

SOME DIMENSIONS OF DIGLOSSIA IN HAITI

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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses itself to the study of the sociological correlates of speech behavior among bilingual speakers of French and Creole in Haiti. Comparisons are drawn with the diglossia situation in Paraguay. One discusses the factors influencing language loyalty and language maintenance, the social constraints of language choice, the social context of communicative development as well as the competence of Haitians in Creole and French.

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The most characteristic feature of the linguistic situation in Haiti is the diglossia demonstrated by the elite of the country. According to FERGUSON's definition (1959), the term "diglossia" is applicable to every situation where two languages coexist, one being a standard language used in formal communication, the other, considered as less important, used in more intimate situations. In Haiti, the two coexisting languages are French and Creole. French is considered as the superior linguistic code whereas Creole has a much lower status. As FERGUSON (1959, a) points out, however, the diglossia situation in Haiti differs considerably from