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Student name: Zoë Sucre
Student ID no.: 816010545
Degree Program: B.A. Spanish
Supervisor: Paola Palmas-Rojas

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ABSTRACT

This research paper observes teachers' perception of Spanish in the primary school syllabus ten years after its initial implementation. This includes they have adapted to the inclusion of Spanish at the primary school level, perceived challenges they face and their perceived needs to make teaching Spanish at this level more manageable. Three outer city schools of the St. Patrick District were selected for this study based their distance from MoE buildings and subsequent resources found in more urban areas. A total of fifteen teachers and three principals were interviewed. This study finds that while Spanish may receive positive reception at the primary school level, there little emphasis being placed on its maintenance, particularly in the areas of foreign language teaching training, provision of standardized physical resources and developing an equilibrium between the Spanish syllabus and the SEA workload at the upper levels.

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INTRODUCTION

The globalization occurring within the current century holds the knowledge of a foreign language (FL) in high regard, not only for its communicative value, but also for the benefits it brings to learning and human development. Concerning efficient FL learning, a largely popular school of thought is that it is more beneficial to begin FL learning at an early age as the knowledge can be more easily retained (GİMATDİNOVA ÇAĞAÇ 132). A result of this belief can be observed in the inclusion of Spanish to the primary school curriculum in Trinidad and Tobago at all levels in 2011. The change had been initially met with apprehension, as the teacher previously had neither been trained in Spanish language competency nor in FL teaching pedagogy. A study conducted by Desrian Wilson in 2016 concluded that teachers had been unprepared for this change and its implementation had been halted in order to better equip schools and teachers with the necessary resources to do it. Ten years have since passed and this research aims to examine the current perceptions of teachers regarding teaching Spanish in their primary schools.

Rationale

Over ten years have passed since Spanish was officially included in the primary school curriculum. This research aims to examine teachers' current perception regarding teaching Spanish at the primary school level; including their opinions on the current syllabus, policies and the kind of support that they have received.

Thesis statement

While the passage of time has acclimatized teachers to teaching Spanish in primary schools, there is still a level of otherness with regard to how it is treated within the public school system.

Parameters

This research seeks to observe teachers' perceptions of teaching Spanish at the primary school level ten years after its implementation, as this is sufficient time for the staff to have adjusted to the change. Government primary schools were chosen as subjects of this study because these schools are solely dependent on the government for their funding and resources, and as such, no external shareholders will have influenced how the schools are run. Outer city primary schools were chosen due to their distance from MoE buildings and subsequent resources found in more urban areas. The study focuses on teachers' and principals' perspectives because these are the ones tasked with directly carrying out the curriculum and policies in the schools. Three schools were selected for this research so as to have as diverse a study as possible. Teachers were also selected from all levels of the school to give a more detailed understanding of the state of Spanish within the entire school.

Objectives

This study aims to examine how teachers have adapted to the inclusion of Spanish at the primary school level. It also seeks to explore any perceived challenges of teaching Spanish at the primary school level, as well as highlight needs to make teaching Spanish at the primary school level more manageable.

Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How have teachers adapted to the inclusion of Spanish at the primary school level?
2. What are any perceived challenges of teaching Spanish at the primary school level?

3. What are teachers' perceived needs to make teaching Spanish at the primary school level more manageable?

Methodology

This research is conducted using the case study method. Interviews are used as the primary data collection method. The researcher contacted the administration of three primary schools within the St. Patrick district in South Trinidad, requesting the participation of teachers who would have taught Spanish to their classes, as well as the schools' principals. There are no restrictions as to the grade levels of the school in which these teachers operated, and the participants selected were of a voluntary nature. There were two teachers from School A; six teachers from School B; seven teachers from School C; and principals from Schools A, B and C. The participants were then interviewed virtually.

Chapter Outline

This research paper consists of three chapters. Chapter One: The Literature Review provides a brief overview of the educational system of Trinidad and Tobago, including the structure of the school system and syllabus, the requirements for teaching at the primary school level and early reactions to Spanish being included in the primary school curriculum. It also observes the climate regarding foreign language teaching in other countries. Chapter Two: The Results is the documentation of the research conducted, recording teachers' attitudes and opinions toward primary school Spanish, their level of preparation with regard to Spanish, students' response to Spanish and the support they have received from stakeholders. Chapter Three: The Discussion is an evaluation of the information gathered in Chapter Two, contextualized by the information of Chapter One.

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a review of information found regarding the current education system of Trinidad and Tobago and initial reactions to the integration of Spanish to the primary school curriculum. It also references how foreign language teaching is viewed in other countries, particularly in the earlier years of schooling.

In conducting this research, few studies were found addressing the implementation of Spanish at the primary level. Most of the literature used in this study dealt with English as their foreign language. Kafique argues for prestige given to English as it is the current global lingua franca (253).

Education System in Trinidad and Tobago

Morton-Gitins and Smith (2) provide a concise and comprehensive rundown of the education system of Trinidad and Tobago, which has been put into the table below.

Levels	Primary							Secondary						
Classes	Infants		Lower Primary			Upper Primary		Lower Secondary			Upper Secondary		Advanced Proficiency	
	1	2	Std 1	Std 2	Std 3	Std 4	Std 5	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Form 5	Lower 6	Upper 6
Age	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18+

Figure 1: Education Levels of Trinidad and Tobago

The subjects covered at the primary are English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Agricultural Science, Physical Education (P.E.) and Health, Spanish, Values, Character and Citizen Education, and the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA).

At the end of students' primary school career, Standard Five students take the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination, which is a "selection mechanism for passage into secondary school" (Morton-Gittens and Smith 2). Heavy focus is placed on the subject areas that are tested, which are English Language, Mathematics and Creative Writing. Moreover, preparation for this examination begins at the Standard Four level. Due to the high-stakes nature of this examination, there is much emphasis placed on students to obtain high marks, as higher grades grant students the opportunity to be admitted not only to prestigious schools, but also their first choice schools, while the opposite is true for lower scorers. There is also heavy emphasis on teachers and schools to provide classes of high achievement. Such heavy focus on this exam may culminate in high levels of stress for students, as well as disappointment in themselves when they do not perform as well as they would like, said the Chairman of Children's Authority Hanif Benjamin when interviewed in an article by Jesse Ramdeo.

Due to SEA preparation, the Spanish for the syllabus at upper levels only covers three broad topics: nationality, physical appearance and communication technology (see appendix 1). It can also be noted that there is more content for Spanish at the Infant and Lower School levels than the Upper level (see appendix 2).

At secondary level, the end of Form Five, according to Rambally, is marked by the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) General Proficiency examination. Grades range from 1-6, with one being the highest and five being the pass mark. To obtain a full certificate, secondary school students must pass five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics. While

students may graduate secondary school at Form Five, secondary schools also offer an optional two-year programme, which is the advanced level. Although for the purpose of this study emphasis is placed on the primary level, knowledge of the secondary level is necessary to provide context of certain academic levels and qualifications.

Foreign Language Teaching Requirements at Primary Level

In the past, the only requirements necessary for teachers to obtain a permanent teaching position in Trinidad and Tobago was a completed CSEC certificate. As of 2011, however, these requirements have since changed. Teachers of any level must earn a bachelor's degree in education, with programmes being offered at the University of the West Indies (UWI), the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and the University of the Southern Caribbean (Morton-Gittins and Smith 3). Teachers are also required to have a certificate of good character provided by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) (Rambally). Despite the passage of ten years since this change, the Ministry of Education website, under the section "Registration Requirements and Application Requirements for Primary and Secondary Schools" has not updated its requirements, listing the previous requirements, albeit in more detail. These are:

five (5) subjects at CXC General Proficiency Grades- I, II or III, or General Certificate of Education (GCE) Grades A, B or C. Must include: English, Mathematics, any science from the following natural science groups- Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Integrated Science, Food and Nutrition, Agricultural Science, Clothing and Textiles, and Human and Social Biology; any three (3) other subjects.

Due to the addition of Spanish to the primary school curriculum, Spanish was also added to the education degree programmes.

Background

In exploring how some teachers reacted to FL teaching in certain countries, this section aims at contextualizing said countries' educational climate. As there had not been cases found concerning the implementation of Spanish as a FL at the primary school level, cases where English was implemented as the FL in primary schools were referenced. In Indonesia, English is an optional local content subject, with no developed curriculum (Hawanti 162), and local content subjects curricula are developed in response to local conditions (166). Many primary schools' inclusion of English to the curriculum is influenced by parental pressure and a desire to increase the school's prestige (162).

At the beginning of Nguyen's paper, English had been added to the Vietnamese primary school curriculum ten years prior (162) and from 2006 had become compulsory, with four 40-minute sessions per week for Grades Three to Five (165). Upon the introduction of the English curriculum, speaking and listening were stressed (165). The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) also felt it important to explain the curriculum to teachers, despite the liberties given to schools concerning how the inclusion of English was handled, in order to avoid the textbooks being treated as the curriculum (165). At the time of Nguyen's research, there were no official English textbooks and materials, resulting in a variety being used for teaching and learning at different schools (162). This mirrors the situation in Trinidad and Tobago presently, in the sense that ten years have also passed since the implementation of Spanish at the primary level, and that there is no official material provided by the MoE for this subject area.

Perceptions of Teaching FL

Naturally, how teachers view FL teaching impacts the overall attitudes to FL education. With regard to this study, their opinion on teaching a FL at an early age specifically necessitates consideration. The literature shows positive reactions to FL learning at an early age. Concerning teaching English in Kuwaiti kindergartens, 75% of participants interviewed agreed that this age was appropriate (Habeeb 101). Dagarin and Perret's work show that Slovenian teachers regard early exposure to English as instrumental to improving English language teaching in their country (492). With regard to Spanish, in an interview with Brigdal, Darcelle Doodnath, a secondary school teacher who had developed a series of Spanish textbooks for the primary level, expressed that from ages 4-6, children are more receptive to language learning, so introducing them to Spanish at the primary school level in Trinidad and Tobago is a boon. This further cements the theory that early FL learning is a popular opinion among educators.

Teachers' views on specific FLs are another factor to consider when examining their approaches to FL teaching. Concerning Spanish in Trinidad and Tobago, one factor affecting the positive reception to learning Spanish is the country's proximity to Latin America (Brigdal; Wilson 189).

Despite teachers' positive attitudes towards the process of FL learning, uncertainty arises concerning teachers themselves carrying out these lessons. Kuwaiti teachers show apprehension to teaching English as they had not studied the language since college (Habeeb 15).

Another challenge, as presented in the literature, is of teachers with no prior language or language pedagogy knowledge being placed in the position of FL teachers, a practice that is criticized by teachers who have majored in FL teaching (Omar 134-135; Inci and Yildiz 444).

For many of the countries presented in this review, FL learning had often been placed secondary to other more traditional subject areas. According to Wilson, in Trinidad and Tobago, 75% of primary schools received moderate to no help for Spanish instruction due to a lack of competent teachers and prioritizing other subject areas, resulting in a lack of continuity through the school and more focus being placed on “core, examinable subjects” (185). Also, regarding Standards Four and Five, Spanish is left behind due to the sole focus placed on SEA preparation (Brigdal; Wilson 191). In Indonesia, due to English’s status as a local content subject, focus is placed on other subject areas, particularly the ones that, similarly to Trinidad and Tobago, are to be nationally examined (Hawanti 165). Moreover, while their principal expressed their confidence in their teachers’ ability to handle the programme well, Hawanti opines that the principal in their school did not appear to be particularly invested in the development of teaching English (165).

Training and Syllabus

The perceived quality of both the training received and syllabus also impact teachers’ experiences in FL teaching. There were many reports a perceived deficiency in FL education provided to teachers (Habeeb 106; Brown 28; Brummer and Dagarin Fojkar 29). Specifically, there was a noticeable difference between the language competency levels of the teacher and the levels necessary for FL teaching (Butler, as cited in Dagarin and Perret 480; Munkund, as cited in Dagarin and Perret 483; Omar 128; Numan and Moon, as cited by Nguyn 170). This can affect teachers’ approaches to FL teaching, due to their lacking confidence in their competence in the language. Teachers may develop an overreliance on the “prescribed system”, stunting the development of their own style of teaching (Omar 139). Doodnath expressed that many primary school teachers confessed to not teaching Spanish as much as they should due to a perceived lack of training (Brigdal).

While it is generally agreed that there needs to be a level of language competency to teach a FL, there are disparities as to what is considered sufficient. Wilson found that despite Spanish being included to teacher education at UTT, curriculum officers expressed that there is no necessity for Spanish competence in teachers for the programme's effectiveness (184), adding that all that was necessary to meet the instructional needs of primary Spanish was literacy (184-185). Similar sentiments may be shared by some teachers in Libya, as it was explained that due to some teachers' lack of fluency in English, they teach the language in Arabic (Omar 115). Omar's research also acknowledges infrequency in English language lectures as training for teachers; which are not in the required standard for learning and teaching" (129). This approach can be theorized as one of the reasons behind teachers' perceived lack of training and subsequent lack of confidence concerning FL teaching.

While language competency appears to be the primary focus of FL teaching, it is important to understand that effective FL teaching requires a specific skill set, one that must also be trained. Therefore, how FL teaching pedagogy is handled affects a country's FL learning climate. Wilson records that in Trinidad and Tobago, teachers appear untrained in Spanish pedagogy (191), with one principal admitting that a lack of training for the school administration from the MoE left them uncertain of their role (193). This compares to Indonesia, where English's status as a local content subject resulted in many teachers of English lacking in either language proficiency or in pedagogy, either entirely or in primary education (Hawanti 162). In Turkey, as many English teachers are not class teachers, they lack the pedagogical knowledge of children, with half of the participants in Inci's and Yildiz's study admitting to having developed the necessary skills on the job (440). This is contrasted with Germany, where teachers appear to have both language and pedagogical training to teach English as a FL to young learners (Inci and Yildiz 441).

It must also be considered that FL teaching to young learners requires a different skill set from simply FL teaching. Concerning the teaching of French in Greece, Faouglis' research found that while the vast majority of participants had 11+ years of FL teaching, their peak experience teaching French at the primary school level was 6 years (132).

One must bear teachers' opinions of their FL syllabi in mind, as it may affect the efficiency with which they carry out the material. For example, teachers in Kuwaiti feel uncertain about the current programme of English language education and that policymakers should consult teachers to address concerns regarding the current curriculum (Habeeb 111, 112). Habeeb warns, however, that opinions about the curriculum must be taken with caution, as these teachers are neither fluent in English nor trained in English language teaching methods (111). Hawanti says that the English language curriculum in Indonesia focuses on junior high and high school students (162), which may be a source of concern for primary school teachers. Inci and Yildiz noticed that while generally both Turkish and German teachers were satisfied with their programme, there were still some complaints raised by their teachers. For example, some Turkish teachers found the programme too intensive; some thought that the units were not enough and that activities in class should be "enriched with song and games"; some found it wholly unsuitable for children (443). In Germany, some teachers argued that the primary English programme did not allow for a smooth transition into secondary education (443).

All of the aforementioned concerns will have influenced teachers' views of the implementation of the FL programmes at the primary level. Wilson argued that there was a need for clear policy direction on the part of the MoE of Trinidad and Tobago, indicating a level of ambiguity regarding what is expected of educators (201).

Support received and required

Teaching and education exist within a wider community; hence there is a level of external assistance required for FL teachers to efficiently carry out their programmes. A means of support frequently requested is the provision of FL specialists (Habeeb 102, Wilson 190, 200), which further highlights class teachers' lack of confidence in their language capabilities. More direct support from the MoE is also a popular request. Habeeb reports a prevailing opinion that the MoE of Kuwaiti provided insufficient means and resources to teach English (112), while Doodnath expressed that marketing her textbook was the most challenging part due to the MoE's approach to Spanish language teaching in Trinidad and Tobago's primary schools (Brigdal). This indicates a supposed lack of understanding on the part of the MoE of the specificity of the requirements of FL teaching.

The interaction between Ministry personnel and the schools is another avenue through which more ministerial support can be given. Doodnath mentioned that in Trinidad and Tobago, curriculum supervisors for secondary schools also have to oversee primary schools, and that there is only one person in each educational district responsible for Spanish (Brigdal). This implies that said personnel may not only be overextended, but that primary Spanish may not received the attention necessary. Wilson's study finds complaints of inadequate communication "between all levels of personnel", with little evidence of support from the MoE (198).

Another human resource instrumental in supporting FL teachers in primary schools is the parents. Kafique agrees that parents' attitudes in Punjab to the development of the English language programme to be important, while Hawanti cites parental pressure as a factor influencing the inclusion of English to some Indonesian primary schools (162). Omar complains of a lack of family cooperation with schools in Libya.

An additional factor teachers believe will allow for the effective carrying out of FL programmes is more concise policies. Listyariani et al noticed that as English was not a subject on the national curriculum, the primary schools that did offer it had to create their own policies regarding teaching it (2). This can lead to a lack of uniformity regarding how the subject is implemented nationwide. Furthermore, while in Pakistan the language policies emphasize “the need of proficient English language”, there was a disconnect between these policies’ implementation and their maintainance (Kafique 255), which calls back to Nguyen’s “haphazard” approach to FL learning in primary school in some countries. Turkish teachers complained of a lack of instruction and information, particularly when their new system and programme had begun (Inci and Yildiz 444).

Access to adequate physical resources was another form of assistance requested by teachers. Wilson, speaking on the importance of handling resource needs, observed some teachers not only lacked curricular documents and resources, basic equipment and suitable infrastructure, but one participant had purchased or used their own resources (192), a cost “in terms of time, effort and finances” that the author argued was “unwarranted” (192-193). The type of resources needed is also important, with the literature presenting a lack of certain items necessary for FL instruction. These include textbooks, specialized rooms and audio-visual equipment (Johnson, Berg and Donaldson, cited in Omar 114; Listyariani et al 6; Hawani 163). Furthermore, so as to keep up with the needs of modernization, Turkish teachers argued for the necessity of internet access for all schools (Inci and Yildiz 444).

Students’ Reactions

Finally, how teachers view FL education is impacted by cyclical nature of teacher-student interactions, with Habeeb stating that there is a direct and indirect impact teachers’ “perceptions,

attitudes and methods of teaching” have on a child’s experience (7). One common impact of FL classes on young learners is an increase in self-confidence (Habeeb 110; Wilson 192). Levels of children’s enjoyment of FL learning are also high, Doodnath noticed that over the duration of the Spanish after school programme organized by the Siparia Regional Corporation, the children displayed excitement and eagerness to learn (Brigdal). This excitement would also influence students’ willingness to use the FL both inside and outside of the classroom (Wilson 190, 194), although there must be equal opportunity outside of the classroom for students to be able to practice (Omar 142). Excited participants may also make the carrying out of FL programmes easier on teachers due to their not having to combat unwilling attitudes.

While the majority of the literature focused on English as its FL, the same themes and principles can be applied to the teaching of any foreign language. Additionally, the compulsory statuses of these FL varied, influencing how much importance they were given, as well as how they were approached. Very little literature regarding this topic was found with regard to Trinidad and Tobago, with the latest academic paper found being from 2016, midway through the initial inclusion of Spanish to primary schools and the beginning of this paper. Thus, this research seeks to assess the current status of Spanish in primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago, the results of which will be explored in ensuing chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: RESULTS

This chapter presents the resulting data of the interviews conducted among the teachers and principals at three Southern outer city primary schools in the St. Patrick district. The table below displays the current levels taught by the teachers. While it should be noted that various teachers have experience teaching multiple levels, this table only reflects the level they were currently teaching at the time of the interviews.

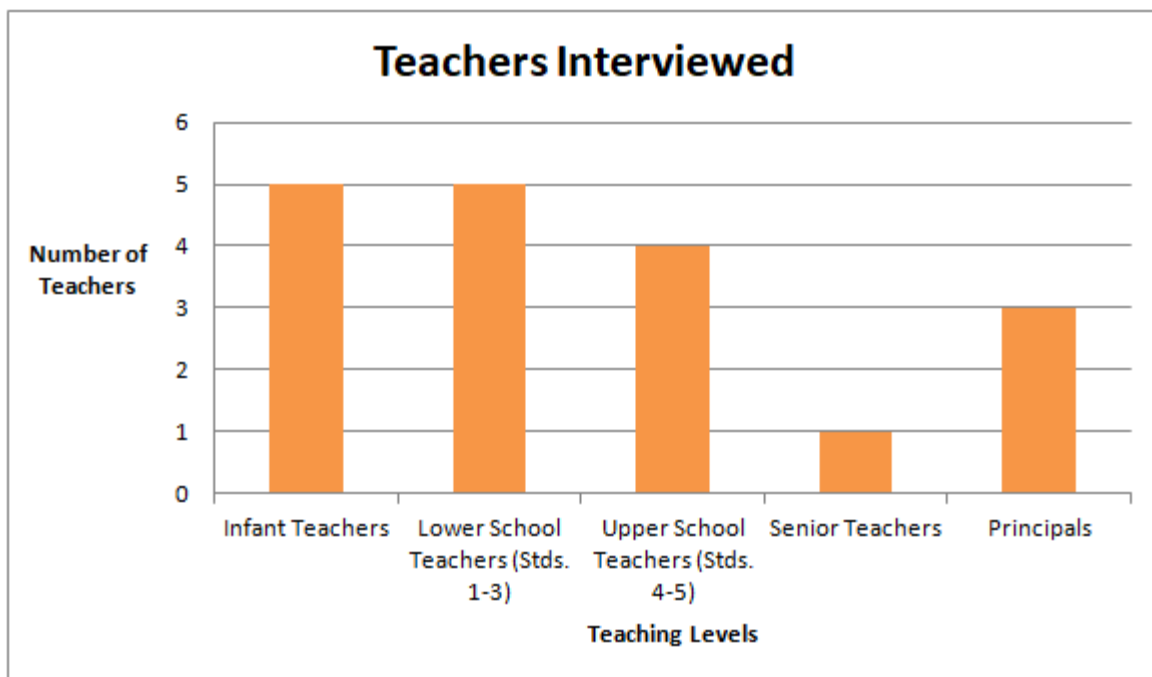


Table A: *Teachers Interviewed*

The objectives of this interview are to examine the following themes:

- The situation of Spanish in the three schools studied
- Preparation to facilitate Spanish
- Perception of students' reception of Spanish
- Opinions regarding the input of stakeholders

The situation of Spanish in the three schools studied

Firstly, the amount of time devoted to Spanish was examined, corresponding with Teacher Question (TQ) 1 (appendix 4) and Principal Question (PQ) 2 (appendix 5).

For infant level, results stemmed from between 25 minutes to 2 hours per week, although the average time allotted was 25-30 minutes per week.

Lower school had the most varied responses, as shown by the table below:

School A	School B				School C		
Principal	Principal	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4	Interviewee 5	Principal	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
1 hr	25-30 mins	45 mins	30 mins-1hr	5 hrs: 1hr per session	2 hrs	2 hrs	1 hr

Table B: Time Allotted to Spanish Per Week at Lower School Level

At the upper level, teachers report that there is no Spanish taught due to focus being placed on the SEA examination, although both Principals A and B maintain that their schools continue teaching it, for 45 and 30-40 minutes per week respectively.

There is no Ministry-mandated time duration for Spanish. At School A, the principal is the one who decides the time allotment of Spanish. At School B, administration and teachers cooperatively decide on how much time is allocated for Spanish classes. For School C the teachers assign the time, with the principal giving the final approval. Age is the primary influence on the time variations between the school levels, with the younger students having less time due to their shorter attention spans. There is also a transversal approach to teaching primary Spanish.

How teachers prepared for Spanish classes is explored in TQ2 (appendix 4). The results are shown in the table below:

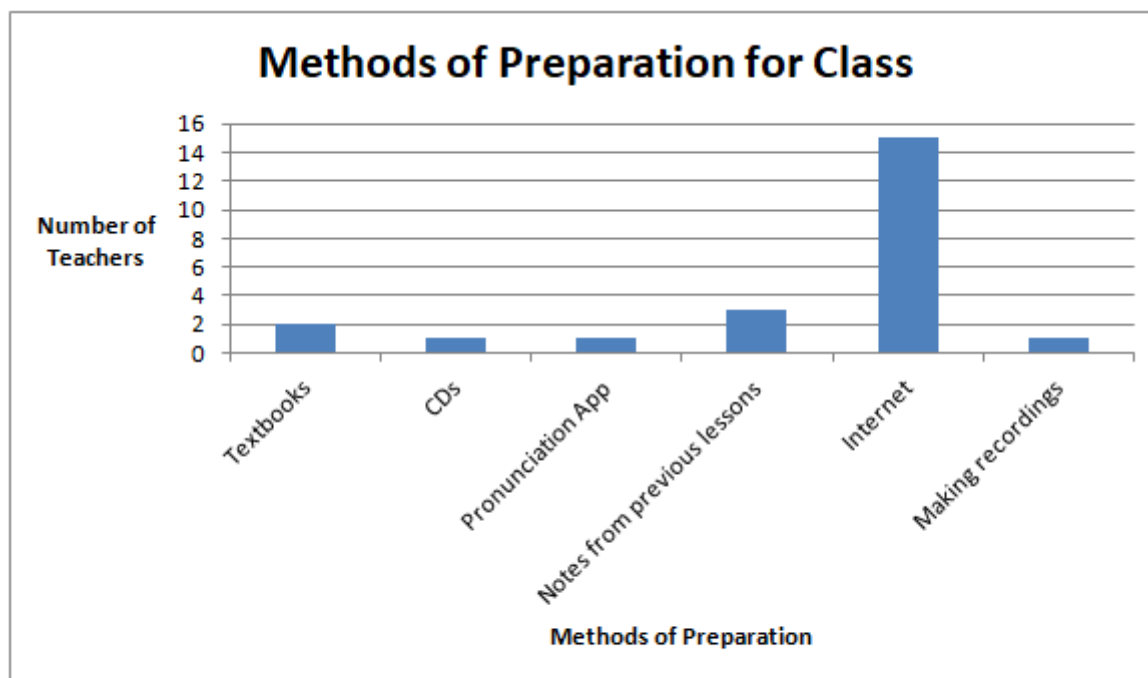


Table C: Methods of Preparation for Class used by Teachers

It should be noted that most teachers interviewed made use of more than one method, with all teachers using the Internet as a means of preparation.

Participants' opinions of Spanish in was explored in TQ3 (appendix 4) and PQ 4 (appendix 5).

The majority of reactions ranged from positive to neutral. Both principals and teachers credit the influx of Venezuelan migrants, as well as Trinidad and Tobago's proximity to Latin America as reasons for the positive reception and perceived utility of Spanish.

The experience that most greatly impacts teachers' positive perception of Spanish is the positive student reactions, something observed by the principals as well. They report students' high levels

of engagement, as well as increased participation from more introverted students, which they speculate may be due to the change in atmosphere Spanish creates for students.

Teachers have also expressed that Spanish appears to be less structurally rigid than other subjects, and allows them to use songs, rhymes and games as part of their teaching.

The most common influence on dislike had with regard to the teaching of Spanish comes from teachers' lack of confidence in their competence in the language. None of the participants are fluent in Spanish, and have expressed their concerns over teaching the children the wrong information. Some had also indicated another disadvantage to be that not all the students would be as eager or as adept at learning the language as others. One participant explicitly stated that their students do not see it as important, due to their being in one of the upper level classes where strong emphasis is placed on preparation for SEA exams.

Teachers' opinions on introducing Spanish to students at the primary level are discussed in TQ4 (appendix 4) and PQ5 (appendix 5).

The idea of beginning Spanish instruction at this age is generally supported due to the theory that language learning occurs best at this age. Teachers find the syllabus adequate to their respective levels. However, one upper school teacher believes that it is not necessary for Standards 4 and 5 due to the workload to prepare students for SEA.

There were contrasting opinions shared regarding the skill set required to teach primary Spanish, as explored in PQ12a (appendix 5). Even though all principals agree that language competency is important with regard to teaching Spanish, Principal A believes that while having a specific skill set may be necessary to teach Spanish at higher levels, secondary school Spanish is a sufficient level to teach at the primary school level.

Teachers' overall Spanish experience is explored in TQ14 (appendix 4) and PQ14a (appendix 5).

Teachers had initial apprehension when Spanish was first introduced, but have since grown accustomed to it and have begun to enjoy it. Both Principals A and B encourage Spanish at primary level while Principal C, although admitting that they do not have much interaction with it, notices that both teachers and students seem to enjoy it.

Preparation To Facilitate Spanish

PQ 1(appendix 5) explores schools' preparation for teaching Spanish at the primary school level.

All principals mentioned that the inclusion of Spanish to their schools' curriculum was compulsory, although Principal C stated that it was not consistent throughout their school and was excluded at upper levels. Principals did not indicate that anything specific was put in place to facilitate Spanish at their schools, although Principal B said that administration assisted through their provision of their expertise and resources.

The following table depicts the results of TQ6 (appendix 4).

Background in Spanish	Number of Teachers
Secondary School	All, at varying levels
UTT	10
Other college	2

Table D: Teachers' Background in Spanish

Teachers also expressed that they had not had much exposure to Spanish after their formation. Moreover, teachers reported that UTT focused more on the pedagogical aspect of FL teaching than developing their language skills.

Implementation of Spanish at their schools is explored in PQ3 (appendix 5).

Principals admit that their schools have limited to no resources to facilitate teaching and learning Spanish for teachers and students, adding that there is heavy reliance on the internet. Resources are provided by either the school (Principal C), teachers (Principal A) or both (Principal C).

The table below shows the results TQ7, which observes how teachers prepared themselves for Spanish at their schools (appendix 4).

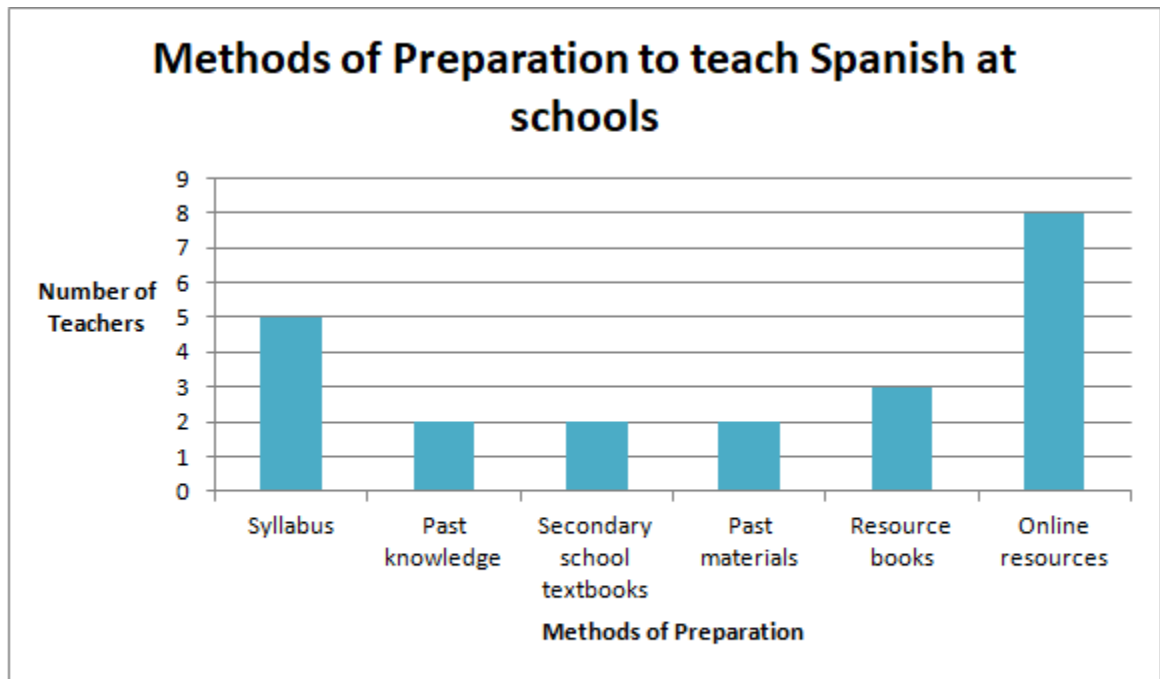


Table E: *Teachers' Methods of Preparation to teach Spanish at schools*

As shown in the table above, the most widely used means of preparation is online resources.

All principals agreed that their teachers possessed the necessary skills to teach primary Spanish, in PQ12b (appendix 5)

Teachers and principals had varying opinions regarding the efficacy of the primary school Spanish syllabus. The table below displays their views on the current syllabus.

Perceived Strengths of Primary Spanish Syllabus	Perceived Weaknesses of Primary Spanish Syllabus
Satisfactory	Limited
Suits needs of community	Rushed
	Repetitive
	Lack of continuity
	Excessive
	Lacking local relevance
	Room for improvement

Table F: Teachers' Perceptions of the Primary School Syllabus

While a majority of participants finds the syllabus satisfactory, many complain that due to the lack of continuity throughout the school, they have had to repeat content from the lower levels. Teachers also voiced the need for the syllabus to be culturally relevant, adding that policymakers need to include present teachers in the syllabus development. Some regard it as excessive either due to having to balance it with the SEA workload or having to balance it with Second Years who are also just beginning to learn Standard English.

While the principals have admitted to not being overly familiar with the syllabus, they believe that it adequately suits the needs of their communities. Only Principals B and C saw areas in which the curriculum could be improved: Principal B suggested the provision of links to locally relevant resources while Principal C argued that Spanish should be tested on a national level for consistent teaching to occur.

Perception of Students' Reception of Spanish

Reports show students' positive response to learning Spanish, with many claiming that students see Spanish as a "break" from more traditional subjects. They also observed a boost in

confidence from more introverted students. There is a better response from lower levels, however, as a result of the workload of the SEA classes.

The table below reflects the results of TQ9c (appendix 4):

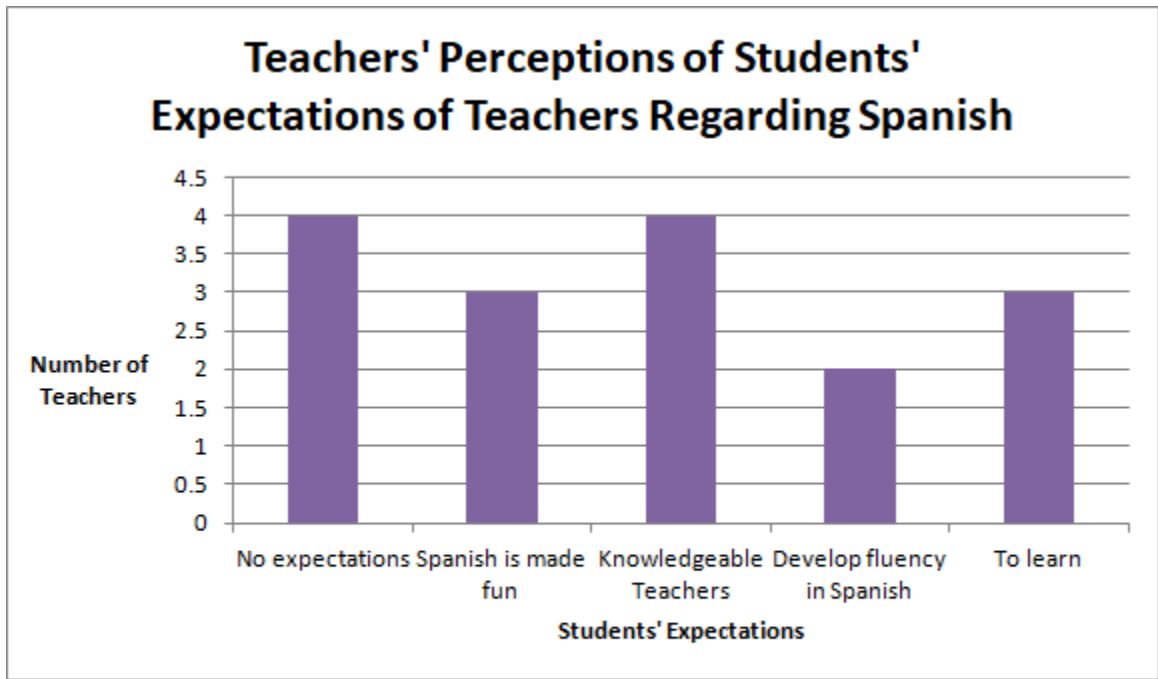


Table G: Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Expectations of Teachers Regarding Spanish

Concerning PQ13c (appendix 5), while SEA students are still expected to do what is required where Spanish is concerned, principals also hope that the students develop a love and appreciation for Spanish.

Opinions Regarding Input of Stakeholders

The expectations of the MoE have great influence on the situation regarding Spanish at the primary school level, with the general consensus being that the MoE expects Spanish to be taught throughout primary schools. This expectation is maintained regardless of teachers' language proficiency. Principals A and B report that the MoE monitors the annual percentage of

Spanish taught through teachers' reports, while Principal C notes that rarely is the state of Spanish inquired after by the MoE. The MoE has been reported to provide little support apart from the curriculum guide concerning Spanish at the primary level. While both Principals A and B find the MoE's expectations reasonable, Principal C disagrees due to the amount of subjects taught at the primary school level.

Concerning the schools' expectations, teachers are expected to teach Spanish regardless of their language proficiency, although some do not think that it is expected at the upper levels. While principals do expect teachers at upper levels to continue Spanish instruction, they acknowledge that the syllabus may not be completed due to the prioritization of SEA preparation. Principal A believes that their teachers have become well-adapted to teaching Spanish, while Principal B notes that teachers find it difficult to source accurate and locally relevant content. Principal C finds that some teachers see it as an additional burden due to the heavy workload of the entire primary school curriculum. The teachers that participated in this project note the importance of a supportive principal, as it impacts the kind and quality of support received from the MoE and its officials. They also add that their schools have provided them with necessary AV equipment such as computers and projectors when necessary. Support has been limited; however, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, most teachers rely on their own access to resources.

The table below reflects the expectations of parents concerning Spanish at the primary level.

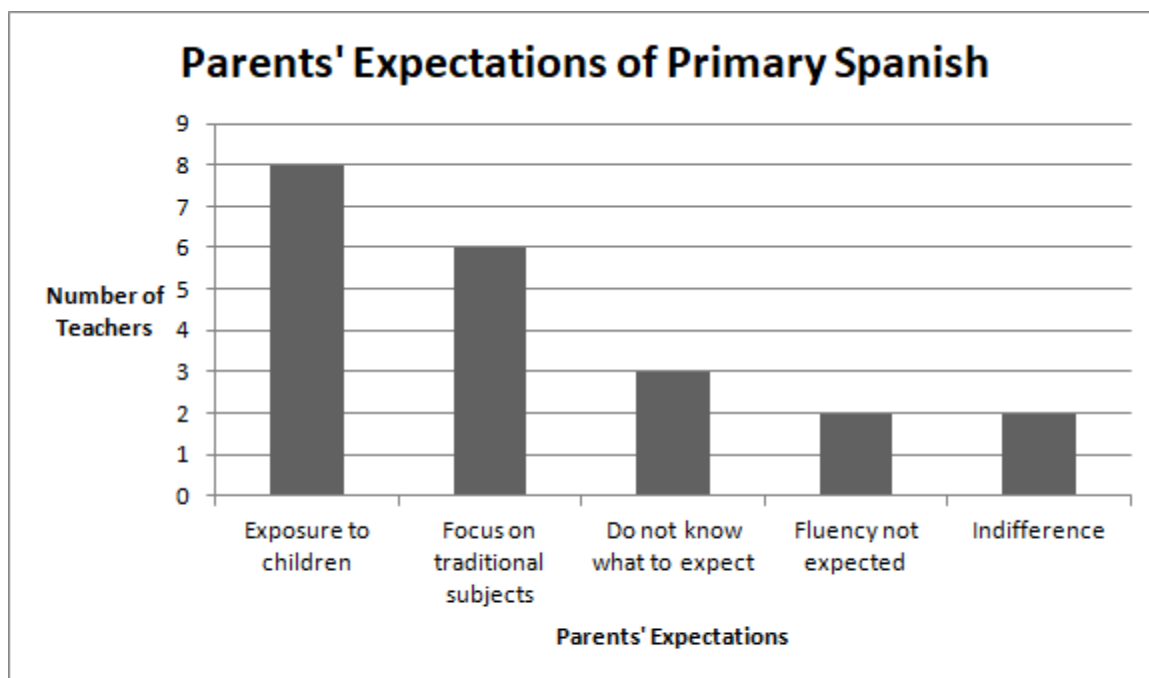


Table H: Parents' Expectations of Primary Spanish

According to the teachers who participated in this study, parental support for primary Spanish comes in the forms of helping with homework and being resource personnel. Some parents, while they are welcoming of the subject, do not prioritize it, while those with children at the upper level do not give any support to Spanish.

The most popular resources teachers' found necessary to facilitate teaching Spanish at the primary school level were: textbooks and workbooks, flash cards and charts, visual media (videos, television programmes), auditory media (CDs, headsets, recording devices) and specialized personnel. They also stressed the importance of locally-relevant content as well as being presented with lessons that give clear instructions as to what is expected of them.

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The table below depicts the kind of support needed from the MoE.

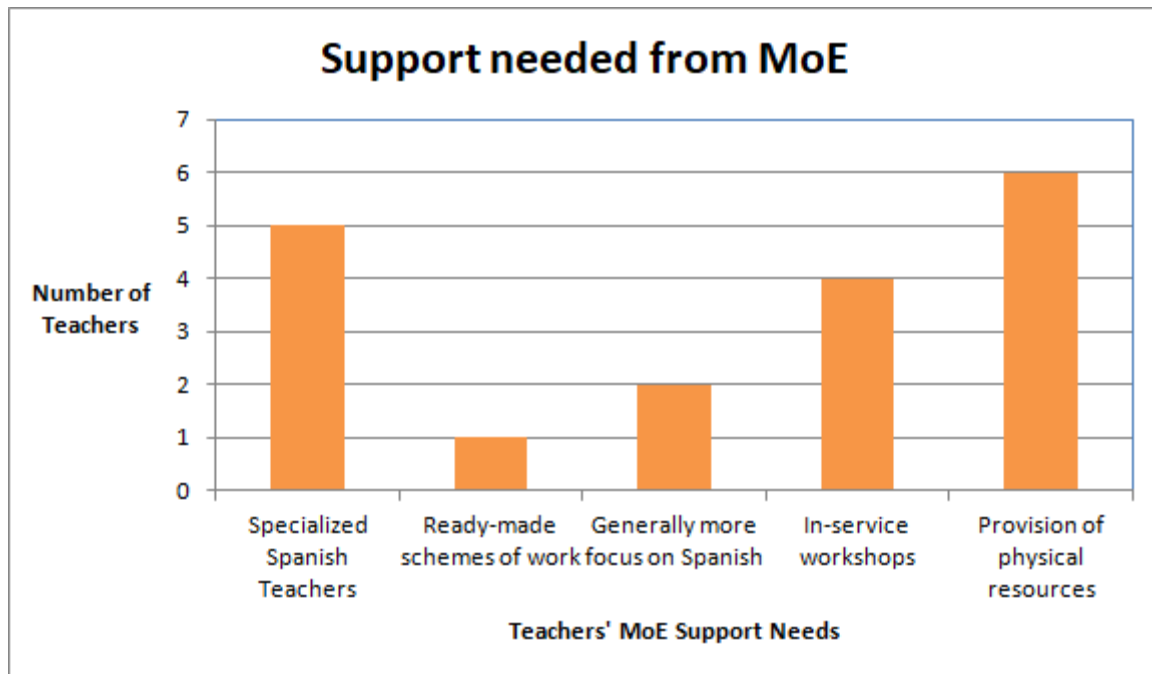


Table I: *Support Needed from the MoE*

The most popular responses, apart from the provision of physical resources, were the appointment of specialized Spanish teachers to the primary school staff and the hosting of in-service workshops for Spanish.

While Principal A does not require assistance from their staff, both Principals B and C stress the importance of peer assistance where necessary, with Principal B adding that they expect their staff to partake in professional development activities.

Generally, parents are requested to do nothing more than what is usually expected, i.e. assisting with homework, encouraging learning and maintaining open communication with the school.

The following chapter seeks to analyze the data presented in this one.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS

This chapter will analyze the results discussed in the previous chapter, using the same core themes.

Attitudes toward Spanish at the Primary Level

Most teachers expressed positive to neutral opinions regarding their teaching Spanish, with many owing this to their enjoyment of the subject during their education, as well as the passage of time, which was likely to have acclimatized them to teaching Spanish at the primary level. Of the two that explicitly expressed dislike, only one shared that their SEA class did not see the utility of it. This contrasts with other SEA teachers, who reported positive receptions of Spanish among their students. Thus, it may be inferred that said teacher's opinions on the subject may either be influencing their perception of their students' reception of the subject or influencing their students' reception of Spanish, as was discussed by Habeeb (7).

The most common reason teachers disliked teaching Spanish was their lack of confidence in their language competency, which contrasted with their principals' opinions that their staff possessed the necessary language skills to teach Spanish at this level. Moreover, while the schools have may acclimatized to teaching Spanish, the principals themselves have confessed to having little interaction with it. This, as Wilson reported, is indicative of a disconnect between school administration and teachers (198).

Despite the general positivity with which Spanish is received, it is still treated with otherness although it has been a compulsory part of the primary school syllabus for a decade. An example of this can be seen in the time allotments for Spanish decreasing at upper levels, despite principals' claims that the lowest levels would receive less time due to their age. Some teachers

do not even teach it at the upper levels, at the general attitude is that it is not expected to be pursued at the upper levels, as the SEA examinations take precedence, which was also observed in Wilson's research (191). One teacher expressed that, were cutbacks to be made, Spanish, VAPA and P.E. would be the first ones to go. This focus on "core" subjects is another observation made by Wilson concerning Spanish's treatment at primary level in Trinidad and Tobago (185). Based on the information found in Chapter 3, little attention has been paid to the improvement of Spanish at the schools, and although teachers credit their students' positive reception of Spanish to be a source of their enjoyment of teaching it, they claim that it is regarded as a "break" from other subjects, further cementing its extra-curricular perception.

The unanimity with which all participants agreed with beginning FL learning at this age both supports and is influenced by the popular ideology that FL learning is most efficient at these early years (GİMATDİNOVA ÇAĞAÇ 132; Habeeb 101; Brigdal; Dagarin and Perret 492; Kong 5).

When questioned about the "special skills" needed to teach Spanish, all principals referred solely to language competency. This shows that schools either are unaware of or do not focus on the pedagogical aspect of FL teaching of young learners. Moreover, while Principal A believed that a secondary education in Spanish was sufficient to teach at the primary level, they did not say up to which level would be sufficient. All of these suggest that the skills required to teach Spanish at the primary level are not concretely conceptualized.

Preparation to Facilitate Spanish

Concerning how primary schools prepared to facilitate teaching Spanish, none of the schools that participated in this study indicated that any special efforts were placed, with strong sentiments of

it simply “has to be done”. This may be due to them being unaware that any special effort was needed. The principals’ lack of interaction with Spanish, however, might be more reflective of Hawanti’s research, which found their principals not seeming particularly invested in the development of teaching English (165).

While all teachers had undertaken Spanish during their secondary education, there was variation in the extent to which it was pursued. Some desisted after Form 3, the level at which it is no longer compulsory and is optional at higher levels at most secondary schools; some did it as part of their general formation at UTT. This suggests a lack of benchmark for FL language competency, similar to Nguyen’s study in Vietnam (169). Additionally, it can be claimed that FL teaching training is not particularly stressed by policymakers, as the teachers who only possessed a secondary Spanish education would not have been trained in language teaching pedagogy, which is viewed unfavourably among those who possess both the language and teaching competencies (Wilson 191; Omar 134-135; Inci and Wildiz 444).

None of the teachers interviewed had pursued a Spanish language programme at UTT, indicating that none of them are specialized Spanish teachers. Some even expressed their hope that they were not seen as FL teachers, signalling that they did not view their training as sufficient to qualify them as such. Also, they admitted that they had not had much exposure to Spanish outside of their formation, as there was little to no in-service training provided, an occurrence similar to that in Kuwaiti (Habeeb 15).

Some concerns about the syllabus were that it was excessive and needed to be culturally relevant. The majority of those who found it excessive referred specifically to teaching Spanish in conjunction with the SEA workload, which suggests that the logistics of maintaining Spanish at upper levels was not explored thoroughly. The request for cultural relevancy implies that while

the syllabus may meet the language needs of Trinidad and Tobago's primary schools, it does not meet the cultural needs.

One teacher expressed the need to consult "grassroots teachers" when devising the syllabus, which Habeeb's research also found (111, 112). This indicates that, despite the document on the primary Spanish policy including teachers as policymakers, those who are charged with teaching primary Spanish have expressed that they do not feel involved in the decision-making process. Their opinions are important to consider because they not only know their capabilities and limitations, but also are more directly able to observe the needs of children concerning Spanish. Like Habeeb's research, however, these opinions on the curriculum must be carefully observed, as none of these teachers are FL specialists or FL teachers (111).

Perception of Students' Reception of Spanish

Teachers previously reported that their students regard Spanish as a "break" from "traditional" subjects. This may be due to teachers' flexibility during lessons, as some commented that they were more able to incorporate songs and games in Spanish than other lessons. This also indicates that students do not regard Spanish as a regular part of their curriculum, which may result in students feeling less pressure to excel. A popular observation also was the boost in students' confidence and participation during Spanish classes. Habeeb (110) and Wilson (192) also observe this with their research.

The majority of teachers reported that students either did not know what to expect concerning Spanish or they expected knowledgeable teachers. This speaks of the teacher-focused nature of Trinidad and Tobago's education system, and implies that students' receptiveness to Spanish is almost entirely influenced by their teachers as a result.

Teachers' opinions regarding input of stakeholders

Despite the expectation that Spanish is to be taught at all levels in primary school, the MoE appears to not pay particular attention to its progress, with the general perception being that they provide little to no support in the maintenance of Spanish. This is also evident in their expectations of all teachers complying, regardless of their language and FL teaching competency. Much of the literature displays governments' lacking support regarding FL teaching and learning development in primary schools (Wilson 185; Nguyen 169; Kafique 257), which suggests that policymakers may not have a clear understanding of how languages function as a system or a subject, nor do they consider the language competency and FL teaching pedagogical needs for teaching a FL at the primary level.

The MoE's interest in a school's Spanish programme influences how heavily focused it is. While most schools' expectations align with the MoE's mandates, one participant expressed its unfeasibility, as "we ourselves [teachers] cannot speak it [Spanish]." This further demonstrates the disconnect between policymakers and teachers as previously mentioned.

Based on the responses given by participants, it appears that the schools in this research have limited to no primary Spanish resources for teachers or students, and there presently are no standardized resources specific to primary school Spanish made available by the MoE. While schools do provide the necessary AV equipment and the MoE has provided laptops to teachers due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these tangible resources are for general use, not specific to Spanish. While the internet may be a popular and effective resource, it is not Ministry-provided to either teachers or students. As many teachers have resulted in outsourcing materials and information, there may be inconsistencies in the content taught, as well as a level of uncertainty regarding the content taught. There is also the risk of teachers developing a heavy reliance on the

syllabus, which Omar remarks may hamper the development of their own style of teaching (139). Much literature has noted the importance of physical resources, particularly textbooks, which teachers have named as a necessary resource, on the success of a school's FL programme (Wilson 192; Johnson, Berg and Donalson, cited in Omar 114; Listriyani et al 6; Hawanti 163).

Teachers are responsible for developing their knowledge however they can, as no in-service training for Spanish is provided. They also have to source or make their own resources, which Wilson described as an "unwarranted" cost of "time, effort and finances" (192-193). Principal C regarded Spanish as an additional burden on teachers, as these are all classroom teachers who are expected to teach all subject areas.

Requests had been made for the provision of both specialized Spanish teachers and in-service workshops, the former of which has been proven to be popular (Habeeb 102; Wilson 190, 200). These reinforce teachers' beliefs that they do not have the necessary competency to teach Spanish at the primary level, although it also reinforces the notion that Spanish is viewed as an additional weight to teachers' workload.

While teachers report positive reception of primary school Spanish among parents, there is still the caveat that it should not detract time from more "traditional" subjects. Furthermore, parents' expectations regarding the subject is heavily influenced by what Standard their children are in, with heavy resistance to non-SEA subjects at the upper level. In instances where teachers do not teach it, parents do not inquire after it, which indicates a more apathetic regard of Spanish among primary school parents.

In summary, the general perception and reception of Spanish at the primary school level is one of obligation rather than passionate interest and much of the maintenance of Spanish at primary schools relies heavily on teachers.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, while Spanish may receive positive reception at the primary school level, it is still treated as an outlier in favour of more traditional subjects, with little emphasis being placed on its development further than its obligatory teaching.

There also is no benchmark for teachers' training regarding FL teaching. There lacks a standard Spanish language competency level to teach at this level, and there is little acknowledgement of the pedagogical aspect of FL teaching. This need can be met by establishing a standardized level of Spanish competency for teaching Spanish at the primary school level and placing more emphasis on FL teaching pedagogy.

Additionally, while principals may have confidence in their teachers' language capabilities, teachers themselves have expressed doubts due to their lack of specialization in Spanish and do not view their training as sufficient. Hosting in-service Spanish workshops would remedy this concern.

Concerning the content, the syllabus for upper levels expects for Spanish to be maintained, but it is not attainable at the moment because of the quantity of work expected for the preparation for the SEA examination. Furthermore, teachers have expressed a need for the current syllabus to meet the cultural needs of Trinidad and Tobago, in addition to the language needs.

Most teachers believe that students' reception to Spanish has been positive, with many displaying increased confidence during Spanish classes.

Apart from its initial implementation, there is no clear evidence that the MoE has allocated physical resources or ongoing training to support teachers and institutions to standardize the

implementation of Spanish at the primary school level, and there has shown to be a disconnect among all levels of personnel concerning teachers' needs regarding FL teaching and training.

Moreover, the lack of standardised materials provided for primary Spanish may produce varying results where the teaching of Spanish at the primary level is concerned. The production of these resources would alleviate some of the doubts that teachers have regarding the content they are required to teach, as well as provide locally relevant content to better connect with the children.

There is also a great dependency on teachers for the maintenance of Spanish at this level, as they are responsible for furthering their own development due to a lack of in-service training for Spanish, as well as outsourcing their own resources. This explains the popularity of the request for specialized Spanish teachers, both as a language resource and as a human resource to alleviate some of current teachers' workloads.

Areas for further study

Further areas of study can be a comparison of the treatment of primary Spanish to other primary subjects, as several participants in this research have mentioned certain traditional subjects being favoured over Spanish. There can also be a comparative study between the language competency levels needed to be able to teach Spanish at the primary school level and at the secondary school level in Trinidad and Tobago, to observe how their training impacts their approaches to FL teaching. The transition from primary school Spanish to secondary school Spanish also merits research. The state of Spanish at government-assisted and private schools is another area for further research, because they are more autonomously run and receive less direct governmental assistance than government schools. There is also a benefit to observing teachers' perceptions of the situation regarding Spanish at the primary school level at government inner city schools due to their proximity to urban resources and ministerial offices.

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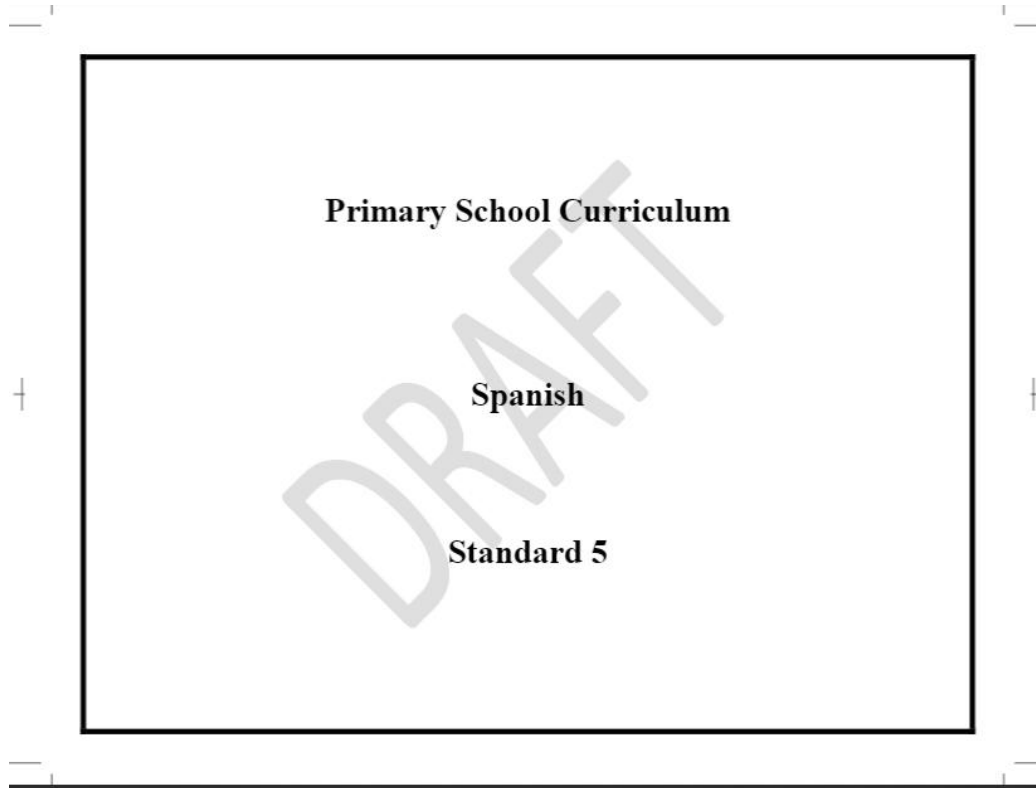
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APPENDIX 1

Primary School Curriculum Standard Five pgs 84-86



SPANISH: STANDARD 5

CONTENT/SKILLS	DISPOSITIONS	OUTCOMES	ELABORATIONS
1.1.1. State their nationality and that of others in Spanish. <i>¿Cuál es tu nacionalidad?</i> (<i>Soy trinitario/Soy trinitaria, Soy tobaguense</i>) <i>¿Cuál es su nacionalidad?</i> <i>Es trinitario/Es trinitaria, tobaguense, americano/americana, jamaicano/jamaicana, español/española, venezolano/venezolana</i>) 1.1.2. Recognize flags of selected Spanish-speaking countries. (<i>Venezuela, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Panamá, México</i>)	1.2.1. Feel a sense of belonging to their country. 1.2.2. Develop a sense of identity. 1.2.3 Be respectful of other nations of the world.	1. Demonstrate a growing sense of patriotism to their nation, and respect for other nations.	- State their nationality and those of four other countries. [1.1.1] <i>- I'm Trinidadian, Tobagonian</i> <i>- He/ She is Trinidadian/Tobagonian/ American/Jamaican/Spanish/Venezuelan.</i> - Identify the flag of their country and those of selected Spanish-speaking countries in the Caribbean. (<i>Venezuela, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Panama, Mexico</i>) [1.1.2] - Display behaviour that is consistent with patriotism and respect for other countries.

SPANISH: STANDARD 5			
CONTENT/SKILLS	DISPOSITIONS	OUTCOMES	ELABORATIONS
			[1.1.1;1.1.2]
2.1.1. State in Spanish selected items of clothing that they wear. <i>¿Qué llevas?</i> <i>(Llevo uniforme, pantalones, camiseta, camisa, falda, vestido.)</i>	2.2.1. Engage in exploration of language through comparing words of different languages.	2. Engage in conversations using simple Spanish structures.	State in Spanish selected items of clothing that they wear. [2.1.1] <i>I wear a uniform, pants, t-shirt, shirt, skirt, dress.</i>
2.1.2. Recognize typical Hispanic wear <i>¿Qué traje típico es?</i> <i>(el bolero, la mantilla, el poncho, el sombrero)</i>	2.2.2. Be aware and appreciative of Hispanic culture.		- State the Spanish words for selected Hispanic wear. [2.1.2] <i>(bolero, mantilla, poncho, sombrero)</i> - Recognize selected Hispanic wear (as above). [2.1.2]
2.1.3. Describe their physical appearance (height, size) in Spanish. <i>¿Cómo eres?</i> <i>(Soy alto/alta, Soy bajo/baja, Soy delgado/delgada,</i>	2.2.3. Develop a sense of identity.		- Orally make descriptive statements about their height and size, in Spanish. [2.1.3] <i>I'm tall, short, slim, fat, medium sized</i> - Engage in exploration of Spanish and Hispanic culture. [2.1.2; 2.1.3]

SPANISH: STANDARD 5			
CONTENT/SKILLS	DISPOSITIONS	OUTCOMES	ELABORATIONS
<i>Soy gordo/gorda,</i> <i>Soy mediano/mediana)</i>			
3.1.1. Communicate in Spanish using various media.	3.2.1. Be respectful as they communicate with others. 3.2.2. Be safe and responsible as they interact with others using various media. 3.2.3. Be enthusiastic about forming links with others.	3. Use their knowledge of Spanish to engage in safe, responsible and respectful communication with others, both within and outside of their country.	- Communicate with others in their country who are learners of Spanish via hand-written letters, email, phone, text, video chat. [3.1.1] - Open lines of oral communication with students from Spanish-speaking countries. [3.1.1] - Display safe, responsible and respectful practices as they interact with others. [3.2.2]

APPENDIX 2

Primary School Curriculum Spanish Infants 1- Standard 5 Table of Contents

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APPENDIX 3

Ministry of Education Registration Requirements for Primary Schools



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
moe.gov.tt

REGISTRATION OF TEACHERS

A person desirous of registering as a teacher must supply the following original documentation with a completed Application form for registration as a Teacher to the HUMAN RESOURCE INFORMATION SECTION (RECORDS), Ministry of Education.

ALL DOCUMENTS, with the exception of the testimonials are to be accompanied by a **PHOTOCOPY**.

- (a) Birth Certificate from the Registrar's General Department, Ministry of Legal Affairs with Affidavit (If necessary).
- (b) **Marriage Certificate** (For married women only)
- (c) **Two (2) Testimonials** or Recommendations from Registered Teachers of not less than five (5) years standing in the Service of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The testimonials **must be on a School letter head or School Stamp must be present on letter stating the /Registration Number of the Teacher/s**. All testimonials must be written within the last six (6) months. Teachers must be presently in the service for at least five (5) years in a Government Primary or Secondary School.
- (d) **Official Receipt of five dollars (TT\$5.00)** for the Registration Fee.
- (e) **Certificates attesting to applicant's academic qualifications:** In cases where Certified Statements from the Examination Section, Ministry of Education are to be used in lieu of the Certificates/Diploma, the Original Statements are required.

Requirements for Registration

Requirements for Registration

Primary Requirements

- (1) Five (5) subjects at **CXC GENERAL PROFICIENCY** – Grades I, II or III OR General Certificate of Education (GCE) Grades A < B or C. Please note Grade III has been a pass as of June 1998.
 - Mathematics
 - **English (Compulsory)**
 - **Any /science (Compulsory)** One (1) of the following subject from the Natural Science Group:
 1. Biology
 2. Chemistry
 3. Physics
 4. Integrated Science
 5. Food and Nutrition
 6. Agricultural Science
 7. Clothing and Textiles
 8. Human and Social Biology
 - **Any three (3) other subjects**
 - **Along with other requirements listed at (a) to (e) above**

APPENDIX 4

Teachers Interview Questions

- 1) How many hours of Spanish do you teach per week?
- 2) How do you prepare for those classes?
- 3) Do you like teaching this subject? What do you like/dislike most about having to teach a foreign language as one of your classes?
- 4) How do you feel about having to teach Spanish at this level?
- 5) How do you think the students feel about learning Spanish at this age?
- 6) Do you have any background that has prepared you to teach Spanish at this level?
- 7) How have you prepared yourself to be able to teach Spanish in your school?
- 8) What do you think about the Spanish syllabus for this level?
- 9) What do you think are the
 - a) school's,
 - b) parent's,
 - c) children's,
 - d) government's expectations of your role as a foreign language teacher?
- 10) Do you think that you have access to resources that facilitate teaching this subject?

11) What kind of resources do you think will facilitate more your job of teaching Spanish at this level?

12) What kind of support have you received from the

a) school

b) parents

c) MoE/the government since you were asked to teach this subject?

13) What kind of support do you think that you need?

14) How would you describe your overall experience teaching Spanish?

APPENDIX 5

Principal Interview Questions

1.
 - a. How manageable did you find including Spanish to your school's curriculum?
 - b. What measures were put in place to facilitate teaching Spanish at the primary school level?
2. How many hours of Spanish are currently allocated at
 - a. infant level?
 - b. lower school level?
 - c. upper school level?
 - d. Who allocates these hours?
 - e. If the number of hours is different at each level, why is this so?
3. What resources/ type of resources does the school have to help facilitate teaching Spanish at the primary school level to
 - a. teachers?
 - b. students?
 - c. Who provides these resources, and who chooses them?
4. How do you think the inclusion of Spanish to the primary school syllabus benefit your school and your community?
5. How do you feel about the students learning Spanish at this age?
6.
 - a. How familiar are you with the primary school Spanish syllabus?
 - b. Do you think it suits the needs of your student community?

7.

- a. What has been the response of parents and children to Spanish at the primary school level?
- b. Did you notice any difference?

8.

- a. What expectations does the Ministry of Education have for your school and your students with regard to Spanish?
- b. How is this monitored?
- c. How reasonable do you find it?

9. What type of assistance have you received from the Ministry of Education to facilitate teaching Spanish at your school?

10. What sort of feedback do you receive from teachers concerning their experience teaching Spanish?

11. What kind of support do you think you will need from

- a. The Ministry?
- b. Your staff?
- c. Parents?

12.

- a. Do you think teaching Spanish requires a specific skill set?
- b. Do you think teachers currently teaching Spanish possess those skills?

13.

- a. How much focus does the school place on Spanish at the Std. Four and Five level?
- b. What is expected of teachers at this level?

- c. What is expected of the students at this level?
- d. What expectations do parents have at this level?

14.

- a. What has been your overall experience with Spanish at the primary school level?
- b. What improvements do you consider necessary to the curriculum, if any?