



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Language Group: Cape Verdean  
Author: Tracey Raposo

Program Contact Person: Nancy Cloud (ncloud@ric.edu)

# Understanding Cape Verdean Creole



(Google Images)



(Google Images)

**Tracey Raposo**  
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# About Cape Verdean Creole

- Also known as Creolo, Kriolu, Caboverdiano, or Kabuverdianu
- This Portuguese-based Creole derives from 15<sup>th</sup> Century Portuguese but is also influenced by some West African languages. [HEAR IT!](#)
- The language is spoken mainly in the Cape Verde Islands but can also be found in places with heavy Cape Verdean immigration, such as...
  - \*Portugal
  - \*Guinea-Bissau
  - \*Brazil
  - \*Angola
  - \*United States
  - \*Senegal
- Portuguese is the official language of Cape Verde and is used in all schooling, government, and written forms of communication. However, Creole, as it is called by natives, is the preferred language of most.
- Approximately 400,000 people live on the nine inhabited Cape Verdean Islands.

# Cape Verde Cont.



(Google Images)

- \* Cape Verdeans are part European (Portuguese) and part African.
- \* People from the Northern Islands of Barlavento identify more with Portuguese culture.
- \* People from the southern islands of Sotavento identify more with African culture.
- \* The strongest pride, however, lies in the island that the individual is from.

These divisions contribute to the different dialects of Cape Verdean Creole that are spoken. Each island speaks in its own distinctive dialect. However, dialects can be grouped by similarity into the dialects of Barlavento and Sotavento.

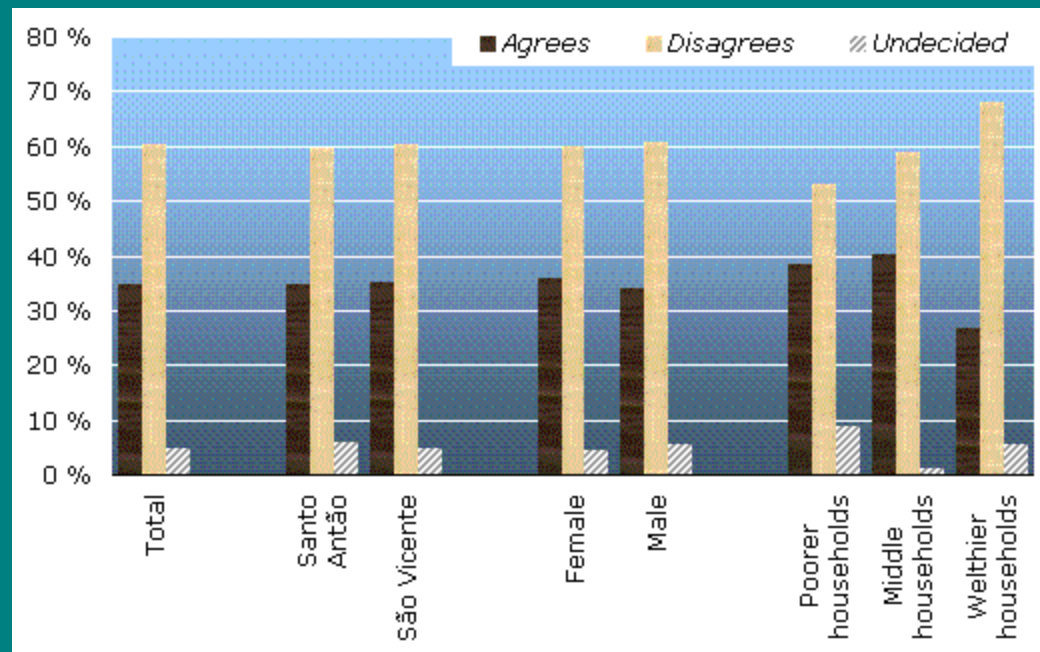
# Language and Identity

A group of students from the islands of Santo Antão and São Vicente were asked to respond to the following statement...

**It would have been better to use Creole in class.**

Clearly, students disagree with that statement. The other interesting point is that the wealthier the student, the more likely they disagreed.

Like in most other diglossic areas, a sense of status is associated with each language. Although, Cape Verdeans are very proud of their Creole, a sense of higher education or status still lies in the



official language of

# The Writing System

- Cape Verdean Creole is not a written language!
- Cape Verdeans use the Portuguese language to communicate in writing.
- An alphabet for Creole has been created, although it is not official. It goes by the name of ALUPEC (Alfabeto Unificado para a Escrita do Caboverdiano). This translates to Unified Alphabet for Cape Verdean Writing.

<b>A a</b>	<b>B b</b>	<b>C c</b>	<b>S s</b>	<b>D d</b>	<b>E e</b>	<b>F f</b>	<b>G g</b>	<b>H h</b>
a	bé	ce	es	dé	e	efe	gé	aha
[a]	[be]	[se]	[ɛs]	[de]	[ɛ]	[ɛfɛ]	[ge]	[aha]
<b>I i</b>	<b>J j</b>	<b>DJ dj</b>	<b>L l</b>	<b>M m</b>	<b>N n</b>	<b>NH nh</b>	<b>O o</b>	<b>P p</b>
i	jé	djé	ele	eme	ene	énhe	o	pé
[i]	[ʒe]	[dʒe]	[ɛle]	[ɛme]	[ɛne]	[ɛnɛ]	[ɔ]	[pe]
<b>K k</b>	<b>R r</b>	<b>T t</b>	<b>U u</b>	<b>V v</b>	<b>X x</b>	<b>TX tx</b>	<b>Y y</b>	<b>Z z</b>
ké	ere	té	u	vé	xi	txi	yé	zé
[ke]	[ɛrɛ]	[te]	[u]	[ve]	[ʃi]	[tʃi]	[je]	[ze]

# Communication Style

- Cape Verdeans have a very hospitable and respectful culture. This is reflected in their communication style.
  - When walking by someone, it is considered a sign of disrespect to not say hello- whether you know them or not.
  - Cape Verdeans address their elders and family with a title.
    - i.e., Senhor, Senhora, Tio, Tia, Mae, Pai
- The culture is also very relaxed, placing emphasis on taking the time to socialize.
  - As a result, Cape Verdeans are known for being late!

# Communication Cont.

## PHYSICAL COMMUNICATORS

- Non-verbal gestures or “talking with your hands” is very common.
  - It is okay and common to touch another person while in conversation.
  - People stand close together in a typical conversation.
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## THE TYPICAL GREETING

- Spoken in Creole, unless it is a business conversation, where it is done in Portuguese.
- Start with a short handshake, if it's a man-man conversation.
- If the conversation is woman-woman or man-woman, start with kissing the cheeks of the other person.
  - Typically both cheeks are kissed, unless you are kissing an elder/parent where it is considered acceptable to kiss just one cheek.
- Always ask the person how they are doing, then ask about their family.



# What do English & Cape Verdean Creole Have in Common?

- **Phonology**

- Creole has lots of consonant clusters, perhaps even more so than English. Making what can be typically difficult sounds like /bl/ or /sp/, won't be very difficult for these speakers.
- Each letter in the English alphabet can be found in the Creole alphabet making the same sound. The one exception is 'w' which is not in the Creole alphabet.

- **Morphology**

- Both languages contain words that have two or more morphemes, so understanding the complexity of multiple morphemes in an English word, like 'unreasonable', will not be something that is new to the learner- although it will still take work.

# Gender Inflections



- On Nouns
  - Only animated nouns (people or animals) carry a gender inflection. For example,
    - irmon/irmá- brother/sister (inflected)
    - ovu- egg (not animated/ not inflected)
    - ❖ some nouns are associated with gender only by attaching the word “máchu” for male or “fémia” for female at the end of the word.  
(i.e. fidju-máchu= son; fidju-fémia= daughter)
- On Adjectives
  - Likewise, only adjectives that are describing an animated noun need a gender inflection. For example,
    - mininu guniadu- unhappy (guniadu) is inflected because it is describing a boy.
    - cárru bránku- white (bránku) does not need an inflection because it is describing a car.

# Complications in Learning to Write English

- Learning to write in English will undoubtedly be one of the biggest challenges an ELL learner will face.
- Creole speakers do not have an official written form in their language, therefore they write in Portuguese.
- This essentially becomes a learner with Portuguese as their L1 learning to write English.
- Portuguese is a phonetically written language and English is not always. This will certainly cause some initial confusion.
- Consonant Diagraphs:
  - some Portuguese letters like ‘x’ make the /sh/ sound in Portuguese rather than the /ks/ sound. You may get an early learner making a negative transfer by writing “xel” instead of “shell.”
  - To make matters more confusing, words that are spelled with ‘ch’ make the /sh/ sound also. For example, “chourico” or “chicharros.”

# Potential Errors in ELL

Error	Why?	Example
May Place Adjective After Noun	Sentence Structure in Creole follows the order of  Subject- Verb- Object- Adjective	“I like the shirt red.”  rather than, “I like the red shirt.”
May Place Unnecessary Gender Inflections	Animated nouns are gender inflected.	“dog-boy”  instead of simply saying “dog”
Possessive Determiners	Possessive pronouns are pluralized rather than the noun itself.	“Mys book”  rather than, “my books”
“to-be” Verbs	Distinction is made between permanent and temporary “to-be” verbs.	Learner may think that “I am” is a temporary state, so there must be another verb for being in a permanent state.
May Pluralize Articles	Articles are pluralized as well as the noun.	“Thes horses”  rather than, “the horses”

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M.Ed. in TESL Program  
Nancy Cloud, Director  
Educational Studies Department  
Rhode Island College, HBS 206 #5  
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Providence, RI 02908  
Phone (401) 456-8789  
Fax (401) 456-8284  
ncloud@ric.edu

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