

ABSTRACT

Classroom Speech and Academic Performance: An Investigation of the Relationships between Linguistic Exposure and Academic Performance of Students in Specific Subject Areas in Signal Hill Secondary Comprehensive School

Barbara Constance

This study attempts to investigate the basic assumption that exposure to language in the classroom impacts on academic performance of the students. It examines classroom spoken language in particular groups in Signal Hill Secondary Comprehensive School in Tobago with a view to determining the linguistic exposure of each class and the extent to which this exposure correlates with the academic performance of the students as class groups.

Data was collected via audio recordings, field notes and unstructured interviews of teachers over the duration of the investigation. Audio recordings were done while students were simultaneously observed in their natural classroom environment. Data was also collected using students' scores from the examinations which they sat at the end of the term. This was done using four first form groups and four fourth form groups within the school. Focus was placed on the groups' exposure to spoken language within specified subject areas and the academic performance of the same groups. The overall design model utilized in this investigation was a **descriptive correlational design**.

While the researcher was collecting data in the classes, the students were not required to do anything apart from what they usually did in their classes. They continued with their classes as usual, as far as possible, while the sessions were being audio taped.

The teachers were quite cooperative and did their part to ensure that the class ran as smoothly as possible.

The findings suggest that there is no positive or negative correlation between classes' exposure to spoken language and their overall academic performance. Specific features of classroom spoken language did not show any particular correlation to academic performance. Any apparent correlations may be due to other variables such as teacher methodology and students' academic aptitude.

Key words: academic performance; classroom spoken language; linguistic exposure; scores; correlation.