

Mathilde Dallier- CLEAR presentation- University of Buffalo

The attitudes of teachers of French towards the use of Trinidadian English Creole in French language teaching in Trinidad: Preliminary observations

In Trinidad and Tobago, the official language is English, while the vernacular spoken languages used daily are Trinidadian English Creole (TrinEC) and Tobagonian English Creole. Due to the country's complex linguistic history, TrinEC possesses a vast linguistic heritage, connected to, among other languages, Trinidadian French-lexicon Creole (TFC) and French. It can therefore be hypothesized that French language educators' attitudes toward TrinEC are shaped by this historical context, but also reflected in their teaching practices, and may influence students' engagement in the language-learning process.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this ongoing doctoral study examines French teachers' attitudes toward TrinEC, as well as their perceptions of its role in secondary education. Data collected so far include classroom observations and interviews with six secondary school French teachers. The study explores the potential use of TrinEC as a pedagogical tool in French as a Foreign Language (FFL), particularly as a bridge between students' source language and the target language. This could also allow teachers to make the French language less of a foreign language to students, increase their motivation for French language learning and then offer foreign language instruction that reflects their Trinidadian identity. This, in turn, could take part in helping French to survive as a foreign language of choice in the country.

Preliminary findings from the interviews suggest that, although teachers generally express rather positive attitudes toward TrinEC, English remains the institutional norm. TrinEC is accepted and seen by teachers as a legitimate language, even though not always initially mentioned as such. It is used in oral interactions by both teachers and students, most often with the aim of building a rapport between teachers and students. It is, however, rarely employed as a structured pedagogical tool in the French classroom. Its use appears to have strong boundaries nevertheless, ideological for example, but also social and institutional.

This presentation will share these early findings and invite discussion on the pedagogical possibilities and limitations of incorporating TrinEC into French language teaching in the Trinidadian context.