

ABSTRACT

This study looks at acrolectal Jamaican English, i.e. the variety of English spoken by the elite of Jamaica in formal contexts. The study examines the speech of twenty-four educated Jamaicans. Seven phonological (TH Stopping, 'ng', Tense Vowels, /k/, /jʊ/, 'I', 'don't) and two morpho-syntactic ('There...be', Zero Copula) features of their speech are quantitatively measured and correlated to the social factors of social class, age and sex. The effect of linguistic factors on variability within the speech of the twenty-four informants is also examined. In general, it was found that: the Lower Middle Class used more non-standard forms in their speech than the Upper Middle Class/Upper Class; the younger group of informants used more non-standard forms in their speech; and that females used more non-standard forms than males. Possible reasons for the language behaviour of different sectors of the population are posited. Some phonological features of the speech of the informants (referred to as Acrolectal Jamaican English or AJE in the study) is compared to other varieties of English (Caribbean dialects of English, Standard American and Standard British English). In conclusion, the explanation previously put forward for the language behaviour of the different groups of individuals is examined in greater detail; and attempt is made to classify the kind of variability found in the text; and the concepts of Acrolect and Standard Jamaican English are explored.