

ABSTRACT

Students' TAM Errors In The Context Of The Speech Of Tobago

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This dissertation explains eleven subtypes of tense, aspect, and mood (TAM) error identified in three types of composition in attempted Standard English (SE) written by students of Forms 4, 5, and 6 of a secondary school in Tobago. It does so essentially by reference to the behaviour of identical or analogous forms/structures in naturalistic Tobagonian speech (TOB) as well as in SE. It analyses both the erroneous and the naturalistic forms/structures in terms of their semantic and discourse functions or, where these are not applicable, in terms of their (semantico-)morphosyntactic structure, compares them, and concludes i) that all the subtypes of error are either partial or full calques on the naturalistic forms/structures; and ii) four of them represent new interlanguage uses of SE forms. Similarity/identity of morphological structure, semantic content and discourse function between the error forms and naturalistic Tobagonian forms establishes the Tobagonian identity of the calques. Insufficient habituation in the Standard English rules (of use) underlies the calques and new uses. Decreases in the frequency of seven subtypes in Form 5 texts suggest a link between frequency and level of exposure to instruction in Standard English. Increases in the

frequency of three subtypes in Form 5 and persistence of three subtypes in Form 6 with comparatively high frequencies suggest that the relevant subtypes are particularly difficult to eradicate.

The sharing of the same lexicon by Tobagonian and Standard English as a result of slavery and the post-slavery maintenance of British rule provided the linguistic basis for calquing and development of new uses for SE forms.