

ABSTRACT

This study aims at providing a basic phrase-structure grammar of Berbice Dutch, one of only two Dutch Creoles known to have developed in Dutch colonies in the Caribbean. As far as has been possible the grammar of Berbice Dutch presented here is described without reference to other languages with which it has co-existed. The lexicon is, however, discussed mainly in relation to the lexicons of the modern standard versions of lexical donor languages.

The fact that Berbice Dutch may be regarded from internal linguistic evidence as well as from historical evidence as one of the older creoles of the region allows for a re-examination of the processes of pidginisation and creolisation. The contemporary co-existence of the language with English offers opportunities for the examination of possible continua between systemically distinct languages. Finally, the fact that Berbice Dutch faces extinction allows for the examination of the process of language loss and the attrition of grammatical categories.

The description is based on twenty hours of recording done mainly with thirteen informants in loose interview type situations which allowed informants enough freedom to present long stretches of narrative. Information gleaned in informal conversations in Berbice Dutch was also used to supplement the interviews.