

ABSTRACT

“I got what I wanted but how did they make me feel?”
The Anatomy of Linguistic Discrimination in a Diglossic Situation

Kadian Nadeisha Walters

This dissertation sought to determine whether direct linguistic discrimination exists in service encounters at Jamaica's state entities that have adopted a Citizens Charter. These entities promise to provide, among other things, fair and equitable service in their charters but is this the case for all Jamaicans regardless of their primary language? Additionally, it examines the anatomy of this linguistic discrimination in a diglossic speech community, where English is the official language and Jamaican Creole is traditionally reserved for informal domains.

The data includes 192 recorded telephone interactions with preselected Service Representatives (SRs) in entities from the three main geographical regions of Jamaica. The methodology uses a modified Matched-Guise technique to collect subjective reactions of a male and a female bilingual caller, who interacted with SRs in SJE on one occasion and JC on another. The study applies Conversation Analysis to examine the SRs' conversational practices while providing favourable and unfavourable service to these callers.

The study provides insight into the nature of linguistic discrimination in a diglossic context. It highlights the experiences that JC speakers may face in public service encounters; the quality of information they receive and how they are made to feel. These findings provide relevant information for language policy makers and customer service personnel in the thrust to provide equal and efficient service.

Keywords: Kadian Nadeisha Walters; linguistic discrimination; linguistic profiling; diglossia; language attitudes; language rights; language ideology; language in service encounters; matched-guise technique; Jamaica.