

00:00:17,180 --> 00:00:23,520

There is a popular story in Guyana about a foreign doctor who, while working here, had a patient

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who complained of belly pains because, as we say in Guyana, she did an operation.

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The doctor then requested the patient to show him the marks of surgery that were a result of the surgical operation.

00:00:36,840 --> 00:00:44,040

What the patient meant, however, was that she was experiencing bulges and diarrhea, which caused abdominal cramps.

00:00:44,259 --> 00:00:50,159

This simple scenario demonstrates that a communication barrier exists between foreign doctors and Guyana's patients.

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However, as one travels around Guyana, one will notice that not only are foreign doctors posted

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around the country, but Guyanese doctors are also posted in areas that are foreign to them.

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As it is, we migrant doctors were doctors who were trained overseas for several years, but are

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now posted in areas not indigenous to them.

00:01:08,440 --> 00:01:11,099

What plays out are interesting linguistic scenarios.

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Guyanese medical practitioners will either rely on their own knowledge of the language, based

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on where they come from, or it will take several months to learn the legal framework of the community.

00:01:21,959 --> 00:01:27,059

Or they will rely on the local medical assistance for translation purposes.

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Now, in this presentation, there are several considerations that are to be explored, as you can see here.

00:01:36,599 --> 00:01:40,980

As you know, language is an indispensable tool of communication.

00:01:41,839 --> 00:01:45,080

It communicates our emotions, our desires, our complaints.

00:01:46,300 --> 00:01:50,360

Whenever a patient speaks to a doctor, it is very important that the doctor understands exactly

00:01:50,360 --> 00:01:51,379

what the patient is saying.

00:01:51,760 --> 00:01:57,279

Failure on the part of the doctor and the patient can result in detrimental consequences.

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And such consequences, as you know, can include misdiagnosis or delayed treatments, because

00:02:02,500 --> 00:02:06,519

the patient didn't communicate clearly his or her condition.

00:02:09,979 --> 00:02:16,279

Now, because a lot of times the medical provider or the patient come from different linguistic

00:02:16,279 --> 00:02:23,119

systems, it's easy to see that the communication gap can become larger.

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Now, if someone says, for example, halapikulsna, it could mean someone in rural areas, such

00:02:32,520 --> 00:02:39,039

as Carpentine in Guyana, would take that to mean can we remove your clothes, or can we remove your clothing.

00:02:39,300 --> 00:02:42,679

The first sentence that you see here, as I get to the end of the presentation, I'll explain

00:02:42,679 --> 00:02:46,160

to you exactly what our orthographic system is.

00:02:46,899 --> 00:02:51,199

So the market of linguistics and medicine has not been so relevant as today, with the growing

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influx of foreign medical professionals from Cuba, Brazil, Ethiopia, China, plus increased medical

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services available to indigenous communities, there remain large language gaps that need to

00:03:02,520 --> 00:03:06,979

be bridged between the medical provider and patients.

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I became interested in this area because of two reasons.

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One, to bridge the communication gap, and very importantly, to preserve the Guyanese language

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through writing and audio eventually.

00:03:17,720 --> 00:03:19,100

That's the direction the project will take.

00:03:19,820 --> 00:03:24,600

When I first embarked on this project, I decided to start online to see if anything had been published in this area.

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The only thing I came across was a list of works, a list of Guyanese terms compiled by Dr.

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Michael Cole of Fort Smith, Arkansas, who takes a team of volunteer medical professionals to Guyana every year.

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They've been going to Guyana for the past 20 years, and I was delighted that someone recognized

00:03:41,839 --> 00:03:47,960

the difference in linguistic systems, and decided to document such findings that were used in practical circumstances.

00:03:48,619 --> 00:03:50,220

I made contact with him.

00:03:50,419 --> 00:03:56,360

I was happy enough to meet him because I later found that year was the last year for the project,

00:03:56,619 --> 00:03:58,479

and after 20 years it would come to an end.

00:03:59,259 --> 00:04:06,020

In our discussion, it was clear that there was definitely a language barrier that needed to be bridged.

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This compilation is one that will step in the direction of equipping medical professionals with

00:04:13,179 --> 00:04:18,079

relevant linguistic knowledge, and encourage Guyanese people to use their own language.

00:04:19,799 --> 00:04:24,019

One of the things I believe is that language, as you all know, is a repository of local wisdom.

00:04:26,119 --> 00:04:28,019

One of the examples here is...

00:04:28,899 --> 00:04:34,600

I wrote here that I would get pile, I'm not sure if you're familiar with the term pile here. No?

00:04:35,100 --> 00:04:39,320

Alright, so I wrote here that I would get pile if I sat on cold concretes.

00:04:40,019 --> 00:04:46,799

I know Professor Dino would notice, my wife, that if you wear wet clothes for a long time, you get pile.

00:04:46,920 --> 00:04:50,899

If you sat on cold concretes, the older folk will tell us that you get pile.

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However, medically, we are told that piles are hemorrhoids, right?

00:04:54,380 --> 00:04:57,160

That's what they are caused by straining their oral veins.

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Interestingly, our persons in Bonfim, which is a neighboring Brazilian town, told the Guyanese

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to believe that you can get piles by doing the opposite, by being exposed to heat.

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For example, if you sit for a long time on your motorcycle, the heat from the engine can make you piles.

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Another thing I was told not to do was don't take a bath as soon as I took my feet out of shoes,

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or else I would get Bigfoot.

00:05:26,440 --> 00:05:30,320

Bigfoot is actually a case of elephantiasis, which is spread by mosquitoes.

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These examples tell us that we have a rich tradition of popular beliefs and local knowledge

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that helps to maintain our language and thoughts.

00:05:38,980 --> 00:05:43,720

And two, there is a need for medical professionals to become a favorite of Guyanese terms and popular beliefs.

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It's necessary for foreigners, especially Cubans.

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I'm saying especially Cubans because there's an exchange program in Cuba and Guyana where a

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lot of medical professionals get posted all around Guyana.

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So it's especially important for Cubans and Guyanese medical professionals who are assigned

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to different parts of the country to learn the legal framework of the

community in which they are posted.

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We in Guyana have a unique way of labeling our body parts.

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So this entire thing that you see here, that's what we call our foot.

00:06:17,359 --> 00:06:22,579

So to say that your foot hurts can refer to pain in your thigh, your leg, or your foot.

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So the foot is a generic term.

00:06:25,119 --> 00:06:29,859

When someone says that the belly is hurting, well, it means something like your tummy.

00:06:30,179 --> 00:06:35,420

It could be as a result of acid reflux or food poisoning or a strain.

00:06:36,700 --> 00:06:40,679

So belly means this entire thing. Sometimes it gets complicated.

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In the case of prescribing and administering medication, the medical professional has to be

00:06:47,739 --> 00:06:52,399

cognizant of the various ways of expressing terms in different communities.

00:06:52,540 --> 00:06:56,059

On the coastline, I think it's better to write down the times to take the medication.

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But in rural, interior, indigenous communities, especially for the older folk, where time is

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not described using a clock or where clocks are not used, the persons are more connected to their environment.

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The medical professional can give directions.

00:07:11,720 --> 00:07:13,700

This is actually what they do here. It's the same.

00:07:14,119 --> 00:07:23,480

Take the first dose in the morning with the sun here in the east, then sun up top, and then sun in the west. So using the sun.

00:07:23,839 --> 00:07:26,959

That's with a dispensed medication.

00:07:27,739 --> 00:07:32,880

So the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis recognizes the relationship between language and thoughts.

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And Whorf's construct of linguistic relativity essentially states that speakers' formation of

00:07:38,380 --> 00:07:40,540

their worldview is facilitated by their language.

00:07:40,660 --> 00:07:45,140

So you preserve language through the language, and language is preserved through the continuity of culture.

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Another interesting thing that I believe here is a future area of medical research in Ghana

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is that medical conditions are described for are more prevalent in certain areas of Ghana and among certain ethnic groups.

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So, for example, in the coastline, as you can see, are Amerindians living in the interior locations

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are more likely to see treatment for snake bites, arthritic pains, malaria, various symptoms.

00:08:17,279 --> 00:08:23,660

In some rural communities, Nara is a predominant Indian condition. It's not for debate.

00:08:23,880 --> 00:08:27,839

So I would ask Professor Dina, is Nara an Indian condition? What is Nara?

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Some people say it's a myth.

00:08:30,359 --> 00:08:31,420

It's all in your head.

00:08:32,640 --> 00:08:40,320

But it's also said to be an abdominal muscular strain that somehow just happens among East Indians.

00:08:40,440 --> 00:08:41,940

I've never had it as yet.

00:08:43,020 --> 00:08:44,599

But it just seems to happen around here.

00:08:44,840 --> 00:08:49,080

In cases of hypertension, diabetes are reported more often in coastal areas.

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However, someone in the medical profession noted to me that the reason that hypertension and

00:08:54,520 --> 00:08:59,080

diabetes are not reported in interior locations is either because persons are not aware of their

00:08:59,080 --> 00:09:03,299

conditions or they don't suffer from those ailments because of their active lifestyles.

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So, as I said before, most Amerindian persons, I guess because of the kind of lifestyles they

00:09:10,520 --> 00:09:18,539

have, back pain, head pain, neck pain, and that's an interesting way of describing the different kinds of pain.

00:09:19,320 --> 00:09:22,479

I'm just going to gloss through this section here.

00:09:23,299 --> 00:09:27,500

In the dictionary, medical terms take the shape of one-word items or phrases.

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Basically anything that could be associated with the medical profession or seeking medical advice,

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which also includes horrible cues, as we say then, on push medicine.



00:09:37,440 --> 00:09:41,760

The compilation does not substantially cover veterinary terms as yet.

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An interesting question is, which words are Dainese?

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I'm using Dainese here instead of Creoleese, which is a term that's popularly used here.

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Dainese refers to Danish-fueled English, but it encapsulates other languages present in Guyana,

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but whose words and expressions find themselves in the mainstream of language.

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Dainese, in other words, is the lingua franca of the Dainese society.

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For example, Dainese is mainly trilingual with Portuguese, English, and Guajajara.

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Many Coastlanders would say, Ache, when they want to speak in a disgust to someone.

00:10:20,080 --> 00:10:26,719

One of the common ways there is if you have the ladies, you have the girlfriends, and you see

00:10:26,719 --> 00:10:32,000

one of your girlfriends walking with a guy that you don't really like him, you say, Ache, to speak in a disgust.

00:10:32,000 --> 00:10:38,659

And it could also include other ways, but this is the one that's most common here.

00:10:38,739 --> 00:10:45,419

So, interestingly, Ache is a phonological variant of the Guajajara adjective, which means deformed,

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and it's from Melbourne 2004.

00:10:48,359 --> 00:10:54,539

So, therefore, Ache finds its way in the dictionary purely because it's part of the Latin Dainese lingua franca.

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Dainese is a fully developed and functional language which has several dialects.

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Dainese people will easily recognize a rural variety or an urban variety.

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For example, a Prohibition variety, or an Eskuban variety.

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These varieties are just called dialects.

00:11:10,200 --> 00:11:11,619

I'm just going to go through here.

00:11:12,320 --> 00:11:17,820

So, there are different phonological processes that are prevalent here.

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So, there are several examples of where there is a deletion of final syllables, or phones and

00:11:28,059 --> 00:11:33,080

so on, deletion of initial syllables, and those types of things.

00:11:33,280 --> 00:11:40,219

I'm sure, I guess when Professor Dean first came here and he said to his students, I'm going downtown, it sounded strange.

00:11:40,559 --> 00:11:44,440

I remember Professor John referring to that when he told his students he was going downtown,

00:11:44,440 --> 00:11:48,840

and it sounded strange because Tom has Tom in his mouth, but downtown is the kind of city.

00:11:49,119 --> 00:11:52,940

So, there are several unique ways that Dainese will say things.

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Morphologically, as I was saying earlier, there's an interesting way of how we describe things

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in Daine, where we have the adjective on a noun.

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So, you'd say a sweet man, or a red man, which is by ethnicity a red man, or a tall man, sharp

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man, fat man, big man, which is an older man, or big lady.

00:12:11,719 --> 00:12:15,359

Or, in terms of medically, you have an eye pain or a belly pain.

00:12:15,640 --> 00:12:21,440

So, you have pain, hand pain, finger pain, toe pain, whatever it is, ear pain.

00:12:23,140 --> 00:12:26,299

Or, if you have boils, a lots of boils, or a hard boil.

00:12:27,140 --> 00:12:33,020

So, you have all these kinds of adjectives there. One of the things...

00:12:33,020 --> 00:12:34,260

Alright, so I'm just going to go here.

00:12:34,460 --> 00:12:38,440

So, there's a section I was going to talk about, syntax and morphology.

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But, one of the more important things that I wanted to talk about here is the status of Creole.

00:12:50,679 --> 00:12:58,559

Interestingly, this week and next week, the University of West Indies is celebrating Creole Month, or Creole Awareness.

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I think on the 25th, there is International Language Awareness, or Creole Day.

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So, I really wanted to talk about this.

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So, whenever Creole, or whenever Dainese is written, a common question to ask, what is the right way to spell words?

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And, I think someone was alluding to it earlier in terms of...

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I think it was in terms of how to write. Should we use English? Should we use Creole?

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This is an important question.

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I think the dictionary publication of it could answer it.

00:13:28,440 --> 00:13:33,460

As we noticed, the issue of standardization is never a clear-cut, simple process.

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A language is essentially a spoken system, and some languages are written.

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In this case, Creole is now becoming written.

00:13:43,159 --> 00:13:49,460

Now, I need to say that if we recognize Dainese Creole as a language by itself, then how much

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more should we recognize it as a language?

00:13:51,479 --> 00:13:54,340

We are a written, or an orthographic system.

00:13:54,880 --> 00:14:00,580

And, not a system that limits the language to stutter only, nor an orthographic system that

00:14:00,580 --> 00:14:06,640

piggybacks on English orthography, which kind of signals us what one school of thought is that

00:14:06,640 --> 00:14:09,140

Creole isn't a complete language enough to have its own system.

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In other words, writing validates the language, I believe, and means its status.

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Romain 2005 suggests that a lexifier coding system, or like a

colonizer's language, does Creoles

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a disservice because it suggests that the Creole is inferior.

00:14:27,700 --> 00:14:31,700

Therefore, there is a need to develop an autonomous orthographic system.

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The existence of a codified standard spelling gives a language more autonomy than it might otherwise

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have if it had to rely entirely on the orthography of another language.

00:14:43,440 --> 00:14:50,159

Creole-writing systems based on their orthographies of other lexifiers often do Creoles a disservice

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in suggesting that they are inferior and deficient versions of the languages in which they are lexically affiliated.

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So I've decided to consciously use an orthographic system that's called the Cassidy phonetic

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system that was devised by Frederick Cassidy in the Jamaican dictionary.

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It's also the system that's used a lot now in Jamaica in the promotion of Jamaican Creole.

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So I chose this system to represent the writing of Guyanese.

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However, there are a few modifications to Cassidy that were necessary if it were to represent

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Guyanese phonology because there are certain phosonic features of Guyanese that still need to be documented.

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But neither is English a better system to represent our Guyanese

language.

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I take as my cue the pronouncements of Guyanese professor Hubert Demnisch of UOGIS, also the

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head of the Jamaican Language Unit.

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He sees standardization as an important philosophical and political process, which is essential

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in building a Caribbean identity and nationhood.

00:15:52,380 --> 00:15:55,619

And for that very reason alone, I would support Demnisch.

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He also makes a salient point about creating a system for our Creole language as a separate

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and distinct system that is completed in its own right as a fully developed system.

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He rightly says the process of Creole standardization and normalization is about the assertion

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of national identity amongst bilingual speakers.

00:16:14,940 --> 00:16:19,340

For the latter, the idealization of the Creole language variety is essential issue.

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In spite of this, however, the main claim currently being made for the public formal use of

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Creole is as a means of respecting the language rights of predominantly monolingual speakers

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of the language when they deal with agencies of the state.

00:16:33,359 --> 00:16:38,580

It is this respect for monolingual speakers of Guyanese that predominantly informs this conversation.

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Moreover, the need of recognition of the Guyanese language as a complete system which is worthy

00:16:43,780 --> 00:16:50,679

of standardization is another major tenet that has influenced the underwriting system employed in this conversation.

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Another important question, however, is to ask, considering the varieties of Guyanese, what

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form of the language should we use to write on?

00:17:00,080 --> 00:17:02,840

Since there are several dialects, which one should we use to write on?

00:17:04,280 --> 00:17:09,979

Answering this question about which form is mutually intelligible to all Guyanese people, Demnisch

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2003 replies that a version which is the midway variety, which is widely accessible to all,

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yet the perceived need for Creole and English to coexist in official functions produces an approach

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that seeks to maintain and reinforce the distinction between the two languages.

00:17:29,040 --> 00:17:35,400

For this reason, I have consciously chosen to use a writing system that maintains and reinforces

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the differences between the two dominant languages in there, English and Guyanese.

00:17:41,079 --> 00:17:48,920

Some persons have even remarked that they cannot read Cassidy or will have to learn how to before they can read it.

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My response to the concern is simple.

00:17:51,479 --> 00:17:58,599

Persons can read English because they were taught how to do it in the formative stages of learning the alphabet.

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In any case, English seems to be unreliable in terms of studying in the same way a relearning can take place.

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After all, those concerns give credence to the fact that there are two separate linguistic systems

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and the Guyanese are a topic we could study that fact.

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Earlier, in early last year, a charter on language policy and language rights in the Creole-speaking

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Caribbean was formulated and sent to my signatories from across the Caribbean.

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I was lucky to be invited to that gathering and the actual signing of the charter.

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The charter spells out conditions for the use of Creole indigenous languages in the Caribbean territories.

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Significantly, the charter makes a pronouncement on language use in the medical field.

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Actually, it's the only article in the charter that directly addresses the use of language in

00:18:52,260 --> 00:18:54,479

medical scenarios, as you can see here.

00:18:54,579 --> 00:18:59,540

Language communities are entitled to their use of their languages when services are provided

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and to therapeutic support in these languages when its members suffer



from language disorders.

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So, what does capacity look like?

00:19:10,280 --> 00:19:11,459

This is an example here.

00:19:12,800 --> 00:19:16,160

It's something that is now taking root in Guyana.

00:19:16,640 --> 00:19:24,880

In Jamaica, there has been a huge campaign to re-educate the population in terms of how to write

00:19:24,880 --> 00:19:30,380

down their language, spearheaded by professors at the National Jamaican Language Unit in Guna.

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I think this month they are launching, in collaboration with the Jamaican Bible Society, a publication

00:19:39,339 --> 00:19:40,660

of the Jamaican New Testament.

00:19:41,280 --> 00:19:45,500

And there are a whole host of other kinds of resources on how to write, how to speak Jamaican

00:19:45,500 --> 00:19:47,079

on CD and as a guide.

00:19:49,040 --> 00:19:52,420

So, this now is now only touching on in Guyana.

00:19:53,619 --> 00:19:56,420

So, I've taken a bold step to use capacity.

00:19:56,420 --> 00:20:02,839

I'm basically criticizing that persons can't read it.

00:20:03,420 --> 00:20:04,560

Now, what does it look like?

00:20:04,560 --> 00:20:06,420

This is just an extract here.

00:20:07,020 --> 00:20:14,760

The dictionary, right now as it is, has 400 terms and expressions. So,

for example, cap-bile.

00:20:15,800 --> 00:20:17,319

So, there's a capacity there, cap-bile.

00:20:17,920 --> 00:20:21,880

And then there's the English, which would be cap-boil.

00:20:21,880 --> 00:20:27,579

But if you give someone the English cap-boil, in Guyana they'll say cap-bile.

00:20:28,839 --> 00:20:32,400

So, capacity fully represents the spoken language.

00:20:33,819 --> 00:20:37,260

And then there are certain sections where there's not ecological notes.

00:20:37,880 --> 00:20:42,439

So, there's a popular belief in Guyana, if you give somebody something and you take it back, you get a cap-bile.

00:20:42,719 --> 00:20:50,180

If something comes, a system will come up. It's a cap-bile. So, the conclusion.

00:20:50,339 --> 00:20:56,300

I see the dictionary as a descriptive compilation, not a descriptive one, as many dictionaries are.

00:20:56,739 --> 00:21:03,280

And it's also noteworthy that any dictionary can't fully ever capture all the words at any one

00:21:03,280 --> 00:21:05,540

point in time, especially this type of a dictionary.

00:21:05,699 --> 00:21:08,459

Because every time I get to the end of it, I'll hear something.

00:21:09,219 --> 00:21:13,920

I heard my wife's grandmother say something the other day about her sister's newborn baby.

00:21:13,939 --> 00:21:15,000

And I'd never heard it before.

00:21:15,000 --> 00:21:18,800

So, every day, there are words that can be added here.

00:21:18,959 --> 00:21:23,619

While there are several dictionaries of Caribbean Creole languages, I've not seen any specialized

00:21:23,619 --> 00:21:26,359

publication of Creole medical terms.

00:21:26,660 --> 00:21:32,359

There are some very specific compilations, including the Dictionary of the English Creole of

00:21:32,359 --> 00:21:39,520

Trinidad and Tobago, Wyandotte 2009, Creole English Dictionary, Error and others, 1 to 10, and

00:21:39,520 --> 00:21:45,140

the Dictionary of Jamaican English Classical English, 2002, and Alsop's Seminal Dictionary,

00:21:45,339 --> 00:21:53,560

1996, Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage, which also includes Guyanese words related to flora, fauna, and medical conditions.

00:21:53,979 --> 00:21:59,060

This dictionary of Guyanese medical terms, as far as I know, is the first compilation of Guyanese

00:21:59,060 --> 00:22:02,219

lexemes and expressions specific to medical conditions.

00:22:02,800 --> 00:22:09,099

The only publication of a slightly similar nature that I've come across is A Guide to the Medicinal

00:22:09,099 --> 00:22:13,579

Plants of Costa Guayana, Lushman, White, and others, in 1987.

00:22:14,439 --> 00:22:21,060

Now, in looking to the future, there are several...

00:22:21,060 --> 00:22:26,459

The point I'd like to start right now is that I've had all the words and I've gone through a

00:22:26,459 --> 00:22:32,680

hundred lexemes, so I've started a process of medical screening to have several medical professionals

00:22:32,680 --> 00:22:36,079

from different parts of the country scrutinize it.

00:22:37,680 --> 00:22:49,439

After that, it will go to the linguistics professors in... the lexicography experts in Mona,

00:22:49,699 --> 00:22:54,199

Professor Devenish, and Joseph Parkinson from Trinidad-San Sebastian.

00:22:54,939 --> 00:22:57,079

Then it will have to be adopted and get approved.

00:22:58,000 --> 00:23:04,380

Because what I really want to do is to have this dictionary adopted in the medical profession in Guyana.

00:23:05,099 --> 00:23:09,660

I've started a process of meeting with the Cuban Ambassador to Guyana.

00:23:10,579 --> 00:23:18,180

And it will have to be adopted by the Medical Council of Guyana and the Ministry of Health in

00:23:18,180 --> 00:23:24,619

Guyana, so that it now becomes an essential part of any medical practice in Guyana, especially

00:23:24,619 --> 00:23:29,000

when you're forced into the rural areas, or as you say, the interior locations.

00:23:31,079 --> 00:23:35,739

And then I believe it will get funding from the Ministry there.

00:23:36,459 --> 00:23:46,069

And the final section will be to have a written publication backed up by an audio publication also.

00:23:46,939 --> 00:23:54,579

So what I believe the dictionary will do, at least the two major tenets of this, is to crystallize

00:23:54,579 --> 00:24:01,900

our language in writing, promote the language in writing to show that our language is worthy enough of being written.

00:24:02,760 --> 00:24:07,060

You say something like this to a lot of Guyanese, you have to tell them that they're trying

00:24:07,060 --> 00:24:10,060

to convince them that their own language is worthy of being written.

00:24:11,520 --> 00:24:16,380

And also that linguistics can be used in a very practical way.

00:24:17,079 --> 00:24:21,160

And our language can, the Creole can be used in a very practical way.

00:24:23,040 --> 00:24:27,060

And time does not permit me to show you what the dictionary entries look like.

00:24:27,300 --> 00:24:30,880

But if you're interested, I'll be happy to share it with you. Thank you.