

ABSTRACT

Not many studies have been undertaken to examine the effect of a bidialectic or diglossic language situation on the learning of a new language.

The aim of this study is to examine such a situation as found in the Jamaican language context by observing the reactions of sample types of students to the language situation, and discover the relationship between such reactions and performance in language learning.

Code-switching and code-mixing are identified as two different reactions or approaches to the Jamaican language situation. The strategies employed by both code-switchers and code-mixers in their reactions to the two codes - Standard English and Jamaican Creole are transferred to the learning of Spanish.

Thus, the code-switcher who chooses alternative codes at will and who thereby pays attention to details tends to derive a certain advantage using the same approach to learning Spanish. Alternatively, the code-mixer who mixes the two codes indiscriminately, ignoring essential differences between them, finds learning a new language more difficult.

The speech performance, academic performance and performance in Spanish of five pupils identified as code-switchers or code-mixers have been analysed and related to the two different approaches to language learning.