

ABSTRACT

The Challenges Teachers Face When Teaching Creole-Influenced Vernacular Speaking Students in a Rural School in the Southern Educational District of Trinidad to Read Standard English Text

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This ethnographic case study examined the difficulties that teachers face when teaching the reading of Standard English (SE) text to Creole-influenced vernacular-speaking students at a primary school in the Southern Educational District of Trinidad. Data were collected from three teachers, their students, and the principal, through interviews and observations. It was concluded that 1) teachers and students spoke vernacular freely in the classroom; 2) students were heavily influenced by Trinidadian Creole as evidenced by errors of pronunciation, syntax, and phonology; 3) teachers reported feelings of powerlessness over the strong influence of the vernacular coming from the home, which, they suggested, influenced the students' reading ability; and 4) the lack of a school policy on teaching reading of SE text appeared to be an obstacle to teachers' performance and achievement in teaching SE.

Keywords: Teacher attitudes; Case studies; English; Teaching techniques; Primary school teachers; Language education; Student behaviour; Student sociology; Creole speaking students; Reading instruction; Trinidad and Tobago