

Acquisition of Jamaican Phonology

In *Acquisition of Jamaican Phonology*, Rocky Meade provides a primarily descriptive analysis of the acquisition of phonology by Jamaican children. He discusses the similar development paths not only of the children studied but also of children acquiring other languages. However, the individual variation amongst the children and variation between the socio-economic groups are also captured. The acquisition of syllable structure, segments and features, the use of phonological processes and the effect of variation in the adult language are covered in the process. The findings have applications for the education policies in Jamaica and help provide a standard to judge phonological impairment.

The Creole Continuum model and Optimality Theory (OT) helps to provide a theoretical analysis of the variation encountered in the Jamaican language situation, which includes Jamaican English (JE), the acrolect, and Jamaican Creole (JC), and English-lexifier Creole language. JC includes the basilect (the variety most distinct from JE) and the mesolect. The mesolect includes a mix of features of the acrolect and the basilect in addition to some unique features. The model recognises monolingual speakers of all the Jamaican language varieties and all the multi-lingual permutations. It also provides an account of the range of language varieties acquired by the children. The OT approach accounts for the implicational relationship between variants of the different language varieties and does not allow unat-tested co-occurrences of variants.

An alternative approach to the acquisition process is mooted in a theoretical excursus at the end of the dissertation, beginning with the proposal of a modified version of the Dependency Phonology representation of sub-segmental features. The modifications provide a theory of the segment that can be a supplement to OT. Although the proposed reclassification of sub-segmental elements is motivated by the need to account for acquisition data, it yields the same set of phonemes as the existing theories of the segment. It should therefore be capable of dealing, equally adequately, with the same (non-acquisition) data that the present approaches account for.

This book will appeal to language acquisition researchers, descriptive and theoretical phonologists, creolists, sociolinguists and persons interested in the clinical and educational applications of linguistics.

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