



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



[www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com)

ISSN: 2226-6348

## Kiss and Tell Embracing 'the' Hypothesis

Stacy L. Denny

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v1-i1/10943>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARPED/v1-i1/10943

*Received: 16 January 2012, Revised: 17 February 2012, Accepted: 10 March 2012*

Published Online: 21 March 2012

In-Text Citation: (Denny, 2012)

To Cite this Article: Denny, S. L. (2012). Kiss and Tell Embracing 'the' Hypothesis. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 1(1), 185–206.

Copyright: © 2012 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society ([www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com))

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen

at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Vol. 1(1) 2012, Pg. 185 - 206

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARPED>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at  
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



[www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com)

ISSN: 2226-6348

## Kiss and Tell Embracing 'the' Hypothesis

Stacy L. Denny

The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus Cave Hill, Barbados BB11000.

Email: [stacy.denny@cavehill.uwi.edu](mailto:stacy.denny@cavehill.uwi.edu)

### Abstract

Kiss and Tell is the result of a review of comments about the demerits of research regarding the morpheme order studies (Dulay & Burt, 1974). Some argue that the studies' methodology is flawed because the hypothesis is flawed (see Brown, 2007). Such a view speaks to the need for a plausible hypothesis which will serve to guide the research to credible conclusions. When results are invalid, the application of them in the classroom can become problematic for teachers who lack the sophistication or training in analyzing research and research language, but who put faith in the researcher and the research process. This study therefore aims to take researchers through the process of effectively shaping the hypothesis, with the goal of demonstrating the importance of making the hypothesis central to the research process.

**Keywords:** Teacher Attitude, Bidialectal, Hypothesis, ELT

### Research Problem

Teachers in the field of English language teaching (ELT) continue to look for the 'Messiah', that saving method/approach which will become the panacea for all the language problems with which students present. Included in their search are hundreds of pieces of research conducted in the discipline, and therefore it becomes the responsibility of researchers in this area to conduct sound and applicable research, by giving more thought to the basis for that research, the hypothesis. This study aims to show how they can do so.

### Arriving at 'the' Hypothesis

KISS and TELL is an approach to how ELT research can be effectively conducted. They are acronyms for 'Knocking Into Serious Shape' and 'Talking English Language Learning'. This approach is a demonstration as to why researchers should first research the hypothesis before conducting the research. The basis for this demonstration is that while vague theories can act as the 'springboard' for research, explicit theories give researchers an advantage in the research process, the advantage of knowing exactly where they need to return if they get lost on the journey. With this knowledge, ELT research can become more robust, sounder and certainly more impactful at the level of classroom application. I am therefore proposing that a plausible hypothesis should be knocked it into shape, so that it begins to take shape, rather than be given shape. As the hypothesis is allowed to take shape, there comes with that process a level of

insight, awareness, growth and revelation which might not occur in the same way as it would by imposing shape on an already preconceived design. The former process is exploratory, the latter pre-determined. Thinking about research in light of these processes should reveal the true nature of research, that of 'looking again', with the hope of finding something new. The objective of researchers, especially in the qualitative field, should not be to determine (notice I do not say to predict) exactly what they should find.

### ***State a View***

The first stage of researching the hypothesis is offering a view regardless of how obscure. Because I am proposing that a hypothesis is a series of pre-hypotheses before it becomes 'the' hypothesis, the foundation of the research, I expect my view to take on many different shapes throughout the process. Therefore I will start by offering the view that ELT professionals need to change their attitudes if they want to be more successful in the classroom. It is vital that this view is ultimately properly shaped because as an applied linguist I want the results to shape lives, specifically the attitudes of teachers of English. I wish to help them reshape their language attitudes, if necessary, as I observe that some of these teachers are not growing themselves professionally. In fact, based on previous research (Denny, 2010) I find that they are linguistically inept at using the language they teach and of which they claim to be native speakers, English. My observations also lead me to conclude that these teachers are allowing themselves to be shaped, without question, by external agencies such as Ministries of Education, examination boards, training colleges, research, texts, parents and students, so that they become somebody else's perfect mould. The result is that they are professionally frustrated; they feel professionally useless and they are professionally stunted.

### ***Evaluate the View***

Observations are a good starting point for proposing and shaping hypotheses. Based on my observations I surmised that some teachers of English in the Caribbean have poor attitudes which pose barriers to students' acquisition of English. The hypothesis at this stage is too simplistic and yet complicated as I am trying to tie the teacher's attitude to the students' level of success, which is not my main objective. After much thought, I move along the process by constructing syllogisms which include my key terms. The idea is to introduce some logic to my thought processes. I make the major premise very general, and narrow the minor premise to my main subject of interest in order to arrive at a conclusion.

**Major premise (MaP):** People's attitudes are primarily shaped by others

**Minor premise (MiP):** Caribbean teachers of English (CTE) are people

**Conclusion (Con):** Therefore the attitudes of CTE are primarily shaped by others

**MaP:** People primarily shape their own attitudes

**MiP:** CTE are people

**Con:** Therefore CTE primarily shape their attitudes

**MaP:** People shape their attitudes with guidance and direction from others

**MiP:** CTE are people

**Con:** Therefore CTE shape their attitudes with guidance and direction from others

My analysis of these syllogisms led me to obvious and subtle realizations. Firstly, the minor premise is factual, so I start from this premise and move forward. That is to say, I began by looking at teachers as more than mere professionals, but as people, people with insecurities, fears, contradictions, knowledge and even lack of knowledge. In adopting this outlook, I appreciated that teachers were not robots and so I could not hope to shape them for my own purpose; therefore, there had to be major benefits for these teachers through this research.

### ***Re-evaluate the View***

I also realized that logic did not always translate into truth. A syllogism is valid/ logical when its conclusion follows from its premises, but a syllogism is only true when it makes accurate claims, that is, when its premises are factual. To be sound, a syllogism must be valid and true, and I did not know the truth of my major premises. I needed to establish a basis for these premises, and I did so by re-evaluating my view through the quality of empathy. I questioned myself about what would be the most beneficial set of circumstances based on these three scenarios. In scenario one someone else is in control, scenario two, I am in total control and in scenario three I accept input and still maintain control. I genuinely opted for scenario three, and began to discern that because I was offering my input, shaping teachers' attitudes would mean involving them in the shaping process to the extent that they felt control was not being taken away by those who were attempting to lend assistance.

### ***Restate the view/Define Key terms***

My hypothesis begins to take shape. It currently is that the language attitudes of Caribbean teachers of English can be shaped positively with the right help and guidance. More careful examination reveals a number of misassumptions. For example, I assumed that all Caribbean teachers of English have the same language attitude directed toward a single language. I also assumed that I knew what the right help and guidance entailed, which in reality was untrue. Defining and describing the key terms in my hypothesis was vital to resolving these misassumptions. I started by determining who these teachers were, teachers of English in the Anglophone Caribbean. Next, I identified the predominant language(s) with which they would normally come into contact, Standard English (SE) and non-standard dialect. I then set about defining the central term 'attitude', which is a description of my own expanded view (Denny, 2002) of Sarnoff's, as extended by Edwards (1982). I therefore classify the term as a pattern of *thinking*, based on the teacher's knowledge, opinions/ experience that emerges at an intellectual level about the coexisting predominant languages and their speakers. This pattern of thinking causes *feelings* to be aroused when teachers think, talk or hear about these languages and their speakers. Ultimately, these thoughts and feelings give way to *behaviour* that is manifested by means of words or *actions* in the classroom.

Having taken the aforementioned steps I am keenly aware that there are still some misassumptions. For instance, I am assuming that teachers' attitudes need to be positively reshaped/ realigned because they are currently unbalanced. By unbalanced I am referring to a

prejudice against, or a bias towards either language to the point where one is viewed and treated as superior and the other as inferior. With the introduction of this idea, I start to explore the concept of a balanced attitude, which I propose is a realistic attitude, such that, as members of a speech community and as education professionals, teachers see both the value and demerits of both codes as they function in specific social contexts. In other words, as ordinary citizens in the community teachers might have certain beliefs and feelings about both codes which conflict with the linguistic reality. However, as trained education professionals they should be able to restrain such attitudes for the advancement of best practices that address the linguistic reality, so that linguistic reality, not social and personal language attitudes, becomes the predominant factor which influences teaching practice.

### ***Review and Renew the View***

The shape of the hypothesis is becoming clearer and more discernible. Although, not perfect, I believe that I am ultimately theorizing the following:

Teachers of English in the Anglophone Caribbean who display negative attitudes toward the coexisting, competing predominant languages in their communities can be helped to shape these attitudes more positively.

I am aware that I do describe the concept of shaping, but with justifiable reason. I do not yet know. I first need to test the pre-hypothesis to establish whether my claim that teachers do in fact have negative language attitudes is in fact feasible. Only if this is proved, can I further determine what these attitudes are and how they are manifested. If I am able to identify any negative attitudes then I will have the best clues as to how to go about reshaping them positively.

### ***Test the pre-hypothesis***

I continue on the journey in the direction of 'the' hypothesis. I do this by first testing the pre-hypothesis that teachers have unbalanced/biased attitudes towards the predominant languages in my home territory of Barbados.

### **Method**

This research is a set of survey studies in which my directional hypothesis assumes a relationship between the variables teacher thinking and teacher behaviour. I expected that teachers would have a more favourable attitude towards the use of SE in the classroom. I opted for a mainly qualitative approach to draw out, document and analyse attitudes to investigate the validity of this hypothesis. This work is a piece of anti-positivist research. As the researcher, I sought to interpret teachers' version of truth about their language attitudes through my own observations and understandings of the context, what they were saying explicitly, and what they were reluctant to say, but were conveying through body language and innuendo.

### ***Participating Schools***

I chose the schools using systematic sampling. I first identified the four cardinal points of the island and its central point. Based on the parishes associated with these points I selected from

the telephone directory the *first* primary school corresponding to each point, for a total of five schools.

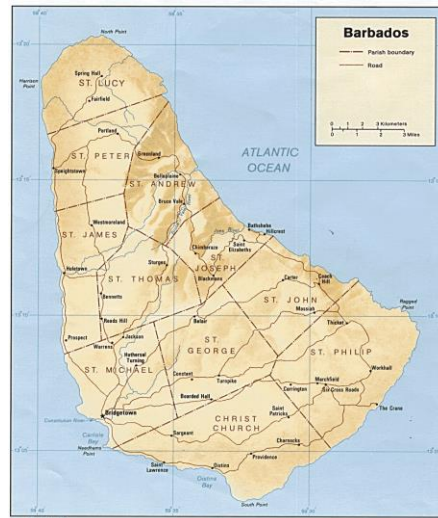


Figure 1: Map of Barbados  
U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 1980

I chose primary schools with the belief that at this level, the foundation for language attitudes is laid, as some students on first entering school will encounter English for the first time. This encounter begins to shape language attitudes, as teachers correct and criticize students' language, something to which many were previously unaccustomed.

### **Participants**

After the schools were randomly selected, I enlisted the help of an official at the Ministry of Education, who identified three senior teachers (the mean average) at each school from an official list. Senior teacher, in this context, refers to a person with five or more years teaching experience, as well as an administrative designation for a teacher who acts as deputy administrator based on the number of children assigned to that school. In Barbados there is one senior teacher to every 200 children. After identifying the senior teachers, I contacted each principal and sought permission to enter the schools. I also obtained consent from participants and informed them of the general topic under discussion, to get them thinking about it prior to the discussion. There were sixteen teachers in total because an extra person from the southern school, who met the criteria, sat in on the discussion, as her curiosity was piqued. I chose senior teachers with the expectation that their years of teaching experience would assist in providing a more in depth knowledge and insight into certain linguistic issues.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

I prepared an unstructured interview schedule, which I piloted and refined. Admittedly, I continued to refine it throughout the discussions, for it was a guide rather than a procedural manual. As a consequence, I refer to the proceedings as discussions, as opposed to interviews, because I assumed the role of moderator more so than interviewer. My goal was actually to play 'devil's advocate' by raising contentious issues for debate and then observing and taking note of

verbal and other reactions. The style of interview therefore lay between advancing the set of research questions I wanted answered and open-ended questions taking the form of a discussion (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010). This style allowed for teachers to speak freely, interject, disagree, concur and discuss the issues as they saw fit. When they deviated I was able to steer them back on course, as moderator and participant, through questions and comments. The schools and their participants can be seen in appendix 1.

### **Analysis**

Each discussion was fully transcribed, incorporating the pauses, hesitations, fillers, back channel signals and overlaps (Yule, 1996). I chose this type of transcription to attempt to recapture the atmosphere, which stimulated certain feelings and elicited certain behaviours in line with the purpose of the study. The transcripts were then sent via e-mail to the participants for review and comments. After transcribing the data, both manually and with the aid of a transcribing machine, I coded and analysed the material, allowing for categories to emerge but also purposefully identifying data that corroborated the three characteristics which comprised attitudes as outlined by my definition. I checked and rechecked the data several times until I felt I had exhausted all possible categories. I then sent these categories via email to the participants for their own analysis. Based on the feedback, these categories were re-analysed several times.

### **Limitations**

There were at the time of conducting this research a target population of 79 government primary schools in Barbados, with approximately 1600 teachers. I therefore would not claim that a mere sixteen teachers are a representative sample. This small sample size was compensated for by drawing the sample from across the island. In this way, a fairly widespread account of the issue could be observed, and no overall trend could be traced back to a particular school/ parish. Moreover, the objective of the research was not to generalize about the target population, as would be necessary in a quantitative piece of research, but to determine whether the hypothesis could be proved valid and hence, reliable. Admittedly, a larger sample size would have been more effective in grouping the different participants according to independent variables such as gender, a variable, which unarguably would have been, and still can be, a very interesting research dynamic. Also, in retrospect, the research could have been made more robust by *observing*, rather than simply inferring teachers' behaviour towards the languages in the classroom. However, I felt that the way in which I conducted the discussions allowed for real views and feelings to emerge, which are crucial to ascertaining attitudes.

### **Research questions**

- What in the teacher's opinion is the difference between Bajan and Standard English?
- What role, if any, should BD play the classroom?

### **Findings**

#### ***Local vs. universal***

My analyses of these data findings are based on my own observations and interpretations as well as knowledge of the literature in this field. The rationale behind question one about the

difference between Standard English and Bajan Dialect (BD) was to get teachers to give a description of these two codes. Descriptions are a good way of determining how people see things from their perspectives, which indicate how they feel about them. Some of the responses follow:

Ms A: there's something called Caribbean English...that would vary depending on where in the Caribbean you are...and it has nothing to do with English which is like British English; it has a whole new dimension of its own...when I say standard dialect we think British, but it's not British

Ms N:...Standard English is formal, universal...it's easily understood well.... throughout the world in countries who speak standard English. Whereas dialect now is more...cultural....it's a language too but peculiar to uh let's say an island or part of a country... and it's not universally like understood...

These two perspective differ somewhat. Ms N's perspective most closely aligns with a specific linguistic definition of standard and non-standard language, while Ms A, unlike those to whom she refers, sees Standard English in broader terms. According to her, many view British English as the standard, but she is opposed to this thinking. In fact, she is adamant that there are two different kinds of English in operation, and one has 'nothing to do with' the other. The passionate tone of her voice suggests that she scoffs at the idea of Caribbean people associating themselves with British English, leading me to conclude that she disassociates herself from the latter. On the other hand, she appears to have a great deal of pride in what she calls Caribbean English and does not hesitate to identify with this language. I notice however, that Ms A does not neglect to call this language English, and it comes across as if she is talking about Caribbean Standard English as opposed to the non-standard varieties of the Caribbean. It is not obvious as to which variety she is referring, which makes it difficult to pinpoint her true feelings towards BD at this point. I also noted that while Ms A labels English as a standard dialect, Ms N does not project the same view, preferring to maintain the label 'dialect' for BD; yet, to her credit, she recognises that dialect, the non-standard, is a language. Admittedly I was caught unawares by the level of Caribbean pride on the part of Ms A and the linguistic sensitivity on Ms N's part, to the point that I was unsure of the plausibility of my hypothesis, until I examined some of the other views on the topic.

Some discussants focused on what they regarded as deficiencies of BD, particularly its lack of global currency.

Mrs C: ...it is a little difficult for us then to decide to teach our Bajan dialect because our Bajan dialect is, is only within the confines of 166 square miles...ours is unique, so it really only belongs here, so then anything else outside of here will pose a problem for children if we teach them in this way and they have to write their exams in something else



Ms J in a different discussion comments similarly when she says:

...when you look at the wider scope you can't speak Bajan anywhere else but in Barbados

Ms J seems to be saying what Mrs C is attempting to couch in several words. Mrs C says that unlike SE, BD cannot be taught, because in preparation for the global world, students must be proficient in English. While the explicit reasoning appears sound, the implied reasoning is speculative. She seems to be proposing that BD cannot be taught because it has no currency outside of Barbados. How much currency does Greek have outside of Greece, but who would argue that it cannot be taught for this reason? There is therefore the view that BD is limiting, inhibitive and restrictive. Furthermore, in highlighting the limitations of BD alone she reveals a lack understanding of the strengths of the non-standard, and the weaknesses of SE (unbalanced attitudes). Neither of them considers the limitations of SE, which the following aptly illustrates. In this scenario a Trinidadian explain the inadequacy of SE in some contexts.

speaking Trinidadianese...is unique. It fits in with a good 'lime' and 'fete' when people like to 'ole talk' a lot. A calypso in good English would sound very corny and out of place. It would lose its significance. (Winford, 1976: 69).

The suggestion that currency should dictate language choice in the classroom is skewed. Ferguson (1964) for example questions whether SE is necessarily always the right medium of instruction in certain linguistic situations. Teaching literacy in the native language develops cognitive academic language proficiency skills which can be transferred to aid in second language acquisition (Simmons-McDonald (1996). Even at a most basic level it can be argued that Bajans, and other Caribbean people, living in countries outside the Caribbean use their mother tongues among themselves as a symbol of camaraderie, identity and solidarity in a foreign land. This means that BD and other non-standard languages serve very important functions outside their speech communities. Teachers who limit this role to the 166square miles of Barbados miss the point of language and identity. BD cannot be limited to a space because we carry our identity wherever we travel, and *"language expresses identity and membership of particular groups as well as nationhood"* (Holmes 1992: 129). It is truly language, not skin colour that *"act[s] as an important defining characteristic of ethnic group membership"* (Trudgill 1983: 127). In essence, teachers who continue to disregard this link fail to acknowledge that *"a commitment to democracy means that the use of the mother tongue at work and in school is a fundamental human right"* (Tollefson, 1991: 211), and any other, even well-intentioned thoughts, illustrates a bias towards SE as the more effective instructional classroom tool because BD is unfairly seen as dispensable, detachable from its speaker. From these few analyses, I am beginning to see my hypothesis take shape and the gravity of its implications unfold.

### ***Real vs. Pretentious***

The category of the real versus the pretentious also emerges from my analysis.

Mr B:...you get the true feeling....of a Bajan when he speaks Bajan...his true feelings come up. Sometimes the attempt to speak Standard English

may not give you his true feelings about a particular topic or about a particular feeling that he has (I queries: it might stifle him you mean?) because of the different language forms.

Over in another parish Mrs M expresses very similar views in a different way.

Mrs M: children I think they feel more at home using the Bajan dialect

On the basis of what I observe I conclude that Mr B links BD to transparency and genuineness, or as Mrs N seems to be alluding to, the person in his/her natural environs, 'at home'. On first glance, Mr B's comment appears quite innocent, but some further scrutiny uncovers more. The impression is that there is something false or pretentious about Bajans using SE. This is perhaps the reason some Bajans ask: "*why you talking so 'poor great'*" (posh) when other Bajans use SE at home. It is disconcerting that language teachers would view SE as having a specific social and cultural ownership, which is on loan to others who have no real entitlement to it. Ms A, alluded to this very early on when she spoke of people who automatically associate British with Standard English, as if they solely own the language. Consequently, if SE is perceived as 'belonging' to a particular group, then 'non-belongers' are viewed as needing borrowers' privileges, and to suggest that speaking SE is a 'privilege' promotes the idea that it is put on a pedestal, which is further emphasized by Mr B remarks about Bajan speakers' 'attempts' to reach it. Such an outlook encourages a more favourable view of the standard language.

### ***Proficiency vs. Deficiency***

Linguistic ability appears to be linked to SE proficiency and inability to BD usage. Ms A elucidates this issue in the following excerpt.

I think what most people are concerned about as far as the dialect goes in the classroom is the inability of the children to switch from the dialect to the standard Bajan, right, in the appropriate forum and so on right, and I think that is what most people tend to be concerned about when it comes to speaking dialect in the classroom, and that's why they would insist ...some teachers would insist that the children do not speak dialect in the classroom and they would try to correct them and make them speak the Standard English...

It is clear that teachers have the students' best interest at heart. Because students cannot code switch, that is, they have proficiency in a single language, they are seen as linguistically inept, and teachers do not want them to be in this position. However, insistence on SE usage could mean that teachers see BD as a distraction or a threat to the acquisition of SE. Certainly, one's natural instinct is to eradicate threats that endanger the attainment of one's goal. If SE is seen as the goal and BD as the threat, then this viewpoint will cause teachers to show a clear preference for the use of SE, as it is viewed more positively. Ironically, the eradication of BD for the benefit of SE acquisition would put students back into their original position of being monolingual. Mrs C's view also gives further insight into the issue of proficiency and deficiency.

Mrs C: You only have to come to a classroom to ask a child something that happened and the teacher stops him now to say it in Standard English and the poor fella (expression of pity) cannot express himself anymore...that (BD) is like the soul of the people, you, you, you say it in your language...

I grasp that Mrs C pities the student for not being able to use SE, as she uses the term 'poor fella'. She implies that the student is linguistically deficient, although he appeared to be progressing well in his story telling in BD, until he was cut short and directed to say it in SE. In this circumstance, if this teacher sees the students' language as lacking, she ultimately sees *them* as lacking, and will likely take little or no action to address the issue, which they view as a problem with the student, from whom much cannot be expected. I have heard teachers say: "that is just the way he is. I do not expect better from him". I also notice that Mrs C speaks of BD as the 'soul' of the people but distances herself with the use of 'the people' and 'you'. I gather that Mrs C has a propensity for avoiding the use of BD in the classroom, preferring to operate in SE, a behaviour to which she later admits.

### ***Tutored vs. Untutored***

An interesting dichotomy was drawn as to the manner of acquisition. Some of the discussants said that SE was learned in a tutored/formal setting; whereas, BD was acquired in more naturalistic/informal surroundings. This indicates some awareness about how the languages are learned. Here Ms L states that:

Standard English should be taught in the classrooms...you don't have to teach dialect, it's something that is taught in the home and it's just incidental you know, you learn it.

Ms G in another interview similarly says:

dialect to me is the...the native language which children will....hear will learn without any formal teaching, it is what they hear and what they will naturally speak, so it is the native tongue of where ever the child is born...

This link between SE and education is not surprising, as the two have long been related (Elssasser & Irvine, 1985; Robertson, 1996). It is puzzling however, that Ms L sees the non-standard as a language 'taught' at home, which indicates a systematic deliberate intervention; yet, simultaneously says that this language is learned incidentally. These kinds of conflicting remarks from education professionals are disconcerting because they demonstrate a lack of linguistic understanding which could be fuelling misassumptions and in turn generating negative attitudes.

There is a danger in linking SE alone to education. In so doing teachers may in effect be implying that the non-standard has little/no place in education, because educated people only use SE. This is dangerous, because not only is it untrue, but it does not take into account social appropriateness of language use. The reality is that most educated Caribbean speakers are able to code switch, so that they can use the range of varieties available to them to function effectively

in the various spheres of social life in their communities. The teacher, whose duty it is to educate, and who sees the educated person as an SE speaker, might seek to support eradication of the non-standard, not just from the classroom, but, also from the child's linguistic repertoire. This is not unusual because for decades it has been openly stated that the non-standard is not acceptable form of speech. For instance, Moses et al (1976) conclude from their research that *"typical school practices continue to emphasize...eradication of nonstandard speech"* (p. 80). Oscar Haugh quoted by Geraldine Russell (1965), unabashedly states, *"there are only two kinds of English, standard and substandard. It is the substandard, of course which we must try to eradicate from both the students' speaking and writing"* (p. 51). It is therefore clear that a teacher who thinks that the non-standard is sub-standard will treat it as such, with the objective of eliminating it. This way of thinking promotes an unbalanced attitude, that is, partiality to the use of monolingual SE education in a bidialectal context.

### **Rule-governed vs. Unstructured**

Comments about the linguistic differences between the two languages show a bias towards SE. Discussants commented on the syntactic and semantic differences between the two codes. In the following excerpt, Ms K remarks on the different grammatical structures of the two codes.

Ms K: (BD) runs contrary to what we have for standard English; it has the 's' in the wrong position in terms of the verb; it adds an 's' to the plural; whereas, in standard English there is no plural.. there is no 's' on the plural; the 's' is always (incomprehensible) there and the third person singular and so on and...and then in dialect when we try to use numbers ahm singular or plural, they...they...they're [her pronunciation] no plurals where you can use the...the ahm the...the suffixes, the 's' and the 'es' and so on we have to use the number to indicate that it is plural, and then you talk about two boy two book.

In attempting to highlight the linguistic differences, she appears to be saying that SE is rule-governed; whereas, BD is not. For example, she notes that SE has a system for achieving structures like third person singular present tense and plurality, but because BD does not adhere to the *same* rule system, the implication is that there are *no* rules to form these structures; yet, she clearly identifies the structure when she speaks of 'two boy and two book'. This speaks to an attitude borne from a lack of linguistic knowledge. This lack of knowledge leads to a way of thinking which mirrors Carrington's (1976) findings of the public in Jamaica who see Jamaican Creole as having no grammar or uniformity, causing them to label the language 'broken English'. In actuality one of the discussants, Mr H, blatantly states about BD: *"to me it is a broken form of the standard English"*. This is not shocking, for many the world over share similar views about the non-standard (see Kephart, 1992; Elsasser & Irvine, 1985; McCourtie, 1998; Zephir, 1999). Still, it is understandable when the general public holds such views, but it is less acceptable when those charged with the responsibility of educating Caribbean children, not simply hold these views, but enforce them. A teacher who sees an unstructured/chaotic language operating in the context of a structured classroom will view it as nothing more than a nuisance. If teachers *think* that the language is unstructured and *feel* that it is broken, it is likely that they will *treat* it as

worthless. In thinking and feeling that SE is the 'fixed', 'whole' version of the broken language, this is obviously the language to which they will turn to attend to students' 'linguistic cracks', better known as non-standard dialectal usage.

This section of the results has made certain things apparent to me. Firstly, many of these teachers cannot clearly articulate the differences in linguistic jargon. By this I mean that many of their articulations were based on how they saw these differences as social beings, i.e. as part of the Barbadian speech community, rather than trained professionals who understood that in linguistic terms no language is deficient when it meets the communicative needs of the community. Essentially, teachers spoke as the average man on the street would about an issue which should be well within their area of expertise. However, this is not startling in light of Hess' (1973) comments that *"teachers are generally uniformed about dialects"* (p. 28), and LePage's (1968) claim that teachers are aware that the vernacular differs from SE *"but they are not able to formulate in any methodical way where the differences lie or what they are due to..."* (p. 437). This lack of information can result in the spread of misinformation that can lead to the perpetuation of negative attitudes shrouded in ignorance about the linguistic context in which the professional teacher operates.

## Research question 2

### **'Facilitate' Communication**

Most of the discussants claimed that BD had some role to play, but analysis of their comments suggests differently. To illustrate, it was stated in several discussions that BD should be used to facilitate communication with the students, but it seems that BD was resorted to, in order to facilitate, not the students' comprehension, but the teacher's frustration at attempting to communicate with the student. The quotations below exemplify my theory.

Ms L: sometimes in the classroom...the small children you are trying to say something in standard English (Mrs M finishes off this statement: 'and they don't understand you'), you are doing your all and the children looking at you as if you're saying something foreign ...and you just slip back into a little thing (BD) uhhh!!! (to indicate that the children are relieved at the teacher's use of the dialect)

Mr B: It's a matter of communication. If a child comes to you from the type of home whatever where dialect is the norm in the home or within the family setting then you yourself (the teacher) got to know it and be able to interpret it and in order to teach him the standard English then, which becomes his foreign language, then you have to understand both.

Both participants speak as if the use of BD becomes a case of having no other choice. Ms L speaks about 'doing your all'. In short, the teacher is trying every possible way to make the student understand with no success, so out of frustration, as a last resort, the teacher opts to use BD. Mr. B's position is not much different. Although he does not say that BD is only used when one

is at one's wits end, he claims that 'you got to know' BD, there is no other choice, if you want to communicate with the children. While there may be a measure of truth in this statement, I take issue with Mr B's choice of the phrase 'to interpret'. It gives the impression that BD is a foreign language to the teacher, which needs to be translated to make sense of what the student is saying. This view, coupled with the perspective of both discussants that SE is a foreign language to the student, when taken as a cohesive unit signals that the teacher and students are foreign to each other, as neither speaks the other's language. Teachers who see themselves as different from the students they teach, but who are products of the same communities from which these children come, might really be placing themselves in a superior position because of their facility in SE. It could be that this type of attitude (I am not like you because we do not speak the same language) makes these two groups appear to be foreigners/strangers in the same space (classroom). Foreign in this case then turns into, the distance/cultural wall that teachers are choosing to put between themselves and their non-standard speakers on the basis of their facility in SE.

### ***Facilitate Production & Comprehension of SE***

Others claimed that BD is useful for helping students to learn SE, though how so was not made explicit. Mr B explains:

I, I, I would be using dialect in that instance to help the child to learn Standard English. I'd be just using dialect to help the children to attain their levels in Standard English. It's a matter of communicating with them to lead them to Standard English.

Mr H's opinion is almost indistinguishable.

Mr H: if...if it (BD) can be used to the point where the child is going to understand clearly what is being put over to him or her (in SE) I am not against it being used, but to use it as a written or to use it on a wider scope I would prefer, I would prefer for them to learn the Standard English so that they [his pronunciation] means of communication would be facilitated more... more easy.

In my estimation both men see BD as a convenience, perhaps even a 'necessary evil'. The use of Mr B's 'just', mirrors Mr H's use of 'but', as these terms communicate a lack of choice, and an uneasiness about using BD in the classroom. Both comments indicate a preference for SE, which is seen as the prize, that to which the students should 'attain'. In this circumstance, BD might be regarded as both a resource and a refuse, for it helps to facilitate understanding of SE, but on achieving this goal it becomes dispensable. In light of the teacher's expedient use of BD in the classroom, there seems to be a preference for SE as the mode of communication.

The need to use SE to facilitate comprehension of SE is further explored in the following comments.

Ms L: you are trying to say something in standard English...and the children looking at you as if you're saying something foreign ...and you just slip back into a *little thing* (BD)...I think that Standard English for some children is a new language.

In this next passage Ms. K makes herself clear about the issue under discussion.

they...they[her pronunciation] are certain things if you want to explain them you sometimes have to use the dialect and then slip back to the Standard English...Standard English should be used as the required medium of instruction so teachers would not tell you that they use dialect

I wish to revisit a portion of Ms L's statement as it exhibits how unbalanced views result in conflicting expressions. Ms L states that children *behave 'as if'* SE is foreign (I interpret this to mean unknown/ new); the assumption is that it should not be; yet, she admits that SE is a new language for some of these children. To make these two comments concurrently certainly demonstrates a skewed perspective, an unbalanced reasoning, for if by one's admission the language is new to the student why should she be surprised that the students do not understand it or in her words 'look at you as if you are saying something foreign'. This lack of clear thinking and understanding about these issues can lead to the expression of inconsistent views and contradictory ways of behaving in the classroom. A teacher who thinks students should know should not have to teach them to know and then wonder why they do not know. This is clearly confusing and ultimately frustrating, which must eventually lead to some negative responses on the part of the frustrated teacher.

It is the description of dialect as 'a little thing' which I find most telling. The description conveys, even if unintentionally, that the dialect is unimportant, that perhaps it is 'lesser' comparatively to SE. The use of this phrase 'little thing' also appears to draw life out of the language. I am here focusing on the term 'thing'. Language is animate, for it is given life by its user, in labelling it a 'little thing', Ms L is belittling its communicative worth, its vibrancy, its expressiveness, that which Mrs C admittedly dubs 'the soul of the people'. To call BD a 'thing' is to kill that soul, to divorce it from its people, so that it becomes just an ordinary, impersonal 'thing'.

Another interesting observation is the usage of 'slip back' by both Ms L and K. As in the case of a physical slip there is some measure of embarrassment if anyone notices, and these teachers seem to be 'slipping back' into BD/SE in a guarded way, as if in fear of someone observing this action. It conjures up an image of someone attempting to slip away unnoticed. This denotes a measure of awkwardness in having to code switch in the classroom in the presence of the students, as if it were improper, even though necessary. Ms K acknowledges that teachers would not say that they use the non-standard because in her words, "*it is not the law; the law is in all the curriculum*". This is in fact not true; the curriculum actually speaks to using the language with which the children come to school to move them over to SE. Nevertheless, if it is the case that teachers are concealing their use of BD in the classroom for fear of reprisal, they are in reality displaying more than fear; they are portraying guilt and shame about having to 'deviate from the

standard' in the classroom. These thoughts could certainly evoke a negative attitude towards the language (BD) which forces them to break 'the law' of the curriculum.

### ***Creative/Cultural Arts***

Most teachers agreed with using BD in the creative arts to showcase cultural expression. Because most non-standard languages in the Caribbean, when used for instructive purposes, are done so primarily, and most effectively, in the field of creative arts, it is not surprising that teachers see this as the principal role of BD in the classroom. The following give testimony to the association of creative arts and non-standard usage.

Ms L: when we have poetry (performance of poetry) you can see the response to something in dialect, the...the glee and the joy and the...and the enthusiasm in the way the children would learn, and you see them go home and learn expression and you find everybody there want to learn it, but you give them something in Standard English man you would be knocking yuh head (Bajan for exasperating oneself) and they would have weeks and weeks to learn what...four lines?

Ms D: the Barbadian stories that Alfred Pragnell (Barbadian story teller) tells and Timothy Callender (Barbadian playwright and story teller) and those that...that's Barbadian, and if we're going to pass on that heritage then we are going to pass on the language (BD).

Ms F:...in NIFCA (National Independence Festival of Creative Arts) they do a lot of this ahm speeches and then most of them are in dialect.

The commonality in all these comments is that non-standard dialect is appropriate within the domain of creative arts/cultural expression. In this arena, where culture is best expressed, it would seem that license can be taken with the language by the artist. Therefore, this language (BD), which would ordinarily be deemed inappropriate in other contexts is acceptable for the cultural creative arts; where in the minds of many, 'anything goes'. This view could be a hint that these teachers do not see BD as a language through which 'serious' subjects, requiring assessment, like Science and Geography can be taught.

My focus in the next script is not only the role of BD, but more so, the extent of its role. Here, Mrs P at the north school explains how she feels BD should be employed and the extent to which it should be used:

sometimes for drama, sometimes you use it for poetry that sort of thing or sometimes even if...if you're writing compositions some people can put in a little dialect and put it in inverted commas (I: in conversation) right little conversations. It brings more meaning, you know just to say everything like in standard English, you know they say variety is the spice



of life, add a little dialect to it you know make it more spicy, more...more interesting.

Mrs P's analogy is thought provoking. Although, it seems on the surface that Mrs P is praising the non-standard, her comments could actually be viewed as unintentionally derogatory. Her expressions liken BD to condiments that 'spice up' the language lesson, but add little nutritional value, because it lacks substance or value. Such interpretation complements her reference to BD as 'little dialect'. There is the suggestion that BD is less substantial when compared to SE and therefore it must be used in careful measure 'add a little', just enough to 'spice up' the lesson without spoiling it. Such assertions can leave one with the impression that SE is the weightier language; BD is just the seasoning, and if so viewed, then SE would be considered superior, having more to offer.

### ***Discipline/Correction***

The implications arising from the use of BD as a disciplinary and corrective tool were very enlightening. In the following passages Ms I and Ms D illustrate how BD is used to rouse a defiant student to appropriate action, while Ms E explains how the dialect is used to correct a child's use of deviant English.

Ms I: if you really want to be emphatic...the dialect does it so natural right...when I was preparing for this (the discussion at hand) my girlfriend (Bajan term for a very good female friend)...we were talking and B (calls her name) said ahm (mimics friend) "come here to me at once"... "chile you hear I call you" (very emphatically) and when you say that you raise your voice, your "come here to me at once" is on a level, but when you say "chile you hear I call you" (more rapidly and loudly) it sort of motivates right so there is a place for it (BD)...

Ms I associates BD with sternness and the threat of punishment to motivate students to comply with certain instructions they might have been ignoring. Such association could establish a negative relationship between BD and punitive measures, as the next excerpt illustrates. Ms D explains how some teachers respond angrily in BD when students become disruptive; the teacher's reaction is aimed at warning them of disciplinary action:

and (one uses BD) especially when the pressure is piled on too sometimes the children get out a hand...(Bajan for in-disciplined behaviour)

Ms D is insinuating that BD is related to outburst (pressure erupting), a response to ill-behaved students. To suggest that such outburst in BD is the 'natural' response to this kind of situation is to connect BD to a lack of (1) self-control, (2) propriety and (3) decency. By contrast, the implication is that teachers would not opt to use SE in these circumstances as it appears to be linked to the opposite characteristics of self-control, propriety and dignity. By extension, BD is related to strict harmful control which breeds fear and ultimately compliance in the hearer.

BD was also seen as a means of correcting students' language. Mrs E expounds on this thought.

Mrs E:..some children you listen to them and they speak perfect...well perfect standard English. Some of them don't understand dialect because the parents...some parents ahm insist that their children not say it [BD], because if they hear them they correct them, you know how some children say duhm, not duhm, you say them [mimics a parent correcting a child's pronunciation] right, so they speak English.

In this case the non-standard is used to show the child that the attempt to speak SE has failed. By using BD alongside SE it is hoped that the child can distinguish between them and make the correct choice in the future. Notice that no explanation is given the child, so that the use of BD here is to 'show up' the child's failed attempt at SE, and dissuade the child from using the non-standard pronunciation. An examination of such actions (correction, with no explanation) could lead one to conclude that there will be no tolerance of BD pronunciation because it is simply inappropriate, which indeed is absurd if the child is speaking BD.

### ***Little/ No Role***

While most of the discussants agreed that BD had some role, however limited, to play in the classroom, one teacher implied otherwise. This is what she says:

Mrs C: Well I'm a little different although I will tolerate some of it (BD) and accept some of it, I don't, I don't, I don't teach it nor I don't encourage it...since in our society we accept standard English for you know all.. most means of communication...so I might not ahm...encourage it a whole lot I, I go for the standard English, although I know within myself that it has a place and that it is the real means of expression of the people because it is their language you know

The use of the word 'tolerate' suggests an air of condescension, as though she is enduring its presence. Mrs C implies that she is willing to 'go' against the natural course of reason (I go for the Standard English although...) and practicality because SE is what she perceives to be acceptable for the classroom. She speaks of BD as the expression of 'the people' and 'their language', as if to separate herself from the language. It is easy to envisage a scenario where Mrs C reacts negatively towards a child's use of the non-standard because she does not encourage its use and obviously has a penchant for the use of SE.

### **Conclusion: Shape and Reshape**

There were several benefits to researching the pre-hypothesis. I clarified my understanding of that obscure term 'balanced attitude'. While this may change with further research, at this stage I see that a balanced attitude, in the context of this discussion, weighs the implications of the linguistic realities alongside the implications of one's personal views of the issue, ensuring that both sides equally serve the student's educational interest. In practical terms it resembles the conclusion of Taylor's (1973) findings in his research of 422 American teachers, which states: "*it would appear that the teachers may not like a non-standard dialect, but are willing to attempt to*

*use it in hopes of finding a useful teaching tool"* (p. 200). This epitomizes the shape of a balanced attitude, whereby, negative personal thoughts and feelings give way to sound practical and professional applications to address linguistic realities. When teachers cover over linguistic realities with a 'blanket' of personal and social biases, the realities remain, however well covered. The result is that the education system will continue to address the obvious symptom, poor proficiency of SE, without consideration of the source, neglect of linguistic realities. Therefore, the critical issue before all educators, based on these realities, is a need for teacher support for linguistic diversity *"as a necessary opposition to inequitable provisions based on linguistic hierarchies...forces of homogenization...linguistic and cultural genocide"* (Pennycook, 2001: 65). For this reason, Coelho (1988) so appropriately advises that teachers become more knowledgeable about the language background of their students, so as to understand the important link between language and identity, and find ways to assist students to become aware of language difference without loss of self-esteem.

I am also clearer about my methodology having researched the pre-hypothesis. I am now sure that my topic is researchable, and I am in a better position to select my sample through purposive sampling. Doing so helps me to identify members in the population with similar characteristics, teachers of English, from the Caribbean, in primary schools across the islands, with more than five years teaching experience who have a bias towards monolingual English education. In my current research I used a single data collection method to indicate bias, but I recognise that my results can be made more robust if I combine this technique with classroom observations and checklists, to establish clear bias through the manifestation of explicit negative classroom behaviours. By pinpointing specific negative behaviours, I can more easily look at ways of addressing them. Furthermore, teachers' actions, based on observations techniques, can aid in determining the construct validity of the data. I have therefore concluded that researching the hypothesis can only lead to sounder, richer, more robust research, less likely to be plagued by excessive frustrations, modifications and rejections and perhaps even fewer incidents of data tampering for those who might not be inclined to be so honest when they become frustrated.

Most of the discussants' views support the plausibility of my pre-hypothesis that teachers have unbalanced/ biased attitudes towards one or both of the predominant languages. Teachers favour the use of SE in the classroom for very good reasons. Firstly, they are keenly aware of the link between SE and social, economic and educational success as it relates to the child's future. Secondly, they lack understanding of the social appropriateness of language use as it correlates to the teaching of English. However I have garnered so much more through the research of my pre-hypothesis. I acquired a real understanding of my search for 'the' hypothesis near the end of the process. Admittedly, it was clear that my findings were not always directly answering the thesis, but I just could not ignore from the discussants' comments what was happening before me. This research was about more than how a view of a language affected the attitude towards that language. This was, more importantly, how skewed perspectives and unbalanced attitudes affect the language teaching/learning process. I am now aware that I was not asking the precise questions which would lead me to 'the' hypothesis. I gathered that socialization and lack of linguistic sensitization to language issues in the Caribbean contexts were major factors leading

to conflicting views (SE is/not foreign to BD students), contradictory feelings (praise and curse BD in same breath), and inconsistent classroom practices (I can use BD, but will ban the students from doing so). 'The' hypothesis therefore is encapsulated in my third syllogism, which seeks to help re-socialize the teacher, as the education professional, without ignoring the views and feelings of the teacher, as the social being. After much time spent kissing my hypothesis I will tell my fellow researchers that though my technique has some 'teething' troubles, and it is not quite flawless, it is shaping up nicely, and so, I highly recommend that you try it, adapting it to suit your needs (see figure 2 appendix 2).

## References

- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., & Tight, M. (2010). *How to Research 4<sup>th</sup> ed.* Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Brown, D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching.* NY.: Pearson.
- Carrington, L. (1976). Determining language education policy in Caribbean sociolinguistic complexes. *Linguistics: An International Review*, 175, 27-43.
- Coelho, E. (1988). *Caribbean students in Canadian schools.* Toronto: Carib-Can Publishers.
- Denny, S. L. (2002). *We survived the inhumanity but do we still wear the shackles: an investigation into primary school teachers' attitudes into the use of Barbadian dialect as a medium of instruction.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter, Exeter.
- Denny, S. (2010). The ABCs of teacher language proficiency. In N. Faraclas, R. Severing, C. Weijer, E. Echteld, M. Hinds-Layne and E. Lawton de Torruella. *In a sea of heteroglossia: Pluri-lingualism, pluri-culturalism, and pluri-identification in the Caribbean* (pp. 135-152). Williamstead: Fundashon pa Planifikashon di Idioma.
- Dulay, H., & Burt, M. (1974). Natural sequences in child second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 24, 37-53.
- Edwards, J. R. (1982). Language attitudes and their implications among English speakers. In E. B. Ryan & H. Giles (Eds.), *Attitudes towards language variation: Social and applied contexts* (pp. 20-33). London: Edward Arnold.
- Elsasser, N., & Irvine, P. (1985). English and Creole: The dialectics of choice in a college writing program. *Harvard Educational Review*, 55 (4), 399-415.
- Ferguson, C. (1964). Teaching standard languages to dialect speakers. In R. Shuy (Ed.), *Social dialects and language learning* (pp. 105-111). Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Hess, K. (1973). Dialects and dialect learning: Where we're at. *English Education*, 5(1), 26-34.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *An introduction to sociolinguistics.* London: Pearson Longman.
- Kephart, R. (1992). Reading Creole English does not destroy your brain cells. In J. Siegel (Ed.), *Pidgins, creoles and non-standard dialects in education* (pp. 67-81). Melbourne: Applied Linguistics Association of Australia.
- LePage, R. B. (1968). Problems to be faced in the use of English as the medium of education in four West Indian territories. In J. Fishman, C. Ferguson & J. Das Gupta (Eds.), *Language problems of developing nations.* (pp. 431-442). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- McCourtie, L. (1998). The politics of creole language education in Jamaica: 1891-1921 and the 1990s. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 19(2), 108-127.

- Moses, R., Daniels, H., & Gundlach, R. (1976). Teachers' language attitudes and bidialectalism. *Linguistics: An International Review*, 175, 77-91.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical Applied Linguistics: A critical introduction*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Robertson, I. (1996). Language education policy 1: Towards a rational approach for Caribbean states. In P. Christie (Ed.), *Caribbean language issues: Old and new* (pp. 112-119). Mona: U.W.I Press.
- Russell, G. (1965). 1955-1963. In R. McDavid (Ed.), *An examination of the attitudes of the NCTE toward language. National council of teachers of English report No. 4* (pp. 47-62). Champaign, Illinois: NCTE.
- Simmons-McDonald, H. (1996). Language education Policy 2: The case for creole in formal education in St. Lucia. In P. Christie (Ed.), *Caribbean language issues: Old and new* (pp. 120-142). Mona: UWI Press.
- Taylor, O. (1973). Teachers' attitudes toward black and nonstandard English as measured by the language attitude scale. In R. Shuy & R. Fasold (Eds.), *Language attitudes: Current trends and prospects* (pp. 174-201). Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Tollefson, J. W. (1991). *Planning language, planning inequality: Language policy in the community*. London: Longman.
- Trudgill, P. (1983). *On dialect: Social and geographical perspectives*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Winford, D. (1976). Teachers' attitudes toward language varieties in a creole community. *Linguistics: An International Review*, 175, 44-75.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: OUP.
- Zephir, F. (1999). Challenges for multicultural education: Sociolinguistic parallels between African American English and Haitian Creole. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 20(2), 134-153.

Appendix 1

School	Participants
West School	Ms A, Mr B and Mrs C
Central School	Ms D, Mrs E and Ms F
South School	Ms G, Mr H, Ms I* and Ms J
East School	Ms K, Ms L and Mrs M
North school	Ms N, Mr O and Mrs P

Table 1: Participants

\*The letter I on its own represents interviewer