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***THE
LANGUAGE ARTS
SYLLABUS 1975:
COMMENT AND
COUNTER COMMENT***

By

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&

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Contents

NOW OUR BAD ENGLISH IS GOOD LANGUAGE <i>By Gerald Samuel</i>	Page 1
WE OWN KINE OF ENGLISH <i>By Thora O'Connor</i>	Page 4
WHAT IS GOOD ENGLISH <i>By Scholasticus</i>	Page 5
CONGRATS TO SCHOLASTICUS <i>By Puzzled Parent</i>	Page 8
CALL FOR BAN ON LANGUAGE DISCUSSION <i>By Unlettered</i>	Page 8
THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH <i>Gloria de Pieza</i>	Page 9
CREATIVE EXPRESSION BEATS SPELLING AND GRAMMAR <i>By Gerald Samuel</i>	Page 10
A DANGEROUS EDUCATIONAL VENTURE <i>By Noel P. Bowen</i>	Page 13
TRINI-DEGENERATIVE ENGLISH <i>By C. O. Stroud</i>	Page 19
TRINI-DEGENERATIVE ENGLISH — 2 <i>By C. O. Stroud</i>	Page 25
THE LANGUAGE ARTS SYLLABUS <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 29
LANGUAGE, GRAMMAR, A DIALECT AND IN STANDARD LANGUAGE <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 32
PIDGINS, CREOLES AND CARIBBEAN CREOLES <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 36
LANGUAGE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 40
THE STRUCTURE OF TRINIDADIAN AND TOBAGONIAN VERNACULARS <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 43
THE AIMS OF A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMME <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 49
PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTING A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMME IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 53
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OR SELF DEVELOPMENT <i>By L. Carrington & C. Borely</i>	Page 55
SLOPPINESS IS NOT A NEW DIALECT <i>By C. O. Stroud</i>	Page 58
NORTH AMERICAN STYLE <i>By C. O. Stroud</i>	Page 63
REACTIONS TO THE NEW LANGUAGE ARTS SYLLABUS: SOME LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE <i>By L. D. Carrington</i>	Page 65

PREFACE

In June of 1975, the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education and Culture published a **New Primary School Syllabus**. This document represented the first official change in syllabuses for primary schools since the publication of 1946. Very soon after its appearance a number of letters appeared in the press commenting adversely on the section dealing with the teaching of the Language Arts. Because so much of the commentary was ill-informed and misguided, we wrote an eight article series in the **Sunday Guardian** in which we sought to correct the wrong impressions apparent in the letters that had appeared. Large numbers of persons expressed an interest in having a complete set of the articles. We felt that the nature of the controversy was such that our articles should be seen in the context of the views which prompted us to write them. Consequently, we have compiled the entire set of relevant items in this pamphlet. In some cases, we have made modification to our original articles and expanded them to meet queries that were addressed to us by several persons.

In addition to those articles and letters we have included sets of notes together with a reprint of a related article written by L. D. Carrington.

We trust that teachers, students and parents will find the document useful. We wish to thank the Editors of the **Sunday Guardian** and of the **Trinidad Guardian** for permission to reprint the items.

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Trinidad Guardian — 17th September, 1975 p. 9

NOW OUR BAD ENGLISH IS GOOD LANGUAGE by Gerald Samuel

The new Primary School Syllabus released last week by the Ministry of Education and Culture is revolutionary and ambitious in its aims. Indeed, there is nothing wrong with advocating change where it is necessary, and there is nothing terribly wrong with an ambitious syllabus, but the big question is: Are the teachers capable enough to convert the lofty demands of the syllabus into meaningful reality? (1) In this article, I propose to look at the Language Arts, Social Studies and the Creative Arts programmes since it is in these areas that radical changes have been made.

The Language Arts plan puts the emphasis on the spoken word. "At present," says the document, "the manner in which we teach language in our schools, places little or no emphasis on phonology. This is unfortunate since language is primarily a spoken and not a written system of communication. It is through sound, not written symbols, that meaning is conveyed most of the time."

The language which our children use to communicate their thoughts most of the time is the vernacular or "bad English" as we inappropriately describe their language. When a child comes into the classroom and say: "Me ain't goin' no way" or "de food good, oui," there is no need for the modern-day teacher to condemn (2) the child's speech. The teacher is absolutely wrong to despise the child's way of speaking. What the new syllabus demands is that teachers must change their attitude towards the language, the pupil brings with him to the classroom. (3) Too many teachers are hung up on teaching the child to write and speak properly without first recognising that what the child speaks is a language replete with a linguistic system.

VERNACULAR

If the Internationally Accepted English has phonology, morphology and syntax, the new syllabus argues that our vernacular is a total language in that it has each of these parts. Unlike the traditional classroom where learning and teaching were hinged around the teacher, the new syllabus says that all teaching must be "child-centred".

Teaching must move in stages depending on the child's interests. The syllabus calls for the flexibility of the time-table to accomodate the needs of the children. "Principals will need to adjust the time-

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1. The question is very appropriately raised. It is treated in Carrington's article — "The Language Arts Syllabus — Some Lessons for the Future", *The Corinthian* 1976 (See pp. 65-66 of this pamphlet).
 2. The important point here is that the teacher should not condemn the child's language. The child has learnt to speak in the way he does by exposure to the language of his family and his peer group. To condemn or despise his language is to pass similar judgement on both his family and peers. The results of this can be to breed personal insecurity and alienation from his society, whatever that may be. (See 'Language Development or self development' pp. 55-57).
 3. The call for attitudinal change is perhaps the key to acceptable language teaching procedures in our schools. It is not only teachers whose attitudes must be changed. Parents too should be provided with the kind of information that can result in more balanced attitudes towards language and their children's use of it.

table to allow longer unbroken periods of time to Language Arts so that the teacher would be able to proceed unhindered by strict subject divisions or a fractured Language Arts time allowance." Some principals are angered by this call for elasticity in the Language programme. "This will lead to indiscipline", says one principal." (4)

The translation of this plan into meaningful action will pose several problems to many teachers. The main problem is that teachers who attended colleges more than three years ago might not know enough about the vernacular system to deal effectively with the new programme. (5) Recent teacher-college graduates will not have this problem since they have been taught the phonology, syntax and morphology of the vernacular.

The second problem is that there are not many teachers who are familiar with the 'foreign language techniques' which the new syllabus sees as requisite for our dialect-speaking pupils. (5) The third obstacle is that the physical structure of most of our schools is not conducive to the strong oral orientation that the new syllabus demands. The syllabus, for example, calls for free conversation, open discussion and oral reading. (6) In the open classroom school, these new features can generate a lot more noise than already exists and thereby minimise effective teaching.

ADVENTURE

The fourth difficulty is that the syllabus calls for a wide variety of reading among primary school pupils and it sees the school library as a vital source for materials. The planners of this syllabus seem not to know that there are few primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago equipped with libraries. The glaring absence of libraries will adversely affect the literature part of the Language Arts programme since the new syllabus prescribes reading that ranges from adventure and travel stories to biographies of world and national heroes.

Another embarrassing situation that has arisen is that principals are having problems deciphering some of the linguistic abbreviations contained in the language arts outline. (7) "What is D.O.?" asks one principal. "They should have given us lessons on the programme before issuing the document. How am I to explain the syllabus to my teachers when I don't understand some of its contents?"

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4. The concern of principals over the changes in timetables desirable here is appreciated. It is clear that the difficult physical conditions existing in our schools create managerial problems that inhibit the willingness of principals to permit experiment in this area. Obviously the physical conditions must be changed. Equally obviously principals will need to exercise greater ingenuity in the interim unacceptable situation.
 5. See p. 55 under Unpreparedness of teachers.
 6. The effect of poor physical conditions in our schools on the teaching of language arts has been discussed in greater detail in 'Away Robin Run — A Critical description of the teaching of language arts in primary schools. L. D. Carrington & C. B. Borely, Institute of Education, 1972.
 7. The comment seems fair. The syllabus ought not to have been printed without some expansion or explanation of the abbreviations that appear. It is clear that the level of unpreparedness of teachers is sufficiently high to frustrate the intentions of the syllabus.

declares another. To make this revolutionary syllabus effective, teachers and principals who have been trained several years ago must undergo courses in the new linguistic approach.

One cannot blame senior teachers and principals for being antagonistic to certain aspects of the syllabus. They have been trained to hold onto certain attitudes and they would not release those attitudes without some kind of new knowledge. Attitudes cannot be changed by simply demanding that people follow a prescribed syllabus.

In the United States of America, for instance, when it was discovered by psychologists that middle-class black and white teachers held a derogatory attitude towards children who spoke Black English, several school districts organised courses to assist the teachers understand the new socio-linguistic approach to teaching Black children Standard English. The sources of many of these courses was the Metropolitan Centre for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The new Social Studies syllabus is very new in that it integrates the old subject areas like History, Geography, Character Training and Civics. The teacher will now have to emphasise the importance of the child's immediate surroundings during his early years at primary school. In the old programme children learned first about foreign lands. In Standards One and Two, they knew about Red Indians and Eskimos before they read about people and things in their own neighbourhood. When the child knows his environment well, then he is competent to tackle places beyond his locality. The Social Studies course will take the primary school child through social knowledge, moral and social education and these areas include thoughtfulness for others, care of personal and public property, the sources of food, daily happenings, the lives of great men and women, good manners and the appreciation of beauty. At the highest level, pupils will learn about the people and culture of Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean, and the oil trade between Trinidad, Venezuela and the Middle East.

The Social Studies syllabus rightly orients its contents to the local and Caribbean scenes. It, however, fails to emphasise the critical approach to issues and problems which generally arise in Social Studies. Many teachers reading the Social Studies programme will feel that they are doing justice to the syllabus by burdening the children with endless facts on the topics listed. Open discussion and critical appraisals are necessary to stimulate the child's thoughts and ideas.

The Creative Arts section covers Music, Drama, Literary Arts and Craft. The main idea in this part of the programme is to stir the child's imagination, and wherever possible the teacher is expected to employ new ways to deal with old ideas. The surprising part of this section is that it encourages the children to write plays and poetry in Literary Arts. The syllabus in a radical move points out that in creative writing, grammar and spelling should take second place to the expression of the children's ideas. (8) This is the correct attitude. Teachers, however, must be schooled in this liberal approach. If they are not, it is possible that writing can become a barren affair. Not all teachers know how to get the child to talk in the classroom and eventually to lead him to interest the class in what he writes.

8. This is in keeping with recent successful practice in the teaching of language.

The new Primary School syllabus as a whole has lofty ideas. But given the poor physical conditions in schools, the apathy among many young teachers, the inflexible attitudes of older ones, the general resistance to change by principals and the ignorance of the new approaches to education, it would be difficult for teachers to translate our New Primary School Syllabus into a meaningful reality.

Trinidad Guardian — September 27th, 1975, p. 8

"WE OWN KINE OF ENGLISH" by THORA O'CONNOR

Trinidad Guardian of September 17th publishes a long article written by Mr. Gerald Samuel, a teacher at the Couva Secondary School and a former lecturer at the Mausica Training College.

Mr. Samuel feels that English should be taught in our schools as it is spoken in the streets; that a phrase such as "Me ain't going no way" must not be considered incorrect. (9)

Can he be serious? At what stage will the child be taught to speak correct English? Our children must not be allowed to lower their standards because a few teachers have silly ideas of "relevance" as something pertaining to their own small island. (10)

Relevance means relating to the matter in hand; and the matter in hand is education and education is a language correctly spoken, a knowledge of the history, culture and customs of the whole world and, as Mr. Samuel so rightly says, moral and social ethics.

Our children must learn about their land, but we are a very small part of a very large world, and we must be neither ignorant nor insular. On a lighter note, imagine Romeo and Juliet in Trinidad English:

JULIET: Romeo, Romeo, where you is? You here? Go, before me fader lock you neck.

ROMEO: Chile, Ah gone. But ah ehn fraid you fader cutlass, for you eyes pretty too bad..

9. Mr. Samuel's article does not make any such assertion. Gloria De Pieza (p. 9) makes the point firmly. Mr. Samuel's statement reads:

"When a child comes into the classroom and says: 'Me ain't goin' no way' or 'de food good, oui', there is not need for the modern-day teacher to condemn the child's speech. The teacher is absolutely wrong to despise the child's way of speaking."

10. At p. 18 of the syllabus the aims of the syllabus are stated. The statement includes the following statement: "The aim of the Language Arts Programme must be — (a) to teach a new language that is internationally acceptable for communication between ourselves and the outside world . . ." Thora O'Connor's statements do not show familiarity with this page.

Trinidad Guardian — 5th October, 1975, p. 12

WHAT IS 'GOOD ENGLISH'? by SCHOLASTICUS

The new Primary School syllabus which was reviewed in part by Gerald Samuel in the Trinidad Guardian of September 17th will produce mixed feelings in both teachers and the many parents who make repeated efforts to encourage their children to "speak properly". (11) Nowadays, these efforts often produce few obvious results; the child in question "does his own thing" and if "hardened" compounds his behaviour by defiantly pointing out "We is NOT English, we is Trinidadian and we speak Trinidadian." Many baffled parents at this point reach for a tamarind whip or its nearest equivalent, "licks are shared out" and the bid for independence is reduced to a snivel, but — IS THIS CHILD RIGHT?

RICH IMAGERY

Indisputably he is NOT English — should he therefore be taught to relinquish his native vernacular, (12) with all its rich imagery and unique symbolism, for the formality of Standard English or should English be taught as a foreign language (13) and treated in the same way as French or Spanish? Many educationalists favour this approach but the proof of any pudding is in the eating and it is not surprising that many teachers and parents are worried about these "modern methods" and wonder if they will be of ultimate benefit to the child. If teaching in the vernacular encourages a fuller pupil-participation in class activities and greater development of his potential, it is to be recommended (with some reservations). If the use of the "native dialect" in the classroom makes primary education a meaningful exercise instead of a series of well-drilled "lessons" chanted by half-hypnotised children, it is to be commended.

If it is NOT accompanied by a comprehensive reading programme which includes books written in Standard English it may produce inarticulate "School Leavers" who may not have a sufficient grasp and range of Standard English to pursue a chosen career. (14) This possible future inadequacy is probably the main concern of the more "traditional" teacher who is worried about the effects of the new

11. In Trinidad and Tobago and indeed in all of the Caribbean that was formerly British, to "speak properly" is taken to mean to 'speak English'. The equation is unfortunate because it implies that whatever is not English is improper.
12. It should be noted that enlightened opinion in language education is firmly opposed to any language programme that seeks to eliminate, eradicate or in any way deprive any one of his native vernacular language.
13. Teaching of English as a foreign language does not imply treating it in the same way that French and Spanish are currently treated in our schools. There is a common erroneous opinion that the way in which these latter languages are taught is the only way in which foreign languages are taught. This is not the case. Furthermore, the actual statement of the syllabus is as follows:

"Foreign Language techniques must be adapted to suit our dialect-speaking children". p. 19-20.

14. It is worth noting that the currently used methods of teaching do produce a large number of "inarticulate school leavers". It is concern arising from this fact that urges a revised and substantially different approach.

syllabus while fully recognising its advantages. Will fluent "Trinidadian" enable the school leaver, even after passing through Secondary school, to obtain a form of employment which will be economically, socially and personally satisfying? (15) Will this new approach to teaching English provide him with the capacity to write a concise report, draft a memorandum, express himself articulately or convince a potential client? (16)

If he reaches the level of university education, will he be capable of writing coherent essays in Standard English or will he fail his "Use of English" examinations time and time again? (17) An inspection of university examination results in the latter is a daunting experience which indicates that something is wrong with the current teaching of English in many Trinidadian schools. (18) The leap from Primary School to U.W.I., may be great but "as the twig is bent, so will it grow," and there is no doubt that a poor grasp of Standard English invariably proves to be a severe handicap in a wide variety of university disciplines.

FRUSTRATION

It is not sufficient to KNOW — it is also necessary to express this knowledge so that others may know also. Communication is a vital aspect of all levels of education and when this becomes difficult at any stage because a student is inarticulate, the end result can only be frustration. The use of the vernacular may, however, greatly improve communication at the Primary School level, (19) learning may become easier in a relaxed atmosphere where unsuspected eloquence may flower and initiative appear in what would seem at first sight to be an impossible location. This is a very real advantage which should not be ignored — what therefore, is the solution to the DISADVANTAGES which may result from the proposed dichotomy of "dialect" and Standard English? (20)

Essential ingredients of any realistic answer to this vexed question are enthusiastic unharassed teachers who are trained in the new medium, active pupil participation in all classes, comprehensive school libraries, used daily, and extensive home reading monitored by enlightened parents to encourage

15. The syllabus does not aim at producing fluent speakers of 'Trinidadian'. Reference to p. 18 has already been made at note (10). We refer now to p. 21.

"The teacher must always be aware that the primary aim of the Language Arts is to teach English . . . He must try to maintain a consistent standard of good English in speaking to his class but this must be related to the ability of the class . . . The teacher must make himself understood and if the use of English at all times is an obstacle to communication, then he must use the language that his class understands, that is, he must limit his language to those structures and vocabulary items that are within the passive control of his class."

16. There is no reason why it should not.

17. 16 applies.

18. The fact that something is wrong is some justification for a revised approach to language teaching.

19. This position is not taken in the syllabus.

20. The 'dichotomy' between the "dialect" and Standard English is not "proposed" as if it were something to be effected. It is already an incontrovertible fact.

rage the **SIMULTANEOUS DEVELOPMENT** of both creole and "Standard" vocabulary, style and syntax — in short an Utopian Primary School system.

What can be done in the far from Utopian Reality in which even standard textbooks may be in short supply, libraries are non-existent and the only reading matter available in many homes is the family Bible, the Gold Bond catalogue, comic books and certain profusely illustrated local newspapers? Suppose the parents of a gifted child are themselves, though no fault of their own, illiterate?

Under these existing circumstances, is it not necessary to "hasten slowly" to introduce radical changes in Primary School education? Is it not essential to ensure that fundamentals of Standard English are taught throughout a child's ENTIRE school career? (21) There may be a crying need for drastic changes in presentation — no language consists merely of interminable "lists" to be memorised — and gifted teachers are therefore, as always, essential factors in the success of any new programme. Would it do any harm if the Primary School teachers made it a point to speak in "English" while in no way disparaging or ridiculing the speaking of dialect (22) — imitation is as sincere a form of flattery as the reddest mango on the teacher's desk! There is no reason why a pupil's speech should not be enlivened by unique local idioms and inimitable picong — one of the more pathetic phenomena in West Indian society is the individual young or old, who affects a diction and an accent which would either fit into the Bronx or not be out of place on the lips of an Oxford. (sic)

DOMINANT REASON

It is perhaps ironical that, in spite of ringing declamations of anti-colonial sentiments, so many Trinidadians are "More English than the English!" This ridiculous snobbery should receive the castigation it deserves and obviously should NOT be the motive behind learning to "speak properly". The dominant reason why a knowledge of Standard English is essential to achieve success in many walks of life is that it improves communication and enhances clarity in the conveying of specialised information. It also opens up new vistas of knowledge and — to quote the Reader's Digest — "It pays to enrich your word power". "How forcible are right words" said the prophet Job thousands of years ago and the situation remains unchanged!

21. The syllabus proposes that this should be done.

22. The syllabus asserts this firmly. See pages 18, 22 para. 3.

"The need to teach the English Language is still fundamental but the assumptions made by textbooks and English courses designed for native English speakers cannot be accepted in our situation." p. 18.

"The second pre-requisite is that the teacher must accept the home language of the child as the only means of communication at his disposal. It is only when spontaneity has been achieved that the teaching of English structures should begin. To insist on English standards before that, is to inhibit the class to the extent of preventing discussion altogether." p. 22.

Trinidad Guardian — 12th October, 1975 p. 12

CONGRATS TO 'SCHOLASTICUS' by Puzzled Parent

How well 'Scholasticus' illustrated the point of his article 'What is "Good English"? which was published in the Sunday Guardian" on October 5. The writer showed that it IS possible to explain to the general reader the complicated problems of teaching English in Trinidad by his (or her) use of clear and simple language.

And what a refreshing change from the psychiatric jargon and technical expressions so dear to the hearts, minds and typewriters of many experts on education. What was even more impressive was the sound good sense of the argument that we should NOT get ourselves off from the mainstream of English which is THE international language in the world today. (23) My congratulations to 'Scholasticus' for a beautifully-written, well-thought out article on a very important subject.

Trinidad Guardian — 14th October, 1976 p. 8

"CALL FOR BAN ON LANGUAGE DISCUSSION" By Unlettered

This dialect-language discussion in the news media is causing the utmost confusion. What can the purpose be? From my earliest childhood, however, I became acquainted with the maxim "Common sense beat education" which ended with a respectful reference to the invincibility of "starvation". Not gifted with the great educational opportunities of today, I prefer to rely upon a common sense foundation and express my total agreement with the views on the subject given by a correspondent on your leader page of September 27. (24)

To carry this thing to its logical conclusion: if the language of the barrack yard and the market place is to be the accepted mode of expression in the school-room, in the office and in life generally, all books would be useless, there would be no need for teachers, etc., since there would be nothing for our children to learn and we could well close the schools and universities, save the high wages of these experts and set them free to go and plant peas and gather nutmegs where they could give full play to this dialect stuff.

23. The syllabus specifically recognises this point.

"The aim of the language Arts Programme must be:-

- (a) to teach a new language that is internationally acceptable for communication between ourselves and the outside world so as to enable the children to understand and use both in speech and writing, the basic forms and structures of the English Language to describe the world of matter, feelings and ideas of which they are a part; " p. 18.

24. Reference is to Thora O'Connor's contribution of 27/9/75. See our notes 9 and 10.

Our literary experts especially those hailing from certain sectors of the region are trying to convince us that such dialect is a language in itself and not a slavery-vintage version of English. (25) This is a very bold step to take.

What, if not broken English, is this dialect? Is it Swahili, Hindi, Javanese, Chinese, Red Indian or what? What is its etymology? As pointed out by your correspondent, the promotion and acceptance of such dialect in displacement of Standard English, especially in those most formative years of one's existence will unleash upon us a breed of citizen who may be understood within the confines of his own insular or parochial environment, and nowhere else in the world. (26)

Honestly, I feel that such discussions should be banned from our news media as being a most damaging and indefensible retrograde exercise.

Trinidad Guardian — 15th October, 1975

"THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH" by Gloria DePieza

It is obvious that some people read newspaper headlines and make their own conclusions or maybe they misunderstand English.

How could Thora O'Connor of Valsayn in a recent letter on Gerald Samuel's review of the new Primary School Syllabus say that "Mr. Samuel feels that English should be taught in our schools as it is spoken in the streets?" Mr. Samuel does not make that suggestion in his article.

There is no need for anyone to teach our children the vernacular. They come to the classroom speaking the vernacular. What Mr. Samuel and the new syllabus emphasise is that "teachers must change their attitude towards the language the pupil brings with him to the classroom".

Thora O'Connor goes on to say "Our children must not be allowed to lower their standards". This is the stigma that the new syllabus is trying to eradicate.

She thinks that the language our children speak is inferior. She does not know that the vernacular has a proper linguistic system like any other language and that what is important in teaching our pupils English is that teachers change their old attitude towards the child's language and use foreign language teaching techniques to help the child acquire the internationally accepted English with competence. (27)

25. See our article "The Structure of Trinidadian and Tobagonian Vernaculars" pp. 43-49.

26. Page 18 of the syllabus allays this fear. See quotations at note 23.

27. All our previous notes will indicate our agreement with Ms. De Pieza's position.

Trinidad Guardian — 15th October, 1975. p. 8

"CREATIVE EXPRESSION BEATS SPELLING AND GRAMMAR"

It's vital to child's language development
by Gerald Samuel

Not long ago when a primary school child wrote a composition which was loaded with grammar and spelling errors his paper was returned to him with scores of red ink marks and disparaging comments by his teacher. Today, the teacher is not supposed to slash away at "errors" in the child's composition.

The new primary school syllabus for Trinidad and Tobago makes it clear that when our pupils write creatively, "things like grammar and spelling, would in the initial stages play second-fiddle to expression". Apart from urging the teacher to turn a blind eye on faults in grammar and spelling, the new document encourages our young children to write poetry, plays and short stories.

The old syllabus which was in use up to last term never breathed a word about creative writing. It was limited to practical writing. This type of writing deals with formal matters of communication, like formal business letters, invitations, etc. The children need to know these kinds of communications in order to function in the culture. But the creative expression is vital to their language development.

I suspect that many persons will rave against the tolerance of grammatical and spelling errors in children's writing. (28) But in the early stages of creative writing what is vitally important is that the children express their ideas without inhibition.

ENVIRONMENT

"Through creative writing", says our new syllabus, "children record their reactions to personal experiences by objectifying in words their inner thoughts and feelings". It is when children begin to inject their own "soul" in their writing that it becomes creative. When they begin to manipulate words and to make them symbolic, when they see links in their environment and paint word pictures to represent the relationships, these are ingredients in creative writing.

There are four basic purposes for creative writing, according to educator Paul McKee.

1. It gives the child opportunity to express his own intimate thoughts and feelings concerning experiences with which he comes in contact.

28. It is worth examining what the syllabus says on the question of error correction. At p. 24 the last sentence reads: "The teacher ought not to correct grammatical 'faults' that have not been taught in class".

The thought is, unfortunately, badly phrased and open to more than one misinterpretation. A more accurate statement would be:

"The teacher ought not to insist on the use of grammatical structures that have not yet been taught to his class."

2. It makes provisions for those children who possess literary talent to secure encouragement and appropriate instructions.
3. It arouses and maintains a sensitiveness to an interest in and an appreciation of good literature, and
4. It is more conducive to the development of language ability than are traditional procedures.

Pointing out the child's errors in the creative exercise only stifles his desire to relay his thoughts. Such action gives birth to negative responses and it kills whatever enthusiasm the child may have had.

Suppose a primary school child wrote the following story for his teacher:-

"Today I saw a very butiful pigeon. It white and grey. It landed on top a fence. I tried to grab it with my hand but it flew before I could grasp it. I saw it fly off and it look butiful" —

Chances are that the child's paper would meet with the vengeance of the teacher's red ink pen as he weeds out the bad grammar and corrects the misspelt words. The teacher would even say, as some of our English teachers are wont to say: "This child just don't want to learn. He can't learn good English no matter how many times I teach it". The burden is always on the child when the education system fails him. When a school does well in a national examination most of the praises go to the teachers. But when the children fail, adverse remarks are always directed towards them. "They don't have the I.Q. They just plain lazy".

It might be that teachers should revamp their approach to the teaching of English. It might be that they should stop blaming the children and re-examine their own methods. It might be that in language and literature more emphasis needs to be placed on humanitarian perspectives. I agree with the syllabus that in creative writing a child's "errors" must not be corrected. (29) To correct the child is to reduce him to rigidity.

In many of our schools, teachers still practise solely what the old syllabus preached in English, that is, that the child should be drilled in the uses of the various parts of speech, the different kinds of phrases, sentences and clauses and the rules of syntax. But one needs to exercise the creative potential of the child and here is where creative writing becomes applicable. There are many situations and experiences in and out of the classroom which provide stimulation to creative writing. Since children love to talk about themselves and their family, the following activities are useful to motivate them:

1. Let them write simple diaries.
2. They can make poems for their Christmas or Mother's Day cards.
3. Let them label pictures.

29. It is important to note that Samuel restricts his agreement to "creative writing".

4. Have them create their own comic strips and write the dialogue.
5. They can write autobiographies.
6. Let them write out jokes.

These exercises have been found successful in motivating the child. Before any kind of writing can be done the teacher must build an amiable atmosphere in the classroom through free discussion of some topic of general interest.

The introduction of creative writing in our primary school syllabus was long overdue. Within the past ten years numerous books coming out of England and the United States of America have been published revealing how children's language ability can be bettered by overlooking their grammatical and spelling "faults" in creative writing.

One of the books I like best is a collection of children's writings entitled "The Me Nobody Knows", edited by Stephen Joseph, a New York teacher. The writings were done mostly by Blacks and Puerto Ricans between the ages of 7 and 18. They lived in the slums of New York City and like many of our pupils their language ability was not high. Most of the stories reveal the great power of the children's imagination and the unusual way they looked at life around them. Here is a child's story about "Death".

"It was death in my mother's friends family. We were invited to the funeral. I was in my black suit. I was scared to death. The people were crying. Then the man said we could come up to see the man's body. My mother was pushing me up there. Findly we got up there. I was so mad that I push the man. I poke him in the eyes. I even pull his ears. Expect make up to come off. Then the man got up and said, Hi folks, We were running for our lives. The fat man was the first out. Everybody was getting blocked in the door. The preacher jumped out the window. He got hit by a truck. We ran into the East river and drowned".

According to Joseph in his introduction to the book, the teachers of these young writers never graded their work. They did not insist that the children spell perfectly and write in good grammar.

PUNISHMENT

"Insisting is not the thing to do if you want someone to tell you how he feels". The teachers did not evaluate the children's work. They claimed that when writings were evaluated it focused their attention on approval and not on exploring ideas. Above all, the teachers were able to get the children to trust them because they did not use the authoritarian punishment and reward approach that is so popular and inhibiting in education systems.

To teach creative writing requires creative teachers. If the Ministry of Education and Culture wants its lofty ideas contained in the new syllabus translated into effective action it must lend a helping hand to teachers who are willing to innovate but who do not have the necessary tools to do the job. (30)

Trinidad Guardian — 28th December, 1975 p. 10

A DANGEROUS EDUCATIONAL VENTURE (31) by Noel P. Bowen

The authoritative pronouncement of the Ministry touching the promotion of a linguistic ideology for the nation contained in its recently issued New Primary School Syllabus cannot, I venture to think, fail to amaze, I shall not say appall, all who had hoped to see with the heavy accent and immense expenditure (\$100M in 1976) upon education an improvement in the educational standards of our people, and in particular in respect of the spelling, pronunciation, grammar and meaning of the language they employ and commonly use. (32) To the contrary. A somewhat unexpected and startling divergence, an action in reverse, it would seem, has taken place. In the name of progress the new Syllabus calls for a complete and revolutionary change on the part of teachers towards the speech and writing habits of the young folk (5-11) committed to their tuition.

The curriculum of the Primary School needs, it is claimed to be revised in the light of the changing assumptions and ideas in the education world in respect of teaching methods. As a consequence creative writing is now deemed to be an art and requires to be treated as such. The methods proposed by the Syllabus are avowedly designed to encourage and give free — the freest — rein to the proliferation and perpetuation of the rich and varied slang that so plentifully, and as many think pitifully, abounds in the community, regardless of all or any standards of English, its correctness or otherwise.

CLEAREST TERMS

Let us for a moment examine what is being so ardently and authoritatively pressed. Whereas in times past a real grasp of English, the legal language of the nation, together with a correct knowledge of its grammar and syntax, was the major aim of tuition at all stages of the usual or ordinary curriculum of our schools, this line of teaching has now been plainly and deliberately set aside in the in-

30. The call for proper training and retraining cannot be too strongly made. It is vital.

31. We sincerely hope that no language arts programme in Trinidad and Tobago will have as its target the pompous bombast of this writer.

32. The language which 'they employ and commonly use' is Trinidadian and Tobagonian vernacular.

terest of the "objectification", (a familiar term of this memorable document) by the provisions of the Syllabus which make it superlatively clear that (I quote) "where pupils write creatively things like grammar and spelling would in the initial stage play second fiddle to expression." (33)

It is to be noted, also, that oral expression and reading are likewise listed as being advantageous and (I quote) "might well precede written exercise". (34)

It is thus given in the clearest terms official approval that the child's literary creative development requires that he may express himself as loosely and, if desired, as indifferently as he cares, in the vernacular of the country, and the rules of proper speech, writing, grammar, or what have you, are not to be allowed to hinder or prevent the concretisation of his thoughts and ideas in "Trinidadian", whatever this latter term may mean.

It follows accordingly he shall be at the completest liberty to indulge the down-rightest, backyard exhibition of the vernacular as may be known to him or tickle his fancy, the contention being that under no circumstances is the priceless exponency of his "creativity" to suffer or be set at nought by the restraints of propriety or the civilities of polite language. (35)

Whilst it is true that we in this territory have in latter years become prone to accepting all manner of transitions good, bad, or indifferent, as stagger the imagination, this most potent and prestigious ukase cannot fail in circumstances at once so iconoclastic and far-reaching to leave all who have the future of our young ones at heart in grave disquiet.

When once the child is encouraged to write or speak incorrectly (36) at an impressionable age, the way back to correct speech, the setting aright of verbal error, becomes an exceedingly difficult matter in practice.

Has not the last Lord Birkenhead, a foremost Lord High Chancellor of Britain, recorded in his memoirs the immense effort it demanded of him in his student days at Oxford to acquire the inestimable habit of speaking correctly on his feet! And with what results!

33. The writer has failed to grasp the major statement of purpose in the syllabus. He has reacted to the section on creative writing without recognising that creative writing is not the goal of the syllabus; it is a tool for language and personal development and constitutes part of a set of teaching techniques.
34. Speech is primary in language; writing is secondary and only a representation of speech. The point being made by the syllabus is that the development of oral expression must take chronological precedence over the development of written expression.
35. There is an assumption here that impropriety is intrinsic in Creole speech. This is prejudicial judgement based on an attitude towards speakers of Creole that stems from a source other than the nature of their language.
36. The assumption here is that Trinidadian Creole is incorrectly spoken English. The falseness of the assumption is exposed in our articles at pages 40-49 of this pamphlet. The use of one language has never been an impediment to the proper acquisition of a second language. What is an obstacle is failure to recognise the separateness of two languages when planning a language teaching programme.

CORRECT WAGE

Examination results, as is notorious, are already filled with an alarming and growing percentage of failures in the subject of English, whilst it is certainly everyone's experience to note on all sides the definite decline in the correct usage of the nation's official language, a defect, I might say, not unknown in Government departments and possibly to a greater extent in our business and counting houses.⁽³⁷⁾

This extraordinary attitude respecting English, let it however be noted, has been "in the air" for some time. At the end of 1973 came the incredible announcement (vide the *Trinidad Guardian* December 17, 1973) where under the caption "English out of Public Service Examination" it was reported "applicants for permanent positions in the Public Service will no longer have to take English essay and language in the qualifying examination. The examination will be confined merely to Caribbean Affairs with special reference to Trinidad and Tobago and Arithmetic".

It is not easy for the ordinary and uniformed mind to analyse the reasons that have led generally to an apparent determination on the part of those in authority to sever as fully and as early as possible connection with the Mother Country, and now it would appear, the mother-tongue (38). Or, to understand in the words of the late Sir Winston Churchill, the inexplicable disposition "to forego the rich heritage of the English Language".

However valid (or controversial) the new research may be as to the raising of the child's creativity and level of intelligence the ponderous accent upon the vernacular and the growing tendency to denigrate the European connection, Colonialism and the like, would appear to suggest that the efflorescence of our new political liberties demand the accomplishment of Trinidadian as our lingo, accredited henceforth now official authentication, and the accompaniment at a later stage of internationally acceptable English.

Or, is it that the new concepts regarding the race for racial identification impose the equally momentous duty that necessitates the expression of individual thoughts or ideas in closer harmony with the decor and circumstantial background of the largest segment of the production.

NEW RHETORIC

The true purpose of language is, without argument, twofold in character: communication and social. The measure of its use is the effectiveness of its communication in a manner most appropriate to the subject.

37. The failure of English language teaching must be blamed on the inadequacy of traditional methods not on the present propositions which (at the date of writing) have not been implemented. The present state of our language competence is the result of the old system. The new syllabus attempts to remedy the situation.

38. The assumption that English is the mother tongue of the majority of this nation's population is false.

No one, therefore, can be so naive as to bind oneself to a compulsory acceptance of "older" authorities regarding English usage where the uses of words have been superseded or added to in the light of more scientific investigation or more recent principles of techniques in art, science or indeed literature itself!

Nor, in truth and in fact, of the new rhetoric of the Press and of Radio which manifestly has incorporated the sounds and rhythms of speech obtaining in the parlance novel and forceful, picturesque and colourful, of the less lettered branches of the community.

No one too, will deny the right of the individual to express that which is natural, contemporary or reputable, in the most effective terms possible or to give utterance thereto in an harmonious and even extravagant vein!

But it is not because of such pregnant considerations that we have this unique thesis worked out in discursive form, mandatory on our Primary School emancipating in the name of the 'Creative Arts' (39) all who attend them from restrictions and everything else which are calculated to impair the child's literary development or better his original work by anything as may be found in conventional English usage.

THE VITAL YEARS

Whilst supposedly authority exists for so unreflecting and distracting a theory concerning provisions so arrestingly designed for the cultivation of a personal style of speech and writing during the vital years of childhood, I must confess I am myself not yet aware of the deliberate attempt by an Educational Authority or for that matter a State to stimulate by specific regulation the cultivation of recording of its language in its most broken (40) aspects or of its lowest levels as a matter of set education policy. (41)

Especially in these days when children are already getting, as it were, from all sides, an ever-increasing amount of experience with picture books, comics, radio, television and other visual auditory media almost from infancy, and all for the most part aimed at their educational betterment and upliftment.

But it may be that the syllabus is Trinidad and Tobago's interpretation of the well-known phrase — "reculer pour mieux sauter". However, characteristic or descriptive of the local scene or life, they are, I am persuaded, suited almost entirely to conversational situations and play no part in the normal transactions civil and commercial, of our ordinary day-to-day life. It is to my mind thus a gross

39. This must be an error. He either meant Creative writing or Language Arts.

40. The assumption that Trinidadian and Tobagonian vernaculars are broken forms of the official language is demonstrably false. See pages 40-49.

41. The policy has been grossly misinterpreted. This indicates that the writer has ignored those sections of the syllabus that outline very clearly, the objectives of the Language Arts programme. Previous notes show that the intention is to teach English more effectively than it has hitherto been taught.

travesty of truth and common sense to attempt to substitute or admit such substandard intrusions into the daily study or teaching of English in our Primary Schools or in any school for that matter.

BRIGHTER CHILD

Nor does it need any argument to mark the disadvantages that would face our little nation in the future expansion of its foreign markets should its overseas communications be larded with versions and variants, eulogisms, curiosities and oddities of the English Language carrying little or an uncertain understanding to its customers abroad.⁽⁴²⁾

Whilst possibly the most besetting of questions is how to raise a brighter child, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is crowded with countless suggestions and remedies as to how one can encourage or guide the child's creativity. Research in this field is yet incomplete and many recommendations and proposals, good and bad, are to be garnered in numerous studies, many still under way.

Creativity means, it goes without saying, far more than talent in art or music. It includes the entire range of creative and adventurous thinking in every field. It is plain that the "sprout" of creativity is to be encouraged and guided, but only along the right lines. The question — the vital question — thus arises, Does the New Primary School Syllabus proceed along such lines?

Except perhaps, it may be that granted a comprehensive medium, the new disquisitions represent in the light of the latest researches in education thinking a first-rate guide to methods by which a child can be taught to read and speak and write more effectively.

In this connection it is to be noted, not without some interest (or amazement), that our vernacular is confidently and boldly claimed by the Syllabus to be a total language having phonology, morphology and syntax! ⁽⁴³⁾ A conclusion possibly devoutly to be wished but based on premises at once so flimsy or so sterile as scarcely to merit serious consideration. Right here I may say that I contest strongly the claim that what the child speaks in his home is not English but the vernacular. In my view it is a form of English but very bad English.⁽⁴⁴⁾

It is, therefore, the essential and bounden duty of the Educational Authorities not to accept at that or any stage the low standards set by the most uncultivated sections of the community but to teach the child that which is correct ⁽⁴⁴⁾ from the very beginning of his school days. A primary duty indeed. Furthermore, the Syllabus contends strongly that the ultimate objective of the new line of development must be taken to be preparatory to the elimination by the child of the vernacular as a daily medium of speech and writing at a later stage namely the end of his Primary School Days, and his adoption or qualifying in "Internationally Acceptable English" during the next stage of his schooling.

42. Page 18 of the syllabus refutes the point. See our note 23

43. See the article at pages 43-49 for treatment of this point.

44. Notes 36, 38, 40 apply.

At this point it is necessary to examine once more the proposals from perhaps another angle.

TOTAL CONFUSION

Literary activity can unquestionably be increased by encouragement, opportunity and training, but it can be rendered purposeless and stifling by false educational theories and practices. New ideas and "innovations" are often literarily admissible but it is essential that they originate out of a solid background with fundamental rules.

In this country it is not an overstatement that we are unfortunately lacking in both such respects. Whilst "Innovations" proceed as a rule not from thrilling language but usually from one's own vivid imagination they are definitely not to be drawn from a dubious confused literary background or from the precarious conditions of a questionable social system as give rise to impreciseness and conflicting ideas. Such latter setting, and we fill the picture in almost every detail, is ours, whose social, historical and other antecedents comprehend and comprise a vernacular drawn from broken English, Patois, a mixed-up jargon of the most fatuous Creolese, and a multiplicity of Eastern (Near, Middle and Far) tongues as well as numerous African dialects. (45)

In such discomfiting conditions the child's experiments in language creatively and otherwise, can only lead to stultification, if not total confusion, and can, as I see it, under no circumstances terminate in his learning precisely the right word for an object or a feeling or an action QED.

The main point of the Syllabus is to encourage the child to wallow in the incorrectness and sloppiness of the vernacular at one stage and then tell him in a few short years that he must jettison all that he has learnt in his early days at school and seek thenceforth to "acquire" another language, "Internationally Accepted English", — which is more universally understood and which the official business of the nation is conducted. (46)

45. The presence of vocabulary items or structural patterns drawn from several different sources does not disqualify any form of speech from having an integrity as a language. We might wish to recall:

- (a) that English contains vocabulary that comes from Anglo-Saxon, Norman French, Latin, Greek, Gaelic, Nordic languages (what are now Swedish, Danish and Norwegian).
- (b) that French contains vocabulary that comes from Latin, Greek, Gaulish Languages, Germanic languages, English.
- (c) that Spanish contains vocabulary that derives from Latin, Iberian languages, Arabic and Lusitanian languages.

All languages of the world contain elements that reflect the social and historical contacts of the people who speak them. The notion of the 'pure' language is a myth.

46. The inaccuracy of the view that the vernacular is sloppy and incorrect has already been stated. It should be noted that the syllabus calls for a gradual and ordered programming of the teaching of English. The programme is based on the assumption that the native language or mother tongue (i.e. the form of speech first acquired) is not English. The teaching programme cannot assume knowledge which has not been provided by the programme itself. Furthermore, it cannot delay all teaching until the official language is completely mastered.

So that after inculcating in him one set of standards he is to apply to himself to the acquisition of a completely different set of standards in speech, a procedure that can surely only lead to self-contradiction. Such a course is with respect, nothing less than a waste of public effort and still more, of public funds.

It is clear beyond cavil that the child does not need to be taught or encouraged to write or speak a language which would make him "unacceptable" in any cultural circle involving the use of English. The vernacular cannot by any rule of logic or common sense be worthy of cultivation at one stage of the child's life and be unworthy at the very next! (47)

Rather than to instill into the mind of the child one set of ideas which he is to forego and jettison at the age of 11 as being unworthy of further cultivation, the teacher's duties would most certainly be better and more successfully employed in trying to inculcate in his mind a respect for correctness from his earliest stage.

For these reasons I regard the New Primary School Syllabus as respects the Literary Arts (or Creative Writing) as a dangerous educational experiment in the circumstances particularly of our case, and a surrender by the Ministry of Education and Culture of its important obligations to teach children correct speech from the inception of their training in the nation's Primary Schools. Moreover, I consider the consequences of its introduction as likely to lead from error to error where error already so abundantly exists.

Trinidad Guardian — 4th February, 1976. p. 10

TRINI-DEGENERATIVE ENGLISH by C. O. Stroud

(We have made a concession by using the writer's own headline for this thought-provoking contribution in which Mr. C. O. Stroud, educator and lawyer, discusses English as some people speak it in this country.)

Mr. Stroud refers to "the appalling use" of the language and describes it as "Trini-degenerative English".

47. There is no question of worthiness or unworthiness. The intention is not to change the child's language. It is to provide him/her with another language which can co-exist with what he already has and be used effectively a circumstances demand. Bilingualism and bidialectalism are normal universal phenomena which do not have any adverse effect on the development of the individual.

The concluding instalment appears tomorrow.)

In the issue of your paper for September 27, 1975, Ms. Thora O'Connor, not without justification, poured the vials of satirical wrath on the head of Mr. Gerald Samuel following his contribution to your columns (September 17, 1975) of what may be compendiously summed up as "Good English, bad English". Her translation of Shakespeare into Trini was a rare gem and the facetiousness of it apt. My only criticism of her effort is that it did not go far enough.

It appears that Mr. Samuel was dilating on a new language curriculum for Primary Schools, concerning which he is evidently enthused, and in the context of the appalling use of language at nearly all levels, Ms. O'Connor's reaction can be readily appreciated.

THE MESSAGE

What she did not seem to know was that UWI personnel had conducted a series of discussions over the radio, (48) lasting some 12 weeks, and repeated as recorded in order to make sure that the "message" was delivered, and that the subject was "Creole as a language"; that School Supervisors had done an intensive course at UWI, presumably at public expense, in order that the gospel of Creole could be diffused throughout the length and breadth of the country; (49) and at least one book was prescribed for use in Secondary Schools so that none should escape the virus of Creole; and that at least one UWI personality had over television declared with enthusiasm that Creole was more capable than English to express the West Indian nuances, because English was too cumbersome and lacked the "short cuts" of expression so much in keeping with the regional character. (50)

At a later stage, a columnist, concealing his identity behind the impressive pen-name "Scholasticus", attempted some elucidation of the intricacies of the new Curriculum and satisfied at least one — "Puzzled Parent". He emphasised that standard English was the ultimate objective and while endorsing the new curriculum he added a proviso that there should be an adequate collection of books written in standard English in the School library.

48. The reference is to a series of discussion broadcast by the Government Broadcasting Unit under the title 'Our Creole'. It should be noted that the series was not sponsored by either U.W.I. or the Ministry of Education and Culture.

49. The course referred to was conducted by The Ministry of Education and Culture. One lecturer employed by U.W.I. delivered two addresses. The sessions of the course were held at the School of Education's lecture rooms at U.W.I. The use of the buildings was permitted by the School of Education as a courtesy to the Ministry of Education and Culture.

50. It should be noted that Mr. Stroud's interpretation of the relationship between the GBU broadcasts and the syllabus is his own.

It was not clear, however — though the fact may have escaped the casual reader — at what stage standard English was to be taught, (51) in order to enable primary school pupils to benefit from the existence of such a library. However, the omission there was, might have been deliberate, since the UWI “brains” had already said that standard English should be taught as a foreign language (52) and not before the age of 12 to 15 years.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

In the good old Elementary School, the leaving age was about 15 years, and this is perhaps still so in the Primary School, if post-primary classes are included. Thus, when the UWI views are correlated with the Scholastic, the libraries would turn out to be white elephants.

Is it any wonder that one Secondary School Principal was frank enough to acknowledge that some of the students seeking admission could neither read nor write, even though they had attempted the Common Entrance Examination? (53) Moreover, it is a notorious fact that secondary students who study a foreign language for five years and make distinctions in that language at Ordinary or Advanced Levels cannot speak the Language (54). The Secondary School Principal might well have said that the applicants could not speak English either. The trouble is that the experts who are foisting on this community theories which may have appeared to work in the antipodes among aborigines or in Scandinavia or in those Low Counties, where English is in fact a foreign tongue, those experts, whatever else may be their disciplines, are not pedagogues, and their theories are pedagogically unsound.

51. English is to be taught at all stages of the child's primary education. The point is: What aspects of English and in what order? English is not one thing. It is a language which, like all other languages, has to be divided, for teaching purposes, into simple and complex structures, essential rules and stylistic devices, basic words and advanced words. The important point is to decide what to teach, when and how.
52. The term ‘foreign’ language seems to be causing some problems. According to our recollection the statements to which C. O. Stroud alludes were to the effect that certain techniques of foreign language teaching were appropriate to the teaching of English in this society. It has never been suggested that English be taught only from age 12.
53. Mr. Stroud (and many other contributors) behaves as if this deficiency is a result of the policy advocated by the new syllabus. It could not possibly be as it has only just been published. It is the result of the current ‘good old’ methods which have outlived their usefulness in our society.
54. The reasons why such students cannot speak the language are mainly:
 - (a) that the purpose of current foreign language teaching has been to create a reading and writing competence and only incidentally an oral competence.
 - (b) the methods used for foreign language teaching at the present time cannot create oral competence.
 Briefly, foreign language teaching stands in as great need of review as English language teaching.

RANDOM SAMPLE

A random sample of where this country has reached in language will suffice to show that the ivory tower experts are too far removed from the grassroots really to care. Here is the sample:-

1. Ah ent get no message. Ah now tell she we have to go and meet a fella day.
2. Doh worry wid he and dat. Ah know wah yo talkin bout.
3. Go on mahn, yo too boderation.
4. Wah, nah, nah, man! Ah fraid, ah afraid, ah fraid.
5. Wah wrong wid you nuh mahn! Is annedda fella way lick she dong.
6. Wappen? Way you goin? Dong tong?
7. Way you say? Yo tink ee gorn home? tree ah dem pahss here jess now.
8. "Way you went?" Way yo askin meh? I en do nuttin nuh.
9. Meh head huttin meh, Ah mussee study too long.
10. Ah tell de 'oman to move but she ent takin me on. Ah go clean she up.
11. Doh talk chupidness, boy. Yo lookin for you det or wat?
12. O Gawd, O Gawd, O Gawd! Who geddit, who geddit, who geddit?

This sample was not made up, but was all noted within a few hours. (55) And the persons who gave utterance to them were neither illiterate (apparently) nor riff-raff. They sported big cars and were tidy according to existing standards.

At least two were secondary school students. Moreover, it was not merely what they said, but how they said it — like a loud burst of machine-gun fire, audible one hundred yards away, even though they were speaking to persons hardly a foot distant. (56)

55. The sample is not unlikely to have been heard by the writer anywhere in Trinidad. It is appropriate to note here that the spelling which the writer attempts to use has an important bias in it. (That is not the writer's fault) One cannot call the spelling a system because it is in fact inconsistent. It has the built-in bias of treating items as forms of English words. There is no doubt that the words do derive from or are cognate to English words. But a spelling such as this disguises much more important structural differences between English and Trinidadian.

56. These comments refer to rate of speech and loudness of voice. These are not intrinsic to the vernacular. Their value is purely affective. It is possible to whisper and to speak slowly in the vernacular. The writer is apparently more concerned with "manners" and propriety of conduct than with language use.

This is the speech of Trinidad, this is what it seems must be encouraged. (57) Statistically, this country is highly literate.

B. G. EXAMPLE

During the First World War, the police and militia of Buxton, near Georgetown, in what was then British Guiana, are reported to have gone on a recruiting campaign among Britain's Loyal Subjects, and the event was chronicled in the language of the people. What follows is a fragment of a longish poem:

Wi day pan tak a tappics,
 But mo so bout the warr,
 When we hear a nize a railway line
 Liki tunder a boss a la
 Wi see dem Buxton neigga a run
 Like chicken way go for roose,
 Jozie get fryn, e wahn shut up he shap
 Tinkin say riot brak loose.
 So I say to Sam, "Ah wah dis?"
 Come, buya, let ah we go see".
 Wen we mek up de dam
 Awee meet dem perleeces an milishee.
 Dere bin over tree hundred a dem
 Dat dee march up wid de ban
 An when dem come longside Gomes' rumshop
 Dere dem mek a stan
 De Colonel rede out de paypa fo tell ahwee wo for do.
 Den Mc Artur mank de bax, O Gard! de laya tark fo true.
 Den one backra lady mank de bax, an one song she start fo sing
 Sometin bout flag way nover come dong,
 Wid Gard save awee king.

57. There is nowhere in the syllabus that a statement to this effect is made. It is not a question of encouraging a particular variety of speech. The issues are those:

- (1) the vernacular should be recognised as being **linguistically** a different language system from English.
- (2) the vernacular should not be considered as an incorrect or broken or improper or bastardised or half-baked form of English, **because it is not.**
- (3) children who speak the vernacular should be afforded the same courtesy of respect for their language as any other speaker of another language.
- (4) teaching English to a speaker of Trinidadian Creole is a different task from teaching it to speakers of other languages.
- (5) the order in which elements are taught, the rate at which they are introduced, the difficulty one anticipates in the learner's acquiring them must be conditioned by the separate nature of Trinidadian vernacular, by its structural integrity as much as by the areas of similarity to English.

The above represents the speech of illiterate underdogs striving to imitate the language sounds of their masters. It all happened before and in these parts one is most familiar with the French-patois pattern where *un homme* became *nom*, *les oiseaux* – *zuayzo*, *petit garçon* – *tee gasson*, *un* – *yon*, *les allumettes* – *zalleemet*, *fusiller* – *freeze* – *way*, *diametre* – *jammet*, *Poivre* – *puev*, *poisson frais* – *pwayson fray*, *de l'eau* – *glow*, *tu as perdu place* – *tor pay dee plass*, *ma commere* – *maccomay*, *croisee* – *kwayzay*, *du feu* – *dee fay*, *quelquechose* – *kayshay*, *bailler* – *bah*, *tout le monde* – *toote moon*, *pieton* – *payton*, *les herbes a pique* – *zebapeek*.

The sound of a large group of French words was accurately reproduced in patois, and so evolved a means of communication which our Philologists will tell us is not French, but a Creole sharing vocabulary with French, just as we are told our language is not English but shares vocabulary with English. (58)

The main problem is that we restrict our range by taking so small a share of the established tongue as virtually to cut ourselves off from what was achieved in that tongue. (59) And so far as English is concerned, we insist on retaining at least seven of the very old four-letter variety, especially when at all levels we are determined to be vulgar – they are associated with sexual congress; the elimination of air rectally; the female genitalia (some innocent and absent mother being the usual object of compliment); faeces, micturition, the hind portion of the body; and the male organ, as immortalised by the calypsonian who sang of Santa Claus. (60)

GOLD FOR 'BARD'

We are not only proud to preserve these English words, but found verbal metaphorical applications for them.

And the society is so inconsistent as, in one breath, to award a gold medal to a bard for his contribution to "we culture", a "bard" who was credited by an American newspaper with regaling New York listeners with two and a half hours of unrelieved obscenity; and, in another breath, to be outraged by his demonstration on a public platform of the superficial and undisciplined nature of that culture by using one of the same four-letter English words when provoked.

58. This taunt is in fact a correct statement of the facts.

59. The statement is true both of English and of Creole. Most speakers who use either Creole or English too infrequently use the full resources of the languages. There is a tendency among speakers of both languages to restrict the range of their expression to a level that belies the range of expressivity of the languages.

60. It is a pity that the writer does not recognise that obscenity is universal and not restricted to Creole to specific social classes or particular countries. The Nixon tapes are presumably spoken in good General American English but were no less obscene for that fact. It is a known fact that when people wish to be obscene they prefer their vernacular. Somehow it is more effective. But this is not a characteristic of the vernacular. The fact of the matter is that in any community where a high status language coexists with a low status language, the low status language is used for obscenity or curses. Indeed, the low status language does not have to appear to be similar to the high status language for this choice to operate. Among Italian-Americans, for example, Italian rather than English is used for cursing. The Italian language is not impaired by this fact. Similarly Jewish-Americans prefer Yiddish for cursing. Furthermore, the words used in Trinidad for describing the organs and functions to which Mr. Stroud alludes are ENGLISH TO THE CORE as Mr. Stroud recognises two paragraphs later.

This same society had ignored his contempt of Court when he ran his own defence to a charge of wounding by having all his jurors silently humming "Ten to One is Murder".

Trinidad Guardian — 5th February, 1976. p. 8

TRINI-DEGENERATIVE ENGLISH - 2

(The following concludes Mr. C. O. Stroud's contribution on the use of the English Language in this country, the first instalment of which appeared in yesterday's Guardian.)

Incidentally, certain utterances of the UWI crowd sent me scurrying back to two books which I had read over 35 years ago, one in which the Commonwealth Caribbean, then called the British West Indies, was listed among the English-speaking territories of the world, a description which included the United States of America, the national identity of which has not been tarnished on that account.

The other, "English in the Future" by J. Hubert Jagger, D. Litt., one of the Discussion Books edited by Richard Wilson, D. Litt, and A.J.J. Ratcliff, M.A. (61)

In this letter, the author writes: "English is the speech of the Cockney 'bus conductor who says, 'you left to pie on that bag, sir' and of the city man who replied, 'Oh, I shall have to pay on that bag, shall I?' and of the Scots policeman who retorts: 'och, wull I though!' It is the speech of the mill-worker in Oldham and Bradford, of the Durham miner and the Birmingham mechanic, of the curate of the pulpits, of the Somersetshire and Dorsetshire farm labourer, of the precise Oxford don, of the woman M.P., and of the butcher's boy. It includes the utterances of those whose speech is neglected and degenerate, whether in sounds or in words, as well as the periods of the cultivated diplomat. It includes the speech of the shop girls in Croydon and Aberdeen, and of their boyfriends too; of the book-maker and the jockey at Newmarket, and the barman in Dublin, and the masters at Winchester and Harrow. All these, in their hundreds or thousands or millions are sharers of English speech".

Thus it seems that when Dickens makes one of his characters describe Nicholas Nickleby "As to the teacher, 'e were lean an' were" and when elsewhere there is reference to "You Bonnie lassie playing with a wee dog in the kirk yard", the speakers were speaking English, though not Standard,

61. We have not been able to see copies of these works.

Received or Modified. And by the same token, the boys at our street corners, chattering almost unintelligibly, are speaking English too (62) (for they know no other language), though their efforts cannot be called "Good Speech". (63)

Here is Dr. Jagger once more: "Good speech is only acquired by effort; by trying to speak well, and in accordance with a good model. For centuries Standard English, which begins its career as a local dialect among others, has been the speech of the court, of the intellectual class, the witty, the learned and the prosperous (64). It has been in closer contact with written English than any other forms of spoken English has been: It is, in consequence, better on the whole, and better spoken on the whole, than any other form of English. Standard English is preferable to any local dialect both because it is not local, and because it has acquired qualities far superior to those possessed by any local dialect. This conclusion is not derived from snobbery, but from common sense." (65)

Thus, if by its new curriculum the Ministry of Education makes official (66) the careless and sloppy speech now heard at all levels, except in the courts and from the pulpits, then the experts appear to be adopting a defeatist attitude of "If you can't lick 'em, then join 'em".

A BETRAYAL

But such an attitude, in the light of the millions of dollars being spent on schools, on teachers and on education generally, amounts to a betrayal of trust, and to a deliberate attempt to halt the production of Woodings and Williamses and Capildoes.

Nowadays the words VERNACULAR and DIALECT are being bandied about without any reference to their dictionary meaning and by persons who ought to know better.

62. We disagree. The structural characteristics which make the forms of speech to which Mr. Stroud refers dialects of English are VERY DIFFERENT from the structural characteristics of Trinidadian and Tobagonian vernaculars. The relationships that exist between dialects of the same language do not exist between Trinidadian English creole and English.

We must insist that to say that two languages are related does not mean that one is a dialect of the other or that both are dialects of the same language. For example, French and Spanish, Italian and Rumanian are related languages but in no sense is any of them a dialect of the other nor are they dialects of the same language. Similarly but not identically, it would be grossly inaccurate to deny that Trinidadian and Tobagonian Creole are related to English BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT ANY ONE IS A DIALECT OF THE OTHER OR THAT ALL THREE ARE DIALECTS OF THE SAME LANGUAGE.

63. Stroud insists on repeating this falsehood. The notion of 'good speech' is a SOCIAL judgement not a linguistic judgement.

64. This view is in harmony with our statements at pages 34-35 under 'Dialects of a language' and 'the Standard Language'.

65. We fail to follow the logic of these assertions.

66. The Ministry of Education is not seeking to make any such thing official! Even a cursory reading of the syllabus shows this.

When Eusebius Sophronius Ieronimus translated the Bible from the Greek text to his native Latin producing what is known as the Vulgate, that distinguished cleric was translating into the vernacular. And when the Douay monks translated the Vulgate into English, they too were translating into the vernacular. Tyndale and the learned translators of the reign of James I performed a similar exercise.

Some enterprising "scholar" will no doubt produce a "Sambo and Suzie" or a "Mammit's" or a "Zingay Talala" version of the English text and call it a "Translation" into the vernacular.

The other word, dialect, has already been used in one or other of its accepted meanings, to wit, a mode of expressing thought a subdivision of a language, a local form of speech. (67)

When, therefore, our dons (68) spread the word that English is not the speech of the Caribbean area, and endeavour to establish that Creole is a language distinct from any of the established European languages of the region, they must realise that they can fool some of the people some of the time, but not all the people all the time.

What goes as Creole appears to by-pass French-Patois, Dutch Takki-takki and Papimento, and whatever is the local speech of San Maarten. (69)

NOT SPOKEN

Mr. Paul Keens-Douglas appears to be one of the persons impressed, and his Creole, though admirably performed, is not spoken by him.

The M.C., of "Mainly for Women" goes into ecstatic delight by his performances, excellent entertainment, but when she interviews him, bless her heart, her speech is far removed from Creole as it can be, and so is his. And her programme for Twelve and Under gives the lie to our UWI gentlemen by her presentation of so many talented children whose English is as flawless as her own, thereby presenting a silver lining to a dark cloud.

For, it must be admitted that Trinidadians, who in years gone by referred contemptuously to the "twang" associated with other territories, are now at the foot of the class where speech is concerned, and seem to glory in their achievement.

"Graduates" of certain long-established schools, sporting their "Levels" speak carelessly and sloppily, and when any attempt is made to remind them of the high tradition of their schools, they non-

67. Compare our definition at pages 34-35.

68. It must be noted that 'our dons' are not unique. The reader is invited to consult the following bibliography: Reinecke, Tzuzaki, DeCamp, Hancock and Wood: *A Bibliography of Pidgin and Creole Languages* University of Hawaii Press, 1975, 804 p.

69. We have not been able to interpret this sentence.

chantly retort that they are not speaking English but Trini, in the "able" tradition of their teachers, so many of whom are UWI products. (70)

Generally, one has to see a group to ascertain whether they are "funning" or quarrelling or preaching, and what goes for "conversation" is normally a loud interchange of banalities, not one giving another a chance to complete a statement before butting in; the women sound like cackling hens and everybody specialises in using harsh voices harshly.

Our Caribbean mirth is characterised by the loud laugh, which Goldsmith, that shrewd observer of human nature, says "speaks a vacant mind". And we can laugh at any and everything, reminiscent of a neolithic Amerindian tribe mentioned in "The Readers Digest", whose other characteristics are incessant chatter and the habit of repeating anything at least three times. Shades of our groups! Speaking means shouting, and one hears parents shouting at their children for the youngsters to keep less noise, in complete disregard of the superior efficacy of example over precept.

There used to be a theory, said to be founded on psychological research, presumably called an "Old Wives Tale" in this age of wisdom and progress, which attempted to establish a relationship between tidy thinking, tidy appearance and tidy speech.

The same applied to the contrary attributes. Thus a hard-working stevedore was a scholar, he wore his blue dungaree accompanied by a broad waist-cincture to aid his spine, and cursed beautifully when he took his grog. The moderns have adopted the dungaree and called it denim, a large proportion have embraced the cursing habits though replacing grog by dope; but most have thoroughly repudiated the hard work syndrome and so debunked the theory.

The village schoolmaster possessed an orderly and ordered mind and could be recognised by a stranger to the district, by the way he dressed and spoke, as a schoolmaster, a model for his pupils. Those were the days when the schools taught the rudiments of Reading, Writing and Reckoning and parroted a good deal of superficial Religion. Those were the days when uneducated and unsophisticated mothers saw to it that their progeny went to absorb what was being offered, so that the children could have a better "break" in life than their elders. That was a period when school boycotts were unknown and the welfare of the young was not made a political football.

The country has moved a long way from those times and "progress" has meant that materially prosperous parents can spend a good deal of their time demonstrating, ranting and raving, virtually encouraging their children to be disrespectful of constituted authority, and by their example teaching children to be slack and careless in speech.

70. Incorrect English must not be confused with Creole. For example the following is excerpted from an item in the press of some weeks ago "As a result, the dire need for more licensed marriage officers in the church, which has 29 branches in the country, glared itself."

Clearly here, the reporter misused the English verb "to glare". But this is not a Creole usage. It is incorrect English. There is absolutely no doubt that people do use the English language incorrectly but it is of utmost importance that they should not be assumed to be speaking or writing Creole. Many public figures, television and radio personalities are constantly guilty of absolute bloomers, but their mistakes are not usually related to Creole at all.

If speech evolved from grunts, snarls and snaps, there is a determination for it to return to its origins. And as there appears to be an acceptance of the view that "we" culture must be guided by caissos with expression like:

"No pickpocket will ever pick a nex' pickpocket pocket," and "Kick she teet out she mout" and "He lick she," it ought to be admitted that in making Trini official, the Ministry aided and abetted by certain UWI elements, is being committed to an inconsiderate and desperate enterprise because of the reckless ardour of its technical officers and a noble jealousy for what they regard as a national identity.

Sunday Guardian — 15th February, 1976.

THE LANGUAGE ARTS SYLLABUS by L. Carrington and C. Borely *

Between September 1975 and February 1976 numerous letters and comments have appeared in the Trinidad Guardian and Sunday Guardian on the topic of the New Primary School Syllabus for Language Arts as well as on the nature of language in Trinidad and Tobago. The items in question are as follows:

17/9/75	G. Samuel	"Now our 'bad English' is good Language"
27/9/75	T. O'Connor:	"We one kine of English"
5/10/75	a. Scholasticus: b. Previously Puzzled Parent:	"What is 'Good English' "?
14/10/75	Unlettered:	"Congrats to Scholasticus"
15/10/75	a. G. DePieza b. G. Samuel	"Call for ban on Language discussion."
22/10/75	News Item:	"The Teaching of English"
27/10/75	O.M.	"Creative expression beats spelling and Grammar."
28/12/75	N.P. Bowen	"Teachers' group to probe primary schools syllabus"
4 / 2 / 76	C. O. Stroud	"Words and the way we speak them"
5 / 2 / 76	C. O. Stroud	"A dangerous educational venture".
		"Trini-degenerative English — 1"
		"Trini-degenerative English — 11"

* The articles appearing between pages 29 and 56 were written by L. Carrington and C. Borely.

Our perception of our role as teachers within this society does not allow us, much as we regret it, to take advantage of the opportunities for picing offered by both Mr. Bowen and Mr. Stroud. It is fair to say that few of the writers listed above showed a full appreciation of the facts of language, of the nature of the linguistic background of Trinidad and Tobago or of the purpose of language teaching. It is unnecessary for us to take every single point from each person's contribution and to express agreement or disagreement. We propose, therefore, to use those items as a background to the presentation of our own views on the subject of the Language Arts syllabus.

Before beginning our task though, we wish to make it quite clear that the statements which we shall be making about language, about Creole languages and about language teaching are accepted by most linguists throughout the world. They are not inventions of the "U.W.I. brains, U.W.I. personnel, or U.W.I. products" as Mr. Stroud believes.

The following quotations are taken from the New Primary School Syllabus published in June 1975 by the Ministry of Education and Culture. We cite them because the propositions which they make, lie at the base of the concern expressed by some of the writers and perhaps by many other persons who have seen (and not seen) the syllabus. It should be noted right here and now that **NOWHERE** does the syllabus state that Trinidadian and Tobagonian vernacular should be taught in schools. The intention of the syllabus is to teach English better than it is taught now.

1. p. 5 "The first thing that teachers of English need to recognise is that the vernacular is in fact a language with an organised system of rules, (a grammar) and not a mere compilation of broken English Grammar rules".
2. p. 3 "The Language Arts Curriculum presented here recognises the fact that the language spoken by the child when he enters school is, in most cases, structurally different from the English that he is expected to learn in school".
3. p. 3 "It would be absolutely unrealistic for teachers to demand of the newcomer to the school a working knowledge of English".
4. P. 18 "The need to teach the English Language is still fundamental but the assumptions made by textbooks and English courses designed for native English speakers cannot be accepted in our situation".

The aim of the Language Arts Programme must be:

- (a) to teach a new language that is internationally acceptable for communication between ourselves and the outside world so as to enable the children to understand and use both in speech and writing the basic forms and structures of the English Language to describe the world of matter, feelings and ideas of which they are a part;
- (b) to give the pupils the opportunity to express themselves creatively in language — at first, in the only language at their disposal and later by degrees in gradually more acceptable forms of English.

- (c) to provide the child with an enrichment of literary experiences by introducing him to works of high literary value".
5. p. 22 (in reference to the infant department) "... the teacher must accept the home language of the child as the only means of communication at his disposal. It is only when spontaneity has been achieved that the teaching of English structures should begin. To insist on English standards before that, is to inhibit the class to the extent of preventing discussion altogether".
 6. p. 20 "The child needs to learn to understand spoken English. This means that the language that the teacher uses must be adjusted to the level of comprehension of the class and so controlled as to expand their range of understanding both in vocabulary and in complexity of structure".

The importance of the propositions made in the syllabus cannot be appreciated with a clear understanding of certain basic concepts of the nature of human language. You will pardon us therefore, if we spend a considerable amount of space talking about these concepts, defining terms and providing examples before we look at the syllabus itself.

Language — some basic definitions

We must distinguish **Language** from a **language**. A standard acceptable definition of the phenomenon we call human language might read as follows: - an arbitrary system of conventional vocal symbols by which one human being communicates with another. Each word in that definition is purposely included. '**Arbitrary**' means that there is no reason, earthly or divine, why an object that has four vertical supports, a flat top and on which people place other objects should be called a 'table'. It only requires a moment's thought to realise that there must be as many words used to refer to what we call 'table' as there are languages in the world. None of these has any more status in the eyes of either the Lord or the linguist.

'**System**' means that human language shows a pattern of organisation. It is not a haphazard collection of sounds strung together at random on each occasion that a human wishes to communicate. There is a code of usage that restricts the choice of sounds, the order in which they occur and the ways in which they are grouped. For each thought that we wish to express, we may select different sets of words placed in different relationships to each other, or sometimes the same sets of words in different relationships.

'**Conventional**' means that the arbitrary system that we are discussing conveys meaning only to people who belong to the community which shares a particular convention. Take the following example: There is a language in which, if I am hungry, I say "mwen fen". If I went to Papua-New Guinea or to Argentina and said this to someone I met, the chances are that he would not have a clue what I was saying. He would not understand me because he did not share the language conventions of the group to which I belong. People who share the same linguistic conventions can be said to be speaking the same language.

'Vocal' is an important part of the definition. It does two things:

- (a) it indicates that it is by the use of the vocal mechanism (lungs, larynx, mouth and nasal passages) that we communicate;
- (b) it establishes that speech is primary and writing is therefore secondary. If we reflect for a moment, we realise that human beings have been talking for much longer than they have been writing. Indeed, we can refer to writing as being *invented* but no one refers to speech as being invented. Writing is, in fact, a representation of speech, a representation of language. It is fair to say that only the dumb or severely mentally handicapped do not use speech, but more than half the world's population does not write.

'Symbol'. The term 'symbol' is not difficult to grasp. When a traffic light changes to red at an intersection, the approaching vehicles come to a stop. The light does not physically move the driver's foot over to the brake and exert downward pressure. It merely symbolizes to the driver that he should come to halt. In the same way that the light is a symbol, the word 'dog' is not itself an animal, but a symbol representing that animal. Note that it has symbolic value only to those people who share the same system of conventions.

Finally, we consider 'communicates'. Communication is the purpose of language. Ideally whatever message the speaker utters is interpreted by the listener and understood by him. This, of course, can only happen if the speaker and hearer share the same linguistic conventions. A good example is provided by radio transmission. Radio 610 broadcasts on 610 khz. They can only communicate with me if I share with them the frequency 610 on my radio receiver. In the same way, a speaker only communicates with a listener if the listener is on his wave length, sharing his communication conventions.

Sunday Guardian — 22nd February, 1976.

A LANGUAGE, GRAMMAR, A DIALECT AND A STANDARD LANGUAGE

A language and grammar

Given what we have said about Language in general, it is not difficult to see what a language is. A language may be described as one specific type of human speech communication system. For purposes of study, a language is divided into three major components — the sound system, the grammar and the vocabulary.

The sound system is that part of the language which concerns:

- (a) what sounds speakers produce to convey meaning;
- (b) the orders in which those sounds occur;
- (c) how those sounds are modified when they are near to other sounds and so on.

Take the following examples of English sound groups:

camps, lamps, pumps, sumps, lumps.

All five words end with the sounds (m), (p), (s) — (mps). We may say then that (mps) is a permissible sequence of English sounds. Yet, there are no words in English *mpsac, mpsal, mpsup, mpsul, all of which have the same sequence (mps) at the beginning of the word! The reason is that the sound system of English does not include such sequences at the beginning of words, although it includes them at the end.

The grammar of a language is the system of organising words in sequences, of changing parts of them, of adding intonations and other such features in order to express different meanings. The grammars of different languages do not have to use the same kinds of devices. Consider the examples of Latin and English that follows:

Puer amat puellam.
Puer puellam amat.
Puellam puer amat.
Amat puellam puer.

All four sentences may be translated into English as "the boy loves the girl" although the order of words is different. True, the emphasis changes with the changes of word order, but we know all the time that the person doing the loving is the boy and the person loved is the girl. We could not fiddle with the word order in English in this way without changing the meaning or writing nonsense.

e.g. The boy loves the girl.
The boy the girl loves.
The girl loves the boy.
Loves the boy the girl.

The point is that the system of Latin (its grammar) had case endings on nouns, which allowed the reader or listener to identify the subject as different from the object regardless of its position. This is not so in English. Since there are no case endings on nouns, English depends on position to identify subjects and objects. It is important to say here that the difference between the two languages does not entitle anyone to say that English is a better language than Latin or vice versa. (71) All that can be said is that they are different.

There is no need to illustrate the point that vocabulary may differ from one language to another. What we shall have to consider at a later stage is the proposition that languages may share some of their vocabulary.

71. Such arguments were in fact common in medieval times. Many persons would have asserted the superiority of Latin over various European languages as media of communication.

Before, taking another look at a language from what might appear to be the opposite end, we should make a few more pertinent remarks on grammar. The grammar of a language is **inherent** in the language. It exists whether the speakers know of it or not. The task of the linguist or the grammarian is to discover the grammar — by studying the language, by analysing it, by listening carefully to what people say and noticing what they do not say.

When the linguist discovers a pattern of the grammar, he writes it down in the form of what he calls **rules**. We will invent a rule to illustrate our point. Rule 101: In Language Z, a negative statement is formed by placing the form ABU before a positive statement. When the linguist writes such a rule, he is merely saying that given all the negative sentences that he has heard, and all the positive sentences he has heard, the first set differs from the second in having ABU before them. The trouble starts here. When the linguist finishes his description, educational systems, teachers and parents begin to insist that children must conform to what the linguist said! They do this even if half the population does not say ABU, but says AVU! In other words, what started as a description becomes a prescription. The importance of this observation will become apparent when we discuss the notion of standard language.

DIALECT OF A LANGUAGE

Let us start with the individual speaker. H. M. The Queen and John Arlott both speak English. Yet they do not speak it in the same way. There are differences between them. Eric Williams, C. O. Stroud and Noel Bowen all speak English. Yet, they do not speak it in the same way. There are differences between them and indeed there are differences between the two former and the three latter. Technically, we say that each of them has his own **idiolect**. Now let us take a fictitious country called El Dorado. In El Dorado there is a ridge of mountains dividing the country into two parts — a north and a south province. A river flows down the ridge towards the north. So the northern province is divided into a north-eastern sector and a north-western sector. If we examine the speech of the people in the northwest, we find that although each person sounds different (has his own idiolect), they all understand each other perfectly well and are not aware of any differences in their speech. We will call that the N — W dialect.

Now, we look at the fellows in the north-east and find that the same thing holds good for them. Each man and woman has his/her idiolect. And, would you believe it, when the N-W dialect speakers cross the river to trade with the N-E dialect speakers both sets of people say to themselves, "Boy, those fellows talk funny!" Each group is aware of differences in pronunciation and/or intonation, and/or vocabulary, and/or sentence structure, and/or idiomatic expression. But communication is possible between the North Easterners and the North Westerners.

If we repeat the process in the South we can establish a third dialect — the Southern dialect. The differences between the three types of speech are sufficient for us to notice and describe, but they are not so great that the three are not relateable, mutually understandable and groupable as one major speech type. So we then refer to the N-E dialect, the N-W dialect and the S dialect together as a language and we call it Doradian. (You will notice that all of these dialects seem to be quite adequate and there is no talk of better or worse or any such value judgement). The dialects we are dealing with are regional dialects.

We take a second look at the dialects of Doradian and we notice that the people who make laws in each of the three dialect areas of El Dorado speak differently from the people who catch fish, who speak differently from the merchants exporting the fish, who speak differently from the unemployed and so on. The social pecking order in El Dorado's provinces is as follows:

- Class I – the law-makers
- Class II – the merchants
- Class III – the fishermen
- Class IV – the unemployed

We now have four sub-dialects based on social-class and occupation.

THE STANDARD LANGUAGE

Our last look at El Dorado relates to its politics and socio-economic development. We notice that over a period of years, the people of the Southern province become very powerful and dominate the North East and North West. Their area is rich and people in the North start wanting to be like the people in the South. To help matters along the people in the South start setting up schools in the North with teachers coming from the South. These teachers, predictably, begin to insist that children and all people coming in contact with them must speak like Southerners. Furthermore, courts of law require the use of Southern dialect and so on. If we extend the process in all its real life complications, what we arrive at is that the prestigious dialect of Doradian becomes the dialect of the Southern law-makers. Suddenly, everybody else is making mistakes! Mistakes each time that they use forms that are different from those of the Southern law-makers. People begin to write using the dialect of the Southern law-makers, children get punished for not speaking that dialect, linguists study that dialect and decree it – 'perfection'.

We leave El Dorado. The kind of process described is the type of way in which the dialect of Southern Britain, became the standard dialect and thence the standard language of Great Britain. Similarly the Parisian upper class dialect became Standard French, the Castillian dialect became Standard Spanish. Politics, economic power, historical accident and brute force are the types of factors which establish a humble dialect as a national standard language. The other dialects that were formerly equally respectable become relegated to home use alone (where no critical persons can hear you use it), or they shift to joke-telling and skit-performing media. Linguistically, none of the dialects is deficient in the first instance. They are, each of them, fully structured (i.e. they have grammars and sound-systems). If Mary Queen of Scots had lived and Elizabeth I been beheaded instead, lots of little Sussex born children would have been rolling their 'r's in school and using many 'ken's' 'cannae's'; or even perhaps speaking Scots Gaelic! (Historians will forgive the wildness of the example).

Sunday Guardian — 29th February, 1976.

PIDGINS, CREOLES AND CARIBBEAN CREOLES

In this article, we shall focus on Caribbean Creole languages. We hope to show that although Pidgin and Creole languages as a type are very special, they are not as rare or as peculiar as one may at first think. We begin by listing a few to give the reader some idea of their world-wide spread. (72)

1. Hawaiian Pidgin English — spoken by about ½ million native speakers.
2. Gullah — spoken natively by about 125,000 Black Americans from North Florida to South Carolina.
3. Papiamentu — about 200,000 native speakers in Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire.
4. Haitian French Creole — about 4,000,000 native speakers.
5. Sranan (Taki-Taki) 80,000 native speakers in Surinam.
6. Krio — about 3,500 native speakers in Gambia.
7. Crioulo — used as a lingua franca by ½ million in Guinea-Bissau.
8. Swahili — over a million native speakers in East Africa.
9. Papia Kristang — 3,000 native speakers in Western Malaysia.
10. Neo-Melanesian — 1,000,000 speakers in Papua-New Guinea.

It should be noted that the words 'native' and 'natively' are used to mean 'learnt by the speaker as his first language as a child'. Any future use of the terms must be understood in this way. It follows that the term *second language* refers to a language that is not acquired natively.

What is a Creole language? A linguist will use the term *Creole* as his classification for a language that has the following characteristics:

1. shows evidence that the structure (i.e. grammar), the sound system, and the vocabulary do not come from the same source.
2. comparison between the present state of the language and that of the supposed parent languages shows that the present state of the language in question must have resulted from very sudden change rather than gradual evolution.
3. the historical and social background of the language shows that it appears to have begun its existence in cultural contact between groups of people who did not share the same language.

72. A full bibliography on pidgin and creole languages was recently published by the University of Hawaii. (See note 62).

Let us take this in small bites by looking at the process that produced Caribbean Creoles. Essentially, our Creoles result from contact between Africans and Europeans in the context of the slave trade and New World Slave society.

When two people who do not speak the same language meet and **have to communicate** they may do one of the following things.

1. A may try to speak B's language or vice versa.
2. They may use an interpreter who speaks both their languages.
3. They may use a third language, X, that both of them know.
4. They may use some kind of sign language.

Suppose that none of those possibilities can work; they may each try to teach the other a few words of their languages. Indeed, they may try to force each other to understand by a variety of strategies involving gesture, repetition of simple (or supposedly simple) words and phrases. Eventually something seeps through and we have the makings of a compromise language. If that situation arises frequently enough, and involves not just two people but an increasing number of people, our compromise language becomes more useful and expands its vocabulary. In addition, the conventions for using it begin to stabilise and we get what we call a **pidgin language**. Most readers will be familiar with the film version of how American Indians were supposed to speak during the bad old days of cowboys and Indians. The Indians were portrayed as speaking a pidgin language. It is important to note that when people find themselves in the kind of predicament we have described, they use every available language resource. One of the most important resources, of course, is any other language they happen to know. Frequently, the most likely choice will be a language that has worked before with foreigners. The second important point to remember is that both sets of people continue to speak their own languages. The A's speak language A, the B's speak language B. The only time that they use the Pidgin P is when they have to talk to each other.

Caribbean Creoles seem to have their origin in West Africa in the 15th century A.D. The first Europeans to visit Black Africa within our era were the Portuguese. Various documents related to the history of West Africa make mention of a form of speech somewhat like Portuguese which Africans on different parts of the coast could speak. Linguists who study Creoles call that language **Afro-Portuguese pidgin**. Afro-Portuguese pidgin appears to have developed by the kind of process we described above. One scholar, Keith Whinnom (Englishman, at the time of his paper working at UWI) suggests that there is enough evidence that the Portuguese and other European sailors may have been using another language called Sabir as their basic grammatical model for trying to talk to the Africans. Another scholar, David Dalby (Englishman, never had anything to do with UWI) suggests that the Africans may have been using as their basic grammatical model, not their own individual languages, but a lingua franca (a common language) called Manding. Manding had been the major common language of the Mali empire which had already collapsed but the language appears to have continued to serve as a common language between Africans whose native languages differed. It appears that other Europeans who came after the Portuguese (Dutch, British, French, Spanish) adopted the same form of speech for use with Africans. The Afro-Portuguese pidgin appears to have served to allow black faces to communicate with white faces from Senegal down to Angola, a distance of many hundreds of miles.

The Creolization process

When we say creolization process we mean the way in which the pidgin stopped being a second language and became a native language of the African population and indeed of much of the plantation society of this region.

Let us consider how this might be explained:

1. During the slave trade, Africans were captured and bought in several different areas of the non-coastal region as well as on the coast. They were, however, shipped as slaves from relatively fewer areas than the ones from which they came. We therefore know that from any one port, the people who were shipped did not necessarily speak the same native language.
2. Because sailing ships took so long to cross the Atlantic, and because the slave traders needed a large pool of people to ship, many of the Africans were kept in camps (or factories) for a long time before being shipped to the Caribbean. This means that they would need to talk to each other even though their native languages were different, as well as talk with the Europeans.

These two factors reinforced the need for a compromise language. Several scholars (some from UWI but most not from UWI) assert that the Afro-Portuguese pidgin served that purpose.

When the Africans arrived in the New World several other and similar circumstances made the pidgin become a stronger fact of life.

1. The Africans did not necessarily get sold to the same nationality of Europeans that they had dealt with in West Africa.
2. There was no guarantee that any one plantation would have a large number or at least a majority of Africans from the same language group.
3. Children born into slavery would acquire early use of the language of
 - (a) their parents (who did not necessarily talk to each other in their native languages)
 - (b) the plantation work system.

Once these steps take place, what we witness is the development of native speakers of the language which we now refer to as a Creole. All of the Caribbean Creoles, whether they sound like French, or sound like English or like Spanish or Portuguese or Dutch or like nothing else, have their origin in that process. (73)

73. The view that a given creole is an imperfectly spoken form of the related European language has its roots in these early beginnings of the language. This view ignores the fact that culture contact between any two groups under similar circumstances could produce similar results. The example of the development of the Romance languages is particularly appropriate since the prestige of both the results of the process and one of the languages in contact (Latin) has not been impaired by the process. If process and result are not objected to in that case, then there is no particular reason for objection in the case of West African-European contact. It is possible that the difference in time scale may be a reason for the rejection of the comparison by some persons. In the case of Romance languages, the process was begun over 2000 years ago and the evolution can certainly be viewed as taking at least 1500 years in some cases and about 1800 years in others. In the case of the Creole languages the process began less than 500 years ago and for all practical purposes evolution is still in progress.

The Creole French of Haiti, Louisiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, Trinidad and Cayenne results from that process in a context where communication between French speakers and Africans was necessary. Gullah, Sranan, Jamaican, Tobagonian, Vincentian etc. result from the process where English speakers and Africans had to communicate. Papiamentu is the result where Africans and alternately Spanish and Portuguese speakers had to communicate. Once there are enough native speakers, the nascent language begins to stabilize. It falls within the normal dynamics of language development and change. It changes certainly, but at a rate that is much slower than the suddenness of its birth.

Some pertinent observations.

1. The different Creoles of the Caribbean have a large number of similarities in their grammars. (74) In fact, in many cases if one exchanged words of a French Creole for English Creole words the sentences produced would be acceptable. This has been cited by several scholars, among them William Stewart and H. Van Wijk, (neither UWI) as support for the theory of a common origin for these languages. Together with historical evidence on Surinam and Curacao these similarities make us believe that the Africans who found themselves enslaved changed the vocabulary of their language depending on the language of the Europeans but kept essentially similar grammars.
2. Many skeptics may feel that the theory of the development of pidgins and creoles is far-fetched. We do not feel that it is. That such a process should take place in West Africa and the Caribbean between the late 15th and early 19th centuries is not surprising at all. After all, an almost identical process took place in Europe during the period of the Roman Empire. From what is now Portugal in the West to Roumania in the East, Roman soldiers, administrators, bums, camp followers and teachers came into contact with speakers of Gaulish, Celtic, Iberian, Germanic and

74. The following are some of the striking similarities:

- (a) Verb forms are invariable (i.e. they do not change, they are not conjugated in the same way as in popularly known European languages). Tenses and aspects of verbs are expressed by particles (auxiliaries) placed before the verbs.
- (b) Noun forms are not changed to express number (i.e. singular and plural). Instead number words or special articles are used.
- (c) Agreements between subjects and verbs (as in English, French, Portuguese, etc) and between nouns and adjectives (as in French, Italian, Spanish, etc) do not require changes in the pronunciation of either form.
- (d) In all the regional creoles no copula (a form similar to the verbs 'to be', 'etre', 'ser' or 'estar') is used when the predicate is an adjective e.g. *im sik* (Jca) he is ill; *mwen fen* (Haiti) I am hungry; *hi ded* (T'dad) He is dead.
- (e) In all the regional creoles reduplication of forms is used as a word forming device e.g. *fifin* (St. Lucian) 'very fine'; *poto-poto* (Jamaican) 'very soft and gooey.'
- (f) The forms used as personal pronouns are also used as possessive adjectives:
 e.g. *mwen fen* — I am hungry *mama-mwen* — My mother
 Im de a yaad — she is in the house *Im buk* — her book

There are several others which might be cited but the examples are likely to become complicated.

Slavic languages. The processes of pidginization, and creolisation that took place produced several different languages — Portuguese, French, Spanish, Roumanian not to mention the several dialects that we loosely include under those names.

3. Finally, the reader should note that we took care to point out that the research that allows us to make the kinds of statements we make was not necessarily conducted at U.W.I. We felt that it was important to do so, because there is too frequently an implication that views expressed by U.W.I. personnel are based on political sentiment or what critics would call "misguided grass-roots identification". In any country where university departments of language, linguistics or anthropology exist, scholars are keenly interested in researching Creoles. U.W.I. no less so and for the same reasons as every one else — to discover the mechanism of linguistic change and language development at a distance of only a few centuries rather than the several which separate us from the beginnings of traditional languages. This purpose is not a purely academic exercise. It is part of the knowledge required to effect better language teaching in a society such as ours.

Sunday Guardian — 7th March, 1976.

LANGUAGE IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

We now come to the crux of the matter. The reader is invited to recall the definitions and discussion that have preceded this article. We refer especially to the definitions of Language as against a language, the relationship between dialects and a language, and the notion of standard dialect or standard language.

Few people in Trinidad and Tobago speak English as their major medium of daily communication. (75) This has been so for as many years as these islands have existed. In Pre-Columbian times clearly, no English was used. Spanish is the first European language to be used in these islands. It is still spoken natively by small numbers of elderly persons in some rural districts. From the late 18th century, French and French Creole were in use. By the middle of the 19th century Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and Telegu arrived with Indian indentured labour. Meanwhile, African speakers of Ibo and Yoruba, as well as several other West African and Congolese languages were present in the society. Portuguese floated in during the mid 19th century with migrants from Madeira. Chinese languages added to the confusion towards the middle and end of the 19th century. (76)

75. We have made similar observations at notes 32 and 38. Noel Bowen is wrong when he states that English is the mother tongue or commonly used language of Trinidad and Tobago.

76. The reader may find the following of interest: Gamble W. H. — *Trinidad, Historical and Descriptive*. Yates and Alexander, London, 1866.

In the midst of this multilingual situation, French Creole was the *lingua franca*. It continued to be the common language of the society well into the first quarter of the 20th century. Where was English in all this? French continued as the official language until 1823! Newspapers continued to carry letters and contributions in French and Spanish until almost the end of the 19th century! English and Creole English only began to gain ground when Trinidad and Tobago began to receive large numbers of migrants from other islands where English Creole was the *lingua franca*.

What is the contemporary picture? Spanish is of minor importance except in parang. French Creole has receded but has left its mark on the Creole we now speak. It still seems to affect directly a sizeable percentage of school age children in certain rural districts. Standard Hindi – Urdu, and Bhojpuri (a Bihar language) are powerful languages in Trinidad. Half of our cinemas show films in Hindi or Bhojpuri, our television station provides concert performances and films in that language and our two radio stations broadcast several hours of music in these languages. Chinese languages have faded in importance since only elderly Chinese persons or new arrivals function exclusively in Chinese. Middle Eastern Arabic is restricted to a small number of families. English is the official language of government, law, business and industry. The entire population, in spite of all of the above, communicates across ethnic, social and linguistic lines by the use of Trinidadian or Tobagonian Creole English.

Linguistic status of our creoles

The first question that arises is this: are Trinidadian and Tobagonian Creole English cases of Language? According to the definition which we gave in our first article (Sunday Guardian of February 15th), they most certainly are. (77) The second question this: Is Trinidadian Creole English a language? The answer in a nutshell is as follows: Trinidadian Creole English and Tobagonian Creole English are two separate dialects of Caribbean Atlantic English Creole. If we examine the vernaculars of all the ex-British Caribbean territories, Sranan of Surinam, Gullah of North Florida and South Carolina, Krio of Gambia and Weskos of Sierra Leone, we find that they are all dialects of one language. (Please see our definitions in the second article of February 22nd as well as the information provided in the third article on February 29th) (78) The crucial point is that the language does not have a recognised standard dialect in the same way that French, Spanish, Russian, English or any other well known international language has a recognised standard.

The reasons for the development or non-development of a standard have nothing to do with the validity of a form of speech in linguistic terms. They relate, as we said in our second article, to social, political and economic factors. In the specific situation of Caribbean Atlantic English Creole, the following reasons are advanced for the absence of an international standard:

1. No group of speakers of a dialect of Caribbean Atlantic English Creole developed political power or prestige over speakers of other dialects of the same language. Consequently, none of the dialects achieved status as the standard dialect.

77. See pages 31-32.

78. Reference is to pp. 32-40.

2. In all the territories (except Surinam) where Caribbean Atlantic English Creole is spoken, it has co-existed with English. The Creole dialects have a vocabulary which is historically and linguistically related to the vocabulary of English. Hence, speakers of those dialects and speakers of English in the same society incorrectly assume that the Creole is a form of English. Since there is no stated external norm that they can call a standard, they refer to English as the standard and consider their creole dialect as an inferior, badly spoken variety of English.⁽⁷⁹⁾ As a result, the speakers' attitudes themselves block the identification and development of a standard.

If Jamaica had thrown out the British in the 18th century and had proceeded to capture all of Belize, the Bahamas, the Windwards and Leewards, Trinidad and Tobago, the picture might have been different. Jamaican teachers, district officers, soldiers and businessmen would have provided the norm for this region. Some prestigious Jamaican Golf and Country Club would have provided a social pattern of accepted speech in each territory. Then, when people produced sentences that differed from that norm, they would be viewed as making mistakes in Jamaican, not in English. In any event, the result for us might have been similar. Children might still have been punished for not speaking properly. The truth of the matter is that in terms of educational policy and curriculum development it matters little whether our Creole has a recognised standard or not. The point is that our Creole exists and has to be considered carefully if humane attitudes and effective methods of teaching anything (not only English language) are to be adopted.

Variation and the structure of our Creole

One of the facts of language behaviour in any society is that people do not consistently use the same variety of speech all the time. How they speak will vary depending upon a number of factors — the person being addressed, who else can hear the conversation, the topic under discussion, where the conversation is taking place, what the speaker wants to get out of the situation, how superior, inferior or equal he considers himself to his listener. In some societies, the changes that take place may be described as style shifts within the same language.

In some other cases, a given society may have two (or more) languages available. What happens then is that some situations require language A and others language B. If an inappropriate choice is made the effect is noticeable in the response of the listener. For example, in some parts of Switzerland, French is used for public activity but the same persons use a dialect of German in private. Similarly, in Wales, many persons use Welsh for everyday conversation but conduct their business in English.

In Trinidad and Tobago large numbers of people use one language at one moment and another some time later. For example, there are people who speak Bhojpuri in one situation, English in another and English Creole in a third. Sometimes, too, in one conversation speakers may switch from English to Creole on several occasions. This is called code switching. Given all of this plus geographical diffe-

79. There is absolutely no doubt that one of the major reasons why creole speakers generally despise their own language is that they have been conditioned to do so by pressures of prejudice from the upper classes.

rences we can readily see that when we look at the two populations as a whole the structure of the creoles will be variable. In addition, people who have been "more educated" in traditional terms are likely to have an anglicised creole.

When we consider all of these factors we realise that such a situation calls for very careful study over an extended period of time. Hundreds of scholars over centuries have been describing English and thousands more will earn a living writing new findings on it. Studies related to Trinidadian and Tobagonian do not go back more than 12 years. (If we had a functioning library service in this country, a list of studies would have been useful to the reader.)

Sunday Guardian — 14th March, 1976.

THE STRUCTURE OF TRINIDADIAN AND TOBAGONIAN CREOLE VERNACULARS

There is at present no exhaustive statement of the structure of either Trinidadian or Tobagonian Creole. Studies are few and in most cases they have been directed at areas of specific theoretical interest rather than simple description. Within the limits of this article we cannot present the sum of knowledge on these dialects of Caribbean Atlantic English Creole. It would take too much space and in addition much of what we might present would require more linguistic knowledge than one can expect in the average reader. We shall restrict ourselves to a small number of grammatical areas, in which Trinidadian and Tobagonian differ overtly from English. In order to facilitate the reader we shall use a spelling system that approximates to that of English. The reader should note that we are doing this for convenience only, although we are aware that this is not a fully acceptable procedure. It is not fully acceptable because to do this obscures differences in the sound systems and consequently in the pronunciation of most items. It is also likely to give the impression that some of the structures are modifications of English structures.

NOUN PHRASE

The form of the Creole noun (unlike that of English) does not vary. Grammatical meanings such as number and specificity are marked by the presence or absence of determiners, numerals etc. Figure 1 shows an analysis of noun marking.

	NON-GENERIC		GENERIC
	Singular	Plural	mango
Unspecified	a mango	five mango	
Specified	di mango	di mango-an dem	

Figure 1

The categories above are exemplified below:

1. I have a mango.
2. He have five mango.
3. Di mango spoil.
4. Di mango-an dem not sweet.
5. Mango good to eat.

Tobagonian shows a difference in the specified plural:- di mango-dem. (80)

6. Di mango-dem not sweet.

Possession in both dialects is marked by juxtaposition of the noun denoting the possessor and the noun denoting the item possessed in that order. The phrase formed has the intonation pattern - - . (high-low)

Examples

7. di man book
Possessor + Possessed
8. mi broder car
Possessor + Possessed

The order and the meaning remain unchanged regardless of the number of nouns linked.

9. Rosy fader cousin wife

The first noun (1) is the possessor of the second (2); together 1 and 2 are the possessor of (3); together 1, 2 and 3 are the possessor of (4).

Note that an intonation pattern low-high (- -) has a different significance.

Compare:

10. a girl friend (high - low) = a friend, male or female, of a girl
11. a girl friend (low - high) = a female friend.

In other words the pattern high-low answers the question "whose"; the pattern low-high answers the question "what type". Hence, when we say "two man rat can't live in one hole", we know that we mean two male rats and not two rats (of any sex) belonging to a man!

80. This, and a number of other Tobagonian patterns are similar to those of Jamaica.

In Tobagonian there is an alternative method of indicating possession by prefixing *fu* – before the possessor.

12. *fu* – Janice food = "Janice's food" (80)

PERSONAL REFERENCE

The system of personal reference in both dialects shows major difference from English. A diagram may be somewhat forbidding and we shall therefore adopt a different procedure.

Subject forms The subject forms have the following distribution. When the speaker refers to himself (traditionally, 1st person singular) the forms are *I*, *a*, or *me*. In Trinidad, *me* occurs as subject in certain negative sentences and in some emphatic utterances.

13. *me* en know.

14. *me* is one body don't stand stupidity.

In Tobago, *me* may occur as subject in all sentence types.

15. *me* name Peter. (80)

When the speaker refers to his addressee (2nd person singular) the form is *you*. A third party male is *he*, female – *she* and inanimate – *it*. Reference to a group including the speaker (1st person plural) is achieved by *we*. Reference to a group including the addressee (2nd person plural) is marked in Trinidadian by *all-you* and in Tobagonian by *unu* (80) This is an important area in which all of the Creoles of this region differ from English. All of them differentiate singular and plural in the second person. (If we reflect a while we will recall that English used to make that distinction: *Thou* – *you*. It no longer does.) Third parties whether male, female or inanimate are referred to as *they*.

Object forms The object forms are identical with the subject forms except that *I* and *a* do not occur as object.

Prenominal forms By prenominal forms we refer to what is traditionally called the possessive adjective. We prefer to use the term prenominal form because Trinidadian and Tobagonian do not, strictly speaking, have possessive adjectives. In these dialects, the sequence pronoun + noun has the same meaning value as the sequence noun + noun with high – low intonation. Hence, in the same way that *di man book* was the book belonging to the man, *he sister* is the sister belonging to him.

Examples

16. *me* fadder
17. *she* face
18. *all-you* bat and ball.

Independent Possessive Prenominal usage.

The examples below show how compound forms having — OWN or — ONE as second element are used as possessive pronouns.

19. that is my own
me own
20. she one have two piece.
21. all you own not good.

Forms with — ONE in second position appear to be restricted to rural Trinidad. Tobagonian has an additional possibility of pre-fixed fu -

22. da pen-ya a fu-me (80)
(that pen is mine)

Reflexive and Emphatic Personal Reference

Reflexive and emphatic pronouns are formed by compounding the object pronouns with the word -self.

23. He cut **heself** (reflexive)
24. **He self** didn't know why. (emphatic).

It is interesting to note that in the area of personal reference, Trinidadian and Tobagonian are very similar to Jamaican, Guyanese, as well as to the French-Creoles. They have the same type of distinctions and the same type of compounding system.

Predication with Verbs

In English most verbs have five forms e.g. take, takes, taking, took, taken. Some of these five forms combine with various auxiliaries — forms of do, have, be — to express a variety of tenses and aspects. In Trinidadian and Tobagonian it is convenient to view the verb as having only one form which combines with sets of auxiliaries to express tenses and aspects. It is very important to note that the tenses and aspects expressed in Trinidadian and Tobagonian are not the same as those expressed in English. The reader is invited to reflect on the following examples.

25. she walking sexy eh!
(she's doing it now, progressive)
26. she does walk sexy eh!
(she usually does, habitual not past)

27. he eat here yesterday
(completed)
28. when she come, he **did** leave already
had
(completed, past by reference to her arrival)
29. a go tell miss
(future)
30. they **used to** live here.
(habitual in the past)
31. all you did touching the bottle.
was
(progressive in the past).

The markers of Trinidadian may be summarized as follows:

Progressive, not completeive, not past:	— ing
Not progressive, completeive:	no marker
Past:	did had was
Future:	go
Habitual, not past:	does
Habitual past:	used to was to

The reader should note a few points:

1. Past marker **was** occurs only when the verb also has the progressive marker — ing.
2. Habitual past marker **was to** is restricted to some rural speakers.

The markers of Tobagonian are different.

Progressive, not completeive, not past:	a
Not Progressive, completeive	: no marker
Past	: bin
Future	: go, a go
Habitual, not past	: does, a
Habitual past	: used to

It is to be noted that in Tobago forms that are present in Trinidad alternate with basically Tobagonian forms. Secondly, Tobagonian **bin** combines with **a** to provide a past progressive form **bina**.

Examples.

32. Mary a share food gi everybody.
33. Mary share food gi everybody.
34. Mary bin share food gi everybody.
35. Mary go share food gi everybody.
a go share
36. Mary does share good gi everybody.
a share
37. Mary used to share food gi everybody.
38. Mary bin a share food gi everybody.

Foregrounding

Let us shift to another area of the Trinidadian and Tobagonian grammars. It is occasionally necessary for a speaker to avoid ambiguity or to emphasize a specific part of a sentence. Consider the following examples:

39. Sparrow make that calypso.

This is a simple statement. Suppose that the speaker was having an argument and wanted to make the point that it was Sparrow and not Kitchener who had made the particular calypso; then he might say

40. Is Sparrow that make that calypso.

This is called foregrounding. Consider the following.

41. Is that calypso Sparrow make.
(not the other one)
42. Is walk I walk to reach here.
(not by taxi)
43. Is sick he was sick why he didn't come.
(not lazy)

In this pattern the word to be foregrounded is shifted to first position in the sentence and the modified sentence is then introduced by *is*. In Tobago the introducer is the form *a*.

44. John tief the mango.

45. A tief John tief the mango.

It must be noticed that the rules for foregrounding are quite specific. In examples 42, 43 and 45 the words which are foregrounded (i.e. walk, sick, thief) are repeated in their normal position in the sentence. But in examples 40 and 41 this is not so. To say

46. 'Is that calypso Sparrow make that calypso.'

is not correct in Trinidadian. It is ungrammatical. (81) The rule requires repetition of the word only if it is a verb or predicative adjective.

Conclusions

To examine all aspects of Trinidadian and Tobagonian would require far more newspaper space than our readers will tolerate. It would also require many more research resources than we can spend on these articles alone. We shall therefore let the matter rest there.

The alert reader will probably have been able to think of several ways in which the same thoughts expressed in our examples might have been differently stated. We are aware of this and refer to our fourth article of March 7th. (82) Variation is intrinsic to the grammars of Trinidadian and Tobagonian. To discuss variation however would take a new set of articles stating new linguistic principles. We do not feel that this is now necessary for discussion of the Language Arts Syllabus.

It should be clear to all by this time that when the syllabus states that Trinidadian and Tobagonian vernaculars have an organised system of rules, it is making a statement of linguistic fact. When it states that it is unrealistic for teachers to demand of new-comers to the school a working knowledge of English, it is making an incontrovertibly accurate observation. When it invites the teacher to respect the child's language it is doing so on the basis of linguistic facts, psychological good sense and educational advisability.

Now that we have cleared the misconceptions out of the way we shall proceed in our next set of articles to examine the language teaching philosophy that the syllabus proposes.

Sunday Guardian — 21st March, 1976.

THE AIMS OF A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

The aim of any language teaching programme must be to develop in the students the competence to express their own thoughts and ideas fluently and correctly in the language being studied. At first these thoughts are relatively simple and can be expressed in simple basic structures but as the ideas become more complex the language structures themselves become more involved and complicated. In this way, the intellectual development of the student is reflected in the level of language being used in the classroom. One very obvious example of this can be seen in the class readers used throughout the school system where the subject matter and language structure become more and more mature as the student progresses through the school.

81. The notion of being incorrect or ungrammatical in Creole has probably not occurred to most people. The following are some examples of sentences which are not grammatical in Trinidadian.

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| a) | *Me not having a fete | — | Me en having no fete. |
| | *Him never come to school today. | — | He din come to school today. |
| | *Fus a was vex a hit him one lash. | — | A hit him one lash, fus a was vex. |

82. See pages 40-43.

In societies that are monolingual, the teaching programme can assume that the basic structures of the language have already been mastered by the children who come to school at age five. The language programme concentrates on refining the student's use of language, making him more precise in expression and developing a sense of appreciation of the literature of the language. This is the case in large communities of England, France, Spain and in many other countries.

As we have seen in the previous articles, we in Trinidad speak as our first language a dialect that is not English in structure and it is the task of the schools to teach the student body the official language — English.

Since this is the case, it cannot be assumed that the children entering school already control the basic grammar of English nor that what is necessary is to urge them on to a more mature use of that language. The task of the school here is to teach the basic structure of English and only when this is done to move on to more sophisticated work. Because of our language situation, we cannot attempt to proceed along the same lines on which our counterparts in British schools are travelling. We have to come to grips with our situation and devise a curriculum and a methodology that are suited to our specific aims and problems. It is for this reason that we cannot adopt wholesale the textbooks and methods designed for native speakers of English. The rejection of textbooks written for English children is not based on political or nationalistic sentiments. These sentiments certainly have a place in the selection of any text for school use, but the reason for rejecting these books is the conviction they do not set out to do what we recognise has to be done in the initial stages of an English Language programme for our children.

At present there is a loud clamour for the teaching of grammar as the remedy for the declining standard of English among our pupils. It is argued that the grammar teaching method used over a quarter century ago produced some of the best scholars and speakers of English of our time. It has. But it has also produced some of the most pretentious and ponderous writers of our time as well and it has also failed to influence the speaking habits of the vast majority of the population. In spite of the labours of those militant teachers of grammar and their efforts to remove the use of the dialect (or 'bad English' to use their term) it is still an undeniable fact that we use the vernacular regularly for large portions of the day. Mr. Stroud's letter gave examples of the type of language spoken by the average citizens of the country. This merely confirms what the syllabus sets out as its basic premise — that the language spoken by the majority of Trinidadians in almost all informal situations is not English. Moreover, it is safe to assume that in twenty years time, our children will be able to say that the present system of teaching has produced the best writers of English of their time, and their claim would be equally invalid. For the best writers are not produced by any one method of English teaching at a particular time. Often, they are produced in spite of it.

The argument today cannot be about whether grammar needs to be taught in the schools or not. What needs to be decided is how grammar is to be taught. Earlier in this series, we showed that the grammar of a language is inherent in the language. It is the set of rules that a native speaker intuitively uses to produce the acceptable sentences of his language. It is the set of rules that tells him when an utterance is faulty or ungrammatical. He need not know the book version of the rules; his native speaker intuition tells him when something is acceptable or not. The aim of the language course is to produce this type of competence in the learner, to help him to acquire almost intuitively the grammar of the language. This calls for a completely different approach from the old method of learning rules

and then seeking to apply them in practice. Experience (both here and throughout the world) has shown that this approach has failed to achieve any appreciable results.

What the new syllabus aims at is not the production of a few models of good English, but the raising of the level of competence of the total population. It aims at doing this not by forcing them to deny or to denigrate their natural and indigenous form of speech, but by helping them to recognise the need for competence in another language which has international validity and currency and which is more appropriate to certain situations in their lives.

Modern language teaching techniques have developed out of a knowledge of how the child learns his mother tongue in infancy. It might be useful therefore to take a brief look at this language learning process before we continue the discussion.

The baby is born into a world which is full of noise — noise of motor cars, humming machines, sound of footsteps, blowing of horns, music on the radio, humming of computers and the sound of human voices. At first, they are all noise — bewildering and frightening. Soon, because of certain pleasurable associations, he comes to realise that some sounds are friendly and he responds suitably to them. Among these few friendly sounds are the sounds of human voices. At first, all human noise (speech, cooing, and the nonsense noises that adults make to amuse babies) are the same to him but gradually he grows to single out individuals — e.g. his mother and father. He also learns to respond not so much to words, but to speech rhythms and melodies — the intonation patterns of the languages. The learning process continues; he discovers his voice. He begins to babble or coo and experiments with the sound that adults assume to be meaningful and they do their best to get him to repeat it by repeating it to him as often as possible.

Gradually, he learns to do this, since the reaction to these sounds usually brings a favourable response — the appearance of his parents, a hug or kiss — he uses it when he wants attention. Before he can put a string of words together, he learns to use the melody of speech and he can be heard to utter a string of nonsense syllables with the intonation patterns of the language of his parents.

Gradually, the words come. At first, in faulty fashion but when this happens the parents attempt to set him right in his pronunciation. The same with sentences. He repeats the strings of words that he hears. He experiments with new combinations of words and produces his own original sentences. When these are badly constructed (83) the adults around him correct him in a kind and friendly way and he goes on expressing himself using the language more to express his thoughts and needs. The more he uses the language the greater his fluency develops. So that by the age of five or six years he has mastered the basic grammar of the language. He can understand almost everything that is said to him in his language (provided the vocabulary is not too difficult and the sentences not too long) and he can say everything that he needs to say.

As far as the infant's language learning is concerned he is extremely fortunate. He has a number of experts around him to provide the necessary example and to set him right whenever he falters along the road to mastery. This happy situation can never be duplicated in the classroom.

83. 'Badly constructed' here means 'not in keeping with the social conventions' which were mentioned in our first article. Page 31.

Second language teaching attempts to rationalise and organise the manner in which we learn language naturally. There are three major characteristics of the natural language learning situation that can be reproduced:

- (a) the learner must be provided with a good model of the language to be learnt;
- (b) the learner must be given abundant opportunity to use the new language;
- (c) the learner's mistakes must be corrected as soon as possible.

On the other hand, there are characteristics of the natural learning situation that need not be copied. One of these is the totally unstructured exposure to the language that the child receives. The young child hears everything. Very few people make any serious attempt to alter their language when speaking to children (except perhaps to refrain from obscenities). Nevertheless, the child learns quickly. The reason for this is that although the exposure is totally unstructured or unprogrammed (to use a modern technological term), he is completely surrounded by the native language and hears it every minute of his waking day. This massive exposure to the target language can never be reproduced in the classroom. However, this exposure is attempted in intensive foreign language courses which employ language labs and where students are drilled for several hours per day. To compensate for this lack of exposure, modern teaching techniques attempt to organise the teaching units so as to concentrate on a single or a few areas of grammar at a time so that by constant practice the learners will quickly attain mastery of these units. If the course is properly arranged, the areas of grammar that are most commonly used are taught first and those that are less commonly used are taught later. This is seriously in contrast with the pre-occupation of many of the traditional English textbooks with teaching irregular verbs, masculine and feminine forms of a large number of rarely used words and with the testing of the 'abnormalities' of the language.

A language programme based along the principles stated above must therefore be:

- (i) structurally graded so that the essentials of grammar that are most frequently used are taught first gradually including other areas of grammar that are required for a complete mastery of the language.
- (ii) It must provide the learner with abundant examples of the correct form being taught.
- (iii) It must provide the learner with abundant opportunity to speak the language himself.

This must include both the opportunity to repeat specific patterns in tightly controlled sentences and the opportunity to use these newly learnt patterns in new sentences of his own to express his own ideas or feelings. Here again we find a fundamental break with the old teaching which placed little or no emphasis on oral work in the classroom and almost total emphasis on silent written work. Even worse is the current practice — in vogue since the advent of the Common Entrance Examination — of reducing written work to slot filling or underlining and shading exercises.

Sunday Guardian — 28th March, 1976.

PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTING A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMME IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

While it is possible to argue the need for a second language approach to the teaching of English, we must accept that putting it into practice is a much more difficult proposition. The difficulties arise out of a combination of factors, among them:

- (a) the complexity of the language situation in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (b) the growth of a strong nationalistic feeling towards the dialect and its use;
- (c) the poor physical conditions in our classrooms;
- (d) the unpreparedness of the teachers of the nation to use the methodology.⁽⁸⁴⁾

The Complexity of the language situation

In the earlier articles of this series we outlined the nature of the dialect of Trinidad and Tobago.⁽⁸⁵⁾ However, it must be recognised that the actual language situation in the country is not a simple dialect/standard one in which dialect represents only one level of language. We do not live in a situation where we speak either standard English or, to use Mr. Noel P. Bowen's phrase, "the down-rightest, backyard exhibition of the vernacular." The real life situation is one in which there exist both these extremes as well as a wide range of intermediate levels of the dialect, producing what might well be called a continuum situation stretching from the purest form of the dialect to standard English. But the situation is even more complex, for no one speaks at any one level exclusively all the time. All Trinidadians and Tobagonians employ a range of language levels and are guided by intuition to use the level appropriate to the particular time and situation. For example, the people who read the Sunday Guardian with complete comprehension can obviously read and understand Standard English. Nevertheless, they probably speak some form of the dialect when relaxing over some drinks with their friends; they speak another level of dialect when talking to an old fisherman in the country. Of course, we do not all employ this wide range of levels. Some persons are more comfortable only in those ranges closest to standard and others are happiest at the other end of the continuum.

This complicated situation makes it difficult to devise a single language programme for the whole country. If, as seems logical, it was decided to cater for those who spoke the purest form of dialect, large sections of the programme would be unnecessary for the children who operated at a level nearer to English on the continuum. In any case, there are likely to be, in a single class, children with such a wide range of competence that a single programme cannot completely satisfy our needs.

^{84.} Gerald Samuel raises this point. (See p. 2)

^{85.} See pp 40-49.

Another feature of our language situation is the disparity between the ability to understand English and the ability to use it correctly. This gives the pupil a false idea of his competence, for he believes that his total command of language is equal to his apparent comprehension of English. We say apparent comprehension because often one gets a false impression of understanding when listening to a flow of familiar words. This gives rise to a false confidence that is not shaken until one is subjected to rigorous comprehension questions.

The vocabulary of the dialect is largely that of English. This shared vocabulary disguises the fact that the languages are structurally different and leads the speaker of the dialect to believe that he is speaking English. This, together with his false sense of comprehension, makes him a very unwilling student of English. Before any language programme can succeed, the student must first accept that he does not know the language being taught and secondly, he must want to learn the new language. The language situation militates against the first of these prerequisites. The growth of nationalism and a consequential elevation of the status of the dialect militate against the second.

The Political-National Attitude

In Trinidad and Tobago today, one can sense a feeling of almost fierce loyalty to some of the things that are identifiably indigenous. This is manifest in the support of the local art forms etc., calypso, steelband, "Better Village" shows etc. It can also be observed in the attitude of large sections of the population towards the dialect. There has always been an admiration of certain features of the dialect, especially of its power to express situations and meanings that are peculiarly local. The attitude today, however, goes well beyond this and questions the need to learn English at all. If the dialect is a valid language, they argue, why must we give up what is ours in favour of the language which is symbolic of the culture that had formerly oppressed us.

This viewpoint is held not merely by young politicians but also by some teachers and pupils. There is therefore an urgent need to convince the population of:

- (a) the reasons why English has to be taught in the schools,
- and
- (b) that no effort is being made to destroy the dialect or even to discourage its use.

The Classroom Situation

It is not our intention here to launch into a criticism of the school system or of school conditions. We merely want to state that language teaching assumes that the learner will have ample opportunity for doing a considerable amount of oral work. At present, in most of our schools where several classes are packed into open hall type buildings and where pupils are crowded into closely arranged desks, this type of work is impossible. (86)

86. See note 6.

Unpreparedness of teachers

At present the idea of second language teaching is new to most of our teachers. This is no fault of theirs. They have grown up in a society which believed that English was its first language and their training did not include learning about the dialect and how to use modern language teaching methods to teach English. However, recent teachers' college graduates have come into contact with some of these ideas and are better prepared for the task. Much more specific training is necessary before a successful language programme can be launched.

The foregoing description seems to provoke the retort: "Well, if the situation is so unsuitable for teaching this type of programme why bother with it at all. Why not go back to the old methods?" The answer is that we are convinced that the old methods are unsuitable and ineffective as we have mentioned before. In addition, the situation described above is just as hostile to the old Grammar teaching methods as it is to the new. We now have a generation of teachers who have little knowledge of grammar in the traditional sense. Moreover the attitudes towards Standard English and to the dialect referred to above will make it difficult for the teacher to attain his objectives.

The question now remains: Are we in a stalemate situation or can something constructive be done about the teaching of English? Our response is a positive optimistic one. The task, though formidable can be successfully tackled. In fact, the preparatory work is already well in hand. A description of what must be done will be the subject of a separate study.

Sunday Guardian — 11th April, 1976.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OR SELF DEVELOPMENT?

In the last article some of the problems of using an unmodified second language approach to the teaching of English were outlined. In spite of the problems, English has to be taught. This is the fact that many critics of the new syllabus seem to miss. The final objective of the syllabus is the acquisition of the English Language by the child and it demands a higher level of proficiency in the language than was possible using the old methods. But the learning of Standard English is not the only aim of the syllabus. Indeed, it might even be claimed that it is not the prime aim. For the prime aim of the curriculum is not language development but self development. To be more explicit, it is more important for the child to develop his personality and become a well-integrated, self-confident and self-respecting individual who does not know how to use English properly than to be a master of English and be underdeveloped in personality, self-respect and confidence. These are, however, the two opposite extremes and we do not intend to suggest that we are in an either/or situation with regard to the syllabus. Indeed the syllabus was developed with the specific aim of achieving both goals: a well-integrated individual and a competent user of language, both English and vernacular.

One of the features of our dialect situation is that our children are denied the opportunity for self-development that native English children have in their language classes. The child needs to express himself, and he has several outlets for doing this: art, music, dance, play, but most importantly and by far the most available to him — language. The child in a monolingual society, by participating in creative language classes at school develops his own personality positively and creatively. The situation in Trinidad and Tobago has been, up to recently, the complete reverse and will continue to be so if those who would abolish the dialect from the classroom were to have their way. The child who speaks

nothing but the dialect at home enters school at age five with no other language at his command. To deny him the right to speak the only language he knows in the classroom is to deny him the right to express even his basic needs. To "correct" him every time he uses the dialect is to inhibit him at the very start of his school career. Merely to demand the use of correct English without ever really teaching it in an organised and methodical fashion is to demand the impossible. It is no wonder that this system has produced generations of students who are extremely awkward and tongue-tied whenever they are put into a formal situation that demands the intelligent and creative use of language. Yet these very people are very vocal, once the situation is changed to one that allows the use of the dialect.

The infant entering school for the first time is placed in a situation that is psychologically hostile to his self-development and self-identification. He is placed in a strange room with strange children and strange furniture. He is abandoned by his parents and left in the custody of a stranger. If in addition to this, he finds that this strange custodian not only uses a strange language, but demands that he use it too then his bewilderment would be total. It is only because our teachers have had the good sense to ignore the demands of former syllabuses and administrators and permit the children to use their own language and to speak to them in it that the effects of total estrangement have not been universally felt by our children.

The dialect is not only necessary for the development of self expression in the child, it is necessary for communication from teacher to pupil. In a previous article we stated that our level of comprehension of English was greater than our ability to use the language. This enables us to acquire information in English without being able to reproduce it in English. This however, holds good only for those who have been exposed to standard English for some time. The teacher of the child in the infant and junior classes in the school must recognise that his pupils' comprehension of English is limited and must modify his language, even to the extent of using the dialect, in order to convey his message.

It might well be argued that teachers have been doing precisely this (consciously or unconsciously) for the longest while. This is absolutely true. Good teachers instinctively recognise the level at which to pitch their communication to obtain maximum results. This is a useful skill for it reduces the problem of which level of dialect to use in which areas to a purely hypothetical one. Linguists may never be able to prescribe precisely how to say what to whom, but good teachers know.

To go further, it is not sufficient to go on teaching in the language that children understand best. To do this would be to deprive the child of the best means of learning standard English. For just as the child learns his first language by hearing it constantly and learns to understand it by hearing sentences in situations that enable him to interpret them correctly, so must he be helped to learn his second language, English.

Theoretically, the primary school child is fortunate in the area of language teaching. For the person who teaches him English also teaches him everything else. It is therefore possible to integrate the language teaching with the subject matter of the entire school curriculum. In this way, the structures taught in the English class can be used and practised throughout the school day in whatever subject area they are called for. An even greater advantage accrues to the child. Structures that are as yet not formally taught can be acquired by hearing them used by his teacher in situations and contexts that

make them meaningful. By gradually extending the limits of the child's comprehension of English by the use of new structures in "non-English" lessons, the teacher can accelerate the learning process and lead the class into a quicker mastery of English. This extension of the work of the prescribed syllabus should itself be carefully graded if it is to be successful. A total, uncontrolled use of English to children who understand only a few structures will result in parrot-like repetition of whole paragraphs without any real comprehension and with little or no improvement in spontaneous speech and writing. This is similar to the situation so familiar to teachers today in which students can reproduce flawlessly, notes in Biology or Geography and yet be hard pressed to put together an original paragraph in acceptable English. In order to perform this task of gradual exposure of the pupils to the structures of English the teacher must be constantly aware of the total language programme. He must have clearly outlined at least four categories of language structures as follows:

- (a) Structures already taught and learnt by the class;
- (b) Structures at present being taught;
- (c) Structures to be taught in the near future (possibly structures understood but not readily produced by the children);
- (d) Structures not understood by class.

With this in mind he can plan his work to include as wide an application of the structures of (a) and (b) together with a judicious introduction of those of (c) in his lessons on other subjects to his class. In this way the class will get practice in using the structures that they are learning or have already learnt and be provided with useful exposure to those areas of grammar that they are soon to learn. The structures in (d) will be avoided as far as possible and if they are used will be explained as soon as possible afterwards.

Since the child is learning to speak English gradually we cannot expect him to express all his thoughts in flawless English. We can only demand that he use the structures that he has been taught. When these are not sufficient to convey his meaning, he must be allowed — no more, encouraged, to use the dialect to express himself. To deny him this use of language is to deny him one of the best means of self development.

SLOPPINESS IS NOT A NEW DIALECT By C. O. STROUD

Trinidad Guardian – 23rd June, 1976. p. 12

(C. O. Stroud puts the point of view for language discipline in schools. His comments follow lectures on creole sponsored by the University. (87) This is the first instalment of his comments. The writer is a former teacher who went into Law.)

I read with interest and a certain degree of pleasure the contribution made by representatives of the U.W.I. and the Ministry of Education and Culture on the topic of creole and the new language study syllabus.

At first, I did not like their attitude of supercilious condescension but soon got used to it. I was gratified to realise that their ultimate objective is English, and that is what I expected it would be.

I am in a position from time to time to read their criticism of attempts by public servants to write English examinations.

Indeed, the most thorough analysis of such attempts ever seen by me was written by one of these gentlemen, an analysis of such attempts as misspelt English words, faulty construction and syntax, and absence of ideas, resulting from non-existent reading habits.

PEDAGOGY

I read what Laguille said about such matters so long ago that I have forgotten how to spell his name. He had said that all that there was to say about synthesis and analysis in language from the first utterances of mankind and how language developed.

Jagger had attempted to show how Latin Grammar evolved from the complex Greek Grammar largely by the reduction in inflexions and how Western Grammar emerged by a similar device.

Messrs. Carrington and Borely were more specific in the development of their theme and one got the impression, an impression that they probably did not set out to create that migrations from West Africa, with concomitant importations, determined the trend of speech in these parts, the influence of the speech of Amerindians, Indians, Chinese, Syrians, Jews, Irish, Canadians, English, Scottish being minimal in the evolution of Trinidadians and Tobagonian; and the role of education being unable to arrest "natural" trends.

I was happy to see that many of the Radio-series absurdities were not repeated: I was disappointed that they were not expressly repudiated.

87. See notes 48-50.

It must be appreciated that pure scholarship in linguistics has aims and objectives far remote from those of practical pedagogy. One does not become a pedagogue merely by obtaining post-graduate Diplomas and Degrees in Education.

In Scotland, for example, one used to secure a University Degree as a condition precedent to entering a Training College to be trained for two or three years, during which period one had practical experiences in teaching at all levels, from Infants upwards.

ACID TEST

The linguist can afford to adopt an attitude of academic detachment while the pedagogue concerns himself with results, and tends the infant with the same degree of solicitude as a gardener who prepares the nursery bed, carefully selects the seed for sowing, watches over it from germination to seedling.

Froebel and Montessori could not have cared less about abstruse linguistic theories, (88) but found ways and means to communicate with tots of varied backgrounds and to teach them.

They knew and took advantage of, the psychological value of imitation, so far as their charges were concerned, "got through" to them without garbling the language the children were expected to learn; and improved their mental stock.

It is manifest that the two gentlemen have never even tried to teach infants. Theories are useful as guides but the acid test is actual teaching.

In this age of sophisticated audio-visual aids, one ought not be allowed to repeat heresies of the linguists in a pedagogical setting. (89)

It may surprise these two gentlemen how many of our children have learnt to read by daily following Sesame Street; children who are said not to understand standard English spoken by Trinidad teachers manage to follow and learn from a North American accent. (90)

88. We dispute this proposition. Froebel and Montessori were operating in monolingual situations and their efforts at communication did not necessitate the use of other languages.
89. We are not sure what audio-visual aids has to do with linguistic heresy.
90. Sesame Street has a number of very important differences from a classroom. Among them are:
 - (1) The child may pay attention only when he feels to do so;
 - (2) No one on the screen tells him that his imitation of rhymes, jingles or other material is wrong;
 - (3) No one checks to see whether or not he has learnt the day's lesson. The result of these three circumstances is that the child is relaxed, not threatened and can function at his own pace and according to his own whims.
 - (4) The school situation is not identical to the TV viewing situation.
 - (5) The persons appearing on Sesame Street are native speakers of American English; our teachers are not native speakers of the English they attempt to teach. The difference is crucial as the results achieved show.
 - (6) Much of children's success in learning from Sesame Street is related to play acting and pretending to be one or other personality on the programme.

Pedagogy concerns itself with the development of the whole personality and recognises that the spoken language is just one facet of such development.

And in the case of this country, which is establishing the sort of national identity it wants to establish, the pedagogue analyses apparently unrelated aspects of character, and discovers there is some common denominator/factor.

(91) He observes the way we stand about sidewalks or streets; the way we abruptly lunge or drift or lurch into the path of rapidly-moving vehicles; the way we park our bicycles with tails jutting out or sit on them with front wheel against the curb and the bike at right angles to the pavements; the way we ride those bicycles, often without brakes, bell or lights, weaving in and out between cars or trucks; the way we take the same egocentric attitude which has no consideration for other people, behind the steering wheel of a motor vehicle, overtaking in forbidden places, cutting in when it's unsafe to do, ignoring double lines, junctions, intersections, corners and speed limits; the way we blind others at night with "bright lights", making us allegedly the worst drivers in the world bar none; the way we shout above all competing noises and continue to shout even when the competition has ceased; the way we accost others, courtesy and *la politesse* being considered to be attributes of people from an alien planet.

In this final connection, one often gets more consideration from a scavenger than from a conceited holder of 'O' levels. And it is against this background and in this context that the pedagogue sees the fight on his hand to set some discipline into the spoken word. He understands why Trinidadians achieve "machine gun" fluency at the expense of pronunciation and articulation.

Every educator of the young knows of the emotional and other problems of children of five left for the first time under the guidance of strangers. In a recent television interview, a psychiatric social-worker who in former years taught such children, recollected that such children had to be taught their lessons in the discipline of society, the discipline of recognising that others had rights too.

Infant teachers are kind, considerate and motherly but firm. In this brave new world we have created five-year olds on their way to school shout and sing so that they can be heard a block away (they do not as a result seem healthier than the few quiet ones) and from year to year they keep the cultural torch alight with "Hol' the pussy, hol' " or "Miss Mary" or "All saltfish sweet" and these are the "little innocents" that the stranger has to curb even at the risk of being accused of interfering with their "freedom of expression."

Years ago when I was actively engaged in education, I had an "experience" with a few infants on their way to school, I was heading the same direction to supervise the work of students-in-training doing "practical". The mature and vulgar remarks of these innocents to one another caused me to change my plan. I could not let them know that I was an "official" concerned with education. Things have gotten far worse since that.

91. The content of this paragraph is irrelevant to the matters which we assume to be under discussion.

COLOURS

In yesteryear, little children learned to distinguish colours with the aid of velvet Balls (part of Froebel's gift) and the assistance of a tuneful ditty.

"Some balls are red and some are blue.
A yellow one I show to you;
Orange and purple too are seen.
And here's a pretty ball of green".

I think this qualified as English and children who knew it years ago still know it as they also remember:

"Twinkle, twinkle little star!
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky.

Children used to say this before they could read it and no teacher would dream of not giving them a proper model to imitate. Teachers agreed with Wordsworth's dictum: "The child is father of a man", and took pains to see that earlier impressions of formal education were good impressions. They did not, in the name of "freedom of expression", encourage or tolerate or condone:

1. A ready to go now; Yo en self do nutten yet.
2. She gone home a ready.
3. Dah is de car way come out.
4. Boy, I en like dem ting, right?
5. If you is having da kine a wedder we en going no way.

FLAWLESS

Teachers could not see any logic in expecting children to practise saying: "siddong, stan up, leggo, lay we go, troway, ben-dong, dah man, a fellah, de naybah, a nedda ting," and to end up saying sit down, stand up, let go, let us go, throw away, bend down, that man, a fellow, the neighbour, another thing. They knew the function of the synapse in habit formation.

"Me no know" is excusable in an illiterate, but unpardonable in an educated person. "I en know" is equally unforgivable. Sloppiness and carelessness do not create either dialect or a new language. (92)

Several years ago I crossed the Atlantic on a converted troop ship. Among my fellow passengers was a girl of five or six who was making the trip with her parents.

The child was born in Trinidad and had attended Nursery School with numbers of other Trinidad children. But that little girl became the darling of other passengers. She was uninhibited and spoke charming English within the limitations of her vocabulary which was surprisingly good. She was not wild or exuberant or boisterous, as the brats one meets nowadays at our Airport; and not once during the long and tiring trip did either parent find it necessary to raise a voice at her. When she was not

92. We have already made the point that what is referred to here as sloppy speech and careless speech does not necessarily coincide with vernacular speech. (See note 68 and pages 43-49).

being pampered by passengers and crew, she was quietly sitting on the deck with old magazines and a pair of scissors. She could not read the magazines, but was cutting out pictures which she rearranged in her "scrapbook".

She was as Trinidadian as the rest of us, but creole was not "natural" to her, because her parents did not think that they would go as far back as the 15th century for a pattern.

Incidentally those were the days when pupils of certain prestige schools (93) spoke flawless English as a matter of course. The explanation for the disciplined efforts of that little child was perhaps in the fact that her mother was an Infant Methods teacher and the father a soft-spoken graduate in Agriculture.

MODELS

Both parents by their own speech provided the child as educated parents are expected to do, with a useful model to follow, and successfully insulated from her the stentorian raucousness which so many of us seem to prefer.

The scholars have said that 90 percent of our people speak in what they still insist on calling "the vernacular" a mode of speech which a young training college graduate, "fresh from the mint" calls the VANNACULAR (sic), and I assume that they can back this up with statistics.

Fifty years ago the percentage of illiteracy was probably 90 per cent, and even then people on occasion 'spoke well', even though they got trapped by complicated syntax. People 'from the bush' had their own unpolished way of expressing their dry humour. I recall travelling along a track with one of them on our way to his ajoupa. As we trudged along up hill, the remains of a bird fell on the track and immediately an owl began its peculiar hooting rhythm. Jobee, as I knew my companion, saw some relationship between the dead bird and the hooting and interpreted with a growl: "You kom an make me drop my bod" (I learnt later that Jobee, despite his woodcraft and bush-lore, could neither read nor write).

NORTH AMERICA

It is surprising how many of our so-called literates speak or growl like this, all in the name of a glorified vernacular. A Prisons Officer stumbles in a pot-hole and exclaims: "Oh s..t, mahn! Way de a.e is dis' ". Two small boys, apparently brothers, about seven and nine discussing the recent cricket series, and younger repeatedly accusing the older of talking s..t.

Two factors which have influenced our general behavioural pattern and so our approach to speech are worthy of mention.

In the first place, for more years than one can recall, we have had a massive inferiority complex vis-a-vis North America with the result that things American are deemed worthy of copying.

93. There is a very important observation relevant here. In "the days" referred to the education system was overtly elitist in selection and in aims. This is no longer true. Different methods are required for a different clientele.

How else do we account for the nasal delivery of our crooners, male and female, during their vocal renditions on stage or screen?

The step to the second factor is a tiny one, especially as we tend to copy the less desirable features of North American life and make them our own.¹(94)

NORTH AMERICAN STYLE BY C. O. Stroud (continuing from yesterday)

Trinidad Guardian — 24th June, 1976

Freedom, North American style, has influenced our parent-child relationship, our teacher-pupil attitude, our tendency to scream obscenities at one another, our general disrespect of the aged, the ease with which we accept cults and fads from the North (the hippie look, the tight fitting trousers, the jigger boots, the high-heel look for men, the bearded faces with or without sideburns, the AFRO hairstyle which we rationalise as Arising From Racial Oppression, the noisy idle motor cyclists, the Black Muslims and the ever increasing multitude of evangelists) and the socio-criminal proclivities characterised by a disturbing tendency to violence, especially on University campuses, a wanton destruction of lives and property, brazen daytime robberies of banks and business places, senseless burglaries for the purpose of "collecting" stereos, the use of iron-bolts, switchblade knives, flailing-chains, sawed-off guns, woollen headgear convertible to masks, arson for "kicks", "the whole works" — talk tough, walk tough, look tough, be tough. "Ah does do dat when I en got nuttin else to do."

And the facility with which we mop up *uptight, freeze, bread, chick, cat, pig, cop, copper, kid, no way! You tink it easy, right? you tink it soft, right? male chauvinistic pig, hi! guy*, and accommodate them side by side with *mamaguy, lime, bobbol, bobolee, boof, boobooman, bossman*.

All of which suggests that the influence from the North is of greater immediacy in determining what we say and how we say it than the slave trade.

But I cannot question the scholarship of modern scholars. It is over 35 years that I "broke my staff, buried it certain fathoms in the earth and deeper than did ever plummet sound, I drowned by books."

A good deal of what was written sent me back to 1925 and beyond. In that year, the late W.D. Inniss was trying to teach Latin to students like me from the Elementary School, who used English, not Creole, as a base.

94. We share the writer's displeasure at indiscriminate adoption of North American patterns of behaviour and speech. We feel though that this is not a phenomenon which language arts teaching can overcome.

Because of the severe limitations of our family background, the Elementary Teachers had given us a fair start, as most of us knew by heart "Pitt's reply to Walpole." and the highlights of Burke's speech at the Impeachment of Warren Hastings.

WATCHWORDS

In verse we could recite "Regulus Before the Roman Senate", the "Story of Horatius," "Brutus to the Romans", "Anthony to the Romans", and were well equipped with the Rules of Syntax from Davidson and Alcock's Grammar.

And as for poetic prose we had read aloud certain reading lessons so often that we could say from memory: . . . "and we shouted and laughed from morning 'till night, not fearing at all that our intrusive talk would interrupt the grand, majestic symphonies of ocean."

And by way of contrast: "At night, sometimes, when our play was done, we were hushed by the murmuring of the waters, and we listened to the great voice which seemed to tell of the secrets of the sea."

For all but the very few who won "exhibitions" or "Bursaries," the elementary school was the final outpost of formal education, and the teachers, despite the meagre salary inducement, saw to it that we were well prepared, even in the cheek by jowl conditions, to meet the challenges of life.

"Dedication" and "service" were their watchwords, and they did not create an atmosphere in which things got out of hand and then shed crocodile tears concerning the lack of expression in youth in the face of the massive expenditure on teachers' salaries, solid school structures, improved environment, and extended curricula.

REACTIONS TO THE NEW LANGUAGE ARTS SYLLABUS: SOME LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

by Lawrence D. Carrington, Research Fellow, School of Education

In July 1975, the Ministry of Education and Culture published a new syllabus for primary schools. The part of the document which has proven to be the most controversial is without doubt the syllabus for the teaching of the Language Arts. Indeed, it is the only section of the document which departs radically from previous positions and practice on the teaching of any subject. The previous syllabus dated from 1946. The thinking which lay at its base viewed the speech of Trinidadian and Tobagonian children as a form of English which was made imperfect by all-pervasive and persistent errors resulting from solvenly speech habit. It also stated as one of its aims the development in the learner of an appreciation for the fine literature of the English language. By contrast, the 1975 syllabus asserts the status of the vernacular spoken by children in these islands as a grammatically structured systematic form of speech which is not an inferior form of English. It also proposed a shift of emphasis to oral communication competence. It invites the teacher to respect the validity of the child's speech and urges him to revise his attitude to the notion of correctness in speech behaviour.

It is commonplace for the opinions of theoreticians to be ahead of those of practitioners and for the latter to be out of phase with controlling authorities in education. It is not so usual though for the views of a controlling authority to be in line with those of the theoreticians and for both to be measurably ahead of the practitioners. In the case of the Language Arts syllabus, this is precisely the position. Its propositions are consistent with the most advanced views of those linguists who study creole languages and language teaching in bilingual and multilingual societies. But neither the teachers nor the communities which they serve are ready to cope with such seemingly revolutionary approaches.

Within a very short period after the publication of the syllabus, the daily newspapers printed more than a dozen letters (some from prominent citizens) condemning the language arts section of the syllabus. Many of these letters reasserted that the vernacular was badly spoken English; others expressed alarm that the vernacular would be taught in schools and used to the detriment of English competence in the learners. The confusion over the true intent, actual propositions and suggested procedures in the syllabus, although clearly related to faulty reading of the document, was not confined to the general public. Examiners visiting student teachers on practice teaching were able to observe well intentioned but hopelessly misdirected attempts by teachers to implement what they thought were the requirements of the syllabus. There has also been repeated evidence of conflict between some principals and younger teachers on the method by which language should be taught.

It is of little practical value to treat this matter as a debate in which the "old syllabus" camp and the "new syllabus" camp will seek to overcome each other. Far more important is the recognition that the events that have followed the publication of the syllabus are proof that it was not developed in accordance with an acceptable approach to curriculum development. Neither the teaching service nor the public have been adequately prepared to accept the syllabus. The ideas which the syllabus embodies are new to all but a very small number of people within the community. Yet there was no attempt made during the years over which the changes were projected to undertake active propaganda on the subject of language in this society. Over several months, a radio broadcast by the Government Broadcasting Unit entitled "Our Creole" attracted the attention of large numbers of people. The production of this programme was not the result of collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture. It resulted almost exclusively from the initiative shown by one member of G.B.U.'s staff. It was

not envisaged by either the producer or the participants as a support for the syllabus. Were this the case, it would have been very differently organised. The Ministry of Education did organise a brief orientation to the new philosophy of the syllabus for school supervisors but this was all the preparation that either the teaching force or the public received.

Education is too public a matter to be treated in this fashion. Language itself is too sensitive an area for such uncaredful approaches to policy modification. Future developments in curriculum must be preceded by adequate preparation of the public by concerted efforts to popularise intended policy changes. A second lesson that arises is that the teaching force must be intimately involved in all phases of the development of new syllabus and curriculum. This is necessary as a guarantee both of quality and commitment. The classroom teacher must be personally involved in the evolutionary process that produces change in education.

It is noticeable when one reads the new syllabus, that it is unaccompanied by any schedule which would spread its introduction over any period of time to allow adjustment to its new requirements. This is an error. It is not implied that one should set different deadlines by which teachers of successive classes should have changed their attitudes. Attitudinal change does not result from directives. Nevertheless, the absence of a phasing-in schedule does strike the reader as a deficiency. It would seem from the above that future curriculum changes should have a planned schedule of introduction to prevent dislocation of the school-system because of extensive change at all its levels.

A fourth observation is necessary. The syllabus does not come to the teaching service with any supportive teaching material to facilitate its implementation. This means that the proposed philosophy is not being given a fair chance of success. A fourth principle is implied — teaching materials developed in the mould of the philosophy of the curriculum must accompany the policy statement of change in curriculum.

It must be noted that the comments made in this article must not be construed as a rejection of the philosophy proposed by the syllabus. Indeed the writer wholly supports the thinking on which the syllabus is founded. What I have attempted to do is to show that it is not enough to make sensible statements on education. One has to prepare both the public and those who execute educational policy for those statements. In the final analysis, education depends on the teacher to achieve its goals and curriculum change cannot succeed unless the teacher is part of the process of its development.

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