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This study is anchored in postcolonial theory, which provides the critical lens through which the enduring impacts of colonial power structures on primary education in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically linguistic practices, were examined. The primary aim of the investigation was to ascertain what counter-hegemonic forces challenge the dominant language ideologies in the classroom in Tobago. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this investigation and in order to acquire a profound understanding of the issues, in-depth interviews, semi-structured questionnaires and classroom observations were utilized for data collection. The participants comprised four teachers who are employed in a suburban school in Tobago. The data analysis process incorporated a thematic approach using a coding matrix. The results revealed that linguistic counter- hegemonic forces, particularly Creole, prevail amidst diversity and ambivalence in the classroom. It can be concluded that the counter- hegemonic influences serve to complement the linguistic dynamics required for teaching and learning. An analysis is recommended, to discern strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and solutions, so that teachers and students may be empowered and provided with adequate support.

Keywords: counter-hegemonic forces, language choice, linguistic needs, linguistic diversity, ambivalence.

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I. BACKGROUND

Language policy and dominant linguistic ideologies have played a critical role in shaping educational systems and classroom practices in the Caribbean region. In some postcolonial societies, such as Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), official language policies that have privileged colonial languages such as Standard English in the past have been revised to accommodate the local Creoles in education. In 2013, the Ministry of Education (MOE) instituted a policy endorsement on the use of Creole English within the classroom. Although this language accommodation was implemented to aid student comprehension and increase the level of engagement, it was also viewed as an ameliorative measure, a turn away from the dominant linguistic hegemony, a restructuring of the language hierarchy to give rightful place to the local Creole languages.

The former English-only policy for education reflected hegemonic ideologies which equated accuracy with intelligence and academic success, and as a consequence became a marker of legitimacy, social mobility and power in the classroom (Phillipson, 1992). These hegemonic ideologies became embedded in the national curricula, teacher training programs and academic instruction and assessments and not only did they suppress the linguistic diversity brought by students to the classroom, but it was also a devaluation of identity (Liddicoat, 2016; Hurie & Callahan, 2019; Scott & Vengas, 2017; Velasco, 2025). Rigid adherence to monolingual policies, which are "corrective" approaches to the use of non-standard languages, result in the alienation of learners when their linguistic identities are positioned as inappropriate or

deficient for teaching and learning (Emerick & Goldberg, 2023; Hammine, 2020; Kiramba, 2018). A barrier to learning was thus created because of this disconnect between the language of the home and the language of the school (Craig, 1999; Youssef, 2002). For many students in Trinidad and Tobago, Creole English is the primary language used at home and in their communities, and as a response to students' linguistic needs, a culturally relevant response in the form of a policy adjustment was implemented to honour linguistic diversity as an asset to the teaching-learning process. This counter-hegemonic strategy validates students' linguistic repertoires, promotes equity and improves learning outcomes (Chisholm, 2021; Martinez, 2018; Yilmaz, 2021).

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the intersection of counter-hegemonic forces, language choice, and linguistic needs in the primary classroom in Tobago. Apart from considerations of how dominant language ideologies shape current practices, the study will focus on how implementation of inclusive language practices in a postcolonial context at the primary level could support and empower students to make strategic language choices where linguistic needs may be unsupported. The study will also focus on how these alternative frameworks could offer more equitable and effective educational experiences.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Linguistic hierarchies, a characteristic of many postcolonial societies, create barriers to comprehension, student engagement and student overall academic performance. Consequently, counter-hegemonic forces emerge as acts of resistance that challenge prominent language ideologies. In Tobago, these forces have manifested in the forms of teacher agency, student agency, and advocacy for more inclusive and equitable language policies and practices. However, there is a gap in understanding how these counter-hegemonic forces operate in the primary classroom, how they influence language choice and how they align with or conflict with students' linguistic needs.

3.1 Central Research Question

How do the present language ideologies influence language choice and instructional practices in the primary classroom?

3.2 Research Sub- Question

- What counter-hegemonic forces, which challenge dominant linguistic norms, are prevalent in the primary classroom?
- How does language choice in primary classrooms support students' cognitive, socio-emotional and academic linguistic needs?

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonial theory interrogates how colonial ideologies persist in systems of knowledge, language and identity long after political independence has been achieved (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002; Said, 1978). In the context of this study, Trinidad and Tobago - a former British colony, classroom practices continue to reflect colonial hierarchies that privilege the coloniser's language- Standard English while marginalizing the country's Creoles.

Postcolonial theory challenges the monolingual ideology that associates Standard English with intelligence and educational legitimacy (Pennycook, 1998). Standard English with its associated prestige still "mirrors and reinforces social hierarchies" (Metz, 2018, p. 457) not only in the classroom but also in the society. Through curriculum implementation, assessments and other aspects of education, many learners are excluded from meaningful engagement in the learning process as a result of linguistic imperialism. This situation is described through a postcolonial lens as a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991).

An understanding of students' linguistic needs through postcolonial lenses acknowledges a change in perspective regarding education - from the legacy of imperial control to a place where

teachers and students can now shape how they produce knowledge and make education more accessible. This makes language choice a political act (Baldwin & Quinn, 2007) on the part of teachers and students to end the erasure of local identities and cultural subordination. Students' needs which include cultural and linguistic validation, are met in an inclusive space where linguistic diversity is leveraged as a learning resource (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

In Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean, resistance by teachers and students to these dominant language norms brings the concept of counter-hegemonic forces into play. London (2001) described the use of the English-only policy in Trinidad and Tobago as an imposition and anti-democratic and in an earlier reference to the reproductive roles that schools play in education, argued that "Individuals within the school may therefore generate counter-hegemonic forces through which they might temper or even reject altogether constraints of imposition from the system" (London, 1995).

5.1 Counter-Hegemony

In the contemporary Caribbean classroom, value is being ascribed to linguistic diversity *via* pedagogical practices which integrate the use of Creoles as legitimate forms of communication and learning. Current research argues that there is no pedagogical justification for maintaining an English only policy (Bajwa, 2020; Cross et al, 2022; Rahman, 2020). Hence the call for the culturally responsive approach to teaching and the inclusion of multicultural curriculum content, a deviation from, or resistance to the colonial monolingual policy, has been described as counter-hegemony by postcolonial critics (Cere, 2020).

A rejection of ideological manipulation (Apple, 1981) and language ideologies such as language standardization (the belief that the only correct language is the dominant one, hence no other form is appropriate), and native speaker ideology (the belief that native language speakers are not linguistically competent as those who speak the dominant language) must be noted. These ideologies facilitate the harmful practices of discrimination and inequality by ascribing certain attributes such as intelligence to speakers of the dominant language - in this case, Standard English while rendering the native language as unacceptable (Baker-Bell, 2020; Metz, 2018, Woodard & Rao, 2020). Consequently, the deviation or resistance to these ideologies is demonstrated in various ways through classroom practices which include teaching strategies, and multilingual approaches to teaching and learning such as code-switching, translanguaging and validating linguistic identities.

5.2 Language Choice and Linguistic Rights

The inclusion of Creoles in teaching and learning signals that agency is given to both teachers and students as the indigenous knowledge they bring to the classroom has value. This freedom to choose their language is more than a decision about learning; it is quintessentially a matter of human rights (Davila, 2017; UNESCO, 2022). When affirmation of students' languages is demonstrated by teachers, it is also an affirmation of their identities (Su & Lee, 2022; Winer, 2022, Youssef, 2014) and creates an equitable context conducive to learning (Crosson, 2022; Robertson & Simmons-Mc Donald, 2014; Skerrett & Vlach, 2022).

The agency to choose not only challenges linguistic imperialism, but also promotes democracy in the classroom. Studies in critical pedagogy refer to this as crucial in the decolonization process (Freire, 1970). The school, traditionally used as an agent of power for social control and manipulation of knowledge by dominant groups (Apple, 1995), must now facilitate teachers and students as producers of knowledge (Gojkov, 2019; Knight, 2006; Medina & Samaca Bohorquez, 2020). According to UNESCO (2022), students have a right to choose and be educated in their own language. This kind of policy change in education is both agentic and liberating (Gojkov, 2019).

5.3 Linguistic Needs of Primary Learners

Students in learning contexts where their native language is different from the language of instruction (LOI) are often in need of significant language-related support in order to not only understand and communicate in the learning process, but also to succeed in their overall academic performance. These learners tend to have various linguistic needs, which if not met could be detrimental to their academic achievements. Linguistic needs as used in this study can be described as: the need to process and conceptualize subject content effectively (cognitive); the need to be included and validated in their linguistic identity (socio-emotional), and the need to develop proficiency in the language used mainly for instruction and assessment (academic).

The cognitive aspect of learner needs can be addressed through relevant use of student-centred teaching strategies by teachers and learning strategies by students. What and how students think about language, how they understand, learn, remember and use language are critical for developing language skills (Sulastriana, 2021). Socio-emotional needs could be met through validating students' linguistic identity by giving their language the same or similar status of the LOI. The position that students' home language must not be denigrated validates their presence, significance and acceptance in the classroom (aus der Wieschen & Sert, 2021; Tan, Farashaiyan, Sahragard, & Faryabi, 2020). Developing proficiency in the second language for academic purposes - instruction and assessment - can be supported, through a rich language environment, translanguaging and scaffolding. Language support through use of the first language in the teaching-learning process (Yaghobian, Samuel, & Mahmoudi, 2017; Williams, 2019), and code-switching (Chen & Runbinstein-Avila, 2018), Khairunnisa & Izzah, 2022; Ma, 2020), along with other multicultural approaches mitigate language contestation, facilitate learning, and enhance language development in both first and second languages.

These approaches to addressing students' needs are supported from the field of educational psychology. Piaget's (1952) cognitive development theory purported that the primary learners are at the stage where information must be presented in a way that connects with their present experiences. Vygotsky (1978) pointed to the necessity of interaction and scaffolding (temporary support to help the learner succeed) in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) also stressed the need to use language as a cognitive tool because it helps children organize and develop their thinking. Cultural tools (for example, language or symbols) and cultural influence facilitate cognitive development therefore the inclusion of learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds are vital to learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978).

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Employing a range of data collection techniques at two primary schools in Tobago—namely, semi-structured questionnaires, classroom observations, and in-depth interviews—facilitated the generation of diverse and relevant forms of evidence, while also illuminating the varied perspectives and lived experiences of the participants. Given the nature of the research questions a qualitative methodology is justified for this research. As noted by scholars such as Billups (2021), Creswell (2015), Hatch (2023), and Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative inquiry enables a deeper understanding of cultural contexts and authentic, real-world situations—in this case, the use of Creole English within educational settings.

Participants

For this study, purposive sampling was employed for selection of the participants as well as the school. Five (5) teachers were chosen from one primary school in Tobago based on their experience and amenability to participate in the study. All teachers possess day-to-day lived experiences of the culture and language use, as they were born and bred on the island. Having received their education in local schools at both the primary and secondary levels, they are versed in the linguistic traditions of the communities. In

addition, the one male and three female teachers are university graduates who attained extensive teacher training, and acquired a wealth of teaching experience at the particular school for more than ten years.

The school is located at the meeting point of four communities so the student population comes from varied social and economic backgrounds, which adds to the complexity of language use and consequently the linguistic needs of the students. Written consent was secured from the participants, the school's principal and the Division of Education in Tobago for the conduct of this study. Participants participated voluntarily and were given the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used for the participants and the name of the school was not disclosed. Participants consented to face to face in-depth interviews, completed semi-structured questionnaires and allowed the researchers to observe their classrooms at appointed times. Clarity of any issue was sought through mobile communication.

VII. DATA COLLECTION

In order to acquire a profound understanding of the issues, in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires were appropriate for data collection. Classroom observations were included so the researchers had a heuristic and existential experience on language use in the classroom. These also enabled the researchers to build rapport and trust with the participants. Detailed field notes and informal conversations complemented the observations. The multiple methods utilized facilitated triangulation and corroboration of data for a more profound understanding of language ideologies, counter-hegemonic forces and linguistic choices that prevail in the classroom. Multiple methods of data collection enhance the credibility, accuracy, rigour, trustworthiness and authenticity of the study. Multiple methods of data collection were selected because "they better guarantee a spectrum of diverse perspectives for analysis and representation" (Saldana, 2021, p. 76).

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, data were analysed using five systematic but reiterative steps. Firstly, the data were transcribed verbatim so that the actual views and experiences of the teachers could not be misconstrued. Reiterative readings of data from transcripts from the in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires and classroom observations facilitated triangulation. The main criteria for trustworthiness which have been identified by qualitative researchers include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Billups, 2021; Hatch, 2023) In this research, those criteria were established through classroom observations; detailed explanations as well as verification through conversations, meticulous documentation that were complemented with field notes, and member checking. These were essential for corroboration of data, establishing trustworthiness and verification of the findings. Reflexivity also allowed researchers to bracket (Billups, 2021; Maxwell, 2013) their preconceived notions so that the authenticity of the research was maintained.

The researchers engaged in line-by-line coding as advocated by Creswell & Creswell (2018), Billups (2021) and Saldana (2021) This was conducted manually for accuracy, as one software for data analysis seldom suffices and there is the perennial problem of interpretation of Creole language. Manual coding allowed the researchers to remain immersed in the data, while maintaining awareness by engaging in bracketing personal biases (Billups, 2021; Maxwell, 2013). In order to summarize the data and capture the essence of meaning similar and related information were coded. Different segments of text, including sentences and phrases, which showed relationships were highlighted.

Secondly, with reiterative readings, relevant information was clustered, the codes were revised, pertinent information were discerned and categories were formulated. Thirdly, the data were consolidated facilitating further reduction, and a matrix was developed to allow for a holistic view. This also allowed for elimination of redundancies and identification of outliers. Fourthly, the matrix

formed a synthesis of the data, which enabled the emergence and discernment of multiple sub-themes. Finally, through a process of merging sub-themes, reflexivity and revisiting codes and categories for synchronicity, final themes emanated. The three themes that emerged, which are discussed in the subsequent section include:

- *Linguistic hegemony - the conundrum*
- *Resistance, ambivalence, and counter-hegemonic practices*
- *Linguistic diversity*

IX. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Central Research Question: How do the present language ideologies influence language choice and instructional practices in the primary classroom?

Theme 1: Linguistic hegemony - the conundrum

Bailey & Gayle (2015) describes language ideology as "a set of beliefs that seems to serve and shape the interests of a certain group in society; has a legitimating or justifying function; and has the power to control or influence how people think about, or act in, their social circumstances" (p. 23).

Language ideologies result in linguistic hegemony (Metz, 2018) and in this study two dominant ideologies, language standardization and native speaker ideology have been influential in terms of language choice and instructional practices. The school, according to postcolonial critics, is regarded as a medium through which hegemonic structures are maintained *via* language use (Apple, 1995). The superior position and prestige ascribed to English resulted in the language being formally chosen as the LOI in all schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

In this study, the data gathered from the in-depth interviews revealed the dominant language ideologies present in the primary classroom. Teachers' belief that Standard English is the only legitimate form was evidenced as they referred to "proper" and "correct" many times in reference to Standard English. For example, Participant 1 was asked whether she found herself struggling to use Standard English and she responded as follows:

> Where am I? Did I say this correctly [Standard English]?... I know that... arm... well many of us would struggle just to make sure that you keep it right [Standard English] and for me when you focus too much on keeping it right [Standard English] or getting it right [Standard English] you always find yuhself [yourself] stumbling.

In response to the question on her concerns about language use she spoke of students expressing themselves in "a better way" referring to Standard English. Participant 2 also used "proper" several times in relaying her schooling experience:

> The teachers, they speak proper English [Standard English] but they could switch easily... and I... I although in the questionnaire too, there were some questions I was not even sure how to answer. I don't consider myself speaking proper English [Standard English] per se but maybe polished... if I were to say polished. So, is like... where does that stand between Creole and proper English [Standard English]?

As Participant 2 continued to respond to concerns about language use, she identified Creole English as "the wrong thing":

> ... so they try, I guess more so probably when we're doing Language Arts and they have to respond in a proper way [Standard English] because you get marks for those.
>
> ... even in the grammar you know, the structure of all the sentences and the verbs and subjects and all these things, I find that you do see the way they talk coming out sometimes. It's not natural because we practice saying the wrong thing [Creole English] all the time.

Participant 3 made her beliefs very clear as she expressed an intolerance towards Creole English, described it as "broken up," and advocated for the maintenance of Standard English in her interview. Participant 3 further spoke in terms of "saving" students which reflected her belief (as the colonisers) that there was salvific value in Standard English. She stated:

> ... if we could save 5 out of 10 or out of fifteen and let them go out in society speaking properly [Standard English] and note that the Standard English has a place in their vocabulary and in their communicating with others, we wouldn't get the set of stupid language [Creole English] we are hearing - and the curse words wouldn't come into the classroom because there is no place for that there, there's no place for it.

Some participants further believed that subject content should not be taught using Creole English because it was not the standard language. It was observed from the observations of lessons that some participants held the firm belief that Creole English is "broken" and "corrupt" and therefore their responses to students included statements such as "say it properly"; "that is not the right way, say it again"; "say it better"; "repeat it correctly"; "I would not use it in the classroom..." in reference to use of Creole English.

The participants' perceptions reflect their position on language ideologies present and it appears that they espouse the status described by Metz (2018) and Woodard and Rao (2020) as gatekeepers of English. The above excerpts show that teachers believe that Standard English is the only legitimate language that has value in education. The perception that Creole English is inferior to Standard English is evidence of the existence of standard language ideology and native speaker ideology. Both ideologies are characteristic of the *comprador elites*, individuals who were left behind by the colonizers to carry on their civilizing mission. Said (1993, as cited in Gandhi, 1998) alluded to this and lamented the lasting cultural impact of colonialism, arguing that the language and discourse of colonial powers formed a strong system of ideas. These ideas were linked across various texts and served the interests of colonial rule, shaping the social, political, and institutional structures of the time.

Following the Ministry of Education's endorsement of Creole English usage within the classroom in 2013, there has been a discernible increase in counter-hegemonic practices among educators. The study's findings indicated that teachers exhibit diverse orientations toward language use, with Creole English predominantly employed for classroom management purposes, such as maintaining discipline and facilitating student comprehension. Notably, in certain instances, entire Mathematics lessons were conducted in Creole English, underscoring its functional role in instructional delivery.

Furthermore, educators relied heavily on Creole English to capture students' attention, clarify instructions, acknowledge and correct errors, pose questions related to lesson content, and engage in responsive interactions. These practices reflect a deliberate shift from traditional language norms, challenging the dominance of Standard English and embracing linguistic diversity as a pedagogical tool.

This strategic utilization of Creole English aligns with broader postcolonial educational frameworks that advocate for the inclusion of indigenous languages in formal education. When teachers integrate Creole English into classroom discourse, the result is enhanced student engagement and comprehension. It also effectively contributes to the decolonization process, fostering an environment that validates and leverages students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Sub-Question 1: What counter-hegemonic forces, which challenge dominant linguistic norms, are prevalent in the primary classroom?

Theme 2: Resistance, ambivalence and counter-hegemonic practices

The data collected from the in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaire also highlight that although English is considered the language of the intellectual and is vital for socio-economic advancement, language ideologies in Tobago are shifting.

The shift was first pioneered by students who for decades, in the face of an English-only policy, resisted what was considered an imposition by London (2001). Teachers in the interview described their frustrations when they tried to "correct" students' use of Creole English. This was a grievous issue especially for Participants 1 and 4.

Participant 1 stated:

> It's very difficult for children to take correction because in my experience, there were children who, they would make a mistake. You would explain to them what is wrong and tell then to fix it and they would come back with the same thing. And they do it time and time again. And then… even when they are reading or speaking… you know and you make a correction whether its language use in the construction apart from pronunciation, they would skip over, you know. Insist on these children taking the corrections in order for the language use to improve.

Participant 4:

> I would correct them and we would move on. The corrections don't always stick because they would naturally revert right back to what they know. It's just a continuous process of correction. It is very frustrating because as I said, you would teach them, they would get it and by lunch time or [a] couple hours after, it's right back to the same thing and you would correct them again, and [it] is like you [are]always reinforcing something. Sometimes it does feel like a waste of time.

The observed resistance to correction among students underscores the significance they attribute to both Creole English and Standard English, reflecting a nuanced appreciation for language choice. Classroom observations revealed a marked preference for Creole English, with students frequently avoiding the use of Standard English. Notably, some students exhibited complete disengagement, remaining silent throughout entire lessons despite having the option to communicate in Creole English.

This behavior can be interpreted through the lens of language ideologies, where students' linguistic preferences are shaped by broader sociocultural and educational contexts. In many post-colonial societies, Creole languages have historically been marginalized within formal education systems, often perceived as inferior to standardized languages (Nero, 2018). These perceptions can lead to internalized language hierarchies among students, influencing their willingness to participate in classroom activities conducted in Standard English.

Research indicates that when students' home languages, such as Creole English, are devalued in educational settings, it can result in decreased self-esteem and academic disengagement (aus der Wieschen & Sert, 2021; Manning-Lewis, 2019; Tan, Farashaiyan, Sahragard & Faryabi, 2020; Williams, 2019), Conversely, incorporating students' native languages into the curriculum has been shown to enhance engagement and learning outcomes by bridging the gap between students' linguistic backgrounds and the academic content, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Therefore, acknowledging and valuing students' linguistic identities by integrating Creole English into classroom instruction is not only a matter of cultural responsiveness but also a pedagogical strategy that can mitigate resistance and promote active participation. This kind of approach aligns with contemporary educational frameworks that advocate for the inclusion of diverse linguistic resources in the teaching-learning process.

Another significant counter-hegemonic action was the ideological shift by the MOE which officially acknowledged in the primary school *English Language Arts Curriculum Guide* (2013) that teachers and students had permission to use Creole English in the classroom to facilitate comprehension and student engagement. The Curriculum guide states:

> In Trinidad and Tobago, the coexistence of two major linguistic systems, English Creole and Standard English, poses specific problems for some learners. The English Language Arts curriculum explicitly recognizes the nature of this challenge and seeks to address it through a student-centred approach to learning which respects students' linguistic experiences. The language children bring to the classroom, their first language, is a tool for building their awareness of the target language. The students' first language becomes a natural support if communication breaks down when

> teaching Standard English; this is because both languages are supportive of students' overall linguistic development. Awareness of the two major linguistic systems, English Creole and Standard English is built in the ELA programme. (p. 22)

The MOE envisioned a change in language ideology for primary education with the hopes to impact teaching and learning for nation-building. This shift in policy was also seen in some participants' responses. Participant 2 shared her experience in teaching Math.

> ...When we're doing Language Arts, they [students] have to respond in a proper way [Standard English] because you get marks for those...but in the other content areas . . . I must admit like Math like if they're answering even orally, I don't really put much pressure on it.
>
> They [other teachers] like correct them [students] when they say something wrong [Creole English]. And I try to do that as well... Math is already so complicated... you have to allow them to be themselves and allow them to talk how they are comfortable talking... and not just Math too, it could be [in] Science and Social Studies.

The observation of lessons also demonstrated how participants monitored their language use; it was extremely easy for teachers to slip into Creole English without realizing it. The semi-structured questionnaire indicated that participants do not consistently focus on language use in their professional roles. Additional support for Creole English was shown through participants' expressed interest in learning more about it, as revealed in both the interviews and the questionnaire. When asked if they would like to learn about Creole English grammar, 3 out of the 4 participants answered affirmatively.

Shifting language ideology was also evidenced in the questionnaire where out of the 4 participants, three indicated a preference for both languages in spite of their stance for Standard English in the in-depth interviews. This highlights ambivalence described by Bhabha (1994) or dual linguistic identity according to Nero (2018) and it facilitates the postmodern concept of polyvocality in the classroom.

The findings showed that the participants exercise individual agency in their pedagogical choices, incorporating Creole English selectively in various instructional contexts such as lesson discussions, content delivery, revision activities, and comprehension checks. The integration of Creole English in these domains may be interpreted as a deliberate act of cultural reclamation, aligning with postcolonial perspectives that view such practices as part of the broader process of identity reconstruction among formerly colonized populations (Bhabha, 1994).

The varying attitudes or conflicting feelings of participants toward Creole English highlights the inherent tensions that exist in postcolonial educational contexts. These tensions exist where residual colonial ideologies are embedded in the school system and often conflict with the evolving language and practices in the classroom (Nero, 2018). These evolving language attitudes carry significant implications for teaching and learning.

Sub-question 2: How does language choice in primary classrooms support students' cognitive, socio-emotional and academic linguistic needs?

Theme 3: Linguistic diversity

The revised curriculum, serving a reconciliatory and restorative function, challenged the colonial utilitarian model and paved the way for the promotion of language development, affirmation of individual identity and self-determination, and empowerment of students. As a consequence of shifting language ideologies, some instructional practices reflect counter-hegemonic forces at work. Some participants have recognized that Creole English can be leveraged as a valuable learning resource through which subject content can be delivered (Behrmann, 2018; Craig, 2014; Lodge, 2017; Robertson, 2010; Simmon-McDonald, 2014, Roberts, 2014). Participant 4 shared concerns about his Creole English proficiency and confessed that he learnt the students' version of Creole English and as a consequence, simultaneously learnt more about

Standard English. This kind of interface worked for the benefit of the teacher and students. He explained:

> I remember when I started working there [at the school]... they [students] used to ask me about [the] town side and the way they [students] spoke was very fascinating. I used to pick up a lot of stuff [Creole English]... and you know if they had some proverbs or whatever and I didn't know what it meant... I would ask them and then come home and try to use it you know... and I would try to dramatize things from the students and the teachers. So, I learnt a lot of things.... My appreciation for it [English] has grown.

The findings also revealed that participants employ diverse strategies to integrate Creole English into both instructional delivery and classroom management. Observational data indicated that several teachers utilize code-switching between Standard English and Creole English, tailoring their language use in various ways as listed below.

- Lessons in SE with classroom management in SE and CE.
- Lessons in SE with classroom management in CE.
- Lessons in SE and CE with classroom management in SE.
- Lessons in SE and CE with classroom management in SE and CE.
- Lessons in SE and CE with classroom management in CE.
- Lessons in CE with classroom management in CE.
- Lessons in CE with classroom management in SE and CE.

Classroom observations revealed heightened student cooperation when Creole English was employed, indicating that culturally responsive teaching strategies resonate with students' linguistic realities. This approach parallels the concept of transitional bilingualism, wherein learners' mother tongues are utilized during initial educational phases to ease the acquisition of the target language (Bryan, 2014).

Linguistic needs identified in the study surrounded syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Addressing these needs requires a comprehensive approach that considers cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic dimensions of learning. The goal should be for equitable language practices which support linguistic diversity. Educators should adopt pedagogical strategies grounded in the principles of second language acquisition and educational psychology, thereby promoting inclusive language practices and multilingual approaches aimed at enhancing educational outcomes.

The *English Language Arts Curriculum Guide* noted a "psychological resistance" among primary learners toward the study and use of Standard English (p. 21). Gandhi (2019) posits that the decolonized often underestimate the enduring psychological influence of colonialism on contemporary society (p. 6). Said (1989) further reinforces this view by asserting that the post-colonial condition does not signify the end of colonization but rather its transformation into more subtle forms, including linguistic dominance. He emphasizes the importance of "psychological recovery," suggesting that reclaiming historical narratives and linguistic heritage is essential for the decolonized to achieve self-understanding and navigate the complexities of their identities (p. 8).

The observed variations in language use among participants reflect a deliberate engagement with linguistic diversity and demonstrates critical pedagogical choices that challenge traditional monolingual norms. These practices point out the importance of ongoing dialogues concerning colonial legacies, their impact on language use in educational settings, and the potential for harmonizing Standard English and Creole English to serve students' best interests and fulfill curricular objectives.

Contemporary researchers advocate for the inclusion of Creole English as a legitimate medium of instruction, countering longstanding perceptions of its inadequacy for academic purposes (Behrmann, 2018; Cooper, 2019; Craig, 2014, Lodge, 2017). This shift aligns with Said's

(1993) emphasis on recognizing the intrinsic value of "the Other," suggesting that such acknowledgment facilitates identity formation and self-determination.

In the classroom, linguistic diversity highlights the necessity for teachers to recognize and engage with the "third space"—a conceptual framework introduced by Bhabha (1994) that acknowledges the hybrid nature of post-colonial identities. When teachers embrace this space, they can create "poly-contextual, multi-voiced, and multi-scripted" learning environments that honor linguistic diversity and promote inclusivity (Gutiérrez et al., 1999, p. 287). Such an approach not only fosters students' linguistic and cultural identities but also upholds their human rights within the school system.

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