Chapter 3
SUE TESOL for Indigenous Critical Praxis: Teachers’ Construction of an Alternative to Method

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ABSTRACT

In English-Colonized Caribbean and other English-based vernacular-influenced speech settings, the issues faced by practitioners in teaching English are not about whose English but more about which method? This preoccupation with the notion of an appropriate ESL methodology has stifled the growth of teacher-constructed methods. This chapter departs from teachers’ call for clichéd ESL/EFL method towards teachers’ envisioning and implementation of innovations for targeting, attaining, and sustaining the use of English inside and outside the classroom. The findings are indicating that when these innovations in the use of English are constructed and centered on what schools and students excel in, there is room for the creation of an alternative to method and the growth of an indigenous pedagogy for sustaining the use of English in TESOL in vernacular speech settings.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9228-0.ch003
INTRODUCTION

For decades, the English Language teaching faculty of the English-speaking Caribbean has been practicing under the notion that immersion in English is not possible or workable and is the most challenging pedagogical goal in our English-based Creole teaching environments. The unique language teaching and learning environment where the target language provides the lexis for the mother tongue has resulted not only in these perceptions and dispositions towards immersion, but continue to challenge practitioners as the methods and approaches for teaching English to English-based Creole speakers or in vernacular-influenced speech environments resist the well-known and tried English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and even English as a Second Dialect (ESD) methods. English sounds familiar to our learners, but while many may be able to receive English, to produce it is challenging (Craig, 2006). Many practitioners have accepted that the English most students speak is ‘broken’, so the urgency is to fix what is broken. This ‘pedagogy of repair’ has left many cracks held together with the glue of grammar quick-fix for writing in English. Teachers of English across the Caribbean are persuaded by the pedagogical wish to ‘teach English as a second language.’ However, the experience gained from over twenty years of English Language Teacher training and preparation has indicated that targeting English in Caribbean speech contexts is not the real issue. Pedagogies for making English the language of choice and sustaining its use in the classroom and other formal speech contexts are the real challenges faced by teachers (Feraria, 2000, 2008, 2016). Armed with the knowledge of methods and approaches to teaching English (gained from their courses of study) and which the language situation in the Caribbean resists, teachers have deflected attention from them being the designers of methods and have lamented for years for ‘methods for teaching English as a second language in environments where many refuse to accept the stigmatized Creole or Mother Tongue as the first language. Bryan (2010) noted and supported my call for an indigenous pedagogy (Feraria, 2005, cited in Bryan, 2010) and noted also that the whole notion of methods has been rejected for a post-method pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2002). This paper is largely propelled by the belief that while immersion in English works for speech environments where the first language does not share the lexis of English, the target language in Caribbean English based speech environments, the focus should be directing classroom pedagogy towards targeting, attaining and sustaining English. At the heart of this pedagogy is the philosophy of English for every-day use and teacher constructed practice that make English audible, visible and achievable for everyday communicative needs. This call is for indigenous critical praxis which is shaped by teachers’ construction of an alternative to method which can be treated as indicators of a post–method pedagogy shaped within three parameters of praxis:
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