

ABSTRACT

Pronunciation problems of Barbadian students of Spanish

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This thesis investigates the problems of Barbadian students in the production of the Spanish sound system against the historical contexts of the teaching of Spanish in Barbados and the evolution of the language situation on the island. Spanish began to be taught in the secondary schools of Barbados around the turn of the last century; the method used emphasized grammar and translation rather than the students' oral facility in the language. This situation began to change only after Barbados achieved political independence, when a number of factors helped bring about the present situation in the teaching of Spanish, where there is much more emphasis on oral communication.

The language situation in Barbados can be defined as bi-dialectal, that is, most Barbadians can speak a formal variety Barbadian Standard English (BSE) as well as an informal one, Barbadian Dialect, (BD). This thesis investigates in some detail the influences of these two varieties upon the production of Spanish segmentals and suprasegmentals, based upon a number of different exercises carried out with a cross-section of Barbadian high-school and university students.

The results of this research show that whereas most of the sounds of Spanish occur in one or other of the two varieties of language spoken by Barbadians, the students nevertheless seem to associate the learning of a foreign language with a formal situation and tend to be influenced more by the sound systems of BSE (the formal variety) than BD - thus not availing themselves of those phonetic resources of the dialect form that might be more appropriate to the Spanish sound system. This thesis also suggests an approach which might be used by teachers to take advantage of such sound correlations as exist between the Spanish language and Barbadian dialect.