

Reviving Indigenous Language and Culture in Post-colonial Sent Lisi (St. Lucia)

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Abstract

This paper examines some semiolinguistic aspects of the languages in St. Lucia (Sent Lisi in Kwéyòl), a multi-language country in the Eastern Caribbean. The paper describes the evolution and development of French-lexified creole language of St. Lucia including its role in the development of St. Lucian society. Emerging cultural trends are discussed along with recommendations for utilizing the untapped potential of “Indigenous Language and Culture Assertion,” our proposed explanation of the current St. Lucian language and culture situation.

Keywords: Kwéyòl, St. Lucian Creole, Cultural Assertion, Indigenous Language and Culture, Post-colonialism, St. Lucian Identity, Afro-Caribbean Identity.

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Introduction

For some time now, the authors of this paper have been preoccupied with defining what it means to be St. Lucian. By our own admission, we align ourselves with a broader group of individuals who are seeking to conceptualize the essence of Caribbean identity. This search for individual and cultural identity is particularly salient for Caribbean people, who as a society have suffered purposeful and generational dehumanization. Consequently, it has been observed that a rich Caribbean intellectual tradition has resulted from the desire of African, Amerindians, and Indians to achieve racial and national liberation and to preserve a sense of their identities (Henry, 2000). In our preliminary explorations of the meaning of St. Lucian identity, we discovered that it was impossible to ignore the influences of languages, in the formation of the Caribbean self. We think Henry (2000) came to a similar conclusion when he remarked on the extent to which we are unconsciously enmeshed in the languages we speak. Therefore, as an anchoring point, our goal in this paper was to examine some semiolinguistic aspects of language in St. Lucia, a multi-language country in the Caribbean, in order to infer explanations about individual and social identities. From a purely linguistic perspective, this paper describes the development and evolution of French-lexified creole language of St Lucia (Sent Lisi in Kwéyòl) and its role in the development of St. Lucian society.

The explanations we propose in this paper are generated from a naturalistic inquiry – ethnographic and historical analyses – of processes that have transpired within the language-culture context of St. Lucia. Language communication is culturally and philosophically significant both in terms of the intended messages of its producers and the personal interpretations of its receivers. Furthermore, individuals identify themselves reflexively through their social interaction with other individuals, and it is through language that the modes of representation, interpretation and communication within a culture are socially specified. In order to discover how individuals generate meaning within a multi-language culture like St. Lucia, it is necessary to understand the historical, cultural, economical, and political aspects of social interaction within that culture. We report on some of these aspects of languages used in St. Lucia, making special reference to Kwéyòl Language and its role in self-relevant meaning-making.

Colonialism and the languages of St. Lucia

Beyond its racial and psychological impacts, colonialism succeeded in its attempts to historicize the existence and identity of the African in the Caribbean. Traditional African philosophy is cosmogonical and mythological, but not historical (Ikenga-Metuh, 1982).

Since African philosophy (including its ontological explanations) preceded colonialism, it was only by ignoring the pre-modern existence of Africans that it became possible to legitimize European social structures such as slavery and capitalism. Therefore, slavery and colonialism launched Africans into modern history. The legitimization of Eurocentric ideals coupled with the systematic delegitimization of the African was carefully conspired and constructed within the sphere of European semiolinguistics (Hickling-Hudson, 1996, 2006). In other words, the African suffered as a result of demoralizing linguistic inventions such as the designation of the “Negro” along with all the negative implications of blackness that are enmeshed in Eurocentric symbolism.

French-based Creole (Kwéyòl) Language in St Lucia

St. Lucia, like many of its sibling islands, enjoys a culture that stems from and embraces vast diversity. Its culture is a single, but multi-faceted representation of the integration of all this diversity. To persons unfamiliar with the region, this may not be clear at first glance, but those who have had the privilege of experiencing it, or better still, living within the culture, can attest that the island does indeed tell a tale, one of many chapters. And many of these chapters are dedicated to language in the St. Lucia – its history, its position today and its position in the future. The language of a people often provides valuable insight into their cultural dynamics. Furthermore, possessing knowledge about the history of a language is essential in truly understanding the language. We often want to know who first spoke the language, why it was spoken, how it developed, and whether the language signified anything other than an agreed-upon means of communication. We also want to know whether it is an oral or written language, and what meanings are assigned to its symbols, signs and images. The languages of St. Lucia are vibrant and are perfectly suited for this type of close examination because of their noticeable roles in the colonial narrative we are about to illustrate. The account begins with the the colonization of St. Lucia (1642-1979). During this time English and French Europeans went to war 14 times over the rights of possession of the island. France finally ceded control of St. Lucia to Britain in 1814, and on February 22, 1979 Saint Lucia became an independent state of the Commonwealth of Nations. St. Lucia’s “Kwéyòl” or “Patwa” (French-based creole) found its roots in early French colonial periods.

Amerindian influences on St. Lucian languages

Imagine, in the beginning of this saga, a lush green island, in the Caribbean, no more than 238 sq. miles. This island was populated by two tribes of Amerindians, the Caribs and Arawaks (Rogozinski, 1992). Then, one day to their shores, arrived lighter skinned, hairy men with different colored hair and eyes, and a different language (Hulme & Whitehead, 1992). With no intention of sharing, these Europeans took over the land, and enslaved the Amerindians. The Amerindians were ill-equipped to handle slavery or the contagious diseases of Europe that had been brought to the island, and so, as the Amerindian population dwindled, so did the language and culture (Mintz, 1971). It is interesting that these first St. Lucian islanders appear to have had the least significant influence on the formation and continuing legacy of languages spoken in the Caribbean. This is likely because the European colonizer had effectively killed off the aboriginal predecessors and as a result took up the position as host where he was once a guest (Mintz, 1971). The language remaining today in the Caribbean is, therefore, not that of the Amerindian, but the language of the European colonizer. For St. Lucia, the languages of use were French or English at various times in history. This is not an indication that they were the most popular and useful languages. They were simply the language of the colonizer – the language of power and prestige. English still serves as the official or formal language of the island today.

It is plausible that there could have been a mixing of languages spoken among members of the different Amerindian tribes who inhabited the land. The tribes spoke different languages, and so it can only be assumed that there would be a language collaboration resulting in a creolized language across the tribes (Rogozinski, 1992). It is also plausible that other language mixing transpired as a result of the Amerindian communication with the European. Surely, these two cultures did not speak the same language, and in order to live together, however briefly, there was likely communication. However, the language(s) presumably spoken by the Amerindians between the tribes, and then with the European, were not considered to be creoles but pidgins. While both pidgins and creoles represent the formation of a new language from the mixing of two or more languages, the difference between the two is that pidgin languages die out after fulfilling their usefulness, whereas creoles survive and become the language adopted by a nation (Decamp, 1971; Chaika, 1994). Literally, surviving pidgins are called creoles.

African influences on St. Lucian languages

So now, with a greatly reduced or eliminated Amerindian workforce, European Colonizers needed another source of labor. Thus, it makes sense that the next group of people to make a significant contribution to the development of language in the island was the African slaves “acquired” from the West Coast of Africa.

Although slave ships mainly left from the western coast, the slaves who were brought to the Caribbean, were from different tribes and different areas, and thus, did not share the same language (Dalphinis, 1985). Therefore, the introduction of the tribally diverse slaves to the Caribbean also signifies the introduction of many African languages and dialects to the region. These African slaves had to communicate with each other, and in spite of the similarities among the languages, there were also significant differences. A standard way had to be found that would facilitate communication among the slaves. This was, reportedly, the birth of the first creoles among the slaves. Alleyne (1971) acknowledges that since most of the slaves were from the Akan and Ewe tribes, many of the structural similarities of creole came from these two tribes.

In the plantation system in the Caribbean, creolization of language was taking place out of the basic need for communication. Africans were socialized within the plantation system that was under the European's domination (Hoetink, 1979). Not only was creole language formed among the Africans who spoke different native tongues, but, life on the plantations necessitated a common language through which the slaves and their European slave owners could communicate. This new situation of interaction, no longer just among themselves, but with persons who spoke an entirely different type of language, provided yet another need to adjust the language that the Africans spoke. In addition, the Africans may have had to relexify their creole to correspond to alternating British and French rule (Dalphinis, 1985). Brathwaite (1995) explains that although the slaves' languages retained their West African syntax, they were being greatly influenced by the new environment and European linguistic and cultural priorities.

Veritably, European colonizers also had to make adjustments to the languages they spoke. This new form of communication would include everyone on the plantation, slaves and owners alike, and would latter become the core of French-based creole or Kwéyòl in St. Lucia. It included French words and vocabulary with a grammatical structure resembling that of the African languages. Historically, little detail is known of the early language mixtures spoken strictly amongst the Africans. If we again consider Decamp's (1971) explanation of pidgins versus creoles, these African mixtures characterized pidgin languages whose usefulness had expired.

The stigma of Kwéyòl: cultural hegemony, stress, and identity conflict

Although creole was derived purely from necessity, as a means of communication, there has been a stigma attached to the language, where it is still spoken. This stigma is deeply rooted in the plantation system and culture. Persons who communicated using Kwéyòl were thought to be of a lower class than the persons who spoke the "pure" European language. This is easily attributed to the fact that only the white plantation and slave owners, overseers, or their wealthy families spoke the European language exclusively. Everyone else, thought to be "inferior", spoke Kwéyòl as the primary language. Kwéyòl was therefore, the language of the lower strata of society (Hoetink, 1979) and the language which a person spoke depended on his or her social class and positioning. Kwéyòl was the language of the lower class not because it was poorly developed or structured, but because it was the language of the African slave, the black man and woman. Henry (2000) argued that in the plantation society the "Negro" occupied the "zero point" and the language of the African slave occupied the "zero point" along with him or her.

Kwéyòl language, forged in the days of slavery, lived on in St. Lucia. The initial stigma attached to the speaking of Kwéyòl, sadly, continued to be perpetuated by many of the institutions on the island. The education system favored the language of the colonizer – lessons were and still are taught in the Standard English, not in Kwéyòl. Those exposed to the education system learned what the English language had to offer, linguistically and culturally. If one was to perform well at school – reading English books and writing English exams – the language with which one would have to be comfortable was English. Brathwaite (1995) argues that as an alternative, students could have been learning about their national heroes and other aspects of their national culture. However, the nationals learned both formally and informally that Kwéyòl was not a "proper" or real language. Additionally, there was no literature yet available - Kwéyòl was spoken at home, not at school, and not in the workplace. Additionally, it was not to be spoken in formal settings, and especially when addressing a respected person or one in authority. The "proper" language was the European one (Brathwaite, 1995).

Debating a language continuum or language shift

According to Garrett (2000), St. Lucia is different from most creole-speaking situations where the creole (basolect) is lexically related to the standard language (acrolect) yielding a range of speech varieties (mesolects) along a continuum. In fact, St. Lucia boasts two languages that are discrete, both lexically and grammatically (Garrett, 2000). There is the Standard English Language and there is also St Lucian Kwéyòl, which is listed among the Antillean group of creole languages along with creoles spoken in Dominica, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Trinidad and Tobago (Bickerton, 1981; Holm, 1988).

St. Lucia's unusual situation is that although Kwéyòl is French-lexified, it currently co-exists with English rather than French (recall that St. Lucia was finally ceded to Britain). After English rule was established over time in the 1800's, the slaves may have chosen French lexicon to dissent English colonial authority (Dalphinis, 1985). Many of the other islands remained under French control allowing their creoles to be wholly influenced by the French language and this may explain why the creole spoken in some these other Antillean group islands are more similar in dialect than St. Lucian Kwéyòl (Holm, 1988). The existence of a French-lexified creole in an English dominated society is the first demonstrable evidence of the people's need to preserve some sense of "self" against cultural hegemony. Some researchers (DeCamp, 1971; Isaac, 1986) point to the linguistic dexterity of the people of St. Lucia as revealed by a continuous spectrum of speech varieties. This continuum ranges from French-based Creole (Kwéyòl) to Standard English. The majority of the populace is able to speak both languages to various degrees of competence. There is, as the continuum suggests, an endless variety of English and French Kwéyòl that can be spoken. However there are four main categories:

French Creole or Kwéyòl, Anglicized French Creole, Creolized English, and Standard English.

French Creole or Kwéyòl is the "pure" form of French Creole that has passed on from one generation to the next. The components are traceable either to French vocabulary, African structure, or a mixture of the two. *Anglicized French Creole* (moves away from Kwéyòl toward English) is an even more advanced form of creolization. It incorporates English words from the official language of the island with Kwéyòl. *Creolized English* (moves away from English toward Kwéyòl) is commonly referred to by other names like slang or broken English. And, finally, there is *Standard English*.

Garrett (2000) posits that there are two interrelated processes at work in St. Lucia that share a converging relationship. While the French-lexical Kwéyòl is undergoing attrition due to contact with English, it is simultaneously being replaced by the emergence of a new language variety that he refers to as Vernacular English of St. Lucia (VESL). VESL is an English-lexicon variety that is nonetheless grammatically more Kwéyòl than English (Garrett, 2000). Garrett (2000) also regards as unusual the emergence of a formal register of creole or "High" Kwéyòl in St. Lucia that is used as an alternative to the official language. He explains that a small group of highly educated St. Lucians, who speak both English and Kwéyòl, have inadvertently Anglicized Kwéyòl by infusing stylistic and generic Standard English conventions in an effort to preserve the Kwéyòl language. Garrett regards this linguistic phenomenon as a general Anglicization of Kwéyòl language spoken in all aspects of St. Lucian society (Garrett, 2000). Garrett (2000) has identified a social movement in St. Lucia geared toward the preservation of Kwéyòl. He attributes this phenomenon to the shifts in the language system in St. Lucia. He argues that Kwéyòl has become valued significantly by some as a central tenet of post-colonial and post-independence national culture (Garrett, 2000). The authors see this as part of a broader process, which we have called "Indigenous Language and Culture Assertion."

National Identity, "Indigenous Language and Culture Assertion"

The negative view of Kwéyòl is changing; in what seems like an island-wide awakening the people of St. Lucia have recognized the need for the preservation of Kwéyòl. There are conscious attempts to dispel the myth that Kwéyòl is an "embarrassing" part of St. Lucian heritage of which the nationals want to be cleansed. Of particular interest to the writers of this paper are the "Creolized English" and "Standard English" speaking categories on the island. These categories represent persons who are more fluent in English but want to speak more Kwéyòl, like younger persons who live nearer to the capital, who deliberately insert Kwéyòl words and expressions they know into an otherwise English sentence. As one tries to explore and explain the nature of language in St. Lucia, and many other islands in the Caribbean, one quickly realizes that the task entails a lot more than a study of the words that the islanders use and the way the sentences are organized. The history and culture of the islands are as much a part of the language, as are the letters that form the words. And even when we believe that the historical study of a language is complete, and we have caught up with the language, we find the language has yet again evolved. Language is dynamic, and it changes with the culture and the environment. It changes to suit its speakers and their purposes, and this is exactly what we believe is happening in St. Lucia, the language is shifting along with the culture.

Indigenous Language and Culture Assertion is the process through which the displaced peoples of slavery and indenture declare a native, homegrown identity as an alternative to the dominant languages and cultures of their colonial past. In St. Lucia and the rest of the Antilles, the search for identity is a post-colonial turning point. Walcott (1962) offers one of the most compelling reflections of this ontological and existential crossroads in his poem "A Far Cry from Africa."

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall we turn, divided to the vein?

I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue we love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can we face such slaughter and be cool?
How can we turn from Africa and live?

Walcott's (1962) reflection interrogates the issue of where the search for St. Lucian identity should begin and end. If St. Lucian identity is settled in the plantation cultures of the colonial period then there would be no need to point to its pre-historic African roots, only a need to accept its European aspects. However, many St. Lucians have not settled for the fragmented identities of freed-slaves and their descendants, but have searched for an "indigenous self," one that resolves the conflict of its dehumanized ontology. Colonialism, through slavery and later indenture, spoiled the human spirit of Antillean people and produced in them a deep sense of ontological fragmentation. The Caribbean Sea wafts fragments of African, Asiatic, Mediterranean, and European cultural heritage unto the St. Lucian psychological and emotional landscape. Ironically, this is what has characterized Antillean society, endurance against tyranny and the accretion of those drifting psychic fragments. This characterization also raises the question of the degree to which indigenous St. Lucian identity is resolutely singular or monolithic. St. Lucians may differ significantly in the degree to which they identify with or can be identified by an indigenous culture.

Reinterpreting History, Formalizing "Being," and Asserting an Indigenous Language and Culture

There are many individuals who have contributed to the preservation of the Kwéyòl language and culture in St. Lucia, but because of length limitations we are bound to omit some names. Notwithstanding, we wish to demonstrate how social interaction of just a few key players influenced the cultural landscape in St. Lucia and how such contact may have contributed to changes in the language shift identified. Admittedly, those who have been omitted are no less influential. Kwéyòl has survived and thrived because the most notable local figures of post-colonial reconstruction have fought to preserve the existence of the language. Among those were the artists who defined the signs and symbols of Kwéyòl and exhibited them without fear of scorn. These men and women embraced the dualities enmeshed in St. Lucian society and embodied in Kwéyòl imagery.

Some notable figures

Harold Simmons (1915-1966) was one of the "fathers" of the new West Indian society (Lewis, 2004). Simmons was born in Castries, St. Lucia, where he stayed all his life, and insisted on fighting colonialism and finding alternatives through art and culture. Simmons was a renowned artist, historian, folklorist, archeologist, journalist, and social activist. As a child Simmons attended the Methodist Elementary Schools and St. Mary's College. He held a six-year job at a private firm until 1940 after which he left to focus on his painting – he was by that time a recognized artist in the Caribbean and North America. His pursuit of his craft yielded an Art Teacher Diploma via the Royal Drawing Society (Lewis, 2004). Simmons was an active public servant and relished his civic responsibilities (see Lewis, 2004, for a complete biography) but his most notable contributions were possibly in the areas to art and culture. His passion for the arts was unparalleled. He became a founding member of the St. Lucia Arts and Crafts Society, the St. Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society, and an active associate of the St. Lucia Arts Guild (Lewis, 2004).

As the island secretary of the St. Lucia Boy Scouts Association from 1942-1946, Simmons also helped to shape outstanding young St. Lucians. Simmons closely mentored and taught many now-famous young boys, including Derek Walcott (cited earlier), winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 1992, and Dustan St. Omer, world-renowned visual artist. Central to the work of these St. Lucian icons is post-colonial reconstruction and the creation of an indigenous St. Lucian cultural arts and Kwéyòl identity. Through visual art, drama, theatre, and poetry, Walcott and St. Omer have both been extremely successful in articulating St. Lucian culture both for St. Lucians and for the world. Msgr. Hon. Dr. Patrick A.B. Anthony, SLC is a St. Lucian theologian and cultural activist. He received a MA in theology from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and a Ph.D. in English from the University of the West Indies, Trinidad. An active humanitarian, he founded the Anthonian Home for the elderly, and the St. Lucy's Home (a rehabilitation center). He also held distinguished posts in the St. Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society and the St. Lucia National Trust, which constitute only fragments of his involvement as a cultural activist.

As a priest, one of Msgr. Anthony's desires for St. Lucia was the formation of an indigenous theology – he wanted a church that was sensitive to the cultural and social environment. However, the introduction of indigenous cultural elements into the church such as folk singing, calypso and reggae, drumming, dancing, and drama was destined to be challenged by established canon.

Deeply committed to the preservation and development of St. Lucian society Anthony, with others, founded the Folk Research Centre as a non-governmental organization in 1973, six years before St. Lucia's independence. The founding members, in recognition of his influence and legacy adopted Simmons as the inspiring spirit of all their work.

The Folk Research Centre

The Folk Research Centre (FRC) in St. Lucia is an institution committed to the revitalization and conservation of the cultural identity of St. Lucians, so that this identity and all it encompasses will be accessible to present and future generations (Folk Research Centre, 2008). The Centre is committed to preserving the St. Lucian culture and identity as the country develops and experiences social, political and economic shifts. This includes island-wide acceptance and ownership of the cultural heritage and resources. The FRC advocates personal and group responsibility, creativity, productivity and self-sustainability where the national culture is concerned, especially in the face of globalization. The FRC has five major project and program areas, each consisting of subtopics. These major project or program areas are *research and documentation, culture in education, language development, production and publication, and folk arts.*

Research and documentation includes the systematic cataloging of cultural processes and events, monitoring of research in St. Lucia, promotion of research into St. Lucian life, and provision of library and research facilities. Culture in education deals with the dissemination of cultural information to schools and communities through standard and alternative education media. This program brings cultural education to the formal education system. Language development consists of advancing the study and development of Kwéyòl and St. Lucian bilingualism, promoting the use and appreciation of St. Lucia's two main languages, (English and Kwéyòl), and promoting and coordinating the celebration of Jounen Kwéyòl (Kwéyòl Day) and Creole Heritage Month. Production and publication involves distributing cultural information through a variety of standard and alternative media. It also involves incorporating cultural programming in print and audio-visual media. This program is responsible for the annual publication of the Lucian Kaiso Magazine, which documents the development of Calypso in St. Lucia. Finally, the folk arts program organizes folk events, develops and presents folk theater, supports folk artists, and hosts a permanent annual cultural exhibition. Incidentally, at the time of this publication, the FRC was considering the development of the Harold Simmons Folk Academy, which was proposed to provide systematic instruction in St. Lucian folk culture and to promote Kwéyòl literacy.

Folk theater and fine arts

The Folk Research Centre was registered in 1985 as a non-profit company, and has since been working successfully to promote folk arts as a medium of cultural and social transformation. The FRC insists on making St. Lucian culture visible through the most visual media and as a result St. Lucian theatre and fine arts are reflective of that visual culture. Where nationals once may have been inclined to performance arts of a more Eurocentric flavor, the visual and creative arts are now rife with aspects of the St. Lucian Kwéyòl heritage. Moreover, Kwéyòl folk theater arts have flourished in St. Lucia and provided avenues for St. Lucians to identify their realities. The Creole Theatre Workshop has translated many Caribbean plays and productions into Kwéyòl thereby extending Kwéyòl to the neighboring Caribbean islands, like Martinique and Guadeloupe, where French-based creole is also spoken. In addition to the theater arts in native languages, St. Lucian music festivals showcase Kwéyòl art forms. The quantity and the variety of local music in St. Lucia also demonstrate a resurgence of the Kwéyòl culture. Several old and newly formed music bands play Kwéyòl-infused genres such as cadence, zouk, reggae, gospel and calypso.

The media

The St. Lucian media has made a concerted effort to promote the Kwéyòl language and culture. Regular programming includes the traditional Kwéyòl arts and festivals. In fact, there are programs on the radio and television strictly for the use of Kwéyòl. Although some of these broadcasts are strictly informative, others are call-in programs that elicit responses from the listeners or viewers. The audiences have the option of calling in and responding in Kwéyòl (or in English if one prefers) to the topics under discussion. This has been an excellent means of fostering community development by democratizing relevant issues that in the past would be discussed strictly in English. These types of programs are widely accessible to St. Lucians and discuss the position of the Kwéyòl culture in today's society. There has been a dramatic surge of print media in Kwéyòl. Where the Kwéyòl language was once seen as a purely spoken tradition, there have emerged newspaper and magazine articles, books and other written Kwéyòl works. St. Lucia has witnessed the introduction of a Kwéyòl dictionary (Mondesir & Carrington, 1992), handbooks (Louisy & Turmel-John, 1983; Fontaine & Weekes, 1994), as well story books, and the New Testament of the Bible available in Kwéyòl, only to name a few.

The media has proven to be an invaluable way to educate people in Kwéyòl, for not only has radio, television and print media been used in Kwéyòl literacy, but a Kwéyòl Internet and multimedia presence has also emerged. A previous administration of the St. Lucian Government had initiated the Kwéyòl Multimedia Product Development Committee, whose charge was to develop a Kwéyòl curriculum and instruction. Aiding this venture was the compilation of a Kwéyòl Spell Check for use with Microsoft Word. These initiatives may perhaps pave the way for the formal and systematic use of Kwéyòl in secondary schools.

Government involvement through the education system

The media – print, radio, television and the Internet – have possibly provided the best means of educating St. Lucians on aspects of Kwéyòl culture, which had previously been taken for granted. Historically, Kwéyòl has never been synonymous with educational success and upward mobility. Attempts are being made to formally teach Kwéyòl in the secondary schools on the island. If this happens, Kwéyòl will be elevated to more than just a valorized oral tradition, but also a written one. It also means that the Kwéyòl language and culture will be more freely associated with educational and socioeconomic success. Already the Folk Research Centre offers informational lectures, classes in speaking and writing Kwéyòl, and translation services. There are also a range of activities geared toward educating persons about Kwéyòl and St. Lucian culture. These educational events include folk exhibitions, curriculum support activities for schools, and training for persons in the folk arts. While the voluntarism of persons and non-profit groups and organizations is one step toward keeping the St. Lucian cultural heritage alive, and speaks of the passion and drive of individuals, governmental policies may reflect the greatest shifts toward acceptance and celebration of St. Lucia's creole traditions. For example, both past and incumbent governments in St. Lucia have flirted with the notion of developing a national language policy, which does not exist in St. Lucia at present.

Additionally, the decision to include Kwéyòl in the secondary school curriculum will ultimately rest with the government, as a reflection of a political mandate. As a caveat, we contend that the success of the above efforts to integrate Kwéyòl language and culture into formal institutions in St. Lucia may result in both intended and unintended consequences. For example, while the education system can provide important mechanisms toward their psychological and economic liberation, some young St. Lucians could inadvertently, or otherwise, manifest their personal identities by responding to formal education with patterns of antagonism and general attrition (Lubin, 2009). These youths do not oppose education, per se, but are opposed to inadequacies and lack of perspectives within formal education (Ainsworth-Darnell, & Downey, 1998; Lubin, 2009). For many young people, education that does not “liberate” is not considered to be entirely helpful. Therefore, institutionalizing indigenous language and culture may prove problematic and produce harmful results if youths see it as representing yet another oppressive social construction. Arguably, we want youths to be engaged with and not oppositional to institutions that are valuable to St. Lucian society, such as education.

Yet, we cannot separate cultural education from critical thinking, especially within a society well acquainted with of oppression. Individuals need to be taught both implicitly and explicitly about the processes of Indigenous Language and Culture Assertion. They must learn how to interpret the objectives and agenda of those who may wish to capitalize on the novelty and momentum of a revitalized indigenous language and culture for personal gain. Without such understanding, individuals could once more become susceptible to cultural manipulation. Thus, there is room for research into understanding the potential as well as problems underlying this cultural emergence, perhaps even a need to develop an indigenous education, based on local knowledge, to coincide with the language and culture situation in St. Lucia. However, in doing so, it would be necessary to explore multiple aspects of this education; since, by simply focusing on performance and academic achievement, we could be ignoring the systematic involvement of culture and identity in the development of the St. Lucian self-concept (see Lubin, 2009). Lastly, it would be prudent to explore how to integrate emergent technologies and social media into any indigenous curriculum, as a fundamental premise of such technologies is the portrayal and declaration of self-expression and personal freedoms.

Summary

Kwéyòl language and culture was born out of resistance and struggle against colonial oppression. In times past, Kwéyòl provided St. Lucians with a means of preserving themselves against de-individuation and dehumanization. In the aftermath of colonialism and in the wake of globalization, Kwéyòl language and culture has reemerged – this time not only as a means of self-definition, but also as a means of self-declaration. The stigma of Kwéyòl continues to dissipate even as the language takes on national prominence as a symbol of what it means to be St. Lucian.

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