

This paper presentation will review the recent literature on teaching communicative competence in American English to speakers of Caribbean English and English-based Creoles. Over the past 25 years, various authors have studied the grammatical, textual, illocutionary, and sociolinguistic knowledge and ability of members of this special population. The results of their research have several implications for teachers of English to speakers of other languages in Florida.

The presenter will profile successful pilot projects in K-12 education that have used language awareness methods with their Anglophone Caribbean students to bridge gaps in grammatical competence between the two languages. Teacher attitudes towards Creole languages are also a factor in the sociolinguistic development of these students. The construct of native speaker held by education administrators who control government funds limits the assistance that can be provided for schools with Caribbean immigrant students. Advocacy for the definition to exclude English-based Creole speakers may improve the environment for these programs to succeed.

At the higher education level, studies have focused on the textual and illocutionary competence of students in their academic writing. The presenter will provide a brief overview of the diverse educational experiences from which Caribbean students come to University writing courses in the U.S. These students can benefit from increased language awareness that validates their home language and gives them a medium to express themselves. Attendees will leave this session with a sample lesson plan that can be adapted for teachers or students to improve their language awareness with English and Jamaican Creole.