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1. Background

Both of us realised at an early stage that we wanted to go abroad to experience a different culture and especially another school system. This could only be a reality if we received some kind of financial support. We started to look at what possibilities we had. We were fortunate to get to know about MFS – Minor Field Studies and both of us felt challenged to apply for the scholarship, which we received.

For many years SIDA – Swedish International Development Agency has been giving scholarships to Swedish university students. The aim of these scholarships is to raise the level of knowledge and interest of Swedish students in Swedish international co-operation and to give them the opportunity to learn about other countries, thus promoting international understanding and forming a basis for recruitment of future international workers. (Appendix No. 1)

We used the scholarship to carry out an in-depth study as part of our university program. The scholarship was intended to cover a study visit abroad of approximately two months. We found out that Jamaica would fit the purpose of our study very well considering Jamaica's language situation.

At one point we had doubts about going to Jamaica, since we had spoken to the Jamaican Consulate in Sweden. We were told that Jamaica and especially Kingston was a very unsafe place to go to. This almost made us change our plans. But today we are very grateful that we went. Jamaica is a beautiful island, and we have met a lot of nice people.

2. Purpose

The general problem we wanted to approach how learning comes about in a language that is not one's own. In our case Jamaica became the object of our study. In Jamaica the language of instruction is English but most of the students do not have English as their mother tongue.

2:1. Questions we would like to consider

More specifically we decided to focus on the following:

- Attitudes among pupils about their school situation. What is their experience of for example subjects, teachers, materials, Standard English, Jamaican Creole?
- Attitudes among teachers. What difficulties do they experience within the school, and as regards the school system? Their opinions about the language situation.
- Instructional materials. Are materials produced so that they reflect an ethnically appropriate picture of society? Are two sets of educational materials made available (both in regular English and Jamaican Creole)? Where is the instructional material produced, is any material produced in Jamaica?

2:2. Structure

This is the structure of our essay: First we will give a presentation about Jamaica, thereafter we will describe the language situation in Jamaica, which includes definitions, history and the situation today. Then we will give further details about

the results of our interviews and observations, which will be followed by a discussion.

3. Method

In this study we wanted to use an ethnographic approach by using ethnographic technique(Kullberg, 1996); i. e., observations of teachers and children at school, informal and formal interviews. Our interviews and observations were carried out at an elementary school in Kingston, named Mona Heights Primary. We interviewed students and teachers in order to find out how they look upon their own situation at school. We also observed the situation and attitudes in the classrooms and in the school, partly by taking an active part in the school teaching but also by silent watching.

Our main interest was of course to observe which language that was used in the classroom and in what situations. We wanted to see if there was any obvious switching between the existing languages, if any language was dominant and how well understood the English language seemed to be.

When we interviewed the teachers we departed from a number of open-ended questions (Appendix No. 2). In our interviews we used the questions as a base and during the interviews some spontaneous questions also arose. We did not interview the pupils formally, but we did spend a lot of time talking with them about their feelings and thoughts about their own language. And even if they did not have a specific opinion we made some conclusions.

4. Facts about Jamaica

Population: 2, 160, 000

Official language: English, but the Jamaicans also have a language of their own called Patois. (We will use the term Jamaican Creole (JC) together with Patois)

English is the official language in Jamaica as in all the anglophone Caribbean islands. It is the language of the law courts, the banks, the established church, for example. It is the linguistic badge, which one wears when one wants to identify with a certain level of sophistication, of linguistic competence, and of having 'arrived' in a highly stratified society. Jamaican Creole, and English-related Creole is the language of the people. It is the language they use in day-to-day relaxed situations. It is the language Jamaicans of all classes turn to when they are away from home and feel the need to establish their identities. (Pollard, 1998, p.9)

Jamaica was captured from Spain by the British in 1655 and was more or less permanently under British rule until independence was granted in 1962. By the late seventeenth century, numerous African slaves were brought to Jamaica as plantation labourers. The slaves were separated from the people of their community and mixed with people of various other communities, therefore they were unable to communicate with each other. The strategy behind this was to stop them from coming up with a plot to escape back to their land. Therefore, in order to communicate with their peers on the plantations, and with their bosses, they needed to form a language in which they could communicate. The slaves rebelled many times and after a slave revolt in 1831 with five hundred people killed, the call for

emancipation of slaves grew. The Emancipation Act was passed in 1833.

During the 1930's people began to claim for independence and long-standing injustices gave rise to riots and labour unrest in 1938. Universal suffrage was granted to Jamaica in 1944 and this led directly to independence. Full independence from the United Kingdom was gained in 1962.

Sugarcane used to be the most important income source, now it is only one of many crops grown in Jamaica, along with, for example, bananas, coffee, citrus and green pepper. The main exports are aluminum and bauxite. Tourism is also very important to Jamaica's economy.

About 76 per cent of the population of Jamaica are black African, 15 per cent are African European, 3 per cent are African East Indian or East Indian and another 3 per cent are whites of European descent.

Kingston is the largest city and Montego Bay is the second largest. Because of emigration, almost as many Jamaicans live outside of Jamaica as on the island, mostly in the United Kingdom and the eastern United States.

Education is compulsory for 6 years. Schools are organised into nursery, infant and basic schools (age 3-6 years), primary schools (6-12 years) and secondary schools (12-17 years). The secondary level also includes technical and vocational schools.

Enrolment in these secondary schools is limited, and admission is determined by competitive examinations. Most children must wear uniform to school, at both primary and secondary level. According to statistical figures from 1997, more than 93 per cent

of those who enter Jamaican schools finish the primary level, and about 58 per cent of all eligible children are enrolled in secondary education. Most adults in Jamaica have completed at least five years of education, which actually means that some leave school without having completed the stipulated 6 years of compulsory education. This makes the general educational level of Jamaica rather low. However, there are no exact figures. Girls outnumber boys at the secondary level but not at higher educational levels. (Microsoft Encarta 97 World Atlas)

5. Definition of Pidgins and Creoles

It is not an easy thing to define Pidgins and Creoles. They, like all languages, are capable of expressing the linguistic needs of a group of people, and since no groups of people will ever have identical communication needs, each language is unique. But we know for sure that the pidgin languages have served as trade languages for at least five hundred years and their value in this capacity has never been disputed. It seems unlikely that we shall ever know precisely how the term Pidgin came into being, but today it is the recognised term for a marginal or makeshift language.

The terms Pidgin, Pidgin English and Creole are defined in Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (Webster, 1989, p. 1090 and 342) as follows:

Pidgin: an auxiliary language that has come into existence through attempts to communicate by the speakers of two different languages and that is primarily a simplified form of one of the languages, with considerable variation in pronunciation, and with a major part of its grammatical features selected from those common to both of the native languages of its speakers.

Pidgin English: 1. An English jargon used in commerce in Chinese ports. 2. Any of several similar jargons used in other areas, as Melanesia or West Africa.

Creole: 1. (In the West Indies and Spanish America) one born in the region but of European ancestry. 2. (esp. In Louisiana) a person born in the region of French ancestry. 3. A person born in a place but of foreign ancestry, as distinguished from

the aborigines and half-breeds. 4. creolized language. Cf. Pidgin.

5:1. History of Pidgin and Creole languages

As a result of the desire for new routes to Asia and for new trading partners, European nations began in the fifteenth century to explore the earth thoroughly and systematically. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the English had sailed and traded in every ocean and from that time on they were to extend their influence and spread their language to all parts of the world. This spreading of English has been continued in the twentieth century by wars and the media.

All the English-derived pidgins and Creoles of West Africa, the Caribbean, and the southern parts of the USA are related, not only lexically through English but also in their structures, their idioms and their folklore.

5:2. Pidgins

In the book titled *Modern Englishes* (1984) Loreto Todd writes that Pidgins are languages that have been developed as means of communication by people with mutually unintelligible languages who are brought together in situations where they need to communicate. A Pidgin will contain simplified lexical and morphological items from the parent languages, but often it also has its own special grammar that in no obvious way is derived from the parent language.

People who do not share a common language develop a communication system: a Pidgin. A Pidgin language that derives most of its vocabulary from English is named an English-based or English-related Pidgin. *During the Colonial Period the English*

language held a very powerful and influential place in countries such as Jamaica [---] the tight grip on English and the negative attitude to Creole remained throughout the Colonial Period. (Bryan, 1998, p.9)

Restricted Pidgins, which are accompanied by gesture and mime and have a limited communication value, tend to be unstable and short-lived and they are characteristic of superficial contact between individuals or groups where only two languages are involved. Since they serve a single simplistic purpose, they usually die out.

However, if the Pidgin is used long enough, it begins to evolve into a more rich language with a more complex structure and richer vocabulary.

One explanation of the origin of the word Pidgin is that it is believed to be a corruption of the English word business and the explanation is that Orientals, for example the Chinese, had problems in pronouncing the word business, so that instead of business it sounded more like Pidgin. (Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia)

In an Internet site about Pidgins and Creoles it is said that there is always a dominant language which contributes most of the vocabulary of the pidgin, this is called the superstrate language. The other minority languages contributing to the pidgin are called substrate languages. (<http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/pidgin.html>)

To make it easy one could say that Pidgin is a language based on another language and mixed with other languages, often with simplified grammar. The vocabulary is limited, anything from 700 to 2000 words and the Pidgin languages are used as lingua francas, i.e. languages used all over the world as means of communication by

people who have no other common language. It is used most often in commerce and trade.

5:3. Creoles

However, in multilingual areas of the world a restricted pidgin may become so useful in inter-group communications that it can be expanded, more flexible and capable of fulfilling an increasing number of the linguistic needs of its users. Loreto Todd (1984) says that once the Pidgin has evolved and has acquired native speakers it is then called a Creole.

A Creole may be defined as a *second-generation pidgin* (<http://hj.se/~josv/ug/node10.html>), with at least some speakers having it as native language. Creole means a pidgin that has become the mother tongue of a group of people. This was very common at the time of the slave trade between West Africa and America. The slaves were forced to give up their ancestral African languages and adopt a pidginised variety of European tongues. Children born into such communities learnt to use the pidgin for all their linguistic needs. Pidgins also arose because of colonisation.

The term Creole was first used in the 16th century in Latin America to distinguish the offsprings of European settlers from Native Americans, blacks and later immigrant groups. The term is also used to denote a language derived from a pidgin language, but having a more complex grammar and vocabulary because it has acquired native speakers through years of use. Examples include the Western Caribbean Creole English or Jamaican, French-based Haitian Creole

and Neo-Melanesian, the Creoles Melanesian Pidgin of New Guinea.

(Johannsson, 1997,

p. 4)

Pidginisation is a process of simplification that reduces irregularities in a language and it is a natural consequence of contact between people who speak different languages or different varieties of the same language. Most modern Pidgins are the result of colonial expansion and have been developed from a master-servant type of contact between speakers of European tongue and speakers of so-called exotic languages.

The Creoles that arose under these circumstances used the same simple structures and small vocabulary as characterised a pidgin, but because they were mother tongues they had to be capable of expressing the entire linguistic needs, desires and aspirations of the speech community. This made the Creole more flexible and innovative than even the most expanded of Pidgins.

5:4. Differences between Pidgins and Creoles

There are few linguistic distinctions between a stabilised Pidgin and a Creole. But it is likely that a Creole as a mother tongue has a larger vocabulary, a greater stylistic range and that it is spoken more quickly. Even where a stable Pidgin becomes one of the mother tongues of a group of people, it does not have to fulfil all the linguistic purposes that a Creole must fulfil for a monolingual community.

The majority of Creoles and expanded Pidgins have coexisted with Standard

English (SE), because SE was, and usually still is, the official language of the post-Creole countries where they are found. This co-existence has developed a *post-creole continuum* (Todd, 1984, p.16), which is often described in terms of decreolisation, the process by which the Creole is modified at all linguistic levels in the direction of the status variety of a language, SE. It is interesting to speculate about whether or not decreolisation can develop to such an extent that the extremes of the spectrum may be considered to be stylistic rather than linguistic variants.

Today there is also another force going on and one that may curtail the decreolising process in some parts of the world. It is a force allied to nationalism, which argues that it is the Pidgin or the Creole that should be adopted as the official language of the country and certainly as the language of education.

5:5. Caribbean Creole Englishes

Varieties of creolised English stretch from the Southern USA, through the islands of the Caribbean, along the East Coast of Central America to the South American countries Guyana and Surinam. These Creoles are the mother tongues of people whose ancestors were taken as slaves from Africa. All the varieties have a lot in common because the English language has provided most of their vocabulary and much of their grammar. In addition, the Creole languages also share many non-English structural similarities because of their indebtedness to West African languages

Pidgin- and Creole-speaking communities exist in most parts of the world. At least two Creoles, Anglo-Romani and Shelta, have arisen in the British Isles, but most

varieties are to be found along the trade routes and in ports, often thousands of miles from England. Since the 1950's Britain has received a lot of immigrants from the Caribbean. The majority of them were from Jamaica where there was a large population and severe unemployment.

5:6. The language situation today

If you ask a Jamaican what he or she speaks you will get the answer 'English'. Sometimes the answer is right. Most times it is not. Most Jamaicans speak some version of what the layman knows as Patois, dialect, the vernacular, and increasingly, as 'the Creole'. (Pollard, 1993, foreword)

This is really typical of the Jamaicans as we have understood by talking to them about the language situation. They thought that they were speaking English, but we did not understand what they were saying at first, because they were speaking Jamaican Creole. One could say that Jamaican English and Jamaican Creole (JC) complement each other in the Jamaican environment, and the speaker is able to shift from code to code or mix codes as the situation requires.

The ability to use the right language in a given situation is one of the marks of the middle- or upperclass speaker in Jamaica. The speaker who attempts unsuccessfully to use English in a situation judged to be prestigious, is a figure of fun both to those who can speak English and those who can not. (Pollard, 1998, p. 12)

Jamaica is sometimes described as a bilingual country, with Jamaican Creole

operating side by side with English.

The sociolinguistic reality is that Creole languages are historically the voices of the poor and marginalized communities brought into being by European expansionism. They have remained for some time the language associated with the least privileged in society. (Bryan, 1998, p. 59)

6. Results

6:1 Observations in the classroom

The first thing we noticed when we arrived to Mona Heights Primary School was the noise, it was almost impossible to hear what the students and the teachers said. The explanation was that there was an open space between the classrooms and they had no windows. The sound of 1400 students is impossible to shut out. The teachers have to shout to make themselves heard, the students stand up when they answer and they speak very quietly. We think that the teachers sometimes read the student's lips, because we could not hear them say anything.

The students receive no individual help; they correct each others' homework. We noticed that many of them did not do their homework, however. We also noticed a few students who could not read.

A certain system for collecting food money and checking the students' presence took a lot of time and seemed very beauraucratic.

The students sometimes have silent reading, but just half of the group reads, the rest of them seem to do nothing.

The teacher often leaves the classroom and stays away for a long time without telling the children. If a student makes a mistake, the teachers force them to stand

up in front of the class and then yells at them, and points out their mistakes. Many of the students seem tired and unmotivated, but when the teacher leaves the room they seem more lively and spontaneous.

It is common that the teachers demand correct answers within a certain time, it looks like this makes some students very tense.

The students spend most of the time within the classroom, they even eat there.

6:2. Attitudes among pupils

The majority of the students think that they are speaking English when they are in fact speaking JC. We realised this the first days at Mona Heights Primary. Children all over the world are alike, so, of course, they were very curious and wanted to ask a lot of questions to the two strangers in the classroom. It then became clear that we could not understand what most of them were saying. They spoke JC and many of them had to try real hard to make us understand. When we asked them what language they spoke, most of them answered English. Part of the confusion may come from the fact that Jamaican teachers understand (and speak) JC even if they do not use it in the classroom. So, it is not always *necessary* for the pupils to speak SJE to make themselves understood, even if it is *required* of them.

We also observed that many of the pupils do not do their homework. This could have many different explanations, but one answer that we received was that they find it hard to understand the instructions given by the teachers and their parents could not help them either. This makes sense, because the instructions are given in English, and English is not their mother tongue and the language that they speak at

home is JC.

The pupils cannot see the mistakes in their written English, since it does not come natural to them. We do not think that the pupils are aware of the fact that there is such a great difference between SJE and JC. Jamaican Creole is an English-related Creole. But as we have realised many people think that the relationship with English is closer than it really is. One better way to describe the JC is that the main source from which the lexicon of the language comes is English, the same way as the main source of the popular language in Haiti is French, for example. But it is very important to remember that what JC-speakers "do" with the words in terms of the meaning and pronunciation is sometimes very different from what English-speakers "do" with them.

6:3. Attitudes among teachers

Here we will try to summarise the content of the interviews we made with teachers at Mona Heights Primary School. It was a common thought among the teachers that many of the pupils did not practise the SJE at home. Within the school the teachers try not to use JC. As a teacher you have to show and tell the pupils that there exist other ways of speaking, there are different options. You show the pupils that there are alternatives. But at the same time, as a teacher you have to be sure that the pupils follow and understand what you say. So, you may be faced with a dilemma here. Should you stick to SJE at all times or should you explain in JC when there is something the pupils do not understand?

One of the teachers told us that the students are not improving their SJE language,

because they are not using the same language at home as in school and many teachers find this frustrating. The parents want the pupils to be given homework, but they are often not able to help their children with it, and therefore the pupils are not improving. The teachers also find the national exams pressuring because the students only have one chance to pass. If they do not pass they have to pay for their further education.

Furthermore, one teacher claimed that only one third of the teachers are educated. One reason why English is hard to learn is that JC has a simplified grammar, as for instance, a lack of verbs and verb inflections, therefore the students have difficulties in learning noun-plus-verb patterns, for example 'peopls is' instead of 'people are'. Several interviewed teachers said that English can be regarded as a second language for the pupils. And sometimes teachers think that it feels horrible to force the pupils to speak English because of their lack of English vocabulary. To add to the problem, within the school the pupils speak many different kinds of Creole, because there are various dialects. The parents also speak Creole when they come and visit school.

6:4. Materials

Instructional materials are written in English, but mainly produced, if not in Jamaica, still within the Caribbean. In other words, most school materials are produced locally. However, we think that it would be of advantage if some of the materials were in Patois in order to create a wider understanding. One problem with the material only written in SJE, is that there are words which function in both languages but whose secondary meaning in one is primary in the other. For example, the word

”favour” used as a verb means ”prefer” in SJE in its primary meaning and ”resemble” in its secondary. In JC the verb has only one meaning, ”resemble”. In Jamaica there are many jokes around the notion of two meanings to one word: the Standard Jamaican English and the Jamaican Creole meaning.

7. Discussion

While taking part of teaching in two grade five classes at Mona Heights Primary School for about two months, we have observed the language situation.

From the beginning it was obvious that we did not understand the language that the students spoke; neither when they spoke to/with each other nor when they addressed us. On the other hand, we had no difficulties understanding the way the teachers spoke. Based on this we made the conclusion that this was the principal point of the language situation/problem.

The teachers speak Standard Jamaican English (SJE). All teaching is supposed to be in SJE, but of course there are exceptions; many of the teachers think that they are speaking SJE, when they in fact use parts of Patois (JC). This means that all information the students receive is supposed to be in SJE.

The language of instruction is SJE. The teacher is expected to be an example of English speech, which the student can emulate. The reality however is that the teacher frequently functions in the classroom the way she functions at home or in relaxed situations[---]As a result she misses the opportunity to be a model for the child whose exposure to English may be minimal; who may indeed hear the language only in the classroom. (Pollard, 1998, p.12)

When the teachers ask questions the students are supposed to answer in SJE; this seems to be very difficult for the students, because most of the time the students use parts of Patois mixed with SJE when they answer. This makes it hard for us as observers to understand the students' answers, but it also says something about how complicated it is for the students to use SJE.

It makes sense because Patois is their mother tongue; it is the language they use in their everyday life, at home and with their friends. So, the only time the students get to speak SJE is in school.

JC-speaking children in Jamaica rarely get a chance to practice English in informal situations. That language gets associated exclusively with formal situations, and efforts to use it result in output that is stilted. (Pollard, 1998, p. 13)

We think – as do the Jamaican teachers - that the school needs to give the students proper knowledge of the kind of English that is used in every day life situations, otherwise English is only used in school and not practised in reality. The children do not understand the purpose of knowing and using English outside school.

The only practice in conversation that students get is given when they are supposed to answer direct questions asked by the teacher. And taken into consideration that the class consists of more than 45 students and furthermore that the teacher does not ask that many direct questions, they do not get to answer/practise that much.

The school system is very traditional and it is based on the teachers' authoritarian teaching style, which means that the students are supposed to be quiet and listen to

the teacher.

Classrooms that discourage talk will never be good places for language learning. There are teachers who still regard silence as golden and sitting in one place as a sign of good behaviour. (Pollard, 1998, p.16)

As we observed there is almost no practice in spontaneous speech, even though the students hear a lot of SJE from the teachers. The teachers need to be convinced that a silent classroom is not the most effective way of learning a language, as Pollard (1998) points out,; that spontaneous talk and other fun activities are positive for the acquisition.

One of the more challenging tasks is to get teachers to understand that there can be a positive relationship between talk and learning and between fun and learning. Of course we realise that the possibilities of letting the students speak spontaneously is limited because of, for example, large groups and lack of space.

One major problem about Patois vs. SJE learning is that some words have different meanings. The student who speaks JC and who must write and comprehend SJE in school has to be aware of the fact that one word that refers to one item in JC can mean something completely different in SJE:

The term 'waiter', in books always refers to a man who serves, in JC it may also mean 'tray'. Of course this problem is not one peculiar to the JC/SJE situation. Within the islands there are cases of different names for the same fruit or vegetable in different regions. (Pollard, 1993, p.1)

Of course this creates a lot of problems for the children, but the teachers realise these problems and they try hard to explain in different ways, partly by letting the students use the dictionaries a lot. This is good practice; the students get used to look up words in dictionaries.

One of the tasks of the classroom teacher is to help children identify the two languages and see them as separate and distinct. This is a more difficult task than it might seem on the surface, partly because English is heard less and less in the society, as with increasing national confidence JC is accepted in situations where before English would be accepted. (Pollard, 1998, p.10)

Here is an important task for the Jamaican teacher. He or she has to inform the student that by using a certain word the sentence may have a completely different meaning than what the student intended. An explanation which has to do with different meanings for the same item would be of advantage for the students. This will lead to the students being able to use the word both in their everyday conversations, and in formal situations and writing.

We also think that one good way of learning a second language is to read a lot, in order to expose the students to the written word in English. This is something that all language learning has in common, the ones who take active part in reading will automatically become good learners. It is therefore of major importance for teachers to provide opportunities for reading.

Patois is not an official language. Discussions about this issue have been going on for decades and the discussions are not without controversies. First of all, Patois

probably needs to be accepted as a language in its own right before being given the status of an official language. Researchers around the world are not in agreement as regards what constitutes a "language" or when a variant of a particular language is "ready" to become a "proper language". This is indeed true for Jamaican Creole (Johannsson, 1997, Todd, 1984). There is also disagreement about whether it is necessary to be fluent in your mother tongue for you to be able to learn a second language. Jamaica is no exception, *there is a recurring discussion about the role of the mother tongue in acquiring competence in English..* (Bryan, 1998, p.59)

It is not likely that Patois will become a language used in education at least not for a long time yet, although English can not be regarded as the native language of many of the students (Bryan, 1998, p. 1). But we believe that if Patois to some extent could be used in education, this would lead to a better English language acquisition for students. As teachers in Swedish as a second language our experience tells us that it is much easier to learn a second language if you have a base in your mother tongue.

As we have understood by staying in Kingston, Jamaica, observing in the classrooms, talking with Jamaican people and reading a lot of literature about the Jamaican languages, it is not controversial to say that Jamaica in reality is a bilingual country and English is far more widely understood than spoken. The main spoken language in Jamaica is Patois. Till recently Patois was only an oral language, but by now it has established itself literally, too. Today, Jamaicans are not ashamed anymore of speaking patois, instead they are proud of it and more and more literature is written in Patois.

One typical thing that we first noted when we heard people speaking Patois is that

they often drop the letter "h", for example "ouse" instead of "house". Instead they can add "h" in unexpected positions like in "hemphasize". Patois speakers often have a problem in pronouncing "th" so they drop the "h" in the combination: "three-tree", "thanks-tanks", "the" is often pronounced as "de" and "them" as "dem". It is also common that "w" is dropped in Patois, i.e. "ooman – woman".

We realised this problem with pronunciation when we talked to a Jamaican taxi driver one of our first days in Kingston. He asked us how we found the "eat", and we answered that we liked the Jamaican food. Then he looked very confused, because what he really had asked was how we found the "heat".

The pronunciation of JC is frequently different from the English pronunciation. Over the time, JC has changed many words in ways that make them sound very different from the English sounds. In order to help students who have problems with words that do not sound the same in JC and Creole, we think that the teachers need to provide opportunities for reading and for getting acquainted with what the words look like on paper. And it is important that the words are always introduced in context, each word a student is asked to spell should be given in a sentence.

The most living and lasting traces of Jamaican language in the whole world comes probably from the music, especially the Reggae and the legend of Bob Marley.

A child whose mother tongue is not identical with the language of the school may have a double disadvantage. He or she has to learn a new variety of English before he can integrate into the school system and there is a danger that he will perceive any criticism levelled at his speech as a criticism of himself, his background, his people.

Of course it is an advantage that the Caribbean teachers share the cultural and linguistic heritage of their pupils. *It can be argued that school success will be facilitated if the instruction is linked up with his or her linguistic background.* (Holm, 1988-89, p. 69)

We noticed by observing the teaching in school that the children were faced with a double task since they receive instruction in a "foreign" language. It is obvious that important topics in the school subjects will be more easily taught when instruction is based on familiar examples from the mother tongue. *The ideal product of the Jamaican classroom is the bilingual student [---] The number of these students however is far less than is desirable, made up as it is predominantly of those children who grow up in homes where English is spoken.* (Pollard, 1998, p. 11)

During our time in Jamaica it became obvious that language matters a great deal in the country. Discussions about language issues are going on everywhere; debates rage on radio call-in shows, in newspapers, and among teachers as well as people we met on the street everyone has their own opinion about what people are speaking or should be speaking or used to speak. *It is clear that disagreements over language are symptomatic of larger conflicts: not only over the nature and function of language, and the relationship between language and schooling, but also the place of education in Jamaica's development, and even the directions national development should take.* (Low, 1998, p. 84) These concerns are not merely academic. This widespread investment in language issues signals their intimate relationship with questions of cultural identity, national development, and prosperity.

Working with this essay has strengthened our belief that language is a subject of constant development, it always changes. There are no simple solutions of the language situation in Jamaica, but still our opinion is that the people, and especially the pupils, need to become aware of the differences between Jamaican Creole and English.

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Appendix

Questions

- Problems/advantages with SJE and JC?
- How do you look upon your own situation?
- How much do the pupils use SJE and JC?
- Homework – results?
- National exams?
- Educated teachers?



Linköpings universitet
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Tina Andersson & Carolina Eriksson

Learning in a Language that isn't one's own – the Case of Jamaica

A Minor Field Study, 2001

Examensarbete 10 poäng

Handledare:
Ulla-Britt Persson

Avdelning, Institution Division, Department Institutionen för beteendevetenskap 581 83 LINKÖPING	Datum Date 2001-12-14
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Titel Title Learning in a language that isn't one's own – the Case of Jamaica Författare Author Tina Andersson & Carolina Eriksson

Sammanfattning Abstract In this study, titled Learning in a language that isn't one's own – the case of Jamaica, our intention is to give a picture of what the language situation in Jamaica is like. English is the official language in Jamaica, but it is coexisting with Jamaican Creole, which is not admitted as a official language in Jamaica, but it is the language of the people. In this study we try to point out possible factors that have created the langugae situation of Jamaica. We have mostly focused on the situation at school, all teaching is supposed to be in English. We have observed attitudes among pupils and teachers to English and Jamaican Creole. We will also give general explanations of the terms Pidgin and Creole and we will give a brief history background of Jamaica.

Nyckelord

Keyword

Jamaica; Education; Language; Pidgin; Creole

Preface

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