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ABSTRACT

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The Effect of Trinidad English-Lexicon Creole as a Medium of Written Communication on the Reading Proficiency of Adults in Literacy Classes in Trinidad.

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This dissertation investigates the hypothesis that in the Trinidadian linguistic situation, the use of the vernacular could enhance reading acquisition in adult learners. It is established that there are two main languages operating in Trinidadian society. The official language is Trinidad Standard English (TSE) and the mother tongue is Trinidad English-lexicon Creole (TEC). It is argued throughout that the mismatch between grammatical features of the language of speech and those of the language of instruction is at the root of the high level of illiteracy among adults in Trinidad. To test this hypothesis, a quasi-experimental study, using a statistical contrast matrix design, is conducted among neo-literate adults attending literacy classes. Language is assessed and subjects are re-classified into language of speech (LOS) groups. Texts for reading are presented in both TSE and TEC. Lexicon and spelling are held constant. Reading scores per language of text (LOT) are compared overall and among LOS groups. TSE texts seem to facilitate word recognition & fluency and reading rate, while both texts have equal impact on comprehension scores. No significant relationship between LOT and LOS has been found.

Keywords: Marie-Louise Carmen Brown-Dottin; Trinidad English-lexicon Creole grammar; reading in the mother tongue; reading assessment; spoken language assessment.

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