

Hidden Expulsion – Language and Literacy which embrace our Creole Language for the pre-operational stage of development, from three to seven years

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Philosophical Underpinnings

Creole should be used as the first or primary language in school for children whose mother tongue is Creole. (Clay, 1982, 142) This is essential if they are to succeed in school as in life. Since primary Creole children speakers are in 2004 the minority, separate small groups may be taught during specific and weekly timetable slots in Creole. Arrangements must also be made, like with all children not making appropriate progress, for individual attention. For the majority of primary English speakers, it is necessary to incorporate the use of Creole in positive ways such as dance, informal speaking and story telling.

Rationale

On the Saint Lucian statistics on the internet, Table 58 under Education gives the Percentage Distribution of Pupils in Grade 2 according to their Performance in Two Subject Areas of the Minimum Standards Test, 1999. Outstanding for English was 0.1 percent while very good was 4.0 percent. On the other hand - extremely weak - got a percentage of 59.3 and Weak got 16%. Please note that for - extremely weak - boys got 70.6 while girls got 48 %. It is suggested that the large majority – if not all – of primary Creole speakers fall into the category of the children who are extremely weak in English. The logical conclusion is that these children will definitely not succeed in school unless there is change.

A brief synopsis of the methodologies or pedagogical processes and procedures

The methodologies are based on more than 21 years of reading and research based at the Laborie Community Early Childhood Education Centre (LABCEC)– a minimum number of years required for the creation of methodologies which fit and work. At LABCEC, in 21 years there was only one child whose primary language was Creole. Thus, in terms of access to primary Creole speaking children, our research was curtailed. However, we did the second best thing – that is we focused on language of the children who did attend the centre. Through this, we concentrated on children who had inadequate exposure to the written and spoken language – either because their caregivers were non-literate or because their caregivers concentrated their reading only on literature,

which told simple stories – like romances or thrillers. Such children made up a quasi 100% of our registered child population. However, since their parents are of a Creole culture and language, the children too were immersed in the Creole culture of their parents and other caregivers. Their context was Creole. Thus the methodologies developed merit easy translation into the Creole language since these methodologies or pedagogical processes and procedures are already immersed in the Creole culture. The context of the children is still not far removed from that of the adult generation which cares for them.

The findings

1. Children who have inadequate exposure to the written and spoken English language must be taught during their pre-school and first two years of primary school in groups of no more than one dozen children per teacher or parent aide
2. Among these children with inadequate exposure to the written and spoken English language are children who are either extremely weak. Provisions should be made for these children and the most outstanding children to have individual attention or be grouped with two or three children to one teacher for specific moments of each week
3. For both groups teaching English in context must be integrated into the language curriculum. Paulo Freire describes it as our words and our worlds. Sylvia Ashton Warner expresses it as ‘The Key or organic vocabulary’. As *Chall said* “Therefore, the main task of reading instruction is to teach the child words they already know.” (p. 44) Or National Council of Research, USA “The basic method of the language experience approach thus consists of writing down what children say and then leading them to appreciate that what has been written is what they have said.” (p. 183)
4. Art and the headings or titles of the artwork must also be integrated into the language curriculum, for instance using key sentences the child will eventually draw such titles which she or he names as ‘the crab in the hole’ or ‘the pig in the cage’
5. The sensori-motor approach – with its use of touch in teaching writing, for example and the size of these sand paper letters for early readers – is an integral part of the methodologies to be espoused
6. The school curriculum which includes school culture must, at least until seven, use self-discipline (including the abolition of all corporal punishment to repeat, at least until the age of seven by which time it is no longer needed) bearing in mind Piaget’s prediction that ‘punishment renders the autonomy of conscience impossible’. This must be done for cognition and affectivity are inseparable and parallel. In simple terms, if we want children to learn we have to treat them well
7. Likewise must the school curriculum incorporate the fact that children learn through play and principally from their own action on people, events, ideas and materials

8. The LABCEC curriculum for language and literacy fits and works for such children. It is based on 21 years of reading and research – as all good curricula must be if they are to fit and work

The hypotheses

1. Children whose first language is Creole must be taught in separate groups in school through this language until they can be integrated
2. This curriculum devised for children living in a Creole culture, if not language, can be translated for use with primary Creole speakers
3. For all children, the integration of Creole in every working day through song, dance or story is necessary
4. For all children, the development of positive attitudes to the Creole language is essential
5. For primary Creole speakers, this curriculum must be extended to include home visits to caregivers which persuade them that a decision to speak to their children in their primary language is an essential element in their children's success at school (Clay, 1992, page 143).

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