

ABSTRACT

ORAL COMMUNICATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SPANISH

Bradna Rose McLaren

This study was designed to investigate oral competence in the learning of Spanish among grade ten students in Jamaica. The student sample consisted of four classes with a total of 101 students (37 females and 64 males) selected from three traditional urban secondary schools. The teacher sample included four female teachers.

The investigation addressed the following issues:

1. The amount of oral language production – the extent to which foreign language learners used the target language for oral communication.
2. The competence of student expression in oral communicative activities.
3. The social dynamics of classroom interaction.
4. Classroom techniques used to foster competence in listening and speaking.

A primarily qualitative design was used to identify patterns of discourse in Spanish classes and to solicit views on the level of student participation in listening and speaking exercises. Data sources were classroom observation, students' questionnaire, student interviews and teachers' questionnaire.

The findings indicated that, for the most part, the subjects had little exposure to the practice of oral communicative skills. Within this limitation, they had more opportunities to listen than to speak. The focus was on the development of reading and writing skills. The areas emphasized seemed to have been selected based on the teachers' interpretation of priority areas of the Caribbean Examinations Council's syllabus.

The main implications of the findings suggest that success in oral communication in Spanish depends greatly on the approaches used in the delivery of the programme, the level of teacher preparation and mastery of the target language as well as the interest and involvement of the students.