

## ინგლისური ენის ბარბადოსული ვარიანტის ლინგვისტური კვლევა

### A Linguistic Exploration of English Variety in Barbados

**მარი ჯვანია / Mari Zhvania**

*თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი / Tbilisi State University*

**ლიზა ხასაია / Liza Khasaia**

*თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი / Tbilisi State University*

#### აბსტრაქტი

კარიბის ზღვის შუაგულში მდებარე ბარბადოსის კოლონიზაციამ 1627 წელს, განაპირობა ბარბადოსული კრეოლის წარმოშობა. მასზე დაახლოებით 300 000 ადამიანი საუბრობს და იგი ინგლისურზე აფრიკული ენების ზეგავლენის შედეგია. ინგლისურის ეს ვარიანტი გამოირჩევა განსხვავებული ფონოლოგიური, გრამატიკული და ლექსიკური თავისებურებებით. ის ასახავს კუნძულის ისტორიის იმ ნაწილს, რომელიც დაკავშირებულია შაქრის წარმოებასა და ბრიტანეთის გავლენის ქვეშ მყოფი ადგილობრივი მოსახლეობის მონურ შრომასთან. ინგლისურის ამ ვარიანტის უნიკალური ფონოლოგია განსხვავებულია სტანდარტული ინგლისურისგან. მისი ფონეტიკა ასახავს თანხმოვნების, დიფთონგებისა და მონოფთონგების ევოლუციას, რაც ვლინდება ფონეტიკური ელემენტების დინამიკურ ურთიერთკავშირში და განაპირობებს ამ ვარიანტის მელოდიურობას. მსაგავსად ფონეტიკისა, ამ ვარიანტის გრამატიკაც, სტანდარტული ინგლისური გრამატიკისგან განსხვავებულია. იგი გამარტივებულია, რათა კოლონისტებსა და ადგილობრივ მოსახლეობას შორის კომუნიკაცია დამყარებულიყო და ინგლისური გამოეყენებინათ, როგორც კომუნიკაციის პრიმიტიული საშუალება. ბარბადოსული ინგლისურის ლექსიკოლოგია მისი მდიდარი კულტურისა და ისტორიის გამოვლინებაა. ყოველი სიტყვა მათ მიმე წარსულს, გამძლეობასა და იდენტობის შენარჩუნებას უკავშირდება და ამავდროულად, წარმოაჩენს მათი უნიკალური კულტურის ფლორა-ფაუნის მრავალფეროვნებას. ეს კვლევა წარმოადგენს ბარბადოსული კრეოლის ლინგვისტურ თავისებურებებს, რომლებიც უკავშირდება ბარბადოსის უნიკალურ ისტორიას და აფრიკული კულტურის ევროპულთან შერევას. ამრიგად, კოლონიზაციის შედეგად შექმნილი ინგლისურის ეს ვარიანტი

განსხვავებულია ენის ფონეტიკური, ლექსიკური და გრამატიკული სისტემების თვალსაზრისით.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ბარბადოსი, კოლონიზაცია, მონობა, ბარბადოსული კრეოლი, ფონეტიკა, გრამატიკა, ლექსიკა.

**Key words:** Barbados, colonization, slavery, Bajan creole, phonetics, grammar, vocabulary.

## Introduction: A Brief Contextual Overview

Barbados, located in the Caribbean, was colonized by British colonists in 1627 and remained a possession of the British Crown until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. British people developed a keen interest in Barbados due to its highly lucrative sugar production on expansive plantations. Production of sugar relied heavily on slave labor, this industry proved to be exceptionally profitable for the British economy (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Barbados, May 2008), but on the opposite side, Barbados turned into a colony with enslaved individuals under the control of the United Kingdom. As it is commonly understood, Colonization has a significant influence on the culture, language, and lifestyle of the indigenous people in colonized countries. One of the central issues is language, as during the imperial rule colonizers enforced their language and forbade the natives to speak their mother tongue. A similar situation occurred in Barbados, where colonizers introduced the English language, leading to the development of a new variety of English, the English of Barbados, the so-called Bajan creole. The variety exhibits its distinctiveness in phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. According to the Oxford Dictionary, creole is defined as a mother tongue formed from the contact of a European language (especially English, French, Spanish, or Portuguese) with local languages (especially African languages spoken by slaves in the West Indies). Accordingly, Bajan Creole is a mixture of English and African languages, spoken in Barbados by 300, 000 people. It is characterized by simplified grammar, as English was utilized as a primitive way of communication between slaves and colonizers, its distinctive vocabulary, especially words connected to their unique culture, plants, animals, etc., and lastly with the pronunciation different from the RP, which stands for Received Pronunciation. It is the standard form of speech utilized in London and the southeastern region of England. Historically linked to the middle and upper social classes, RP has often been indicative of a prestigious public school education. Additionally known as the "standard English," "Queen's English," "King's English," "BBC English," or "Oxford English," RP carries various appellations (Payne, 2023). Consequently, this article undertakes a comparative analysis between Bajan Creole and the standard language or Received Pronunciation.

## Phonemic Variations, Examples and Explanations

Based on our examination of videos featuring individuals of diverse genders, ages, professions, and lifestyles speaking in Bajan Creole, we have concluded that Bajan Creole demonstrates distinct phonemic differences. Our analysis involved dedicating over an hour to reviewing YouTube videos of individuals speaking English in Barbados. By attentively listening to their words, we identified unique phonemic characteristics in Bajan Creole. For the readers interested in further exploration the videos used in our analysis will be listed in the Bibliography section below. As mentioned above, Bajan Creole shows its uniqueness in phonetics. For instance, it is non-rhotic, meaning that the /r/ at the end of words is often not pronounced. So, 'car' might be pronounced as /ka:h/, but it also has the tendency to drop consonants, for instance, the word 'land' will be pronounced as /lan/. The sound /θ/ is pronounced as /t/ or /d/ in the words 'this' /dis/ or think /tink/. Bajan Creole may exhibit consonant cluster simplification. For example, "school" may be pronounced as /skul/. Furthermore, some vowels may be pronounced as diphthongs, where two vowel sounds are combined.

1. /ai/ diphthong – the word 'time' in standard English is pronounced as /taim/, but in Bajan

creole it could be /taim/ with a distinct pronunciation.

2. /oi/ and /ai/ diphthongs – the word "boil" in Bajan might be pronounced as /bail/

3. /au/ and /ou/ diphthongs – the word 'house' /haus/ in Bajan will be pronounced as /ous/ with a dropped /h/ sound and /ou/ diphthong.

monophthong pronunciation also sounds different from those in standard English. Sometimes monophthongs are diphthongized and the opposite.

1. /i/ monophthong – the word 'fish' in standard English is pronounced as /fɪʃ/, but in Bajan

it's /fi:ʃ/ with a long /i:/ sound.

2. /O/ monophthong – the word 'goat' pronounced as /gəʊt/ in Bajan is pronounced as /got/.

3. /U/ monophthong- the word 'book' pronounced as /bʊ:k/ in standard English will be pronounced in Bajan as /buk/.

### **Variations in Grammatical Aspects**

In terms of grammar, Bajan Creole shows its distinctiveness as well, which is expressed on the morphological level of the language. One of the fundamental differences worth highlighting is verbs and tenses. Bajan Creole simplifies verb conjugations, often employing the present tense to express past actions. For instance, while Standard English would use the

past tense, as in "She sang yesterday," Bajan Creole might utilize the -ing morphological suffix, as in "She singing yesterday" lacking the 'to be' verb. Negation in Bajan Creole is another important aspect. Standard English "he is not coming" will be replaced with "he ain't coming" in Bajan. Pronouns are also distinct from standard English, e.g., pronouns like "he," "his," and "himself" Bajan Creole employs pronouns such as "he," "heh," and "he-self. Pluralization in standard English is expressed by -s; -es grammatical suffixes, in Bajan Creole, it is often achieved by repeating the noun, for example, "car-car" signifies "two cars." Additionally, Bajan Creole introduces distinct adjective forms and constructions, often influenced by African languages. For instance, the adjective "hard" can become "hardish." Moreover, Bajan Creole employs "fuh" to indicate possession, as in "This book fuh me" (This book belongs to me). Beyond these grammatical differences expressed on the level of morphology, it also exhibits divergent sentence structure. In standard English SVO (subject-verb-object) sentence structure is used but in Bajan, it can vary from SV (subject-verb) to SVA (subject-verb-adverb) (Schneider, 2008). For instance, according to native speakers of Bajan Creole, the standard English sentence 'She reads books' would be expressed in Bajan as 'She read' or 'She read quickly'.

### **A Brief Reflections on the Lexicon of Bajan Creole**

The lexicon of Bajan Creole is a reflection of the island's history, culture, and unique heritage. Some words are intricately connected to the historical context of slavery. For instance, the word 'de shackles' Refers to the chains or restraints placed on enslaved people; 'wukhouse' is the place where enslaved people worked. It could be a plantation, field, or any site of labor; 'de rockstone' Refers to the grinding stone used by enslaved people to process grains or other food items. It's a symbol of resilience; 'Buckra' is a term used to describe the white slave owners or overseers during the period of slavery. Furthermore, Bajan Creole introduces vocabulary distinct from standard English, reflecting the island's unique culture and traditions. Examples include 'pawpaw' (papaya), 'soursop' (tropical fruit, graviola), 'dasheen' (vegetable), and 'conkie (a traditional Bajan dessert) (Dictionary of Bajan Dialect Words).

### **Unique language variety – inspiration and source for further research**

Bajan Creole stands as a linguistic testament to the historical and cultural complexities of Barbados. Born out of the island's colonial past, this unique language variety reflects the impact of forced language imposition during British rule. The phonological, morphological, and grammatical distinctions in Bajan Creole vividly illustrate its divergence from standard English. Beyond linguistic nuances, the lexicon of Bajan Creole serves as a repository of the island's heritage, encapsulating the struggles and resilience of its people. As a living language, Bajan Creole not only communicates daily life but also preserves the historical context of slavery and the distinctive cultural elements of Barbados. The continued use and adaptation of

Bajan Creole underscores its significance as more than a linguistic variant; it is a vibrant expression of identity, endurance, and the enduring spirit of a people shaped by their history. Barbados, the former slave colony of the United Kingdom, is rich with its natural resources, culture, flora and fauna, distinct indigenous population, and their variety of English. This article aims to introduce the reader to the Phonology, grammar, and vocabulary of the Bajan Creole beyond its historical background. As numbers show, it is not a widely spread variety but still, it is very interesting, as popular celebrities around the world, whose origin are from Barbados still speak Bajan Creole as the singer Rihanna, in one of her interviews notes that she found difficulties in interacting with people at the beginning of her career, but as she practiced, an especially crucial aspect of vowels she managed to be more understandable for society (video is provided in the section of bibliography). Lastly, it is important to note that behind the cultural and linguistic richness of the country, the effects of colonization can't be denied.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we have thoroughly examined the historical background, phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary of the unique language variety in Barbados. Regarding the historical context, it's crucial to emphasize the impact of Barbados as a slave colony, where native people were compelled to labor for the UK's benefits, resulting in the imposition of foreign culture, religion, and language, a clear violation of human rights. Additionally, we highlighted the resilience of the native Barbados population. Moving beyond history, our exploration of linguistic features encompassed phonetic distinctions, including variations in vowels and pronunciation. We delved into grammatical nuances, revealing divergences in verbs, tenses, pluralization, sentence structure, etc. The vocabulary, which reflects the country's cultural heritage and natural resources, introduces new words related to historical aspects like slavery and the rich flora, fauna, and cuisine of Barbados to English. The unique English variety of Barbados, Bajan Creole, spoken by a limited population of around 300,000 people, captures their distinctive characteristics, making it a valuable linguistic expression of the island's history and culture.

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#### **The video links used for analysis:**

1. In the video, Rihanna discusses the challenges she faced in social interactions and highlights the initial difficulty she experienced in practicing accents, particularly focusing on aspects of vowel pronunciation. Additionally, she acquaints the audience with the vocabulary employed in Bajan Creole. Retrieved on the 10th October 2023, from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIEZnWwjcVA>
2. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados, addresses the general debate of the 76th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (New York, 21-27 September 2021). Retrieved on the 10th October 2023, from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=mgfIImjf3pyT-yTh&v=wz\\_IDnay3H8&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=mgfIImjf3pyT-yTh&v=wz_IDnay3H8&feature=youtu.be)
3. This video serves as a survey targeting young individuals, where the interviewer inquires about their proficiency in speaking Bajan. While predominantly entertaining, the video also showcases the language abilities of locals. Retrieved on the 12th October 2023, from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrPoIeKqbw8>
4. Barbados celebrates its transition to a republic on its Independence Day where Rihanna gives a speech and the new president, Dame Sandra Mason, honors Barbadian singer Rihanna with a medal. Retrieved on the 14th October 2023, from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWbC1H7RJHI>
5. In the video, with Barbados transitioning to a republic, Drax Hall is unveiled to the public. The significance lies in the removal of the queen as the head of state, viewed as the ultimate measure for Barbados in severing ties with its colonial history. Retrieved on the 15th October 2023, from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLq4owLsIJs>

### ავტორების შესახებ:

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### About the authors:

Liza Khasaia, a fourth-year student, and Mari Zhvania, a third-year student, are both pursuing their studies at the direction of English Philology at Tbilisi State University with state funding. Mari Zhvania stands out as a recipient of the prestigious state scholarship on multiple occasions, alongside being honored with the Bank of Georgia's scholarship for her exceptional academic performance. Liza Khasaia, a former international student under the Erasmus+ program, enriched her academic journey by immersing herself in English linguistics during her mobility in Germany. With several publications and scholarships to her credit, she has contributed to the field. Together, their mutual passion for English linguistics has culminated in the creation of this collaborative work.

E-mail: [liza.khasaia535@hum.tsu.ge](mailto:liza.khasaia535@hum.tsu.ge) and [mari.zhvania000@hum.tsu.edu.ge](mailto:mari.zhvania000@hum.tsu.edu.ge)

### სამადლობელი:

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