

ABSTRACT

Language Situation and Sociopolitical Structure in Jamaica

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This dissertation attempts to contribute further to an understanding of the sociolinguistic situation in Jamaica. It attempts a systematic analysis of the class system in order to examine how social structure and class power are manifested on the level of language.

This relationship between the sociopolitical order and the linguistic order highlights the role of language in the marginalisation of individuals in the lower social groups from the sociopolitical nerve centres. The correlation between language and class also contributes to an understanding of the mediatory role that the Jamaican middle class assumed in the sociopolitical development of the country in the 1930s.

The thesis also looks at how certain social changes in the 1970s have affected patterns of language use in public formal or institutionalised domains such as the state bureaucracy and the education system. This has helped to determine the extent to which the language models that have been proposed for Jamaica such as diglossia and bilingualism, can be used to describe the country's sociolinguistic situation.