

Dancehall dictionary to be published in four languages

A dancehall dictionary endorsed by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) and Jamaica Lexicography Project is currently being researched for publication in four languages in an attempt to profit from the internationalisation of dancehall

It will take five years to complete and include a team of four translators one editor and one research assistant, Farquharson-editor told intellectuals at Symposium 2010 within the Department of Liberal Studies, University of Technology on Thursday.

Farquharson said it will be the first such publication by linguists whilst asserting that that the previous two known dancehall dictionaries did not adhere to rigorous scholarship. They include The Original Dancehall Dictionary by Joan Williams published in 1995 and The Official Dancehall dictionary by Chester Francis-Jackson. The problems of the existing dictionaries included out-dated "slanguage" and ambiguous or non-lexical definitions, said Farquharson, an advanced doctoral candidate in linguistics at the University of West Indies, Mona who holds a MPhil in European Literature (Spanish) from the University of Cambridge in the UK.

The dictionary will not only have phonetic pronunciations but include sentences which utilise the defined word. For instance, "the gal dem a bawl fi mi anaconda" would be translated to "the girls are [crazy] about my big d*&^", he stated.

"If it was 'The girls are demanding my large penis' it really and truly would not have been in the spirit of dancehall and really one had to find the appropriate language that you are translating into," he explained to nodding intellectuals in agreement.

The dictionary is proposed to be published in English, Japanese, German and Spanish. Farquharson added that research into a French publication would be done in order to capitalise on the importance of reggae in that market. The target market are citizens of the four language groups but also universities within the UK, Germany and Jamaica that lecture on Jamaican culture.

"It is a partnership between the Jamaica Lexicography Project and JTB. We are getting decent information on the culture of the country that can be sold to tourists. So it is not something put together overnight by any and everybody which can misrepresent the country. But it will be well researched and put together that the JTB can put its stamp on to say we know this is reputable and we can help to promote it," he explained. "And of course to line my pocket too," he added.

Farquharson's presentation was entitled Making Culture Pay: Towards a Jamaican Dancehall Dictionary, which attempted to use the dictionary as a marketable liberal art project.