

## ABSTRACT

### The Role Played by Social Class, Sex and Subject Specialization in the Acquisition of Standard English by Barbadian Students

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In the light of the apparent increasing failure of many Barbadian Students to acquire the standard variety of English to a proficient level, this research study sought to examine some of the variables thought to be involved in the process of second dialect acquisition to assess the extent of the role they each play in this process. The particular variables looked at were social class, sex and subject specialization.

The method used was to measure the correlation between the level of Standard English proficiency of Barbadian first year university students and their social class, sex and subject specialization to see if any of these relationships proved to be significant. ANOVA and regression analyses were also done to find out the degree of importance of the contribution of each of the abovementioned three variables to the level of acquisition of the students.

In the case of the relationship between level of acquisition and social class, no significant correlation was found between the two and social class was not found to be a good predictor of the level of acquisition of Barbadian students. In the case of level of acquisition and sex, a significant correlation was found and sex turned out to be a good predictor of the level of acquisition of the students. In the case of level of acquisition and subject specialization, a significant correlation was found (though weak), but subject specialization was not found to be a good predictor of the level of acquisition of the students. All of these results have important implications for the Barbadian educational system since they seem to indicate that social psychological factors need to be addressed and institutional changes need to be made in the system in order to minimize any negative potential of these variables and to maximize their positive potential.