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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the attitudes of teachers towards the use of TTSE¹ and TrinEC² among students in classroom settings in two secondary schools in northern Trinidad. It also aimed to determine the correlation, if any, between students' choice of language and their general academic performance and written TTSE competence.

Primary data was collected from oral sources through semi-structured interviews with teachers of varying subjects and form levels at School 1 and School 2³. Additionally, secondary sources from similar studies were used to support the primary findings. The interview results exhibited that teachers had conflicting views on the use of TrinEC in their classrooms. Teachers admitted to code-mixing with TTSE and TrinEC in their classrooms interchangeably while teaching lessons, however, the majority of them did not appreciate this type of use of language by their students. Some felt as though TrinEC was inappropriate for classroom settings and though others felt apathetic towards its use, teachers overwhelmingly preferred that students use TTSE in all possible contexts. As it pertains to the teachers' reports regarding the relationship between students' use of TTSE or TrinEC, data from report books have shown no correlation between their language and general academic performance. However, it is to be noted that a few students struggle to differentiate between the languages, and this has affected their performance in their written TTSE competence. Further research would be needed to explore the reasons for a lack of ability to effectively code-switch between the languages and maintain fluency in their written abilities.

¹ Trinidad and Tobago Standard English.

² Trinidadian English Creole.

³ The school names have been renamed as "School 1" and "School" for confidentiality purposes.

Keywords: Trinidadian English Creole (TrinEC), Trinidad and Tobago Standard English (TTSE), Academic English, perspectives, translanguaging, code-switching, code-mixing.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the development of many Caribbean nations, the term "Creole"⁴ has been integral in establishing an identity in post-colonial societies. Creole's intrinsic nature to Caribbean society can therefore be noted in and have strong impacts on the social culture of Trinidad as well as its education system.

The history of Trinidad during its colonial periods illustrates the origin of our attitudes towards the languages TTSE and TrinEC and the prestige or stigmas associated with both BSE dialects. Wilson explains that after emancipation, British administrators worked diligently to anglicise Trinidad (Wilson 8). Additionally, Wilson stated that under his rule, Governor Lord Harris, mandated that instruction only be done in English in government schools to "inculcate English values" (Wilson 8). Therefore, different non-European communities were forced to quickly learn how to understand and articulate themselves in BSE. These circumstances would have been the catalyst of TTSE's development but more notably TrinEC's creation and development. However, Condé stated that amidst forced anglicisation, TrinEC still took precedence and was the native language and means of communication for both Europeans and non-Europeans, as it was during enslavement (Balutansky and Sourieau 102). This unfortunately still did not work in TrinEC's favour as Condé lamented that, "...when Creole became widespread in each island, at its outset, it was not perceived as a unique linguistic creation, but rather as a distortion, a perversion of the model of the European colonizer's language" (Balutansky and Sourieau 102).

⁴ Creole is the strict sense solely a sociohistorical one, referring to certain languages born as lingua francas amidst heavy contact between two or more languages (McWhorter 9).

These trends concerning the perspectives of Trinidadians towards the use of TTSE or TrinEC, notably the attitudes of teachers persist to the present day. Attitudes towards Trinidadian English dialects and influences in the preferences for each language have been historically instilled in the education system. Thus, it's intriguing to examine these trends among teachers as they interact with the youth who tend to have an affinity towards TrinEC and additionally how this affects students' performance, as TrinEC has always been associated with low levels of education. However, it is important to note that Creole was not made from banal elements. All these elements must be considered when exploring language choices, the perpetuation of stigmas associated with one's language preference and if all of this has a negative or positive effect on the user's intelligence.

Rationale

This study is worthwhile as it can be used to further the changing or updating in perspectives towards TrinEC and other Caribbean dialects and/or pidgins in a post-colonial society. There has been a vast amount of research done on the origins of TrinEC and the linguistic qualities of this language which encourages the recognition of TrinEC as a viable and official language in Trinidad. However, more research is needed on the effects on the academic prowess of TrinEC speakers and how TrinEC can be used independently or even via means of translanguaging⁵ to enhance the education systems.

⁵ Translanguaging is the term used to describe practices that allow and encourage EAL learners to use their full linguistic repertoire in order to empower them and help them to realise their full potential. This means encouraging them to speak, write and/or translate to and from their first language or any language they speak and English, to support their learning. (The Bell Foundation).

Thesis Statement

Trinidadian English Creole is a viable language option that if used effectively, can enhance the learning and teaching experience of students and teachers, respectively.

Parameters

This study focuses on the teachers of two secondary schools in north Trinidad and their students, by extension. This study was limited to Trinidad nationals as they have a larger population than Tobago therefore, providing more varying attitudes towards TrinEC. The sample population was selected based on ease of access due to being a past pupil of both institutions. This close relationship with both schools and the teachers posed an aid to the study as the sample population felt more comfortable and compelled to speak freely throughout the gathering of information. The interviews were conducted, for the most part, face-to-face with 10 teachers over 2 months in November 2022 and January 2023. The interviews were done weekly with 30–45-minute sessions with each teacher to facilitate ease of conversation and to eliminate the pressures of time restraints.

Research Question

What is the correlation between a secondary school student's choice of language between Trinidad and Tobago Standard English and Trinidadian English Creole, and their academic performance and written English competence?

Aim

This study seeks to evaluate the attitudes of teachers of a variety of subjects in two secondary schools in north Trinidad, towards students' use of TTSC or TrinEC in classroom settings. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the factors that influence teachers' perceptions of Caribbean languages and people who speak certain languages. Finally, this project proposes possible strategies in which Caribbean languages can be effectively used to enhance the education experience.

Objectives

This study intends to:

1. Asses the origin of secondary school teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards TTSE or TrinEC.
2. Examine the influences that encourage students to use TTSE or TrinEC.
3. Evaluate the correlation between secondary students' choice of language and their academic performance.
4. Suggest possible ways in which TTSE and TrinEC can be used synchronically to optimize students' comprehension and classroom participation.

Methodology

This study utilised both primary and secondary sources for data collection and supportive information, respectively. The data collection was carried out as semi-structured, face-to-face

interviews which facilitated a more authentic, conversational, and relaxed means of expression for the subject group. The objective of the interviews was to facilitate this social study by gaining insight on the consensus on TTSE and TrinEC from secondary school teachers, the merit of their perceptions and how language use affects students. The interview (see Appendix A) was separated into 2 sections and consisted of 14 static open-ended questions, as well as 6 optional follow-up open-ended questions whenever certain participants hesitated to elaborate on their responses. Both schools provided 5 willing participants who teach a variety of subjects for the interviews, resulting in 10 participants overall. The research approach was therefore qualitative in nature.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 contains the "Literature Review," and it provides an extensive comparative examination of the sources utilized throughout the process of this study. Chapter 2 contains the presentation and analysis of data from the semi-structured interviews which provided the primary oral resources of this study. Chapter 3 entails an in-depth discussion of how the from the data from the interviews relate to the research findings from the secondary resources.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to all the literature gathered for this study, language has historically been a particularly controversial discussion in Trinidad as it pertains to educational instruction. Though TTSE is the official language of communication and instruction, TrinEC is often used by teachers and students alike. These similar studies have shown that the language used often indicates one's cultural identity but more pertinently, has proven to affect their perceived social class. Thus the issue of language use in the classroom has been a subject of many discussions and studies, with much research examining the attitudes and perceptions of various stakeholders, such as students, parents and teachers. This research project focuses on the attitudes of secondary school teachers towards the use of English and Creole in classrooms and therefore, the literature review considers past research on this topic so that it can be related to current trends in teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of TTSE or TrinEC and how this possibly affects student performance.

Research Strategy

Initially, upon deciding on the research project's thesis, the acquisition of secondary sources on similar topics was conducted to widen the sphere of knowledge of TTSE and TrinEC. The use of online databases and library resources from the University of the West Indies were primarily used in this study. Firstly, searches on the university's online database "UWIlinc" was conducted using the keywords and key phrases, "Trinidadian English Creole, Trinidad and Tobago Standard English, Academic English, perspectives, translanguaging, code-switching,

code-mixing." The results consisted of articles, theses, dissertations and books written by both Caribbean and non-Caribbean authors, on the history of the English language, English dialects and variations in the Caribbean, attitudes towards the use of TrinEC and the overall social implications of the use of TTSE and TrinEC in Trinidad and Tobago. Each piece of literature was then inspected over a period of two months to ensure that the data presented was relevant to this project's area of study.

Evaluation of Sources

In its entirety, the collection of secondary sources consisted of fifteen sources of literature. The majority of the sources were published on their respective platforms within the past twenty years which aided in the relevancy of each author's finding in comparison to the trends and data present today. Specifically, among the articles, only one by Mühleisen was done beyond the twenty-year threshold, all the theses were done within the past twelve years. However, two books by Valdman and Highfield, and Balutansky and Sourieau exceeded the twenty-year threshold as they were published in 1980 and 1998 respectively. Additionally, the two used dissertations by Winford and Southers were published in 1972 and 1975 respectively. Though the subject matter of these earlier books and dissertations was pertinent to this project's thesis, it is still wise to keep their publishing dates into consideration when examining their presented findings as sociocultural changes over the past few decades have changed. This could reflect in possible conflicts of ideas, concepts and results on the perception of language in Trinidad in comparison to later studies. However, all materials used were created by academics, categorically, six professors, four PhD holders, three doctorate holders and a well-renowned

novelist. In exclusion of the two theses used by Constance and Walker, all the research literature was qualitative in nature and entailed comparative literature studies alongside their own qualitative findings, much like this study.

Themes

All pieces of literature revolved around similar central themes and concepts concerning TTSE and TrinEC. One of the main conclusions found in all of the studies, regardless of the negative perceptions of those who reject TrinEC, is that TrinEC is a viable language option that ought to be recognized in not just casual but also formal settings for its linguistic values. In fact, Mühlhäuser affirmed that Creoles, which can be compared to pidgins, can and already significantly develop independently of their language of origin and is not always a result of the degradation of their language of origin (Valdman and Highfield 19). Some notions are even present that denounce the fact that the creation of Creoles is no different from the creation of other recognized and standardized languages through language contact (McWhorter 161). However, even though these sentiments were present in all the literature, this still did not negate the fact that TrinEC was often stigmatized while TTSE and any other standardized variation of English was the perceived superior language choice. A consistent trend among the studies that Robertson lamented, is a history in Trinidad where Standard English was appointed as the language for educational instruction and assessment and is often a requirement for the world of work as well (Robertson 33-38). Thus, amidst the stigmatization are tangible social implications dependent on one's language use that have further swayed people's perceptions of certain languages, namely TrinEC. Craig even explicitly stated that, "A similar attitude of rejecting the possibility of a Creole-language education is often found in Creole speakers who aspire, in traditional terms, to be upwardly mobile in their respective societies" (Valdman and Highfield

250). Ironically though, it is proven in both Constance's and Walker's dissertations that the use of TrinEC has no significant negative impact on the intellect or academic performance of students.

All things considered, the selection of literature made significant contributions to the exploration of this study's main themes. The similar theses and dissertations aided in reinstating the findings of this study and also provided more in dept context for the recurring findings that otherwise would not be expressed in a study of this academic level. The ability to access a plethora of literature concerning Caribbean English dialects, their perceptions and social implications also reaffirms the claims by each author, that this is a valuable area of study that deserves noteworthy attention outside of the linguistic world. However, as an appraisal, there is still more research to be done on all the aforementioned topics, themes and concepts from a Tobago perspective. Similar to this study, much of the conversation of research tends to be centralized on Trinidad which can easily neglect the presence and individuality of TrinEC in Tobago. Additionally, frameworks in which the findings and conclusions of these studies can be synthesized and distributed among the public, more specifically in the education system, should also be an integral part of the completion of these research papers.

CHAPTER TWO: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The presented results are from a series of semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted with 10 teachers from School 1 and School 2 in north Trinidad. The interviewees were promised anonymity and therefore they will be using aliases such as "Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3..." and so forth.

Teacher attitudes towards TTSE and TrinEC in classrooms:

The consensus of attitudes towards each language use varied among teachers depending on different parameters of their demographic backgrounds. This resulted in them falling into three different categories, namely, teachers who reject TrinEC but accept TTSE, teachers that are apathetic towards both languages and teachers that are accepting of both languages and even encourage TrinEC use.

As it pertains to the rejection of TrinEC and simultaneous acceptance of TTSE, the majority of the teachers seemed to have limited knowledge of the history that influences their affinity to TTSE. Six of the teachers all lamented sentiments similar to that of the following teacher, **Teacher 1 from School 1 (form 2, Social Studies):**

"The students not realising that speaking like that doesn't get you far in life. *Yuh*⁶ have to know what kind of talk is for *the side ah de road*⁷ or if you want to be respected. Because that manner of speech only *develop(s)* out of illiteracy."

Confirmation of the prevalence of this manner of thinking was seen in León's study where a student confessed that they often felt unintelligent whenever they spoke TTSE "poorly"⁸, (León

⁶ TrinEC for "You".

⁷ TrinEC for expressing behaviours typical of delinquent people.

25-26). Rejection of TrinEC was most seen among teachers in lower forms⁹ who indicated that they preferred TTSE use because they wanted students to have a "good foundation" for their education. Additionally, English and Communication Studies teachers of any form were the most adamant about their preferred use of TTSE for practising purposes.

Two of the interviewed teachers expressed that they were quite apathetic towards their students' language choices. Both teachers were higher form Mathematics and Information Technology teachers who both expressed that students were too old for effort in changing their way of speech and there was no real need to do so. **Teacher 2 from School 1 (form 4, Physical Education):**

"I don't really care how they talk inside class or outside class. Just make sure and do yuh work and I good *chuckles*. Yeah man I don't really see the need to nit-pick if we all understand and respect each other."

There was one History and Caribbean Studies teacher (Teacher 3) who was accepting of both languages, especially TrinEC. This was because their areas of study edified them on the history of language in Trinidad and the necessity for TrinEC for our Caribbean identity, **Teacher 3 from School 2 (forms 3 and 6, History):**

"I think once you're aware of where Creole truly comes from, it's hard to hate it. You have to empathize with our ancestors. I mean they was trying dey best! But plenty people don't know the history, so they repeat it."

Teacher 3 even went on to further speak of where the preference for TTSE comes from which is in accordance with Samarin's statements that "English and French exert their influences by virtue

⁸ That is to say, speaking in TrinEC.

⁹ Forms 1 to 3.

of the fact that they are prestigious languages... of education and socio-economic mobility" (Valdman and Highfield 216).

Trends in teachers' language use in classrooms:

As anticipated, the vast majority of teachers affirmed that they seldom or never speak TrinEC for purposes of reaffirming that TrinEC is inferior to TTSE which is the best choice of language in the classroom and formal settings. Five out of the six self-proclaimed avid TTSE users in classrooms even confidently affirmed that even in their private lives they abstain from the use of TrinEC due to its "poor linguistic value". **Teacher 4 from School 2 (form 2, English):**

"I wouldn't speak like that in my own home so I not allowing that for my students either. If you want respect, you have to show people to respect you with how to speak. Also, time and place!"

Ironically, this teacher and many others of the same opinion, started their interviews speaking TTSE and as time progressed and they became more visually comfortable, their native tongue TrinEC was used in their speech, seemingly unbeknownst to them. When this was politely drawn to their attention, they denied the claims by stating that they were still speaking "proper"¹⁰. It was clear that these teachers all spoke TrinEC on a regular basis as they confidently and fluently articulated a few sentences in TrinEC or even changed from TTSE to TrinEC mid-sentence. This supported Ottley's claims that, "It is clear... that we in Trinidad do not in fact speak English as so many of us think we do" (Southers 2). Through observation of the speech of each teacher, it was evident that many Trinidadians struggle with differentiating between TTSE and TrinEC, and

¹⁰ That is to say, speaking in Standard English or TTSE

they often speak TrinEC, assuming that they are speaking TTSE, all while upholding negative attitudes towards TrinEC and its speakers.

On the other hand, there are five teachers who admit to using TrinEC in classroom settings and/or in their private lives for many different reasons. Three of these teachers claimed that they speak TrinEC when instructing their students because they understand better, it makes class more interesting and there's nothing wrong in speaking TrinEC. **Teacher 4 from School 1 (form 4, French and Spanish):**

"Well, that's the language we born speaking eh. So sometimes I find it easier to use when I'm explaining something in a foreign language to them."

However, slightly contrary is Teacher 5 (form 1, General Science) who says he enjoys using TrinEC to explain difficult concepts, but he would still prefer that his student spoke TTSE in the classroom. This is a similar trend of attitude as seen in Lodge's study where a Science teacher, Bibi commented, "...many times you are trying to explain something to the students and they will not totally get it in English. But, if you use the patwa they can relate to those words" (George 298).

Student demographics in relation to language choice:

It's important to note that School 1 is a co-ed school while School 2 is an all-girls school. This difference in the demographics of the students is a factor that affects a student's choice of language and the circumstances under which they use the language. School 1 teachers attested that among their students, students from presumably low-income (footnote about unsurity)

backgrounds were more prone to speaking TrinEC. However, male students overwhelmingly spoke TrinEC more than female students. **Teacher 5 from School 1 (form 4, Geography):**

"The boys tend to speak it (TrinEC) more. I can only assume because now that's the cool thing to do, you know? But I rather it like that because talking like that is kind of unbecoming for girls, a lil too abrasive".

Teachers in School 2 have stated that while students still use TrinEC from time to time, they know "time and place" and seldom speak TrinEC with their superiors. It is also important to note that this school is considered to be more prestigious than School 1, by Trinidadian society. This seemed to have a more intense effect on the overall attitude of teachers and students towards TTSE and TrinEC. Teachers from School 2 displayed more acceptance towards TTSE and rejection of TrinEC. **Teacher 6 from School 2 (form 6, Literature):**

"It's not a matter of thinking you're better than anyone but you have to be cognizant of the type of categories you can get put into. Here and there is okay (speaking TrinEC), but I try to let my girls know to walk and talk like the person they would like to be in the future."

That is to say that TrinEC speakers are inevitably classed at a lower end of society.

Academic Performance based on Language:

Most of the teachers, notably, the English and Literature teachers spoke strongly about the correlation between students' choice of spoken language and their written English. They even explicitly explained that students who often spoke TrinEC received lower grades than their counterparts who often spoke TTSE. **Teacher 4 from School 2:**

"The problem shows up when they begin to write exactly how they speak. It's all innocent when we're just having a conversation or joking around. But these students don't know how to switch it off. That's why it's better to just keep good practices (speaking TTSE)."

Walker's study also examined this phenomenon by testing Bajan students' language awareness and how it affected their written Standard English competence. The results of this study were inconclusive which indicated a complex relationship between the variables (Walker 153). However, while the results didn't appear to definitively answer their research question, it doesn't fully negate the probability of students' language awareness influencing their written competence.

Contrary to these statements, all other teachers who were against the use of TrinEC in the classrooms, almost reluctantly confessed that the students who often spoke TrinEC still performed well in their exams and sometimes better than their colleagues who spoke TTSE more frequently. This result is also seen in another similar study in a secondary school in Tobago where Constance concluded that "classroom spoken language is not automatically linked to or exclusively responsible for academic success", through a series of observing classroom spoken language, unstructured interviews and collecting student grades (Constance 183). Interestingly, **Teacher 7 from School 2 (form 3 Biology)** also affirmed this thesis:

"Well... yeah, to be fair it (students speaking TrinEC) doesn't *really* affect their work or performance. They still perform really well. My main concern is that they can lose marks for poor grammar since they are *supposed* to be writing in Standard English. But yes, I won't lie and say it (speaking TrinEC) makes them any less smart."

CHAPTER THREE: DISCUSSION

Historical context of Trinidadian language:

An ongoing and prevalent theme observed during interviews with teachers and even throughout all the literature accumulated for the purposes of this study was the history of Creole languages like TrinEC, or rather the lack of knowledge of its history. The persistence of European ideals is still strong in present-day Trinidadian society as teachers are notably unable to accurately articulate the origins of Trinidadian languages. Resultantly, they struggle to understand or agree with the importance that TrinEC has in our society especially as it is one of the most integral elements of the creolization that has shaped Trinidad's society. London spoke of teachers historically being used in Trinidad and Tobago to diminish TrinEC use and uplift Standard English when he said, "The pedagogical methods used by the teachers emphasized proficiency, but here again the acquisition was supposed to be at a cost—obliteration and eradication of local Creole" (London 314). Unfortunately, due to a lack of knowledge, this practice persisted.

The consensus of most teachers and other citizens alike is that TrinEC is a less prestigious, degradation of Standard English used by people with lower levels of intellect; merely a pidgin that is fighting for recognition among fully developed and more functional languages. However, this couldn't be further from the truth as TrinEC has proven itself time and time again to be more than a pidgin and in fact, a language that can stand on its own. In fact, Winford even asserted that unlike Creole, which was an expansion of such, pidgin is not the first language of its speakers and is usually characterized by vastly reduced linguistic elements such

as vocabulary and grammar (Winford 76-77). Therefore, Creoles and more specifically TrinEC holds the same linguistic weight as what we presently consider to be standard languages as most Trinidadian people learn TrinEC at birth. Rarely ever do we see TTSE being the native language of Trinidadians, and almost everyone from all levels of Trinidadian society speaks it, despite their co-existing rejection of it.

The lack of knowledge of historical context is especially harmful because it negates the linguistic authenticity of TrinEc and creates a culture where teachers, who are often charged with educating the generations that help to perpetuate Trinidadian culture, rob the culture of its richness. This intentional rejection of TrinEC also perpetuates racist ideals since a majority of creolization's¹¹ elements are based on African culture that has been mixed with European ideals and elements throughout the process of colonization (Winford 2). It's an insult to our own identities to entertain the notion of TrinEC's primitivity when it's in fact a story of the perseverance of Trinidadians throughout severe historical circumstances.

Post-colonial attitudes towards Trinidadian languages:

It's understood that Standard English or maybe TTSE was preferred during colonial times for many reasons, but these notions began slowly changing in post-independence Trinidad and Tobago. Youssef defined a distinctive change from pre-independence Trinidad and Tobago, where TrinEC was perceived to be a degenerate of English or TTSE, to post-independence Trinidad and Tobago that recognized TrinEc as a language in 1975 (Wilson 32). However, immediate change in attitudes towards both TTSE and TrinEC and the removal of stigma

¹¹ Creolization is a term referring to the process by which elements of different cultures are blended together to create a new culture (Oxford).

towards TrinEC would still take some time to develop. Therefore, intentional efforts were made to encourage this acceptance for TrinEC. Youssef added that an education policy was enacted in 1975 for teachers to encourage the use of TrinEC at the earliest stage of education which he says was successful in affecting a change in attitude (Wilson 32). However, over time the education system seemed to regress on these efforts.

Most teachers in this present study confessed to the rejection of TrinEC in classrooms and the acceptance and encouragement of TTSE. They claimed their reasoning was because of the "dialect's" lack of linguistic value and its inability to be used in intellectual contexts however other findings in this study directly opposed these claims. Ironically some of these same teachers even affirmed that they would sparingly use TrinEC to give better explanations for complex topics. This practice was even seen in a study by Deuber who reported that teachers used TrinEC to explain difficult points or to aid in general comprehension for students who were still familiarizing themselves with TTSE (Wilson 34). Unbeknownst to the teachers who reject TrinEC, this practice in turn proves the linguistic prowess of TrinEC as it's able to be used for complex subject matters. Additionally, it further emphasizes that TrinEC is in fact Trinidadians' native tongue, of which Trinidadians are inevitably more fluent.

Failure to end TrinEC stigma:

Unfortunately, even with all the literature available on the history of Trinidadian languages and attempts at sensitizing the public on the origins of TTSE and subsequently the importance of the promotion of TrinEC, stigma against TrinEC prevails to the present day. The severity of the stigmatization of local English dialects has even resulted in a lack of language

awareness of the presence of TTSE for some people and even a more minor rejection of it as well as they would rather be associated with "the source", more international English dialects. Taylor explains this by saying that the Caribbean's dark history "has made its people reluctant to acknowledge their own worth [...and t]his has resulted in a 'safe' dependence on the norms of the coloniser for validation and status" (Wilson 33). Therefore, regardless of passively acknowledging that TrinEC can function as an independent language in all settings by speaking it daily, Trinidadians continue to encourage its rejection and encourage the spread of negative stereotypes.

What makes the fight against TrinEC stigma more difficult is the discriminatory social implications of language use in Trinidadian society. Most people associate TTSE speakers with success, intelligence and wealth while avid TrinEC users are expected to be from the "lower ends" of society and are perceived to be low in intellect. These thoughts were seen in this study and are visual in all other literature on attitudes towards TTSE and TrinEC. Craig's study exemplified that, parents preferred Standard English over TrinEC because it was believed that the international standard brought more opportunities than TrinEC, more explicitly, TrinEC was not the language of upward mobility (Wilson, 34).

The persistence of these opinions threatens one of the most integral elements of Creole society and culture, its language. Though people may continue to speak TrinEC in casual settings in their daily life, the educational system, which is very influential is currently working at eradicating this language. In Mühleisen's study, an interviewee declared that "Trinidadian Vernacular¹² is a dying form. It will be replaced by Standard English. The Standard in terms of grammar is the form that is mostly used in school; in formal situations it is insisted upon. The

¹² TrinEC or Tobago English Creole TEC

Vernacular is not respected as a reflection of refinement in culture. As we move towards refinement in culture, the language will become more refined" and to be refined is to lack unwanted elements such as TrinEC (Mühleisen). Without this always being the intention, teachers' tendency to promote the practice of TTSE over TrinEC in classrooms acts as a strong driving force for the pending erasure of TrinEC from Trinidadian society and the reinstating of colonial values that Trinidadians desperately fought against in the past.

Limitations

Both schools in the sample population are schools with high academic performance rates, this may have affected the results concerning the effect of TrinEC use of academic performance since these students consistently perform well. The data collection was limited to schools in north Trinidad which limits the true scope of teachers' attitudes towards the languages used by students since Tobago nationals who often speak TrinEC were inevitably eliminated from the study. Due to schedule clashes and transportation issues, 3 sample participants were unable to partake in a face-to-face interview. These interviews were thus conducted via Zoom to still provide visual cues for the data collection, however, 2 of these participants opted to not use their cameras and had a more reserved disposition overall.

Recommendations

TrinEC much like many other Creoles and dialects has shown its linguistic and communicative value, making it a practical and applicable language choice. However, it is clear

that its respect as a functional language continues to not be acknowledged, especially in the educational system which then further reinforces the stigma that is attached to TrinEC, even among those who speak it at home (Valdman and Highfield 249). However, if we are evidently able to articulate ourselves in any genre of expression through TrinEC in our homes or casual settings, it's worthwhile to encourage its use in all other settings. Youssef lamented that the use of TrinEC in formal settings should not be associated with incompetence in TTSE but rather highlight a high level of communicative competence signalled by the effective balancing of languages (YOUSSEF 49). This can be achieved through the intentional use of TrinEC by teachers in classrooms to ensure equity in the comprehension levels of students as TrinEC is everyone's first language. But also, to aid in simplifying complex topics, theories or instructions.

Wilson spoke of a lack of linguistic self-confidence among TrinEC speakers which has in turn resulted in a rejection of their Caribbean identity and all the nuances of a post-colonial society (Wilson 33). The reduction of these negative notions around the Caribbean identity is imperative for fostering a generation of young people that take pride in themselves and their contributions to society as it is deeply tied to their identities. Therefore, the history of TrinEC and its importance to our culture should be included in school syllabi so that both students and teachers can change their attitudes towards TrinEC. This is especially invaluable as Youssef stated that, "To use only one code would be to diminish the richness in communicative range of the speaker for code-mixing has become the unmarked norm in the society" (Youssef 44).

CONCLUSION

This study provided insight into the perceptions of the Caribbean language TTSE and TrinEC and how this affects spoken language in Trinidad society. This is because the youth are encouraged or discouraged by their academic superiors to express themselves in one language or the other. All teachers have attested to an increase in acceptance and embracement of TrinEC among student populations in comparison to previous years and no true connection to a decline in academic performance was found. While the majority of teachers are moderately tolerant of students using TrinEC in classrooms to express themselves and amplify their learning processes, the study revealed there is still an underlying notion of rejection of TrinEC or the use of translanguaging of both languages and rather, the desire for reinstating TTSE as the preferred language. Overall, teachers proved to be ignorant of the origins of TrinEC and the extensive amount of support for Creoles in the linguistic world, which affected their opinions on the prospect of using TrinEC independently in classrooms or allowing translanguaging for optimal learning. Further emphasis on the history and necessity of TrinEC to Trinidadian society must be instilled in teacher training so that they can foster future generations of citizens who honour their native tongues to fortify cultural pride and strong competencies in all of Trinidad's languages.

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APPENDIX A

Face-to-face semi-structured interview conducted with participants at their places of work.

Attitudes towards the use of Trinidadian English Creole by secondary students in classroom settings

INTRODUCTION: Good day, my name is Savannah Sandy, and I am a final year Undergraduate student at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. For my thesis project, I'm exploring the various attitudes towards, and perspectives secondary school teachers may have on the use of Trinidadian English Creole in classroom settings and how this affects their academic performance. I'll first begin with some general questions about yourself and then move onto your opinions on Trinidadian English Creole as it pertains to your students. I assure you that this interview is completely anonymous, and the responses collected will only be used for purposes of this study. There are no right or wrong answers, therefore I encourage you to speak as much as you would like and as honestly as possible.

KEY:

- Static questions
 - Optional follow-up questions

SECTION 1: Demographic data

- What subjects do you teach?
- How long has you been teaching?

- What is your highest level of education?
 - If it is at tertiary level, what was your areas of study?
- How old are you?
- What are do you live in?

SECTION 2: Thematic questions

- What do you think are the origins of TTSE and TrinEC?
- Do you consider Trinidadian English Creole to be a viable language?
 - Do you use Trinidadian English Creole in your regular daily life?
- Do you think Trinidad and Tobago Standard English is better for teaching?
 - Do you ever opt for using Trinidadian English Creole to simplify difficult topics for students?
- What are your general thoughts on the use of Trinidadian English Creole in a classroom setting?
 - How would you typically respond if a student spoke to you in Trinidadian English Creole?
 - If you explain a topic in Trinidad and Tobago Standard English and a student reiterates what you've said, for purposes of clarification, in Trinidadian English Creole. How would you react?
- Would you say that students who prefer to use Trinidad and Tobago Standard English perform better at school?

- What type of students prefer to use Trinidadian English Creole (age, gender, socio-economic background)?
 - Would you say that these students perform poorly or are less intelligent than their colleagues?
- In which settings or under what circumstances do you think Trinidad and Tobago Standard English or Trinidadian English Creole are acceptable or appropriate?
- If Trinidadian English Creole becomes an official language in Trinidad, would you then encourage its use in classroom settings?
- How do you propose we go forward in the most optimal way for educating students where language use is concerned?