

# **Guyanese Creole Survey Report**

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**SIL International  
2001**

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## 1. Introduction and purpose

The purpose of this survey was to determine, through a number of factors, the potential for language development for the speakers of an English-Lexifier Creole in Guyana, South America through the medium of literature. The name of this Creole language is Guyanese Creole. The Guyanese themselves call it Creolese, and that is the name that will be used throughout the rest of this report.

English is the national language in Guyana. It was important to determine if the Creolese speakers were adequately bilingual in English so that they would be able to read and understand English literature. Earlier verbal reports and the *Ethnologue* (Grimes 1992) signified that there may be more than one dialect of Creolese and that the dialects were not mutually intelligible. Thus, there were two things to determine; first, whether there was a need for Creolese literature on the basis of understandability, which assumed that if people could adequately understand English literature they would have little motivation for language development in Creolese and second, whether or not literature in one dialect would suffice. The survey was conducted by the authors, members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) as one of the Caribbean English-Lexifier Creole Survey teams of SIL International. The survey was conducted from July of 1996 to March of 1998.

## 2. Geographic location

Guyana is located in northern South America. It is bordered by Venezuela to the west, Suriname to the east, Brazil to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the north. Approximately 90% of Guyana's 83,000 square miles is undeveloped. The vast majority of the people of Guyana, approximately 90%, live along a ten-mile strip of the coast. This coastal area is mainly inhabited by Creolese speakers. There are Creolese speakers in other areas, but this developed coastal region contains by far not only the highest concentration of people, but also the highest population of Creolese speakers.

The capital of Guyana is Georgetown, located on the Demerara River. There is one major road that traverses the coast and numerous other roads which branch off from this. There are thousands of miles of navigable rivers and streams as well. The main road is interrupted by three major rivers. There is also a major road that goes south from Georgetown to Linden, with plans to improve it all the way to Lethem on the border with Brazil in the interior.

## 3. History of the study of Creolese

A sizeable quantity of academic linguistic research has been done on Creolese. The majority of the research has focused on grammar considerations and phonological issues. In addition, a smaller amount of sociolinguistic research has been conducted.

Many inquisitive writers with a variety of agendas have contributed to the pool of information on the culture and heart language of Guyana. Most of the sociolinguistic research has focused on the Creole continuum, variation, and language attitudes. Much of the early work on the Creole continuum has been done using Creolese as the example language. This includes two books—Bickerton 1975 and Rickford 1987a. Although there has been less cultural anthropology research, some of the sociolinguistic research has anthropological relevance. A small number of cultural anthropology publications are in print. The works of local Guyanese authors provide some insight into Guyanese culture. Some of these are written in Creolese. Educators, also, have published findings, most of which pertain to the teaching of Standard English to students who are speakers of Creolese.

In addition to this, the Area Handbook Studies (Merrill 1993) published a new edition for Guyana in 1993 that gives a broad overview of the country's history, society and environment, economy, government and politics, and national security. For a list of some of the above-mentioned publications, see the bibliography section of this report.

## 4. History of the people of Guyana and its influence on Creolese

The first inhabitants of Guyana were Amerindians. Immigrants from India, are called Indians in this paper. Today there are nine different groups of Amerindians, who mostly inhabit the interior of the country. Some vocabulary currently in use in Creolese has been borrowed from various Amerindian languages. These words are predominately found in the names for places, rivers, flora and fauna, and domestic items.

The first European settlers in the area were the Dutch. They founded a settlement in what is now Guyana and claimed the area in 1581. The Dutch later invited English planters to come and build plantations. Many planters from Barbados came, bringing their slaves with them. In the latter 18th century and early 19th century, the English and the Dutch built dams to make use of the fertile coastal soils. The coastal area was swampland, and had been collecting the silt that was washed there from the rivers that empty into the Atlantic from Guyana's interior and the silt from the Amazon River which is carried along the northern coast of South America by the oceanic currents. In 1814, the British gained

control of the three Dutch colonies which currently make up the Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo regions. In 1831, they formed the colony of British Guiana.

The Dutch influence has resulted in various words in Creolese of Dutch origin. This is most evident in place names and words used in relation to the sea, drainage, and the sea defenses (the current system of dams and canals which keep the coast from flooding at high tide is called the sea defense).

As time passed, both the Dutch and the British brought African slaves to build the sea defenses necessary to farm the fertile coastal area, to work on the plantations, etc. In 1838, slavery was abolished and many of the freed blacks set up independent farming villages along the coast. Most of these still remain.

Today, Afro-Guyanese number about 40% of the total population, and there has been a steady flow of Afro-Guyanese into Georgetown from other areas. Afro-Guyanese are the main employees in the bauxite mining industry, and some other areas of typical employment are education, policing and security related jobs, and national government.

With the abolition of slavery, the British imported approximately 240,000 indentured laborers from India between 1838 and 1917. These East Indians worked on plantations in the sugar and rice industries. Today, Indo-Guyanese number about 50% of the total population. They tend to live in the more rural areas and have continued to be the main employees in the rice and sugar industries.

British Guyana's (Guiana's) political structure underwent serious change in the early 1900s. Most pronounced in this time period is the struggle toward independence. During the 1940s, the British were making preparations for British Guiana to become self-governing. Independence was achieved in the early 1960s. The struggles of the new country were numerous. Strife and disagreement abounded between the two largest political parties. In the later 1960s the economy of the country began to plummet.

This situation brought about the desire in many Guyanese to emigrate to other parts of the world. During the 50s and early 60s, many Guyanese emigrated to London. After independence, many others emigrated to New York City and Toronto, Canada. Small populations of Guyanese can be found in most other Caribbean nations, as well. Approximately 50,000 Guyanese have emigrated to Suriname, the most accessible country for Guyanese who live on the coast. The majority of those who left during the difficult times of the 70s and 80s were well-educated and skilled people, resulting in a significant loss of skilled workers in the country. As the following quote from the *Guyana and Belize: Country Studies* (Merrill 1993) shows:

Guyanese statistics indicated an average of 6,080 declared emigrants a year between 1969 and 1976, increasing to an average of 14,400 between 1976 and 1981. Figures for 1976 showed 43 percent of the emigrants going to the United States, 31 percent to Canada, 10 percent to Britain, and 9 percent to the Caribbean. Deteriorating economic conditions caused emigration to increase sharply in the 1980s. Unofficial estimates put the number leaving the country in the late 1980s at 10,000 to 30,000 annually. Many of these emigrants were reported to be the middle-class professionals....This emigration resulted in a significant loss of skilled personnel.

In 1989 things began to improve with the announcement of economic reforms. These economic reforms and other changes have resulted in major improvements in the economic situation in the country.

Considering the history of Guyana and considering other Caribbean Creoles, one would expect some words of African origin, and this is true for Creolese. In addition to this, there is also a substantial amount of vocabulary—restricted mainly, but not only, to the Indo-Guyanese—that is of Hindi, Urdu, and Bhojpuri origin. This vocabulary is mainly found in the areas of religion, cooking terms and food names, rice and sugarcane farming terms, and kinship terms. A few lexical items of Indian origin have been adopted into the lexicon of all Creolese speakers.

The information above is a brief introduction to the history of the people of Guyana and how that has affected the Creole speech of the area. A more in-depth view can be gained from appendix III of the book, *Dynamics of a Creole System* by Derek Bickerton (1975) and chapter 2 of the book, *Dimensions of a Creole Continuum* by John Rickford (1987a).<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Social factors relevant to the sociolinguistic environment

The social situation in Guyana is complex due to several factors. Some of these factors are: the colonial history of the country, the importation of African slaves, the importation of indentured laborers from India, the political history after independence, and government policies.

<sup>1</sup>Many of the dates and figures in this section were taken from the World Book Encyclopedia 1995, and Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia 1995, as well as Rickford 1987a and Bickerton 1975.

## 5.1 Economics

The standard of living in Guyana is quite low compared to that of the rest of the Western Hemisphere. Guyana is currently the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Only Haiti is ranked below Guyana.

The most widely used and comprehensive statistical measure of development is the **United Nations Human Development Index (HDI)** which combines three variables: income, longevity (health) and knowledge (education). In this index, Trinidad and Tobago is highly placed (35 out of 173 countries). Jamaica at 65 is in the middle range, while Guyana is low at 107 (Thomas 1995:5).

The 1997 UN Human Development Index places Guyana at 104, a small gain from what Thomas reports above. High import duties are placed on all automobiles, electrical appliances, and other items. This has made it difficult for the average Guyanese to own a vehicle and simple household appliances such as a refrigerator. The majority of the average Guyanese individual or family income goes to cover housing and food.

Overall, 43 per cent of the population is estimated to be below the poverty line. Poverty, however, ranges from 79 per cent in the rural interior parts of the country to 23 per cent in urban centres other than Georgetown. In rural coastal communities,...[it] is 45.1 [per cent] and for Georgetown it is 29 per cent (ibid.:13).

Unemployment is not as high as in other Caribbean nations, but this does not reveal an accurate picture for Guyana. As Thomas reports:

Thus, in Guyana, while 11.7 percent of the population is unemployed, underemployment is massive. In the 1992 Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) and Household and Income Expenditure Survey (HIES), it was established that nationally, the mean number of days worked in a 30-day recall period was only 13.7 days. For farmers, the mean was staggeringly low, 3.1 days.

When considered by age group, the data show that in 1992, the unemployment rate in the 15–19 years old age group was 37 percent....Most of the unemployment was in the rural areas (about 54 per cent of the total), followed by urban Georgetown (26 per cent) (ibid.:9).

Despite all this, Guyana's economy is the fastest growing economy in the Caribbean. This is “no doubt in part” due to, the low base from which recovery started in 1992” (ibid.:5). The statistics for 1996 show a growth of 7.9% in Guyana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), up from 5.1% in 1995 (GT&T 1998:84). Guyana's currency is currently quite stable as well. The exchange rate during our time there was between US\$1.00 = G\$139–142. Recently, however, the rate has dropped to US\$1.00 = G\$150. This is mainly due to a severe drought that hit the country in 1997–1998, causing crop failure, and to the unrest that followed the 1997 elections and caused some outside investors to become more cautious.

The three major industries in the country consist of the agricultural production of sugar and rice, and the mining of bauxite. All three registered growth in production in 1996. Sugar is the major agricultural export and registered 10.4% growth in 1996 compared to 1995. Bauxite is the major mineral export and registered growth of 15.2%. Rice is also an export, though most of what is grown is consumed within the country. It registered growth of 6.2% (ibid.). There was also a 31.7% increase in gold production from the mining areas in the interior. A few smaller industries include one plywood factory, a couple of fish-processing plants to aid the small but growing fishing industry, and two breweries.

Tourism, though a small industry, is expected to grow with the rise of ecotourism. Although there are no blue water beaches, Guyana's coast has many beautiful 19th-century gothic style buildings that are open to the public. St. Georges' cathedral, the Victoria Law Courts, and City Hall are some of the most predominant. Guyana's interior has attracted those who wish to view the rain forests and animals of the unique ecosystem that comprise its share of Amazonia. In recent years, a number of enterprising individuals have built rain forest lodges along the rivers and among the cattle ranches in the Rupununi savannas. There are various private tours to Kaitaur Falls, Orinduik Falls, Marshall Falls, and Great Falls. The island forts of Guyana offer unique architecture built by the Dutch in the 1600s. Fort Zeelandia, on Flag Island in the Essequibo River, is a well-preserved relic of the Dutch presence in Guyana, as is Kyk-Over-Al at the confluence of the Mazaruni and Cuyuni rivers. The Kanuku Mountains divide the northern and southern savannas, and are a haven for the rare harpy eagle. The Iwokrama Mountain Range extends over 360,000 hectares, and is the site for a major conservation program which focuses on methods to sustain and utilize tropical forest resources.

## 5.2 Development

Over the years, the infrastructure of the country had fallen into disrepair. Much attention over the past few years has been given to bringing it to modern standards. This, however, is not a task that can be completed in a few short months and it may be another 5 to 10 years or more until widespread improvements can be completed.

Currently the majority of the road repairs are centered in the urban areas, with the exception of the Essequibo Coast road project. Many roads are still in poor condition. Public water is available to virtually all areas of Georgetown, but many rural areas are still without it. The Guyana Water Authority (GUYWA) is concentrating its efforts in those areas without water, mainly rural. There are a few rural coastal areas that are still without electricity. The Guyana Electric Corporation (GEC) is working in these rural areas to put in new cables. The major upgrading being done by GEC, however, falls in the area of obtaining new and more reliable sources of producing energy, including the purchase of new generators to replace older ones. There are occasional mentions of the possibility of a hydroelectric project being undertaken in the interior, but no definite plans have been made. There are still many areas of the country that are without telephone service, or with a very limited form of telephone service. Cellular phones are available, and some villages that do not have telephone lines have one cellular phone that serves the entire village.

## 5.3 Population distribution

The population of Guyana is approximately 750,000. The colonial pattern of agricultural settlement along the coast has resulted in the majority of the population, approximately 90%, now living along a 150-mile long, five- to ten-mile wide strip of the coast and along the rivers going inland. According to *Guyana and Belize: Country Studies*, 70% of Guyana's population is rural and the majority of the urban population is Afro-Guyanese (Merrill 1993:37). The majority of both major ethnic groups, however, are located in the rural areas. Most of the villages located along the coast have some ethnic diversity, but generally one ethnic group predominates. The population to land mass ratio for Guyana is 3.4 persons to 1 square kilometer of land, the lowest in the Caribbean (Thomas 1995:3).

There are three major cities. Georgetown, located on the Demerara River is the capital and largest city with a population, including the suburban areas, of approximately 300,000. Linden, the second largest city with a population of approximately 30,000, is located about 60 miles south of Georgetown along the Demerara River. It is historically the location of the major bauxite mining in the country. New Amsterdam, the smallest of the three major cities, has a population of around 20,000. It is located on the Berbice River on the eastern part of the coast. It is reported that Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, outside Toronto, is the second largest "Guyanese city", with a population of approximately 50,000 to 60,000 residents of Guyanese origin.

## 5.4 Religion

The vast majority of the people of Guyana hold to one of three religions. The largest number of Guyanese, approximately 52%, belong to one of the Christian denominations. Because of the influx of people from India, there are large numbers of Hindus and Muslims. Approximately 34% of the population are Hindus and about 9% Muslim (Merrill 1993:47).

## 5.5 Politics

The Dec. 1997 elections put the People's Progressive Party/Civic Group back in office, but this time with Janet Jagan as president, the widow of the former president. The Dec. 1997 elections were followed by over a month of civil unrest that included riots, looting, almost daily protests by the opposition party, violent clashes with the police, and a few bombings. In mid-January a Caribbean Community (CARICOM) mission was sent to Guyana to try to "restore the country to normalcy". They were able to broker a deal between the current government and the major opposition party officially called the Herdmanston Accord. This included the acceptance of the results of an international audit of the elections count and process and the agreement by the governing party that elections would be called again within three years (normally they are only called every five years). Similar violence had followed the Oct. 1992 elections and looting of some Guyanese stores and businesses was particularly strong at that time. But the violence was confined to a much shorter period of time. Looting was not as widespread in 1997 because many businesses took drastic precautions, barricading their stores and offices.

The government has no specific language policies. English is the national language. There are positive attitudes toward the development of the indigenous languages of the country spoken by the Amerindians. There is currently language development work being carried out in Guyana among both the Wapishana and Akawaio Amerindian language groups. Members of the Wapishana Language Project are attempting to put into place a bilingual education program while members of the Akawaio Bible Translation Council are training Akawaios to read their language. Both are indigenous organizations involved in literacy and translating materials into the vernacular.

## 5.6 Education

The quality of education in Guyana has suffered over the years. Improvements in the education system have been made in the past few years, but they have not been able to overcome the decline that has occurred since independence. Guyana's schools are plagued with supply shortages, water, electrical, and sewage problems, poor resources, and disgruntled instructors. The following paragraph from the 1995 State Paper on Education illustrates this point.

Budget cuts in education due to structural adjustment programmes in recent times, and harsh economic circumstances as a fact of national life for a prolonged period have resulted in depressed wages for teachers, the lack of text books and teaching material, and, inadequate, if not poor teaching-learning environments, for children and teachers. These, in turn, have led to high drop-out rates, particularly from Community High Schools, unsatisfactory results at the Secondary Education Certificate (CXC) examinations, and, for teachers, insufficient job-satisfaction and decline in morale, which many have sought to alleviate by emigrating either overseas or into more lucrative positions in the private sector. The net result has been a serious decline in educational standards in this country (Ministry of Education 1995:7).

Guyana's school system follows the British model. Early childhood education, or Nursery School in Guyana consists of two years called Preparatory A and B. This begins at the age of three years and six months. This is followed by six years of Primary School. At the end of Primary School students take the Secondary School Entrance Exam (SSEE).

The structure of Secondary School education in Guyana is three-part. There are the General Secondary Schools (GSS), which consist of five to six years of education and provide the highest quality education available. There are the Community High Schools (CHS), on completion of which access can be gained to the GSSs by a high score on the Secondary School Proficiency Exam (SSPE). Only about 8% of students taking the SSPE go on to a GSS (Ministry of Education 1997:1). There are also the secondary departments of Primary Schools called Primary Tops. Only those who attend the GSSs have the opportunity for further education via taking the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations, which is necessary for tertiary education. Placement into the secondary school system is based on the student's score on the SSEE. Only the top scoring students will be placed in GSSs, the lower scoring students are placed in CHSs and the lowest scoring students in the Primary Tops. Placement also depends on availability of GSS seats. Seats in the GSSs are available for only approximately 45% of the students taking the SSEE. The rest are "shunted off to what are perceived as academically inferior programmes, which are of shorter duration, allow graduates access only to specialized, lower-level post-secondary programmes and do not provide credentials that are recognized in the labour market" (Ministry of Education 1995:21).

In addition, students in the rural and interior areas are even more disadvantaged because of the lack of availability of GSS seats in those areas. Those students who finish GSS may take the CXC examination. The performance of Guyanese students at the (CXC) examinations in 1991 was the poorest of the CARICOM Countries (ibid.:20). In Guyana,

while 15,100 students wrote the Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE) in 1991, only 5,288 or 35% were entered for the CXC General Proficiency examination in 1996 of whom only 546 or 10.3% gained five or more CXC's grades I and II. The latter is below the average performance (13.15%) of the Caribbean region. Further, when the 1991 SSEE cohort is used to analyse the performance of the Guyana's secondary school system, it is clear that only 3.6% of the 1991 cohort achieved a level of attainment that is required for entry to the University of Guyana. (Ministry of Education 1997:1)

The current system places students whose scores are not high enough on the SSEE to earn a seat in a GSC in CHSs or Primary Tops. There is a high drop-out rate for these two secondary school structures. Thomas reports that "In recent years...there have been marked declines in the ratios of trained teachers to total teachers at all levels of education in Guyana. At the same time, repeat rates have risen and student performance in examinations have [sic] declined" (1995:7, 9).

In 1996, a research project was conducted by Professor Jennings at the University of Guyana on the functional literacy of the out-of-school youth aged 14–25. The Ministry of Education released a summary of that report in which they state that "the main finding of the survey was that 89% of the out-of-school youth in Guyana are operating at a low to moderate level of functional literacy and this is below what is needed to function effectively in Guyanese Society" (Ministry of Education 1997:1). Among the recommendations that were made by the Jennings report were that "institutions concerned with the training of teachers should pay serious attention to improving teachers' skills and abilities

in written expression and language use as part of their professional preparation” and “teachers need courses to help them understand the varieties of English including Guyanese Creolese” (ibid.:2).

Because of the lack of availability of places in GSSs, the Ministry of Education has begun the Secondary School Reform Project (SSRP). The goal of the SSRP is to eventually upgrade all CHSs and Primary Tops to the level of GSSs. The pilot project is already underway and plans are being made to continue from there.

The main institution of higher education is the University of Guyana, which was established as an independent institution in 1963. Besides the University of Guyana, two other institutions are involved in the training of teachers. They are the Cyril Potter College of Education and the Lilian Dewar College. There are several vocational institutions as well. They are the Government Technical Institute, the Industrial Training Center, the Carnegie School of Home Economics, the Burrows School of Art, and the Guyana School of Agriculture.

## 6. Linguistics

There are at least five Guyanese linguists who have written extensively about Guyanese Creole. They are Richard Allsopp, John Rickford, Hubert Devonish, Walter Edwards, and Kean Gibson. There are various other Guyanese linguists who have not written as extensively as these or who have concentrated their efforts in other areas. In addition, there is a good deal of research available which has been done by non-Guyanese linguists, Derek Bickerton being the most prolific.

6.1 Phonology. There has been some academic writing which gives a description of the phonology of Creolese. Several articles deal with the prosodic features evidenced in Guyanese Creole (Allsopp 1972, Berry 1976, Carter 1987, Holder 1972). Wells describes the phonology of Guyanese English with particular concentration on the vowel system and not as heavy a treatment of the consonantal system. The vowel system which he lays out for Guyanese English follows (1982:582).

	Front		Central		Back	
	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
Close	i & i:				u:	
Near-close	ɪ				ʊ	
Close-mid	e:				o:	
Mid			ə			
Open-mid	ɛ				ɔ:	
Near-open						
Open			a		ɑ	
Diphthongs			aɪ		ɔɪ & ɔʊ	

Chart 1. Wells' Vowel System for Guyanese English.

Wells also discusses some general characteristics of the consonantal systems of Caribbean Creoles. In his description of Guyanese English phonology, he states that the “Guyanese phoneme system, both extreme creole and prestige-norm, is isomorphic with the Jamaican” (ibid.:581). The Jamaican consonantal system he describes as acrolectally very similar to the standard accent, but further down the Creole continuum it is characterized by “TH Stopping, Cluster Reduction, avoidance of [ʒ]<sup>2</sup> and some [v], H Dropping, semivowels in words such as /kʃat/ cat, and /bwaɪ/ boy” (ibid.:575).

Rickford, a Guyanese linguist and author of the book *Dimensions of a Creole Continuum: History, Texts, and Linguistic Analysis of Guyanese Creole*, uses a phonemic orthography in his book (1987:7–9). His system is a “modified form of the phonemic orthography originally devised by Cassidy (1961) for Jamaican Creole” and does not represent details below the phonemic system (ibid.). He does make some reference to the phonetic distinctions where he feels that there is potential interest. The vowel system he outlines, slightly different than Wells', follows.

<sup>2</sup> The square brackets [ ] are used to indicate that what falls between them is phonetically transcribed.



	Front		Central		Back	
	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
Close	i					u
Near-close	ɪ				ʊ	
Close-mid	e					o
Mid			ə			
Open-mid	ɛ				ʌ	ɔ: & ɔ
Near-open						
Open			a & a:			ɑ
Diphthongs			aɪ		ʌʊ	ɔɪ

Chart 2. Rickford's Vowel System for Guyanese English.

Where Wells did not provide a list of the specific consonants for Creolese, Rickford does. His phonemic inventory follows.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives	p b			t d		c ɟ k g		
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Fricative			f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ		h
Approximate	w			ɹ			j (w)	
Lateral approximate				l				
Affricates					tʃ dʒ			

Chart 3. Rickford's Consonant Inventory for Guyanese Creole.

Rickford specifically mentions two phonetic variants because he states that they are “subphonemic distinctions of potential interest” (ibid.). These two symbols are the alveolar flap [ɾ] and the glottal stop [ʔ]. He also states that some of his phonemic inventory is restricted to certain levels on the Creole continuum. According to Rickford, the vowels [ɔ], [ɔ:], and [ɔɪ] are restricted to the acrolectal level of Guyanese English and are replaced by [a], [a:], and [aɪ] respectively in the basilectal level (ibid.:159). Also the consonants [θ] and [ð] are restricted to the acrolectal level and are replaced by [t] and [d] respectively in the basilectal level (ibid.:198–9).

Our research does not differ significantly from Rickford's analysis. We would consider the vowel [ʌ], labeled a phoneme by Rickford, to be a phonetic variant of the phoneme [ə]. It occurs in free variation in many words and we have not found a contrasting pair for the two.

[fɹəm] ~ [fɹʌm] 'from'

Example 1

The diphthong [aɪ] has the variant [ai]. Instead of the [ʌʊ] diphthong we have found that it would be closer to [aʊ] or [ɑʊ]. The occurrence of [ʌʊ] is much less frequent in our phonetic data. There were also occasions in fast speech where word final [ɹ] was reduced to [ə] and made what appeared to be an diphthong such as [ɹʔ].

[hɹʔ] 'here'

Example 2

It should be noted, however, that Rickford's system is a phonemic one and he does not generally record things phonetically. There is also a great deal of variation between speakers and even within the the speech of a single speaker, especially with the vowels. We have found that in fast speech most vowels tend to drift toward the central unrounded vowel [ə]. This drift makes it difficult to be extremely concise when recording some data and allows for some strange variants at times. One example of an unusual variant occurred in two occurrences of the same word in one sentence.

[gɔt] ~ [gʊt] 'goat'  
Example 3

Some phonetic and phonemic variation within the vowels that we have recorded, but Rickford does not mention are: the alternation of [æ] with its phonemic representation /a/; the alternation of [ɻ] with its phonemic representation /o/ (this may be due to the vowel drift mentioned above); the alternation of the phoneme /a/ and the phoneme /ɔ/ in certain words; and the frequent alternation of several vowels with [ə], especially in unstressed position.

We have virtually the same consonantal system as Rickford. The processes mentioned by Wells above, TH Stopping, Cluster Reduction, etc. are all present in our data. Rickford mentioned some variations he considers significant. They are related to the alveolar flap [ɾ] and the glottal stop [ʔ]. The alveolar flap variation occurs in the intervocalic position, generally in fast speech, with the phonemes [t] and [d].

[pəteto] ~ [pətero] 'potato'  
[ʃʊdə] ~ [ʃʊrə] 'should-a'  
Example 4

Rickford's discussion of the glottal stop [ʔ] is restricted to its pre-vocalic occurrence in a "markedly basilectal" definite article or demonstrative adjective [ʔa] (1987:222). He goes on to say that Hancock has labeled this as "archaic Guyanese".

There is a phonological process in most Caribbean English-based Creoles called *h* dropping. Rickford states that "the dropping of word-initial *h* is common on pronominal, auxiliary, and other unstressed forms in general Guyanese speech, but *h*-dropping on full nouns and open class items is more geographically restricted" (ibid.:283). This second type of *h*-dropping mentioned by Rickford, on nouns and open class items, in our data, appears to be a different process. In nouns and open class items, the phoneme [h] in the initial position varies with [ʔ]. Initially this process appeared to me as a form of *h*-dropping, and the inserting of the glottal stop before the vowel was not considered significant.

However, on a visit with a friend to his mother, we observed an interchange between our friend and his mother. They were discussing how rice was farmed before there were tractors, combines, and other modern machinery. My friend's mother said a word that both he and we were not familiar with. He then asked what the word meant, but pronounced the word differently. Where his mother had pronounced the word with no initial *h*, he pronounced it with an initial *h*. Upon listening to the recording at a later time, we discovered that the mother pronounced the word with a glottal stop initially and our friend picked that up as an indication that the word began with an *h*. This family is from a rural area located on the western part of the coast. The mother has lived there all her life, but her son, our friend, has lived in the capital, Georgetown, for a number of years, and has had exposure to much more acrolectal Guyanese speech. This may account for the difference in pronunciation of the two, but the fact remains that even though the mother did not pronounce the *h*, the son recognized that it was there. The only clue for him to know this is the fact that his mother used the glottal stop instead of dropping the *h* completely. This indicates that for some Guyanese, the process Rickford calls *h*-dropping in nouns and open class items, is most likely the variation of [h] and [ʔ] in initial position. This variation does not occur, however, on pronominal, auxiliary, and other unstressed forms where *h*-dropping is more common.

[hɛŋgə] ~ [ʔɛŋgə] 'the process of leveling a field after it has been plowed'  
Example 5

One other variation of significance, not mentioned specifically by Rickford in his phonological analysis, but which is transcribed in the texts from recorded speech, is the alternation of [n] with [ŋ] word final. This is the standard pronunciation of the basilectal level and occurs in the mesolect and acrolect as well.

[dɑ<sup>n</sup> tɑ<sup>n</sup>] ~ [dɔŋ tɔŋ] 'down town'  
Example 6

6.2 Lexicology. The lexicon of Creolese contains many words that are unique to it. The majority of these words have been brought into the lexicon from the languages of the indigenous Amerindians living there. The following quote from Allsopp's *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* is illustrative.

Through Guyana came hundreds of nouns, necessary labels of an 'active' ecology, from the languages of its aboriginal indigenes of the nine identified ethnic groups, two Arawakan—Arawak (Lokono) and Wapishana; six Cariban—Akawaio, Arekuna, Makushi, Patamuna, Carib, Wai-Wai; and one Warrau....From these sources Guyanese have scores of names of commercial timbers—**mora, crabwood, karapa, simarupa, tauronira, wamara, wallaba**, etc.; fishes—**arapaima, haimara, paku, yarrow, peria**; birds—**curri-curri, powis, sacki**, etc.; animal life—**abouya, labba, maipuri, yawarri**, etc.; everyday life—**matapee, tacouba, warishi**, etc.; pests and crawling things—**kabaura fly, acoushi ants, labaria snake, camoodi**, etc. This is a vocabulary that amounts to hundreds of everyday words known to Guyanese but not to other Caribbeans. (1996:xli)

Allsopp's *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* is organized in such a way that it lists words and common phrases and in which parts of the Caribbean these are used. There are approximately 880 items that are listed as occurring in Guyana only. Of these, many are phrases, but of the words, the majority come from the Amerindian languages. Excluding words that occurred Caribbean-wide, the two territories that shared the largest number of unique items (words and phrases) with Guyana were Trinidad and Barbados. It should be noted, however, that more than a quarter of the unique items shared (125 out of a total of 466) by Guyana and Trinidad were of Indic origin. This is due to the similar migration patterns of indentured laborers from India that came to both Guyana and Trinidad.

Barbados, on the other hand, also shared a large number of items with Creolese. This is most likely due to the historical migration of some planters from Barbados to the colonies which now make up Guyana. Cruickshank reports that planters from Barbados came to the colonies of Demerary and Essequibo in around 1746 and brought their slaves with them. He states that "the Barbados Black was the missionary of the King's English to the Guyana Black" (1916:iii). Guyana and Barbados had only 2 shared items out of 411 that were of Indic origin.

Jamaica and Grenada would fall into a secondary category. They both shared a little more than 200 items with Guyana. Guyana and Jamaica also had two shared items that were of Indic origin. No other territories shared Indic items with Guyana. Tobago and St. Vincent fall into a tertiary category, each with approximately 150 items shared with Guyana. A complete distribution is provided in the following chart.

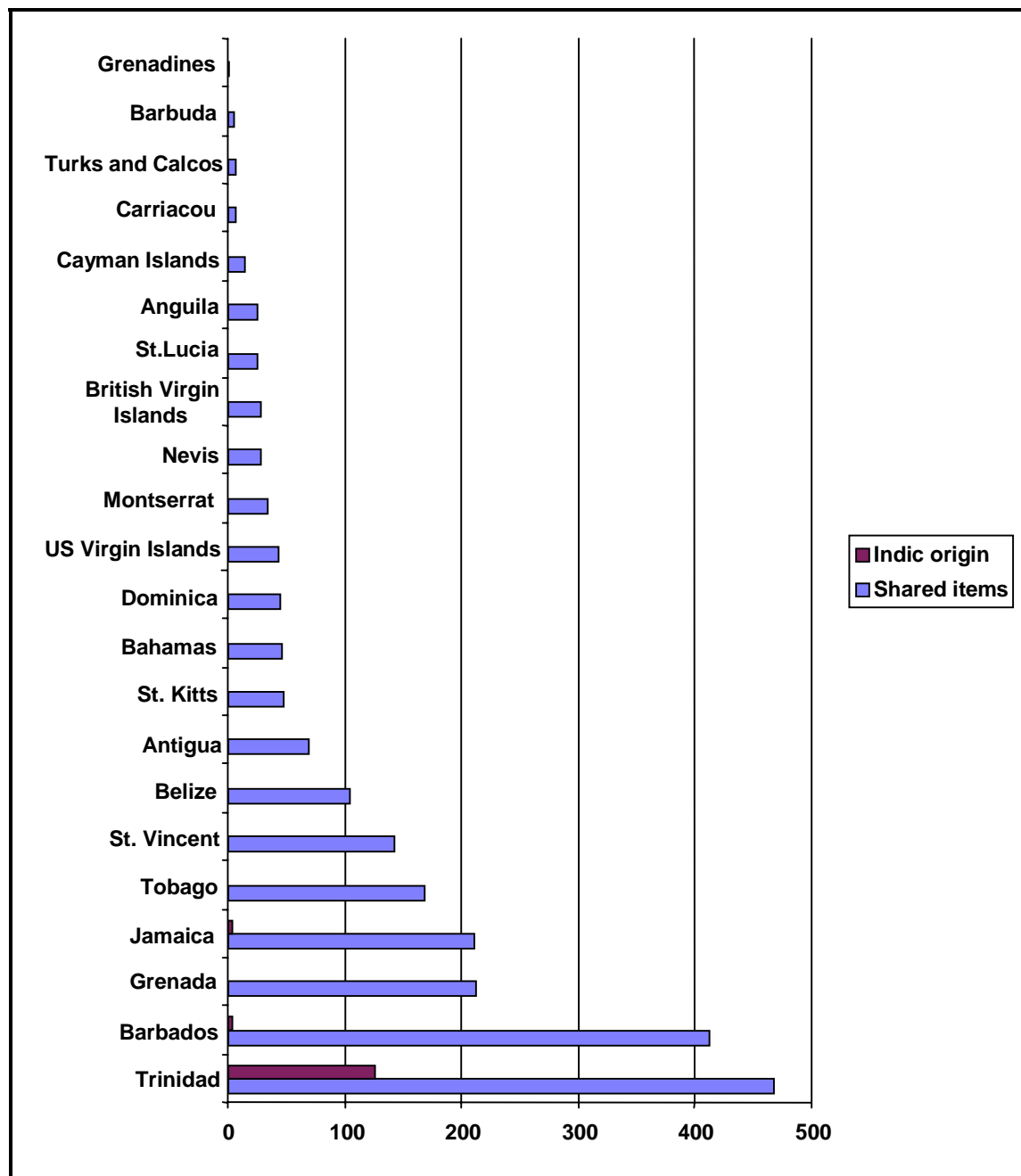


Chart 4. Distribution of lexical items and phrases shared with Creolese.

A large number of items in this dictionary are listed as occurring in the Caribbean area or the Eastern Caribbean area, etc. These items would be shared by all territories and have not been included in the chart above.

### 6.3 Grammar.

There has been a great deal of information written about the grammar of Creolese. Allsopp, as early as 1958, identified that the speech of the people of Guyana fell into different levels. At that time he stratified the differences according to social class. He illustrates these different levels by providing an example of one simple statement, "*I told him*", and nine different ways that it would be produced by these people of the different social strata.

This identical piece of information would be expressed in the following different ways in British Guyana:

1. I told him. [aɪ toʋld hɪm]
- 1a. I told him [aɪ toʋld hɪm]
2. I tol' 'im. [aɪ toʋl ɪm]
3. I tell 'im. [aɪ tɛl ɪm]
- 3a. A tell 'im. [a tɛl ɪm]
4. I tell e. [aɪ tɛl i]
- 4a. A tell e. [a tɛl i]
5. Me tell e. [mɪ tɛl i]
- 5a. Me tell am. [mɪ tɛl am]....

Users of the above forms will be found to be distributed as follows, it being understood that there are no sharp dividing lines between these social and functional strata, except at the extremes, that is, between 1 and the rest and between 5a and the rest:

1. Britons, and a small number of persons usually in administrative positions consciously imitating “white talk” for social reasons.
- 1.a The important middle-class administrative element in Government and Commerce, usually having secondary and sometimes university education, more traveled and often more class-conscious.
2. Ordinary educated middle-class, clerical and professional, usually having secondary education.
- 3, 3a. Careful speech of } Nonclerical employees, working and labouring  
} classes, having had primary but very little or no
- 4, 4a. Relaxed speech of } secondary education.
5. Mostly rural labouring class, but also such people as hucksters, carters, milksellers, street-pedlars, etc., in towns, underschooled, semiliterate and illiterate.
- 5a. Almost exclusively East Indian labouring class as at 5. (Allsopp 1958:61–62).

There have been numerous changes since Allsopp wrote this, including much of the middle-class having emigrated to other countries, but it is interesting to note the urban-rural separation between levels. The example he gives also provides a brief look at the differences in production of one piece of information.

Bickerton and Rickford continued this line of work in their books on different aspects of the Creole continuum (Bickerton 1975, Rickford 1987a). These books provide detailed analyses of the grammar of Creolese. Bickerton, for the most part, uses the verbal system to distinguish the different levels of the Creole continuum. Bickerton makes the point that it would be incorrect to describe the continuum as clearly demarcated between the lects. But for the sake of discussion and analysis, he tries to describe the lects by certain features typical of them. He states that the basilectal level has a typical “system which contains *don*, *bin*, *bina*, *a*, and of course the stem form of the verb” (Bickerton 1975:27). Bickerton goes on to say that “the functions of the stem form in the Guyanese system depend on the stative—nonstative distinction. In its commonest function, with nonstative, it signifies ‘unmarked past’” (ibid.:28). The vast majority of the stem forms are the same as their English cognates, not including phonological differences. There are a number of exceptions to this, of which Bickerton specifically mentions seven.

Three of these exceptions have stem forms derived from English strong past forms: *lef* ‘to leave’, *los* ‘to lose’, *brok* ‘to break’. One has a stem form derived from an English weak past: *marid* ‘to marry’. Three are rather more complex. The English verb ‘to get’ is the source of two distinct Guyanese verbs, *get* ‘to obtain’ and *gat* ‘to have, possess’...English ‘to do’ yields four distinct Guyanese forms; a main verb *du* of similar meaning; a main verb *don* ‘to finish’; a completive aspect marker *don*; an iterative aspect marker *doz*. There is, however, no trace of ‘do-support’ except at the acrolectal level. English ‘to go’ yields three distinct forms: a main verb *go* of similar meaning; an irrealis aspect marker *go*; a specialised completive aspect form, unique to this verb *gaan* (ibid.).

Holm puts the four markers mentioned above, *don*, *bin*, *bina*, and *a*, into the following verbal aspectual categories: the unmarked form (Bickerton’s stem form) is “the simple form of the verb without any preverbal markers” and “refers to whatever time is in focus, which is either clear from the context or specified at the beginning of the

discourse” (Holm 1988:150); the unmarked form plus *bin* indicates the anterior tense; the progressive form *a*; the progressive anterior form *bina*; the habitual form *a*; and the completive form *don* (Holm 1989:407). Holm also labels the irrealis future form as *go ~ sa* and the irrealis conditional form as *bin go*. Anterior forms “indicate that the action of the verb took place before the time in focus (i.e. the time reference of the unmarked verb)” (Holm 1988:151).

Bickerton goes on to describe the Creolese mesolect and the typical changes that take place between the basilect and mesolect.

The main changes that take place in this basilect-to-mesolect phase may be summarised as follows: *doz* develops from a marginal to a central position in the grammar, acquiring a more precise function as it does so; the characteristic basilectal markers disappear and are replaced by other forms; *-ing* forms make their appearance, but with only sporadic accompanying *be*; *go* as irrealis marker is replaced by *gon* which develops as a pure future, with modals fulfilling conditional-type functions; extensive changes take place in verbal negation; English-type past morphemes begin to appear, at first in sharply limited environments (1975:60–61).

Bickerton states that the basilectal markers are replaced by other forms. Some of these replacements are mentioned in the paragraph above. He also states that the functions of *doz* resemble many of the functions of the basilectal marker *a*; *bin* is replaced by *did* (phonetically in our data [di]); one function of basilectal *a* is replaced by *-ing*, this replacement also accounts for the *-a* in *bina*; and the basilectal negation marker *na* is replaced by the numerous other “forms *en*, *doon(t)*, *di(d)n(t)* and *neva*... followed by the sporadic *izn(t)*, *wazn(t)*, *wudn(t)*, etc.” (ibid.:61, 70, 77, 91).

The passive construction in Creolese differs from the Standard English passive construction. The following provides a description of the Creolese passive construction.

The passive form of the verb phrase in GC [Guyanese Creole] differs significantly from that in Standard English. In the first place, there is the invariable absence of the copula... Secondly, there is no morphological marking in the verb to signal it as passive. In GC then, passive structures are recognised not by the form of the verb phrase as in Standard English but by the presence in subject position, of the logical patient or undergoer of the action encoded in the verb. In those cases where the subject can be either patient or performer of the action, **geh** or **don** is used in the auxiliary position (Jones 1994:2).

Although the verbal system is an important gauge in distinguishing the different levels of the continuum. There are other grammatical features that distinguish the levels, particularly the acrolect from the basilect and mesolect. One such feature is the pronominal system. Chart 5 shares the English pronominal system with the basilectal Creolese equivalents.

		Singular		Plural	
		English	Creolese	English	Creolese
1st person	nominative	I	[mi]	we	[awi], [abi], [alawi], [alabi], [aləawi], [aləabi]
	accusative	me	[mi]	us	[awi] etc.
	possessive	my	[mi]	our	[awi] etc.
		mine	[mi]	ours	[awi] etc.
2nd person	nominative	you	[ju]	you	[aju], [aləju]
	accusative	you	[ju]	you	[aju], [aləju]
	possessive	your	[ju]	your	[aju], [aləju]
		your	[ju]	yours	[aju], [aləju]
3rd person	nominative	he	[hi], [i]	they	[de], [dem]
		she	[ʃi], [i]		
		it	[i]		
	accusative	him	[hi], [i], [ɪm], [am]	them	[dem], [alədɛm]
		her	[ʃi], [i]		
		it	[i]		

		Singular		Plural	
		English	Creolese	English	Creolese
3rd person	possessive	his	[i]	their	[dɛm], [ɔlɔdɛm]
		her	[ʃi], [i]	theirs	[dɛm], [ɔlɔdɛm]
		hers	[ʃi], [i]		
		its	[i]		

Chart 5. Creolese pronominal system.

Another grammatical feature which distinguishes the acrolect from the basilect and does occur in the mesolect, but to a much lesser degree, is the plural marker on nouns. Nouns are generally unmarked in Creolese, unless the number (singularity or plurality) of the noun is ambiguous. If the number is ambiguous, then the noun is marked by the word [dɛm] following the noun.

[mi lʊk əkɹɔs a mi pɑtnə dɛm, dɛm ə du di sɛm tɪŋ tə]  
*'I looked across at my friends, they were doing the same thing too.'*  
 Example 7

The infinitive marker is also a grammatical feature with which the acrolect can be distinguished from the mesolect and basilect. In Creolese the infinitive is marked with a form of the word /fu/. This has several phonological variants depending on speaker and the animation of speech.

[dɛm bɑ<sup>i</sup> disɑ<sup>d</sup> fu trɔ sɛm gæsɔlin pɑn di tɪŋ fu si wə go hɑpɪn]  
*'Those boys decided to throw some gasoline upon the thing to see what would happen.'*  
 Example 8

Some speakers from the Corentyne region pronounce *fu* as *fi*. They will also at times use *fi* in place of some English prepositions such as 'for' and directional 'to'.

[ən mə bɛg ə mɑn fi wɑn] *'And I begged him for one.'*  
 Example 9

Three other minor features worth mentioning are the question structure, the quotation formula, and the relative clause marker. There is more than one way to ask a question in Creolese and in Guyanese English in general. The typical way of asking a question involves the use of a *wh*- question word. The *wh*- word often takes a slightly different meaning than in Standard English.

[wə fu du nɑ<sup>u</sup>?]  
*'What are we going to do now?'*  
 Example 10

[e bɑ<sup>i</sup>, hɑ<sup>u</sup> ɪz di tɛkɑps ɪn dɪs plɛs?]  
*'Hey boy, what are the big happenings around here?'*  
 Example 11

The question structure will sometimes reverse the order for the subject and verb and come out sounding like a statement to those not familiar with the structure. In our interaction with and observation of Guyanese and non-Guyanese, we have often heard Guyanese ask non-Guyanese a question similar to this: "[person's name] is here?", instead of the typical Standard English form of the question "Is [person's name] here?" The typical answer from a person who is not Guyanese, when asked a question in this way is to ask in return, "is he?" or "is she?" because they interpreted it as a statement of fact, not a question. This interpretation is due not only to the structure of this question type, but also due to the fact that the intonation of this question type is slightly different than the typical question intonation in Standard English. This type of question can also be made in the negative. This adds to the confusion of those who are not familiar with this type of question structure. One humorous example is when a Guyanese friend asked an American, "You don't want a drink?" This person did want a drink, but just hadn't gotten one yet because she was talking. She thought that our

friend was telling her in an indirect way that she couldn't have a drink or shouldn't take a drink. These negative questions are usually asked after something has been offered, implicitly or explicitly, and the person hasn't taken advantage of it.

The quotation formula is another minor feature worth mentioning. The indirect quotation formula is very similar to the Standard English structure.

[dɛm sɛ da di labɑ:ɪə snɛk wən ə di fɑ:stɪs bɑ:tm snɛk]  
 'They say that the labaria snake is one of the fastest biting snakes.'

Example 12

The direct quotation formula, however, is quite different in Creolese. In Standard English it is often something like "he said" or "she said". In Creolese it can be and often is similar, but frequently it is more like "hear she" or "hear he", especially in animated first person narration.

[i: di biɟ brədə, nɑ sɛ da ə wə?, sɛ ə wə dɑ?]  
 'The big brother said, don't say "that is what?", say "what is that?"'

Example 13

The relative clause marker is the third minor feature worth mentioning. The relative clause markers in Standard English take the form of the typical *wh*-question markers "who", "which", "where", "when", "why", "this" and "that". Some of these forms will be scattered in the speech of mesolectal Creolese speakers, but the basilectal relative clause marker takes the form [wə] "what".

[wən bək ɪz ə mæn wə de ɪn di bʊʃ]  
 'An Amerindian is a man who lives in the bush'.

Example 14

There are other features that could be noted, but these seven, the verbal system and the pronominal system being the two major distinguishing features, and the plural marker on nouns, the infinitive marker, the question structure, the quotation formula, and the relative clause marker being five of the minor features are features which can be used to distinguish Creolese from the acrolect and from other Caribbean English-Lexifier Creoles. Major and minor here are in terms of quantity. They also correspond to importance, but to a lesser degree.

Further detailed grammatical analysis of Creolese is provided in the books by Bickerton and Rickford mentioned above, as well as numerous journal articles and conference papers (Edwards 1991; Gibson 1994, 1992, 1988, 1986a, 1986b, 1984, 1983; Mufwene 1986, 1983; Rickford 1980, 1974; see also attached bibliography).

#### 6.4 Literary development

There have been no real efforts to develop an orthography for Creolese and definitely no attempts at literacy. In the 1970s there was quite a bit of research work done through the University of Guyana (UG) into Creolese, but the writing conventions that were developed followed the Cassidy writing system for the most part. This was developed for the purpose of creating a standard form of presentation within UG and to help with the Caribbean Lexicography Project. Nothing significant was published related to this writing system, except that Bickerton used the system in his book (1975). The Caribbean Lexicography Project was the research vehicle in Guyana and elsewhere for the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Language Usage* (personal communication with Claudith Thompson and George Cave).

There has been some literary development. Various authors have published works written in Creolese. There is no standard orthography that has been used in these works. Each author spells words the way s/he wants. The majority of what has been written in Creolese is poetry and short stories. There was one paper presented to the Society for Caribbean Linguistics 10th Biennial Conference which was written by Hubert Devonish, a Guyanese linguist working at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica (1994). This paper was written and presented in Creolese with a written English translation. This is a rare item and reflects Dr. Devonish's desire to see language development take place in the Creoles of the Caribbean. He is currently involved in aspects of language development in Jamaica, but not in Guyana.



## 6.5 Local publications.

There are various publications that are available on topics related to the Guyanese people and to Creolese. Listed below are some of the publications which provide useful information.

### 6.5.1 Periodicals

*The Guyana Review* is a monthly magazine which fields articles related to local leaders, politics and public policy, economics and environment, culture and society, and book reviews of local publications. Nothing is published in Creolese, however.

*Kyk-over-al* is a journal published one to two times a year. It carries articles on local literary developments in areas of poetry, book reviews, and the Guyana prize for Literature. It also carries short stories and occasionally linguistic articles related to Creolese and other Caribbean Creoles. Some of the poetry and short stories are occasionally published in Creolese.

### 6.5.2 Literary works in Creolese.

Cavigholi, Florence. 1959. Lulu and the Camoodi. *Kyk-over-al* 9(26):41–46.

Chichester, Andy Gorden. 1988. An error of substance. *Survival: new writings from Guyana*. Georgetown, Guyana: Demerara Publishers Limited. Premiere issue:32–35.

Dabydeen, David. 1984. Slave song. Mundelstrup, Denmark: Dangaroo Press.

Devonish, Hubert. 1994. Caribbean vernacular langauges, technology and national consciousness. Paper presented in Guyanese Creole with an English translation to the 10th Biennial Conference of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics, Georgetown, Guyana.

Guyana Metege. 1973. Various authors, 199-page booklet with proverbs and cultural information.

Joseph, Valerie. 1988. A mother's promise. *Survival: new writings from Guyana*. Georgetown, Guyana: Demerara Publishers Limited. Premiere issue:43–47.

Kwayana, Eusi. 1997. Gang Gang: Thirty African Guyanese proverbs. Georgetown, Guyana: Red Thread Women's Press.

Monar, Rooplall. 1994. Estate People. Georgetown, Guyana: Roraima Publishers.

Monar, Rooplall. 1992. Election Fever. *Kyk-over-al* 43:53–66.

Monar, Rooplall. 1987a. Backdam People. Yorkshire, England: Peepal Tree Press.

Monar, Rooplall. 1987b. Koker. Yorkshire, England: Peepal Tree Press.

Monar, Rooplall. n.d. High house and radio. Yorkshire, England: Peepal Tree Press.

Radzik, Danuta. 1988a. Indra - her story. Georgetown, Guyana: Red Thread Publications.

Radzik, Danuta. 1988b. Rookmin - her story. Georgetown, Guyana: Red Thread Publications.

Radzik, Danuta. 1987. Itwaria - her story. Georgetown, Guyana: Red Thread Publications.

## 7. Social Relationships

### 7.1 Interaction with other local languages, including immigrant peoples

There are no significant numbers of other language groups present among the Creolese speakers. There is interaction with the Amerindians, especially in the interior among the gold and diamond prospectors. There is also interaction with Amerindians in such places as Corriverton in the east, Charity in the west, and Bartica, which is upstream on the Essequibo River. These towns are in the outermost portions of the inhabited coastal area. This interaction

with Amerindians is not affecting Creolese nearly to the extent that it is affecting the Amerindian languages. Arawak is reportedly an endangered language and some of the Warrau who live in the Northwest district on the Moruka River are no longer speaking the Warrau language, but are rather speaking Creolese.

### 7.2 Interaction with Creoles from other locations

There is not much interaction within Guyana itself between Creolese speakers and Creoles from other locations. Guyana is located on the northern coast of South America, and, because of its geographical location, is fairly isolated in terms of interaction with other Caribbean English-Lexifier Creoles. Some Guyanese travel to Trinidad to buy goods to bring back to sell, but not many Trinidadians come to Guyana. There is some interaction with the Creoles of Suriname, but the Creole of Suriname forms a separate group from the rest of the Caribbean English-Lexifier Creoles and so does not really have much of an impact on the speech of the Guyanese Creolese speakers. There is some impact on those Creolese speakers who have migrated to Suriname, but very few of them return to Guyana and so their impact on Creolese speakers is basically null.

The major area of interaction comes in the form of music. A good deal of music coming out of Jamaica is very popular in Guyana. Some words that are distinctly Jamaican in origin have found their way into Creolese speech. Many of these words derive their usage from within the Rastafarian movement, which was started in Jamaica. This may account for the relatively high cooccurrence of words between Jamaican Creole and Creolese which was reported in section 6.2 of this report.

### 7.3 Domains of language use

Creolese is used in almost all domains where communication takes place. We have heard Creolese used in almost every domain of communication. It may be more efficient to explain in which domains Creolese is not typically used.

It is not typically used by people who have business in a government office. When a person has business in a government office s/he typically tries to use his/her best English when communicating with the government employees. These employees will use English when communicating with people coming in for business. We have sat in several government offices and heard supervisors giving commands or instructions to other employees in Creolese and then turn to us and speak English. These employees often switch into Creolese also, when they are communicating with each other. Some businesses require their employees to use Standard English with customers.

When people enter a business and attempt to communicate with a clerk, manager, etc. they tend to try to use their best English. However, some will simply ignore the formalities and use Creolese, or not be able to handle the Standard English and have to use Creolese. If the person entering a business knows the clerk, manager, etc. s/he will typically use Creolese. Business people tend to want to appear as professional as possible. In doing this, they will often insist that their employees communicate in Standard English even after being spoken to in Creolese.

Creolese is not used, for the most part, in television and radio broadcasting. There are, however, some programs in which Creolese is heard. At least one television program goes into the community to interview people who have a grievance with the government or a business, etc. In this show, the people interviewed often speak Creolese. There are several call-in television shows. In these shows the persons calling with their questions or comments occasionally use Creolese. There is also a radio show aired once a week in which older residents of typically rural areas are interviewed and asked to basically tell their life stories. Many of those interviewed are monolingual Creolese speakers. In addition, Rickford reports that, in Guyana “the official language is Standard English, and this is the language of government and education, and the language used most often in the media” (1983:147).

Creolese is technically not supposed to be used in the schools. But in interviews with teachers and one member of the Ministry of Education, we were told that many students, especially in the early grades, will not understand what is being taught unless it is taught using Creolese. Although use of Creolese is discouraged by the schools, when we listened to students talking when leaving school, they speak Creolese almost exclusively.

Creolese is typically not used in churches, especially in Georgetown. It is also not used in churches whose pastors are from near Georgetown or have been trained in Georgetown or abroad. This is not across the board, but should be noted as a tendency. In the church services in Georgetown, Creolese is acceptable for use in skits, illustrations, etc. and it is very well received that way, but that is the extent of its use. In some rural areas, where many people do not have a command of Standard English, several pastors we have spoken with said that when they preach they have to preach in Creolese or the people would not understand them.

The person whom one is addressing is a factor as well. It was very difficult to get people to speak basilectal Creolese to us. When most people speak to us they will switch to their highest lect. Rickford’s comments to this point are quite apropos:

Regardless of class, respondents seemed to agree that appropriateness of language choice depended to some extent on who the addressee was, English being more appropriate with interlocutors who usually spoke English and didn't understand Creole...and Creole with those who usually spoke Creole (ibid.:156).

Along this line, Creolese is not used when addressing a foreigner, especially foreigners one has never met previously. It is assumed that the foreigner would be proficient in Standard English only and not at all in Creolese. People are concerned that they would be misunderstood or viewed as uneducated when speaking to foreigners if they used Creolese. Also, conversely, if a foreigner were to address a Guyanese, whom s/he had never met before, in Creolese, it may be perceived as an insult by the Guyanese. The Guyanese would think that the person addressing him/her viewed him/her as uneducated and incapable of communicating in Standard English.

## 8. Bilingualism

There are no statistics related to bilingualism in Creolese and Standard English. There are, however, statistics related to literacy in English. The official statistics do not offer much help here, but the statistics mentioned in a paper issued by the Ministry of Education are quite helpful. That paper is a summary of a report issued by Dr. Jennings of the University of Guyana (see section 5.6). According to Dr. Jennings, 89% of the out-of-school youth ages 14–25 are functionally illiterate. This is a strong indication that a large percentage of the population does not have adequate competency in Standard English. This would also indicate that there would be a high percentage of people who would not exhibit true bilingualism in Guyana. By true bilingualism we mean native speaker fluency in both Creolese and Standard English.

Haynes conducted research where she compared the speech of Bajans (people from Barbados) with that of Guyanese. To create a standard she tested Bajan and Guyanese individuals' comprehension of British English. She reports that "Guyanese tended to understand British speech some rather than all of the time" (1973:69). In other words, Guyanese did not understand all of the British English that they heard. They had a limited comprehension of what could be labeled in Guyana as the "aspired for" standard.

Most people in Guyana will say that everyone understands Standard English. This is especially true of people who have a command of Standard English and live in urban areas. This has been a dominant belief for at least half a century. Allsopp reports that "there are **no children** in British Guiana...who do not understand standard English" and "there is nowhere in the coastal area of British Guiana...where **spoken** [emphasis his] standard English will not be understood" (1953:235). Allsopp goes on to say that people in British Guiana's ability to speak standard English does not necessarily indicate their ability to understand it. He breaks children's speech and abilities in the standard and Creole varieties into three main groups.

1. All children of school age in urban areas...can if required, speak standard English and some of them normally do. The others normally express themselves, in spoken language in Creolese.
2. All children in rural areas can also, if required, express themselves in standard English, though many of them will not keep it up without some strain. The great majority normally express themselves in Creolese, and -
3. The remainder, a small minority, will not be capable of any appreciable sustained effort in spoken standard English. These are most comfortable with Creolese, there being the standing proviso that their understanding of standard English is unaffected. (ibid.:235–236).

This is not what we have found in the Guyana of today. Our findings line up more closely with those of Haynes mentioned above. Those who do not speak Standard English, we have found, have difficulty understanding it as well. This is especially true in the more rural areas. Also those who say that everyone understands Standard English, when pressed, will admit that there are times when they have to switch to Creolese to get some people to understand them. We asked one pastor if he used Creolese when he preached. His reply was, "I only use Creolese when I want to make sure that the people really understand what I say."

The most bilingual individuals would be those who have excelled in their education and most likely live in Georgetown or perhaps Guyana's two other, much smaller cities, Linden and New Amsterdam. In section 5.3 it is reported that approximately 70% of the population of Guyana is rural. Given that the Creolese-speaking population on the coast makes up approximately 90% of the total population, that would put 60% of the total population as rural coastal. In our personal observations we have noticed that many of the people living in the rural coastal areas do not have adequate command of Standard English.

In addition to bilingualism of English and Creolese in Guyana, there was the possibility of a total of six dialects of Creolese. The dialect possibilities are divided by region and ethnic group. There are three distinct regions in Guyana that correspond to the three colonies that were combined by the British to form the united colony of British Guyana. The three colonies were the Essequibo Colony, which is the inhabited area west of the Essequibo River, the Demerara Colony, which is the area between the Essequibo River to the west and the Berbice River to the east, and the Berbice Colony which is the area in the east between the Berbice River and the Corentyne River. The two ethnic groups, the Afro-Guyanese and the Indo-Guyanese, have slight differences in their speech. The most outstanding difference comes from the large amount of vocabulary of Indic origin in the speech of the Indo-Guyanese.

Haynes reports that “almost two-thirds of the Guyanese always understood other Guyanese, and more than a third only understood them at some times, while one subject had found it impossible upon occasion to understand other Guyanese” (ibid.:67). Haynes’ findings may be due to the fact that she used individuals from all socioeconomic classes, including the very rich, who would most likely be monolingual in Standard English. Our initial research indicated that there are at most two dialects that are of significance. These two dialects are the urban and the rural, with rural speech in the Berbice/Corentyne area being the most distant from the acrolect. One distinction we have noted in section 6.3 is the different pronunciation of the infinitive marker *fu* as *fi* and the occasional use of *fi* in place of some prepositions in the Corentyne region.

We carried out a form of Recorded Text Testing (RTT) (Blair 1990) to determine if these dialects were so different that they would require separate literature. We took portions of recorded speech from seven individuals, each from a different region of Guyana’s coast. We then traveled to various parts of the coast and played the tape for various individuals and interviewed them to determine their comprehension of what they heard. We conducted RTT with 32 people from varying ethnic groups, regions, and gender with the result that all but one individual had no difficulty understanding the Creolese from the different regions of Guyana’s coast. The one individual who did have difficulty was a native of Georgetown who only had a good command of Standard English and mesolectal Creolese, but not basilectal Creolese. He especially struggled to understand the most basilectal speaker on the tape.

## 9. Language attitudes

The attitude of the people of Guyana toward Creolese is almost totally negative in terms of its value and usefulness. Rickford provides a good description of the attitudes that most West Indians have toward nonstandard varieties of English throughout the Caribbean.

The standard view of language attitudes in creole continua is that the standard variety is good, and the non-standard varieties (including the “Creole”) are bad. This view may be referred to as the standard one, not only because it is the orthodox one—the one usually reported in the academic literature and the local press—but also because it assumes a positive orientation toward the standard variety alone (1983:146).

This view is true for Guyana in both the fact that Creolese is viewed negatively and that Standard English is viewed positively.

### 9.1 Attitude toward the language itself

In our research, we tried to determine the attitudes of Guyanese people in general in two different areas. The first area was that of their attitude toward Creolese itself. In our observations and in informal interviews with Guyanese, we were able to determine that most people do not see any real value in the use of Creolese. Even though some of these people were monolingual Creolese speakers, they did not view Creolese as something valuable, but rather as a hindrance to them both socially and economically. Some monolingual speakers we talked with were ashamed to go to Georgetown because people would make fun of their inability to speak “proper” English.

One person who is from a rural area but now lives in Georgetown reports that when she visits the rural area where she is from she speaks Creolese so as not to offend her friends and family. She said if she spoke Standard English to these people they would scold her for her “citified” speech. She said if she persisted in “citified talk” she would be perceived as a snob by her friends and possibly even by her family. This is illustrative of others we have met in Georgetown who have family or roots in rural, heavily Creolese-speaking areas. Thus, even though it is viewed negatively, it is still used as an issue in solidarity matters.

The attitudes of people toward Creolese becomes quite evident when you ask people where Creolese is spoken. The answer we received to this question almost always took a form similar to the following, “Well, they speak it bad in

(this area) and (that area), but it is the worst in (this other area).” We were often told that it is spoken the “worst” in the Berbice area. When we told people we were interested in learning Creolese, the most common response was laughter followed by some sort of question or statement of disbelief, like; “Why would you want to learn that?” or “We are trying to get away from that!”

## 9.2 Attitude toward Creolese literature

The second area of attitude research we pursued was the area of the Guyanese people’s attitude toward literature in Creolese. We conducted numerous interviews. These interviews can be separated into two groups. The first group, was somewhat split between the urban and rural populations. The urban lay person tended to take a very negative view of literature in Creolese and did not feel that it was something that would be helpful. Comments that were often made were of the following sort, “Everyone speaks and understands Standard English fine, so why write in Creolese?” or “We are trying to Englishize Guyana; literature in Creolese would be a step backwards.”

The typical rural lay person’s response has not been that much different than the urban response. Most responses tend to take a negative view of a literature in Creolese, but the responses of rural lay people are noticeably less negative than urban lay people with many more positive responses. Rural lay people are also much more willing to admit that there are people who do not understand Standard English well, and that literature in Creolese might help them.

In our interviews we tried to elicit people’s opinions of both a written literature and an oral Creolese literature on cassettes. This was accomplished by simply talking about a literature in Creolese. Those we spoke to automatically assumed we were talking of a written literature. After we received their comments, we would ask them their opinions of an oral literature. The urban lay people still tended to be negative, but a small number said that maybe people in the rural areas could use something like that. They did not see any real use for it for themselves. Rural lay people tended to be fairly positive toward this, but still hesitant.

The second group we interviewed was Guyanese pastors and church leaders. They can also be separated using the urban/rural division. All together we interviewed 30 pastors and church leaders, 11 from rural areas and 19 from urban areas. Only one was female, the rest were male.

The urban pastors tended to lean on the negative side. Of the 19 interviewed, ten were outright opposed to a Creolese literature project, with one of those seeing possible merit for an audio literature for the illiterate and the blind, three didn’t have an opinion, one was initially negative, but turned positive, three were openly positive, and two were positive if it was done for the rural areas, but negative if it was done for the urban areas.

We interviewed 11 pastors/church leaders from rural areas of Guyana. Eight of these eleven were positive toward a cassette literature, three were negative toward any literature at all, and none were positive toward a written Creolese literature. All those who were positive toward an oral literature said that literacy is very low in the rural areas, especially among those who really need a Creolese literature. They felt that teaching them to read Creolese literature was an impossibility because the schools had already failed to teach them to read English.

The three who were negative were either from Georgetown or were trained in Georgetown and had adopted the predominant urban view which looks down on Creolese. It is difficult to find pastors in the rural areas at all. Many of the people who are from rural areas and are able to get education in Georgetown do not want to go back to the rural areas. Most of these individuals have been able to improve their Standard English skills and do not want to have to go back to Creolese.

## 10. Language vitality factors and current status

Education is a major factor which affects the language vitality of Creolese. The more education a person is able to obtain, the more that person’s speech tends to move away from the basilect and toward the acrolect. Rickford states that “Education has thus provided part of the impetus for decreolization in Guyana (and other areas), manifesting itself primarily in the extension of speaker’s repertoires at the upper-mesolectal levels, and in the diminishing frequency with which basilectal and lower-mesolectal varieties are spoken” (1987:71–72). Thus, the proportion of people who are succeeding in secondary education and beyond would tend to match the proportion of people whose speech is becoming decreolized. The attitude of those who work in the educational system in Guyana, with whom we had spoken, would like to rid the country of Creolese. They see it as a major hindrance to education because of its interference with English.

In section 5.6 of this report we find that of the 15,100 students who wrote the Secondary School Entrance Exam in 1991, only 5,288 (35%) of those students were entered to take the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exam. Only 546 (3.6%) of those taking the CXC exam obtained grades sufficient to gain entrance to the University of Guyana. Thus, approximately two-thirds or more of the student population of Guyana is *not* receiving an education which would tend to promote decreolization.

One factor which may influence the vitality of Creolese in the future is the Ministry of Education's Secondary School Reform Project. If the SSRP is able to significantly improve the education system in Guyana in both the urban and rural areas, it may bring about a greater degree of decreolization than is already taking place. There would need to be a significant improvement and other factors may enhance or negate its effects. At this point, the presence of the SSRP would not create a significant trend toward decreolization for at least 20 to 30 years or more, if at all (this is based on the time it will take to implement the comprehensive changes in the educational system and the fact that decreolization would take its greatest effect upon the children of the students that would currently be attending schools in the SSRP project).

Economic incentive is a factor which affects the language vitality of Creolese. Rickford's sociolinguistic study of a rural Guyanese village which has a plantation-centered economy provides some interesting evidence for this. Rickford divided the residents of this village into two socioeconomic groups which he labeled estate class (EC) and nonestate class (NEC). The EC members "worked as cane-cutters, weeders, and in other field-work capacities on the sugar-estate around which the community was organized, and the nonestate class...members held jobs as clerks, contractors, bookkeepers and shop owners" (1983:148). Apparently the two classes view the ability to speak the standard differently. According to Rickford the NEC members see "more acrolectal usage as *contributing* to more prestigious occupations and social class status, while the EC members see language use as merely reflecting socioeconomic status" (ibid.:153). Rickford believes that both are correct from their own perspectives. The next step up for the NEC in terms of occupations are job positions which "seem to demand command of the acrolectal or English end of the continuum" (ibid.:154). The next step up for the EC, however, "insofar as they exist — may involve learning a trade like carpentry or getting a job in a shop, and there are examples of skilled tradesmen and shop owners in the community who appear to have achieved financial success *without* speaking "proper English"" (ibid.).

Rickford's study is a reflection of only a limited community within Guyana, but its results can be projected to the rest of the population. There are those whose occupation would reflect each class that Rickford has outlined throughout Guyana, in both urban and rural areas. Those who work in occupations such as peddlers or who have small fruit stands in the market or sell other commodities in a similar manner, etc. would probably fit within the views of the EC. Those with positions similar to the NEC in urban areas would probably fit within the views of the NEC. The same could be projected for other rural areas.

Solidarity is another factor which affects the language vitality of Creolese. In the same study by Rickford mentioned above, he reports that EC members tended to value Creolese usage among their friends for reasons of identity, solidarity and community (ibid.:151). This would indicate that the language vitality of Creolese on the basis of solidarity would be strong among members of the EC. Members of the NEC did not place a high value upon Creolese because in their view, solidarity with speakers of more acrolectal varieties had greater possibility for socioeconomic advancement. This would indicate that the language vitality of Creolese on the basis of solidarity would not be as strong among members of the NEC. If this is a true reflection of the population of Guyana, then it may help explain the differing responses from the pastors interviewed in section 9.2 above.

Gender, which can be an influence in vitality in dialect situations, does not appear to be a major factor in the vitality of Creolese. The only place where it may be a factor is in some rural areas where gender roles are culturally much more traditional. In these situations, females may be limited in the activities which are culturally acceptable. This can have the effect that they are not allowed to progress in education beyond what is mandatory by the government and thus retain more basilectal speech.

The final factor which needs to be mentioned is that of language attitudes. As mentioned above in section 9, the overall attitude toward Creolese is very negative. It is not a language valued by most Guyanese. The acrolect is by far the prestige variety in the continuum, with the basilect being the stigmatized variety.

Overall, the current status of the language vitality of Creolese is rather healthy. Almost everyone, when you press them, will admit to being able to speak at least mesolectal Creolese. In the rural areas, the highest on the continuum that many can go is only to the mesolect. At this time there do not appear to be any factors or combination of factors which are creating a situation conducive to language shift. The educational system, being the major factor in influencing decreolization, would need to be greatly improved before substantial decreolization could take place.

## 11. Conclusion

The sociolinguistic situation concerning Creolese in Guyana is very complex. Before any language development project could begin, as many factors as possible need to be considered. The most specific factors include bilingualism, education, language attitudes, location of speakers, ethnic group relations, and time frame. First and foremost let it be known that we are not recommending any language development that excludes literacy in the national language, English. Rather, any language development done in Creolese should be viewed as a bridge to literacy in English. Providing literacy in Creolese would be beneficial to Creolese speakers trying to learn to read and/or speak Standard English because it would give them the potential to compare their language variety with Standard English.

We believe that it is clear from section 8 that there is a significant percentage of the population that cannot understand Standard English adequately enough to comprehend books in Standard English. We have met individuals who have expressed their frustration because they are unable to adequately understand books in Standard English. On the basis of this, the potential for the acceptance and use of Creolese literature would appear to be rather high. It is also apparent from section 6 that there are not multiple mutually unintelligible dialects of Creolese, but rather one language whose dialects are only slightly different. Thus there appears to be only a need for a single body of Creolese literature.

It is clear from section 5.6 that there is a sizable part of the population that are not sufficiently literate. This means that if a written literature were done in Creolese, it would still be inaccessible to those Guyanese who may be considered semiliterate to nonliterate. Also, almost everyone we interviewed concerning their views on a Creolese literature was opposed to a written literature. The people who were positive toward such a literature, however, were positive toward an oral literature only (only one person was positive toward a written one). Thus if any significant language development in Creolese were to be done through the writing of materials, there would perhaps need to be a concerted campaign of literacy after initial oral production has been completed. This could perhaps be done through holding literacy classes. Once an oral production has been completed, a booklet that contains the materials on the cassette could be printed and distributed as a companion to the cassette. Then once these materials have been sufficiently distributed, an investigation can be made to determine if there is a sufficient number of people who would desire a written literature.

A literature should target the Creolese speakers living in rural areas. As mentioned in section 8, the majority of speakers who have a command of Standard English live in the urban areas. As mentioned in section 9, language attitudes toward Creolese and a Creolese literature are negative. Those who have a command of Standard English would most likely reject a literature at any level of the continuum except the acrolect. All those who do not have competence at the acrolectal level would most likely have a greater interest in such a literature. Those who would fit this category would most likely be rural individuals.

## 12. Sample texts

Sample from Rooplall Monar's *Estate People*.

Immigrant Woman

Yes me picknee!

So much tings lodge in me head, how me can able forget... forget how me come so ole, burk-up like canepunt bridge, me foot skittle, skin hang-down, wrinkle-up like dry mudbank, hand a-tremble like mango leaf?

Is how me can able forget this ticking in me head, me picknee? Weight in me stomach, dimness in me eye, disturbance in me sleep? Is how me come ole so quick when t'ree-ten years gone back, me was a beauty that make men winking two-time when they eye fall on me body in bazaar? On riverbank?

Is how me come Demerara? In this bitter-sweet estate me picknee? O yes! me been runaway from home when me husband drop dead in jutefield with hungry belly. Was long, heart-rending dry season. Cow, buffalo, sheep, all deading-out in field, by roadside, black crow bird atop no-leaf tree in dry pasture a-ready to swoop-down, jump in dead cow, dead sheep belly, fly a-buzzing, sky blue and clear, and land crackup like dust. No water. No rainfall... (page 1.)

Samples from recorded speech.

22 year old Indo-Guyanese resident of Georgetown, originally from Corentyne.

mə tel wən skul stori. dis ə pɹɑ'mɛəri stori, wən mi bɪnə go pɹɑ'mɛəri skul. mi bɪn de ɪn standə tu. ju no mi bɪn so bəd mən dat lɪks stedi. ju gɛ lɪks stedi. ju skul titʃə... əlwez, əlwez mi de ɪn səm fɑ't, səm pɹəbləm. titʃə əlwez ə pʊt lɑʃ pən mi.

I will tell a school story. This is a primary story, when I went to primary school. I was in standard two. You know, I was such a bad boy that {I got}<sup>3</sup> licks {discipline} all the time. You get licks all the time. Your school teacher... always, always I was in some fight, some problem. The teacher always had to put lashes {discipline} on me.

wel wən mi bɪn de ɪn standə tu, mi had wən gʊd friɛn, wən bodi friɛn, ju no, mi bɛs friɛn. dis tʃap hiɪ, dem bɪn ɪn rɪtʃ. de(m) gɛ nəf kɒmbəɪn ən tɹɑtə. dem ə plən nəf rɑ's ən so ju no. bə hi pəpə bɪnə titʃ. bə hi pəpə brədər dem, ju no, bodi ən so, de had dem ədə, dem bɪnə ɪn di bɪznɪs lɑ'k ju no.

Well, when I was in standard two, I had a good friend, a friend like a brother, you know, my best friend. This chap here, they were rich. They had a lot of combines and tractors. They planted a lot of rice and so, you know. But his father taught. But his father's brothers, you know, brothers and so, they had others, they ran the business, you know.

<sup>3</sup> The curly brackets { } are used to indicate information that was added to aid understanding of translated text.

so dis man ju no i daz wak wit næf næf mæni a skul an tɪŋ. so wan de na<sup>u</sup> abi wen de andə də skul ə ple. ju no abi ge lɪl lɪl bɪ ta<sup>1</sup>m an abi de andə, de andə di skul ə ple. skul lɪl lɪl ha<sup>1</sup> ju no frəm di ɡɪa<sup>u</sup>ŋ, əbɑ<sup>u</sup>t foɪ fit frəm di ɡɪa<sup>u</sup>ŋ. so mi an hi sɪt dɔŋ de andənɪt ə ple mɑ:bl. ju no, mɑ:bl? ju no mi bɪn tɛl ju wan stɔɪi əbət ɛnta hol? dʒəs laɪk ɛnta hol, əbə ple mɑ:bl. an dis man, hi pəkət fəl wɪt tʃɪŋ ɡəm. an mə beg ə man fi wan.

So this friend, you know, he always came to school with a lot of money and such. So one day we went under the school to play. You know, we had a little bit of time and we were under, we under the school playing. {The} school was up off the ground, you know, about four feet from the ground. So me and he sat down there underneath playing marbles. You know, marbles? You know I told you a story about enter hole? Just like enter hole, we play marbles. And this friend, his pocket was full with chewing gum. And I begged him for one.

hi ə stɪl ə tɛl mi man... ju no, i ə laf mi. hi ə wɑtʃ mi. i ə laf. hi na ɡɪv, skɪɛvn tʃap tu ju no. wɛl ju no ju na ɡɛt mæni fi go skul. ju pɛɪɛnts dɛm na ɡɪv jə mæni. ju papə, ju mamə dɛm dɛm hadli ɡɛ mæni. pɔɪ ju no. ju na ɡɛt mæni tu go skul. so mi aks dis man, mi se, “man, ɡɪv mi wan tʃɪŋ ɡəm na<sup>u</sup> man. abi na frɛn?” i na ɡɪv. so hi ə tɛk a<sup>u</sup>t wan wan an i ɔpən əm an i ə it. wen i tɛk a<sup>u</sup>t wan, i ə pɔt m i mɑ<sup>u</sup>t an i ə wɑtʃ mi an i ə laf ju no. an i tɛk a<sup>u</sup>t di ədər wan, i ə du sɛm tɪŋ.

He {was} still telling me man... you know, he {was} laughing {at} me. He {was} watching me. He {was} laughing. He didn't give {any}, scraven {i.e. greedy} chap too, you know. Well, you know, you don't get money to go to school. Your parents don't give you money. Your father, your mother they hardly have {any} money. {We were} poor you know. You don't get money to go to school. So I asked this friend, I said, “man, give me a {piece of} chewing gum now man. Aren't we friends?” He didn't give {any}. So he took out one at a time and he opened them and he ate {them}. When he {was} taking out one, he {would} put {it} in his mouth and he {was} watching me and he {was} laughing, you know. And he took out the other one, he {was} doing the same thing.

so mi, mi daz əlwez wək wɪt (w)an ʃap ɪɛzə bled fi ʃapɪn mi pɛnsɪl an so fi ɪɑ<sup>1</sup>t. — ju na ɡɛ ɪɛzə an tɪŋ, ju pɛnsɪl m de. ju juz spɪt. wen ju ɡɛ ə lɪl mɪstɛk m ju bʊk de, ju tɛk jə spɪt an jə tɛk jə fɪŋə an ju ɪəb ɪt pən ɪt, ju no. a n sɛmta<sup>1</sup>m ə tɪŋ ə pɪl a<sup>u</sup>t ju pɛdʒ, jə pɛdʒ ə tɛɪ, ədə sɑ<sup>1</sup>d ju no. — an so ju wak wɪt ju ɪɛzə bled bɪkə ju wan ju pɛnsɪl de ʃap. ʃapɪn əl di ta<sup>1</sup>m.

So I, I always carry a sharp razor blade to sharpen my pencils and such, to write. — You didn't get erasers and things, on your pencil. You use spit. When you make a little mistake in your book, you take your spit and you take your finger and you rub upon it, you know. And sometimes the thing peels out your page, your page tears, {damages the} other side you know. — and so you carry your razor blade because you want your pencil sharp. {You} sharpen {it} all the time.

so mə wɑtʃ dis man wen i ə ɪt də tʃɪŋ ɡəm. an i ə pɔt wan wan an i ə laf stɛdi stɛdi. mi ɔpnɪn mi ɪɛzə bled. hi na no wə mə du wɪt da ɪɛzə bled. so mə tɛk a<sup>u</sup>t də ɪɛzə bled an wen i ɪt an i ə laf, i ɪt an i ə laf, mi se əlɪɑ<sup>1</sup>t. an w en i pɔd di las tʃɪŋ ɡəm m i mɑ<sup>u</sup>t, wɛl mi no mi na ɡɑ nɛtɪn fi ɡɛ na<sup>u</sup> ju no. so mi ɡɛ vɛks. əl ɔvə frɛn.

So I watched this friend when he {was} eating the chewing gum. And he {was} putting one at a time {in his mouth} and he {was} laughing all the time. I {was} opening my razor blade. He didn't know what I {was} doing with that razor blade. So I {was} taking out the razor blade and when he {was} eating and he {was} laughing, he {was} eating and he {was} laughing, I said {to myself} all right. And when he put the last chewing gum in his mouth, well I knew I didn't have anything to get now, you know. So I got angry. {The} friendship {was} through.

an mi dʒəs tɛk di ɪɛzə bled an i ə, an i ə, ju no, an i han bɪn de pən i mɑ<sup>u</sup>t. so mi tɛk di ɪɛzə bled an mi ɡɑʃ m pən i tʃɪn lɑ<sup>1</sup>k dɪs, ju no, di batəm ə i tʃɪn hɪ<sup>ɔ</sup>. di tɪŋ bəs ɔpn lɑ<sup>1</sup>k dɪs so an skɪn ɔpn so bɪkə, ju no, dɪs pət ɪ<sup>ɔ</sup> ɪz lɑ<sup>1</sup>k, ju no, bɛɪ skɪn. so wen jə... wen i kɔt i ə skɪn ɔpn an ɪt bɛɪ bləd, jə sɪ bləd əl di ɡɪa<sup>u</sup>ŋ, əl i ʃɑɪt, i pənʒ, i ɔl mɑut. i ɔl əp i mɑ<sup>u</sup>t lɑ<sup>1</sup>k dɪs. i na no dat i ɡɛt so bad ju no. di kɔt, di tɪŋ so bad. so hi ə halə, hi ə halə. hi ə ɪɔn. hi ə ɪɔn, ɡ an a i papə.

And I just took the razor blade and he {was}, and he {was}, you know, and his hand was on his mouth. So I took the razor blade and I gashed him on his chin like this, you know, the bottom of his chin here. The thing busted open like this and {his} skin opened up because, you know, this part here is like, you know, skin only. So when you... When he cut his skin open and it bled, you see blood all {over} the ground, all {over} his shirt, his pants, his whole mouth. He help up his mouth like this. He didn't know that he got {cut} so bad, you know. The cut, the things {was} so bad. So he hollered, he hollered. He ran. He ran, went to his father.

wɛl i fadə sɪəs man ju no. so di man... dɛm tɪtʃə... wan de had wan ɔɑɪ. dɛm ɪəʃ i dɑ<sup>u</sup>ŋ tu di daktə k<sup>w</sup>ɪk, asp ɪtəl an dɛm stɪtʃ i əp. wɛl mi na bɪn no da. wen i kəm bæk na<sup>u</sup>, dɛn dɛm ɡɛ mi ə dɪl wɪt mi. man tɪɔ mi əkɪəs di bɛn tʃ. pəl mi pənʒ wɑ<sup>1</sup>s ju no. ta<sup>1</sup>tn əp ta<sup>1</sup>t ta<sup>1</sup>t ta<sup>1</sup>t. an stɑ: stɔk mi wɪt laʃ ju no, blæk sez, blæk stɛdʒ bʊʃ. — ɪn skul dɛm daz juz wɑ<sup>1</sup> kɛn, wɑ<sup>1</sup> kɛn ə stɪɪt vɛn wɪp an ɪz ə spɛʃəl, lɛk, ɪmpɔɪtɪd wɪp. ju no pɪpl ə bɪŋ dɛm m di kɔntrɪ a



n sel... an sel dem. an di hɛdmassɛr gɛ dɛ. an hi ɛlon ɛ gɛ da m skul. bɛ na<sup>u</sup> ju na gɛ wɔ<sup>l</sup> kɛn. so ɛvɪbɛdi ɛ go kɛt blæk stɛdʒ. blæk sez wɪp tɹi... blæk sez tɹi rɪli ju hɔ<sup>l</sup>di dɛz gɛt lɔ<sup>k</sup> lɔ<sup>ŋ</sup> pis ɛ stɹɛt wud. so wɛ ju dɛz du, di jɔ<sup>ŋ</sup> wɔn, sɛmtɔ<sup>m</sup> ju dɛ gɛ wɔn, wɔn ɛ kɛm a<sup>u</sup>t. da ɪz bɛm. so ɛbi dɛz kɛt wɪp an so. — da man pʊt lɔf pɔn mi, pʊt lɔf pɔn m i. lɪks ju no. mɛ hɔlɔ, mɛ hɔlɔ, mɛ hɔlɔ. tɹl mi ɛntɔ<sup>r</sup> sɪt hɪ... pɔnz ɛ lɛk i ɛ tɹo smok man, ju no. ju kɔ:n sɪddɔ<sup>ŋ</sup> no moɪ.

Well his father {is a} serious man, you know. So the man... those teachers... one had a car. They rushed him down to the doctor quick, hospital and they stitched him up. Well I didn't know that. When he came back now, then they got me {to} deal with me. {The} man threw me across the bench. {He} pulled my pants {up to my} waist you know. {He} tighten {them} up, tight, tight, tight, tight. And {he} started {to} stroke me with lashes you know, black says, black stage {both are mispronunciations of black sage} bush. — In school they always use wild cane, wild cane {is} a straight vane whip and is a special, like, imported whip. You know people bring them in the country and sell... and sell them. And the headmaster gets them. And he is the only one in the school {who} gets them. But now you don't get wild cane. So everybody goes cut black stage. Black says whip tree... black says tree, really, you hardly get like {a} long straight branch. So what you do, the young ones, sometimes you {can} get one, one {long straight piece to} come out. Those burn {when used as a whip}. So we always cut whip and such. — That man put lashes on me, put lashes on me. Licks you know. I hollered, I hollered, I hollered. Until my entire seat here... pants {look} like they {were} throwing smoke man, you know. You can't sit down any more.

19 year old Afro-Guyanese native of Georgetown (mesolectal)

wɛl, a<sup>i</sup> dɪ slɪpɪm dɪ ɛdɛr nɔ<sup>t</sup>. an ɔ<sup>l</sup> a<sup>i</sup> fil dɪ bɛd rɔkɪm. dɪ bɛd stɔr ʃɛk... dɪ bɛd stɔr fu ʃɛk. a<sup>i</sup> sɛd hɛlo, ɪz ɛgzɔ<sup>ɪ</sup>sɪst. an a<sup>i</sup> sɛ “o gad, wɛ ɛvɛ dɪs ɪz, lɛt ɪt stɔp ɪɔ<sup>t</sup> nɔ<sup>u</sup> ɪn dɪ nɛm ɛ dʒɪsɪs”. an a<sup>i</sup> hɔlɔ, “mami” ju no. an ʃɪ gɛt ɛp, ɔ<sup>l</sup>ɛwɪ gɛt ɛ p, bɔt ɔwɪ gɛt ɛp. an ʃɪ sɛ, “lɔ<sup>t</sup> dɪ lɔmp, lɔ<sup>t</sup> lɔmp. ɪt mɛs bɪ tɪf tɹɔ<sup>m</sup> tu rɔk dɪ dɔr ɔr sɛmtɹɪŋ fu kɛm ɪn dɪ hɔ<sup>u</sup>s”. an j u sɪ mɪ lɔ<sup>t</sup>m lɔmp. an a<sup>i</sup> pɛt an mɔ tɔɹʃ lɔ<sup>t</sup> dɪ sɛm tɔ<sup>m</sup> bɪkɛz a<sup>i</sup> kʊdn sɪ dɪ lɔmp an dɪ... dɪ mɔʃɪz so a<sup>i</sup> hɔd tɔ pɛt a n mɪ lɔ<sup>t</sup> fu sɪ.

ɛnɪhɔ<sup>u</sup> a<sup>i</sup> dɪ wɛtɪn ɛp lɔ<sup>ŋ</sup>. an ʃɪ sɛd, “dɪ man mɔ<sup>t</sup> kɛm bɔk, ʃud wɪ go bɔk ɪɔ<sup>t</sup> ɪn wɪ bɛd ɪɔ<sup>t</sup> nɔ<sup>u</sup>.” so a<sup>i</sup> ɪsɔ<sup>i</sup>d a<sup>i</sup> gɛn... a<sup>i</sup> sɛd tu mɛsɛlf, “ɔ<sup>m</sup> gɛn lɛf dɪs ɔ<sup>l</sup> tu gad, ɪz hɪ wɔ<sup>ɪ</sup>k. hɪ gɛn wɔ<sup>ɪ</sup>k a<sup>u</sup>t wɛ i gɔ dɛ du”. an a<sup>i</sup> go an lɔ<sup>i</sup> dɔ<sup>u</sup>n bɔk an mɔ bɛd an a<sup>i</sup> dɹɔp tu slɪp. an mɔ mɛdɛ stɛ ɛp hɔl nɔ<sup>t</sup>.

ʃɪ sɛd ʃɪ dɪn go bɔk ɪn ʃɪ bɛd. ʃɪ stɛ ɛp hɔl nɔ<sup>t</sup>. mɔmɪn, wɛn a<sup>i</sup> wɛk ɛp ʃɪ sɛd... ʃɪ sɛz ɛ ɛɹt tɹɔmɛ... dɛ sɛz ɛ ɛɹt tɹɔmɛ, sɛm ɛɹt tɹɔmɛ pɔn dɪ rɛdɪo. an a<sup>i</sup> gɔ sɔʃ ɛ rɪlɪf. a<sup>i</sup> fil bɪkɛz... a<sup>i</sup> fil dɪ ʃɛkɪm so ɪɔf. ɪz bɪkɛz a<sup>i</sup> dɔ:n slɪp an ɛ mɔtɹɛs. a<sup>i</sup> dʒɛs slɪp an dɪ bɛɹ spɹɪŋ.

Well, I was sleeping the other night. And all {of the sudden} I felt the bed rocking. The bed started {to} shake... the bed started to shake. I said hello, {it} is {the} exorcist. And I said “Oh God, what ever this is, let it stop right now in the name of Jesus”. And I hollered, “mommy” you know. And she got up, all of us got up, both of us got up. And she said, “light the lamp, light lamp. It must be a thief trying to rock the door or something to come in the house”. And you {should have} seen me lighting the lamp. And I put on my torch light {i.e. flashlight} {at} the same time because I couldn't see the lamp and the...and the matches. So I had to put on my light to see.

Anyhow, I was waiting up {for a} long {time}. And she said, “the man might come back, should we go back right in our bed right now”. So I decided I {was} going to...I said to myself, “I'm going to leave this all to God, {it} is his work. He {is} going to work out what he has to do”. And I went and laid back down on my bed and I dropped {off} to sleep. And my mother stayed up the whole night.

She said she didn't go back to bed. She stayed up the whole night. {In the} morning, when I woke up, she said... she said a earth tremor...they said a earth tremor, some earth tremor on the radio. And I got such a relief. I felt because...I felt the shaking so rough. {It} is because I don't sleep on a mattress. I just sleep on the springs alone.

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