Chapter 7

Multilingual English–Speaking Caribbean:
From Creole Language Policies to Foreign Language Policies

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ABSTRACT

An increasingly global context with a rapidly growing international migration and the institutionalization of the Caribbean Community (Caricom) as an economic and political unity suggest the need for a language policy in education in the English-speaking Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago). Language police can provide people with the languages and the linguistic and cultural skills needed for a global personal and professional future. In this chapter, the author will present the multilingual context in the English-speaking Caribbean and the language policies until the present time, the recent foreign language policies, and the challenges these countries will face in creating a language policy.

INTRODUCTION

We live in an increasingly complex globalized world. A striking feature of globalization is the impact of multilingualism and the related phenomenon of multiculturalism. Very few contemporary societies can be considered homogeneous; they are increasingly

diverse, either in the languages they speak or how people live and express themselves, and it must be reflected in education (King, 2018).

Multilingual societies are defined by cultural characteristics that value the balance between the languages coexisting and the balance in daily life (Denny, 2013). These societies understand multilingualism as a way of life and do not see it as a problem to resolve. (UNESCO, 2003) ensures that the great challenge for educational systems is to adapt to these complex realities and to provide a quality education that meets educational needs, taking into account social, cultural and political demands.

Multilingualism is a human condition. Three-quarters of the world speak more than one language. But colonial history has given the term a negative connotation that needs to be modified because monolingualism is a handicap rather than a strength (Crystal, 2006). In this sense, there is a thought that linguistic diversity is in decline (King, 2018).

Language contact in English-speaking Caribbean countries is always linked to the concept of linguistic imperialism. (Philipson, 1992) analyzed the phenomenon of English as a world language and the factors leading to English linguistic imperialism. English linguistic imperialism refers to the dominance of English asserting and maintaining the establishment and reconstruction of the structural and cultural discrepancy between English and other languages (Philipson, 1992). English-speaking Caribbean countries, have been multilingual societies for many years but in terms of linguistic maps, they have not been remapped because the region remains prone to homogenous labelling (Myrick et al., 2020). If we look at their past, they were heterogeneous societies, historically, culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse, since they experienced a continuous movement of people from other Caribbean islands, Europe or Africa. A variety of languages are spoken not all languages have had or have the same value or importance (Reichl, 1998). English, French, Spanish and Dutch are the dominant languages, but also a great number of creole languages. In this context, English-speaking Caribbean, English was the language imposed by the colonizers. Even today continues to be the official language in all these countries, a language used in the administrative sphere and coexists with other languages depending on the country.

Although language policy in the Anglophone Caribbean has been discussed for many years and many researchers record interaction between languages in Anglophone Caribbean countries, few have attempted to determine language education policy for these states (Carrignton, 1976). Although, in recent years some of these countries have created a series of language policies in order to regulate the use of some of their languages, as is the case of Jamaica. At the same time, great interest has also been aroused in the teaching of Spanish as a second language, either because of its proximity or because there are interests of a different nature; commercial exchanges or international relations. Many of these countries are trying to create a language

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