Module 2- Language and Community

Grade: 12

Topic: Language in Society

Sub-topic: Attitudes to Language

The reaction of one person to another during interaction based on their language, languages, linguistic variants and individual linguistic choices is triggered by perceptions, preconceptions and prejudice-negative or positive. Some of these reactions-if not most, are superficial and subjective. Attitudes to the variety of English spoken in the Caribbean result from a number of factors including historical, cultural, and social ones. Crucial to the attitude one adopts are two considerations-the association of education, formality and good taste with standard English and the question to whether Creole English is fitting and appropriate for certain uses. attitudes to the use of language may include: pride, confidence and celebration on the one hand, and contempt, shame, resentment and even ridicule of the language one speaks. Code switching or adopting the variety of English spoken by others can be a sign of lack of confidence and pride in one’s mother tongue. Influential attitudes towards language (s) and dialects of a language are determined by powerful groups within a society who wish to promote a particular ideology (a particular set of beliefs and assumptions that motivates attitude and action on linguistic matters) of language use.

**Prestige**

Assumptions about the social class of a speaker are often based on their use of a particular code or style of language; *overt prestige* is associated with using the standard language, as well as having a prestigious accent. For example, in Britain, superior status has traditionally been accorded to ‘Queen’s English’ and what is called Received Pronunciation (RP); in the USA, formal broadcasting accepts the speech and pronunciation patterns of the Midwest as the norm. in the Caribbean, while the perception of the superiority of the Queen’s English still exits, the influence of American media has contributed to the adoption of Amercanisms in broadcasting and public communication. Because of our history, people of the region tend to place a high premium on the standard languages or the languages of power and economic might. Many people believe their upward mobility is largely dependent on one’s ability to fit in with the predominant socio-economic class, and language is the main signifier of this fit.

Changing attitudes to language have created more acceptance of non-standard forms and the development of covert prestige. *Covert prestige* allows people to identify with others based on age, gender, regional or cultural norms.

**Appendix**

**No Lickle Twang**

– Louise Bennett Coverley

Me glad fi see yuh come back, bwoy,
But lawd, yuh let me dung
Me shame a yuh so till all a
Me proudness drop a grung.

Yuh mean yuh go dah Merica
An spen six whole mont deh,
An come back not a piece better
Dan how yuh did go weh?

Bwoy, yuh no shame? Is so yuh come?
After yuh tan so lang!
Not even lickle language, bwoy?
Not even lickle twang?

An yuh sister what work ongle
One week wid Merican
She talk so nice now dat we have
De jooce fi understan?

Bwoy, yuh couldn improve yuhself!
An yuh get so much pay?
Yuh spen six mont a foreign, an
Come back ugly same way?

Not even a drapes trousiz, or
A pass de riddim coat?
Bwoy, not even a gole teet or
A gole chain roun yuh troat?

Suppose me laas me pass go introjooce
Yuh to a stranger
As me lamented son what lately
Come from Merica!

Dem hooda laugh after me, bwoy!
Me couldn tell dem so!
Dem hooda seh me lie, yuh wasa
Spen time back a Mocho!

No back-answer me, bwoy – yuh talk
Too bad! Shet up yuh mout!
Ah doan know how yuh an yuh puppa
Gwine to meck it out.

Ef yuh waan please him, meck him tink
Yuh bring back someting new.
Yuh always call him ‘Pa’ – dis evenin
When him comes seh ‘Poo’.

**Dry Foot Bwoy**

Wha wrong wid Mary dry-foot bwoy?
Dem gal got him fi mock,
An when me meet him tarra night
De bwoy gi me a shock!
Me tell him seh him auntie an
Him cousin dem sen howdy
An ask him how him getting awn.
Him seh, ‘Oh, jolley,jolleyl’

Me start fi feel so sorry fi
De po bad-lucky soul,
Me tink him come a foreign lan
Come ketch bad foreign cole!
Me tink him got a bad sore-troat,
But as him chat-chat gwan
Me fine out seh is foreign twang
De bwoy wasa put awn!
For me notice dat him answer
To nearly all me seh
Was ‘Actually’, ‘What’, ‘Oh deah!’
An all dem sinting deh.
Me gi a joker de gal dem laugh;
But hear de bwoy, ‘Haw-haw!
I’m sure you got that bally-dash
Out of the cinema!’
Same time me laas me temper, an
Me holler, ‘Bwoy, kirout!
No chat to me wid no hot pittata
Eena yuh mout!’
Him tan up like him stunted, den
Hear him no, ‘How siiley!
I don’t think that I really
Understand you, actually.’
Me seh, ‘Yuh understan me, yaw!
No yuh name Cudjoe Scoop?
Always visit Nana kitchen an
Gi laugh fi gungoo soup!

An now all yuh can seh is “actually”?
Bwoy, but tap!
Wha happen to dem sweet Jamaica
joke yuh use fi pop?’
Him get bex and walk tru de door,
Him head eena de air;
De gal-dem bawl out affa him,
‘Not going? What! Oh deah!’
An from dat night till tedeh, mah,
Dem all got him fi mock.
Miss Mary dry-foot bwoy!
Cyaan get over de shock!