Module 2- Language and Community

Topic: Language in Society

Varying attitudes to Caribbean language:

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| **POSITIVE ATTITUDES**  | **NEGATIVE ATTITUDES** |
| Pride  | Contempt |
| Confidence | Shame  |
| Celebration | Ridicule |
| Acceptance | Disgust |
| Approval  | Rejection |
| Respect  | Disdain |
| Worth  | Scorn |
| Trustworthiness | Skepticism |

Consider the following: What do you think is ‘good language use’. Note that the use of patois/creole in public communication is not generally considered good language use. However, the language has survived over several years despite efforts to marginalize it and the use of language in international situations reflect that resilience.

Culture and Identity

Language is an important means of creating and recognizing identity. Our sense of self and our sense of our community are tightly toed in with the language we speak. Identifying a speaker from ‘home’ when in a foreign land, creates a sense of ethnic community or belonging to a group (speech community) and immediately assuages the feeling of being an outsider. People can change their accent to ne that disguises their place in a particular ethnic or national group. When persons alter their speech to fit more closely with the speech of the person they are talking to, it is called ***linguistic convergence***. This is a type of code-switching that is common in tourists areas. On the other hand, persons, may opt to deliberately affirm differences between themselves and others to whom they are talking. This strategy is known as ***linguistic divergence*** and has been observed among immigrants who wish for exclusion from the dominant culture.

Increasingly, educators are becoming aware that a person’s native language is an integral part of who that person is and marginalizing that language can have severe damaging effects on that person’s psyche. Many linguists consistently make a case for teaching native languages alongside the target language that children can clearly differentiate among the codes and be less likely to mix up the two. This approach has been adopted in Haiti, where schools teach both Standard French and French Creole (Haitian) and children are expected to be fluent in both. Additional prominence has been given to Caribbean Creole with the publication of Creole works.

Language in International Communication

Many creoles do not yet have a standard writing system and this hinders the recognition of creole as a valid language. While writing is not a defining characteristic of language, it contributes to its stability and uniformity. Publication of dictionaries along with translations of standard texts into creole gives credibility to non-standard languages and enables their use in education and international communication. Some examples of this are:

* Dictionary of Bahamian English
* Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad and Tobago
* Dominica’s Diksyonne
* Patois Bible (Jamaica)
* A dictionary of Common Trinidad Hindi
* Dictionary of St. Lucian Creole

The role of language as a vehicle for sharing culture is indisputable. Caribbean writers, singers and oral poets have played a major part in fostering acceptance of the Creole languages of the region by incorporating them into their work and exposing them to the world.

Choice of Language

While attitudes to local dialects have been slowly changing, many people still associate the use of Creole with negative images and believe that its use should be relegated to specific circumstances. However, the fact that non-standard language varieties are the most widely spoken in the Caribbean makes them the choice of persons trying to get information to large sections of the society. For example, many advertisers use the Creole language to ensure that their message appeals to most people. At the same time, because of the prestige attached to the standard language, it tends to be the language of choice on formal occasions. A language variety is usually chosen because of its perceived social function. The more formal the occasion, the more likely the use of the standard variety. For everyday interaction, popular music or emotional appeals, people tend to gravitate toward the non-standard variety. Even in a formal situation, the non-standard variety may be used to inject humour.

Teacher will use 1 hour to introduce the remaining sections of the portfolio to students: (see syllabus for breakdown; sample will be made available-see Appendix)

* General Introduction- 12 marks
* Preface- 4 marks
* Reflection- we generally stick to the narrative (10 marks)
* Language Analysis – 18 marks

 Sample of the General Introduction to the portfolio.

**Appendix**

**General Introduction**

Category: Pollution

Theme: Air Pollution

Topic/Question: What are the causes and effects of air pollution in Jamaica?

(This individual’s way of doing this. Students do not have to format it like this but the requirements of the syllabus must be fulfilled) “There is so much pollution in the air now that if it weren’t for our lungs, there would be no place to put it all.” (Robert Orben). Air pollution is a damning topic in Jamaica and it is the sole purpose of this researcher to highlight the causes and effects of air pollution in Jamaica. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Geography, air pollution-the theme selected by the researcher-is the presence of or introduction into the environment of a substance which has harmful or poisonous effects on the environment and its contents.

The purpose of this portfolio is to highlight the causes and associated effects of air pollution in Jamaica. This theme was explored through an exposition. The exposition, research on the theme air pollution was carried out and a speech was delivered, and there was also the presentation of a short story. The short story “Survival of the Fittest” explored this theme through an account given by the main character, Shanique, along with four other characters, they had previously been victims of air pollution and eventually had to isolate themselves from the outside world. Both the speech and short story contribute to the writer’s purpose-that of highlighting the causes and effects of air pollution in Jamaica.

The researcher (students should not do this) is curious as to what are some of the causes of air pollution as she lives in a community where people are always complaining about not being able to “inhale fresh air.” In addition, a few of her friends have been complaining about not being able to breathe properly, and it is of great interest to the researcher to find out the effects of air pollution.

As it relates to the academic interest of the researcher, in choosing ‘air pollution’ as a theme, it is imperative to note that this was a topic explored in the subject Biology, that was previously studied in the 11th grade at the CXC level. In teaching this topic at the period mentioned, with limited time, the researcher’s teacher was unable to cover the topic in great details. As a result, the researcher decided to choose this theme in an effort to be appreciative of the theme and gain a better understanding.

It is the desire of the researcher (use personal pronoun ‘I’) to one day become an environmentalist. As such, doing a research on a topic like this will give the researcher experience in a field as the one being researched. In addition, it is important to note that as a future environmentalist, such researches will allow the researcher to be better able to conduct similar researches without being under much pressure.