

ABSTRACT

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF
ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS IN STANDARD ENGLISH OF
PUPILS IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN TRINIDAD**

Iris Hewitt-Bradshaw

Oral language is not an area that has traditionally received as much focus as the literacy skills of reading and writing. It is sometimes suggested that students' inadequate writing competence is due to the fact that their listening and speaking skills are not adequately developed in the classroom.

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the development of pupils' oral language skills at eight primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Data collected from interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observation reveal that formal teaching of oral language skills is uncommon although many educators think that they should be taught. These skills therefore develop incidentally in many classrooms, but are supported by school activities in some schools. In addition, unsuitable classroom conditions appear to inhibit the implementation of effective programmes to develop oracy skills. The data also suggest that, irrespective of students' social background and language, the teacher's methods, teaching style and the classroom climate are significant in determining the extent to which pupils get an opportunity to develop their oral language skills, and extend their experiences to writing.

Keywords: Iris Hewitt-Bradshaw; oral language; speaking and listening skills.