



A Concise Grammar of Guyanese Creole (Creolese)

Hubert Devonish & Dahlia Thompson

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Guyanese Creole is a language with a high level of variability, induced by ongoing contact with English, the language from which it historically borrowed the bulk of its vocabulary. This variation has been described as representing a continuum between 'basilectal' GC at one end and 'acrolectal' Standard Guyanese English (SGE) at the other. The position taken here is that this so-called continuum is made up of a restricted number of varieties produced by a constrained mixing of features from the 'acrolect' and 'basilect'. There are, as well, features peculiar to the intermediate level referred to as the 'mesolect'. This description will focus on those language varieties referred to by speakers as 'Creolese', i.e. those varieties closest to the 'basilect'. The language situation and a brief socio-historical survey of GC will be presented. This will be followed by a phonological overview of the language. The Morphology and Syntax of the language will be treated in individual sections. The work will use varieties, which are considered to be the least influenced by the structures of Standard Guyanese English (SGE). Reference will however, be made to the intermediate varieties, where this would shed additional light on the structures of 'basilectal' SGE being analysed. The overall thrust of the description is to represent the language from the perspective of a naive native speaker. Linguistic universals and notions of grammaticalisation are employed as tools, which seek to capture this language internal perspective. This should be a grammar which is useful both to the linguist seeking a description which is insightful and backed by supporting evidence, as well as by native speakers who have an interest in their own language. Languages of the World/Materials 80.

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