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# WORK PAPERS OF SIL - AAB

## Series B, Volume 2

### **PAPERS IN LITERACY AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION**

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## PREFACE

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INTRODUCTION TO  
SERIES *B* VOLUME 2

In this, our first volume of Work Papers with the accent on literacy, we include three research papers written by students of the Literacy Course at the South Pacific Summer Institute of Linguistics, Sydney. These appear with a minimum of editing in order to make the information contained in them immediately available. We are grateful to the authors for giving us permission to reproduce their work in this way.

A brief but important paper by Anee Glass on linguist-school interaction completes the volume.

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TRANSITION FROM AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL  
LANGUAGES TO ENGLISH: AS IT APPLIES  
TO CHILDREN IN BILINGUAL SCHOOLS

M. A. Evans

0. INTRODUCTION

I write this paper from the background of being a teacher in a bilingual primary school. I had a group of students reading and writing in their mother tongue, whom I assessed as ready to begin the transition to reading and writing in English. But, how? I knew that to present them one morning with a 'traditional' beginning reader was to court disaster. Yet, in an isolated community and with little material available for information or research, what avenues were open to me? I thought, I planned, tried, thought again, planned some more and eventually came up with a scheme by which the children learned to read in English. From those failures and successes, frustrations and joys, I realized my own need for more knowledge in this area. Other teachers in a similar situation face a similar dilemma. So I became aware of the need to seek out and bring together in some form information in this area. This paper is an attempt to do just that.

I assume that teachers are already firmly convinced of the philosophy and rationale behind these bilingual programmes.

0.1 DEFINITIONS

Already I have used and referred to several terms. Let us make sure, by defining these, that we know what each means:

- (a) Transition: the process of transferring reading and writing skills from the vernacular language to a national language.
- (b) Vernacular: '... a language which is the mother tongue of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language' (UNESCO 1953: 689-690).
- (c) National Language: that language which is used by a majority in the business and government of a nation and is declared by the government to be that country's language.
- (d) Mother Tongue: 'that language which a person acquires in early years and which normally becomes his natural instrument of thought and communication' (UNESCO 1953:689).
- (e) Bilingual School: in this case refers to a school on an Aboriginal community where Aboriginal children learn in their mother tongue until some proficiency in reading and writing is gained and gradually transfer to English as the second (or third, etc.) language.
- (f) Second Language: '... is the language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue' (UNESCO 1953:689).

## 1. FOR WHAT PURPOSE

The UNESCO report (1953:711) on the use of vernacular languages states:

If a child's mother tongue is not the official language of his country, or is not a world language, he needs to learn a second language.

E. Lee says that because many vernacular languages have very little published material available, there is great need to go into the national language, particularly if this is a felt need.

The situation faced by many Aborigines in the north of Australia (where most of our Aboriginal bilingual schools are) is that they need literacy in English to be able to communicate with politicians, miners, companies, medical, commercial and other interests which almost daily make demands on their ability to communicate with the so-called 'outside world'. Most of the children presently in our schools are going to face even greater demands on this ability as governments and commercial interests encroach further into 'Aboriginal

lands' and their own unique life style. Gudschinsky (1973:138) says of transition, 'People who are deprived of this opportunity will find it difficult to take their rightful place in modern society'. It is these children from minority groups in Australia who receive much, if not all, their later primary schooling and all their secondary schooling in English which is, for them, a second language. Christophersen (1973:74) states:

It is fairly commonly admitted by unbiased investigators that bilingual school children are often behind their unilingual contemporaries in language skills (reading, spelling, etc.) in both their languages during at least part of their school career.

He goes on to say,

It seems, however, that the "bilingual handicap"--which is never more than a year or two--often diminishes with age, and by the time a student reaches college or university level his proficiency in the second language--the language of instruction--will be fully equal to that of unilingual students.

Hopefully, some of our Aboriginal students will reach this level of proficiency.

## 1.1 AIMS OF TRANSITION

Bearing the preceding statement of Christophersen's in mind, we ask ourselves what then, are we aiming at, in transferring the children's reading and writing skills from their mother tongue to the national language--in this case English? In speaking of the second language in the Philippines, Gouzalez (1976) says that the English curriculum must aim not only at proficiency in the use of English but also the development of conceptualization skills and vocabulary necessary for the study of science and maths. These skills also need to be developed in other subject areas as the need arises.

Harris (1975:17) speaking of bilingual schooling in the Northern Territory of Australia comments:

So that the student will not be pressured out of his ethnic identity, or become a social misfit in his home culture the goal is competence in the second language, not complete long term transfer to using the second language for all functions.

While I agree with both Gouzalez and Harris, I feel that Gouzalez needs to qualify his comment so that the vernacular is not forgotten in the drive for English skills. Harris has an important

message if we care to listen. We may desire for these children competence in English but surely not at the expense and possible eradication of the mother tongue. This hinges on our basic philosophy of bilingual education for Aboriginal children in our schools. This is another huge topic which we cannot discuss here. However, it is my strong opinion that we must encourage the continuance of writing and reading in the mother tongue long after the transition to English has been made. Briefly stated, our aim can be to give the children the proficiency they need in English to function in the society in which they choose to live.

## 1.2 WHAT TYPE OF ENGLISH WILL I TEACH?

We might well ask ourselves what we mean by competence in the second language. This will vary from child to child, from group to group and from state to state. We will have to answer that question for ourselves in which ever community we are working according to the wishes and felt needs of that particular community. It is possible though to consider some basics. Aboriginal children need to be able to communicate in English with visitors to their community and with people with whom they come in contact in local towns and/or larger cities.

Does he require so-called 'Oxford English'; ordinary, everyday English; university English; 'wharfie' English or stockman's English? Clearly we need to look at the varieties of language within English before we begin to teach. Then limit our teaching to that part which is suited to our pupils at that time, their future needs and the needs of the community as they see them (Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens 1964:292).

This will not be easy and will need considerable knowledge of the community, what the adults want for their children and what the children themselves see as a use for a command of English.

I would recommend the use of ordinary everyday English of an acceptable standard definitely flavoured by the vocabulary relevant to a particular community. One would also need to introduce patterns of standard English which the children will meet outside the school situation and, if relevant, in nearby towns.

## 2. WHEN TO TRANSFER

This question is frequently asked by teachers as their group is becoming fluent readers and writers in their mother tongue. How do I know if these children are ready to cope with transition to another language?

The UNESCO report (1953:699) recommends a gradual transition to the second language as the medium of instruction. The speed, they say, will be controlled by local factors. So too, we can presume is the point at which the second language reading is introduced. Ulibarri (1965:315) feels that the young child (at approximately six years) is in the best position to be learning the second language. He is uninhibited, a natural imitator and mimic, finds repetition and rhythm stimulating, accepts what he is told about the second language and has faith in his own abilities. I wonder, do all these points apply to our Aboriginal students? Yes, he is uninhibited (he should be and he can be in the classroom), he excels at imitating, mimicking, repetition and rhythm fascinate him; but has he faith in his own abilities? Many young Aboriginal children have this faith knocked out of them--yes, even at this young age. It is part of our role to build up again that faith in his own abilities. Pearce (1974:128) recommends a gradual introduction to the second language as a language of instruction as the pupils become familiar with it.

Morton (1975:7) found in looking at various programmes that oral competency in the second language could be placed in her phase one (years one and two) with reading and writing skills being developed in the following intermediate stage.

I found some children were ready for transition towards the end of the third year but others needed to wait until well into the fourth year. The actual time of transition, then, will vary from child to child and from language group to language group. It is possible though, to draw up certain guidelines as set out below.

## 2.1 PREREQUISITES FOR THE CHILD

Before we commence the child in transferring his reading and writing skills to a new code, I think we should assess how he handles the following categories.

### A. Oral Competence in the Second Language.

The child needs oral proficiency and control in the second language--in this case English. Gudschinsky (1973:139) divides this into two main areas: 1) 'the phonetics of the second language' and 2) 'control of enough of the grammar and vocabulary so that he can understand and be understood'. Other writers also agree that a command of oral English is a vital ingredient for a successful transition program (Bachelor 1975:8; Andersson and Boyer 1970:79; Loeweke and May 1974:136; Fishman and Lueders Salmon 1972). One writer only (Harris 1973:58) disagrees:

With the important asset of a knowledge of how to read at the pupil's disposal, it was not necessary for these children to achieve some oral command of English before they could be expected to read English.

However, he (1973:59) goes on to reveal that:

The use of this Kanite-phonemic English is an attempt in the absence of English-speaking teachers, to make the booklet as self-teaching as possible by giving the reader an opportunity to sound out the English pronunciation either in the classroom or at home. . .it is recognized that fluent English cannot be achieved apart from contact with English speakers.

In the light of this second quote, the original statement is not quite as drastic as one is led to believe on first reading. Obviously, the children in our schools do come in contact with English speakers and they do need to become fluent speakers of English.

Pearce (1974:127) gives some valuable points for guiding an effective second language programme. These include:

- a) no denigration--actual or implied of the mother tongue.
- b) an atmosphere conducive to unselfconsciousness in practising the second language.
- c) a structured syllabus to allow teaching the patterns of speech of the second language.
- d) presentation of new materials in a meaningful way.
- e) opportunities to use the new language materials in and out of the classroom.
- f) teachers (preferably native speakers of the second language) who will be models and interpreters of the socio-cultural implications of this language.

Aboriginal children with a rich oral tradition tend to have an excellent oral retention. This is a fantastic strength which we would be foolish not to capitalise on during this oral stage when we can build up a rich oral vocabulary. It is my strong recommendation that an oral competency in English is essential before starting a transition program.

*not before  
the choice is a  
the transition  
is best way  
or without  
early with the  
English put a bag  
which we should  
the transition*

## B. Knowledge of What Reading Is All About.

As previously quoted, Harris (1973:58) considers the knowledge of how to read an important asset in learning to read in a second language. The child knows how to read so this is no longer a problem. He knows that he can get meaning from printed words on a page. The pupil has already learnt to read--he needs now to transfer these skills to the code of another language.

## C. Motivation.

As with ordinary reading, and indeed all learning, the learner needs to be motivated. So too, the child (and adult) must have a desire to read in English. It is no good Aboriginal parents wanting the child to be able to read in English (and this frequently happens); he must have that desire and motivation within himself.

This is not easily done, but I found three quite helpful motivators:

- (a) The children liked to be able to read captions, signs and other writing on films which were shown regularly both in the community and the school.
- (b) They never tired of always coming to ask a teacher about a picture/photo found in a magazine to find out more than the picture itself could tell.
- (c) Many children had a strong desire to be able to read for themselves storybooks in English which had either been read to them or were found in the library.

A fourth and important motivator was the fact that many found the challenge of learning to read in English a real delight and this was motivation at its best--from within.

## D. Literate.

The child needs to be reading and writing confidently in the vernacular before he begins to learn literacy skills in another language (Bachelor 1975:9; Loeweke and May 1974:136).

## E. Knowledge of English Letters and Sounds.

Bachelor (1975:9) regards as essential a knowledge of English letters and their sounds before launching into reading and writing in English. Gudschinsky (1973:139) requires a knowledge of the phonetics of English. I interpret this to mean the sounds of English rather than actual sound/symbol association.

I have not read of anyone else who recommends this and I would disagree with Bachelor on this point. To me this would form an actual part of the program rather than a prerequisite.

## 2.2 OTHER COUNTRIES

It may be useful here to look at when other countries with bilingual programmes have made the transition from their vernacular languages to the national language.

- (a) Vietnam: In Grade One of the primary school, education, including reading and writing, is in vernacular languages with Vietnamese learnt orally. In Grade Two diglot books are introduced with an emphasis on the Vietnamese language. By Grade Three diglots are reduced and are mainly used in new subject areas or more difficult texts. So that by Grades Four and Five no use is made of the mother tongue except in culture lessons. (This information is from a cassette tape of E. Lee talking to the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Darwin, 1973.)
- (b) Guatemala: In First Grade the mother tongue only is used. In Grade Two Spanish is used, with explanations in the mother tongue. By Grade Three only Spanish is used (Lee-- as above). This seems a rather sudden and drastic introduction of Spanish.
- (c) Peru: Peruvian Indian languages are used until Grade Two, with diglots in Spanish. After Grade Two diglots cease; Spanish is used with explanations in vernacular. After this, education is entirely in the second language (Morton 1975:8).
- (d) Philippines: The Philippines has several different schemes, one of which devotes equal time to Filipino and English; another teaches Science, Maths and Communication Arts in English; all else is in Filipino through primary and secondary school. A third program is one of gradual immersion which teaches all subjects (except English) in Filipino for the first two years. Commencing in Grade Three there is a gradual shift to English, with Maths at first and then an additional subject per year until secondary school when all but Filipino will be in English.
- (e) Russia: Children are taught to read and write in their mother tongue, while Russian is introduced only orally at first. By the middle of the first grade, however, they



are already beginning to read and write in Russian' (Hooley 1976:66). This appears to be a very short vernacular period with a rapid introduction to reading and writing Russian.

- (f) American Samoa: Up to ages three to five--that is First and Second Grades--education is in the vernacular with Oral English and Maths in English. At Grade Three transition commences with increasingly large portions of instruction in English, including such subjects as Science (Atuatasi 1974:58-59).
- (g) Northern Territory of Australia: Grade One is entirely in the mother tongue. Oral English commences in Grade Two at age six plus and increases through Grades Three and Four (Brandl 1974:63).

### 3. THE TRANSITION PROGRAMME

Of all areas of the paper, this has been the most difficult on which to find information. Probably there are many and varied approaches, just as there are methods and combinations of methods of reading. Each teacher will develop his/her own particular teaching style and adapt it to the community and children of a particular situation.

It seems there are basically two opposing views. One advocating a phonic type approach which takes those sounds/symbols common to both languages and builds up from there. The other completely wipes what has been learnt in the vernacular programme and makes a fresh start. Neither of these, that I can see, are ideal. What I think we should be doing is looking at the children's skills in all areas and especially written and oral in both languages and capitalizing on these skills to make the transition stage as meaningful and painless as possible.

Not only do we need to look at how we are going to teach this second language but at how children learn a second language and how we as teachers can best use these learning techniques. It is also important to note that the teacher's own influence, attitudes, values, behaviour and personality are an important aspect of the success or failure of any bilingual programme and it applies equally to any transition programme.

### 3.1 HOW CHILDREN LEARN A SECOND LANGUAGE

The following are some opinions as to how children learn a second language; and how they do not. This is a very wide topic, one which needs more research and one which is too large a topic to treat in detail here. We need, nevertheless, to be well aware of its importance and relevance.

It is possible to acquire a good knowledge of a second language without using it as the medium of instruction for general subjects (UNESCO 1953:711).

Just as a child first learns to hear, understand and speak his own language and then learns to read and write it, so should he learn his second language in the same way (Andersson and Boyer 1970:45).

'...languages are learned not taught. . . '--a very interesting comment by Ulibarri (1965:314-15). She goes on,

He [the child] has learned to speak the natural way: by listening, recording what he hears, and when the time comes repeating what he hears.

Speaking of children learning a second language she says:

If a language is to be learned at all the process must be a living, emotional experience and not an intellectual experience. The doors of the heart must be opened, and love must be allowed to embrace the new language.

And what better person to learn a language this way than a child? Again from Ulibarri (1965:317), speaking of children:

If he had been made to learn grammar to learn his own language he never would have learned to speak at all!!!!

And finally, from the Northern Territory Bilingual Handbook (Northern Territory Education Division 1976:21):

Children do not "catch" English by exposure. They learn it by following a carefully built-up program.

### 3.2 HOW DO WE GO ABOUT TEACHING A SECOND LANGUAGE?

What approaches are available to us to use? What should we do or not do in this area? As previously mentioned, a heavy emphasis is

*Who must defend on the side of exposure? Will learning by exposure.*

placed on oral language development and communication skills. Gouzaletz (1976:5) recommends for the Philippines integrated subjects with attention paid to communication type drills and learning situations in English rather than concentrate on structure. Lee recommends the teaching of greetings, conversational exchange and the learning of correct grammatical patterns and the use of substitution drills. In answer to the question of how much to teach, he recommends all the second language pronunciation, all the grammatical patterns, most functors and a basic vocabulary.

Pearce (1974:128) also advocates a situational method and also mentions the need for practising correct stress patterns.

Jakobovits (in Wheeler 1971:57) recommends that language teachers note the developmental stages characterizing the acquisition of the native language by allowing the second language learner to hear and produce semigrammatical sentences. He feels that communication is of greatest importance and he feels that language learners should enter wholeheartedly into communication and that in this way errors would be greatly reduced. Wheeler (1971:60) himself encourages a big vocabulary built up with functors and grammatical structures taking second place.

Taking notice of these writers, it would seem that we need to teach initially what is immediately relevant to the children, following this by functors and extension of vocabulary and grammatical patterns. Substitution exercise may be found useful here.

It is my experience that Aboriginal children have an excellent visual discrimination and a great capacity for visual retention. So I would agree with Wheeler in building up a large vocabulary, particularly of words of high emotive and interest level to the children. I agree too with the teaching of conversational and situational English in which phrase and sentence patterns are built up and the children become confident and automatic in their use. This needs to be done orally initially. The patterns and vocabulary are used automatically by the children and fairly easily transfer to written work and reading.

### 3.3 FURTHER PRE-READING REQUIRED FOR TRANSITION

Just as auditory and visual discrimination are essential pre-reading skills for the vernacular language, so too for the second language as there are new elements to distinguish. After consultation with the Aboriginal teacher and the linguist (see Sections 4.1 and 4.3), the teacher of English will need to devise exercises and

activities to help the children discriminate between new and contrastive elements and to be aware of new letter shapes with accurate pronunciation of new sounds.

### 3.4 REQUIREMENTS OF A TRANSITION PROGRAMME

Once again there is considerable difference of opinion as to what constitutes a good transition programme. It must be based on the children's interests and experiences and use the language structures they use and with which they are familiar. Pearce (1974:127), I think, gives the best and most comprehensive coverage of what an effective second language programme in a bilingual situation needs to be. At the risk of repeating myself from the oral English section, I shall summarise his main points here in full. His points apply equally to the oral as well as transition (reading and writing) programme.

- a) no denigration--actual or implied of the mother tongue.
- b) an atmosphere conducive to unselfconsciousness in practising the second language.
- c) a structured syllabus to allow teaching the patterns of speech of the second language.
- d) an aural/oral approach so that children can understand and speak the language before they are expected to read and write it.
- e) presentation of new material in a meaningful way.
- f) opportunities to use the new language materials in and out of the classroom.
- g) the development of sufficient skill in the second language to attempt to teach specific subject matter in that language.
- h) teachers (preferably native speakers of the second language) who will be models and interpreters of the socio-cultural implications of this language.

Additional requirements include:

- a) new written word patterns.
- b) phonological and grammatical chunking strategies of written material.

- c) functors in connected material.
- d) punctuation.
- e) recognition of discourse clues, e.g. once upon a time.

As with any reading programme there needs to be an abundance of graded materials, interesting and culturally relevant for the children to read at all stages of progression. The children also need to hear stories read to them in English.

### 3.5 ONE SUGGESTED APPROACH

I have set out here, briefly, what I consider to be a workable method. It is by no means the whole answer, nor is it the only one. But it is one way and may serve as a useful basis from which to start developing a programme. (See also Appendix A.) With the exception of Oral English no one aspect precedes another and all should knit together.

- (a) Oral English: Start from Grade One with fifteen to thirty minutes per day and progress through a recognised programme (Appendix A) with more time per year. In this way a logical sequence and all areas of grammatical and phonological structure will be covered. Much can be done incidentally particularly on an individual level.
- (b) Vocabulary: Along with the Oral English programme of language patterns develop in the children an extensive vocabulary, drawing on their experiences, fears, delights, and interests. Nouns with their associated adjectives and verbs are good. Words in English which have no vernacular equivalents or terms and personal and place names can begin to be learnt as sight words.
- (c) Language Experience: The child's first experience at written English for his own reading should be of his own words. 'The words they use must be made of the stuff of the child' (Ashton-Warner in Bachelor 1975:10). Remembering the prerequisites for the child (Section 2.1), he should by now have some competency in English and on this we must capitalise. He will quickly transfer his reading skills to the new code and he will be delighted with his progress. Begin by him telling the teacher a story which she writes and he reads. Once his basic vocabulary is developed, he can use a modified Breakthrough approach (Appendix A). Rapidly he will be making and writing sentences for himself. As the

child develops skills here, punctuation, functors and chunking can be taught. The modified breakthrough and language experience approach can continue together until the child is able to freely and skillfully write and read of his own accord.

- (d) Phonics: As the child's competency develops, attention can be paid to analysis and synthesis. Children need to be aware of sounds and symbols in both languages which are identical, sounds/symbols in one language and not the other and symbols in new syllable or word patterns and new consonant clusters (see Section 4.3).
- (e) Word Families: This probably goes hand in glove with (d) above. Children enjoy this activity and it helps them in word building and word attack skills. Words are grouped in families according to rhyming words, initial sounds and other common elements.
- (f) 'Home-Made' Readers: Encourage your class or group to write about anything and everything and make these up into books, charts, etc. This can be done on an individual, group or class level. You will find that the children will cover many village, community and personal activities and you will have a never ending supply of interesting, relevant and culturally acceptable reading material. Despite the high rating given to commercially produced books, it is their own home-made books that the children return to again and again.
- (g) Comprehension: This should be started orally at first. The children will be (hopefully) used to comprehension activities from their vernacular programmes and this too will be transferred to English. It will prove no problem as the children develop their own reading material and gradually move on to regular reading books.

### 3.6 A WARNING

While we are enthusiastically working with and encouraging our children in rapidly becoming literate in their second language, we must not neglect the mother tongue. I am convinced it is of utmost importance that we continue to encourage and make time available for the Aboriginal teachers to work with the children to continue extending and developing their reading and writing skills in their mother tongue. I repeat what I said earlier in this section that the teachers' attitudes, etc., are most important. The attitude of 'now

the children can read, so we'll forget about the vernacular and concentrate on English' will come through only too loudly if it's there. This is not the attitude which will develop and encourage our Aboriginal pupils as self-respecting and proud peoples.

The vernacular language as used in the educational setting is necessary for communication (and communication is necessary to learning). It also carries enormously important messages in terms of inter-cultural respect, self respect, and as a statement that the minority language is as "real" and as valuable in its own right as the dominant language (Harris 1975:24).

#### 4. PERSONNEL

Just as many people are involved in the bilingual education programmes of our schools, so many people are involved in the transition part of the programme. The teaching team of Aboriginal teacher, non-Aboriginal teacher, and linguist must still continue to work together if the programme is to be successful.

##### 4.1 THE ABORIGINAL TEACHER

Although considered perhaps a minor role in the transition programme, it is nevertheless important that the Aboriginal teacher is best able to explain to children in their own mother tongue when the non-Aboriginal teacher uses English beyond their comprehension. This is important and valuable providing the children are not allowed to become dependent on explanations in the mother tongue at the expense of understanding English. The Aboriginal teacher also needs to be given the time to develop and extend the children's ability in reading and writing their own language.

##### 4.2 THE NON-ABORIGINAL TEACHER

This is the main teaching area of the non-Aboriginal teacher. He/she plans the programme and teaches English as a second language to his/her children newly literate in their mother tongue. He/she will also teach other subjects in English as the children's ability develops and the need arises. The non-Aboriginal teacher also acts as a very important model for the group and as an interpreter of the culture of the second language.

### 4.3 THE LINGUIST

The job of the linguist does not end with the development of an orthography, a set of primers and some supplementary material for extra reading. The linguist's help in the transition programme is invaluable. The teachers need certain comparisons from the linguist.

(a) Comparison of Sound/Symbol Systems is needed to have an efficient transition programme. Curnow (1975) compares the following groups:

- i) no difference in sound or symbol
- ii) same symbol different sound
- iii) entirely new--that is not existing in the vernacular at all
  - a) with little pronunciation problems
  - b) with great pronunciation problems
- iv) comparison of punctuation
- v) comparison of vowel blends
- vi) word families
- vii) consonant clusters

To this list Leslie and Ken Hansen (1975) have added:

- i) sounds which occur in different places within the syllable and word
- ii) interference between the two languages
- iii) a comparison of different syllable patterns

To this list again, Hudson and Richards (1976:81-82) have added:

- i) stress
- ii) vernacular sounds transferred to English



(b) Grammatical Structures.

It is very useful for the teacher to be able to see a comparison of the Grammar Systems of the two languages. Hudson and Richards (1976:100-105) have included Word Order, Negative Questions, Why, Active/Passive Sentences, Reflexive, Pronouns, Articles, Prepositions, Instrument, The Copula, Future Tense and Conjunctions. Hall (1976:4) adds Hyphenation, Suffixes and Sentence Coordinates.

#### 4.4 TEACHER TRAINING

The non-Aboriginal teacher is a native speaker of English and a trained teacher--surely you ask he/she needs no more training to equip them for the task of teaching English as a second language. Consider then what the following authorities have to say on this important aspect:

It is not enough for the foreign language teacher to be able to speak English. To be most effective he should know English--its sound system, its structural system and its vocabulary--from the point of view of a descriptive analysis in accord with modern linguistic analysis (Fries 1945:Preface).

This also implies that teachers need to be aware of the fact that languages are structured differently, an awareness especially needed in interpreting material given by a linguist (e.g. Section 4.3).

And we emphasise strongly the fact that a teacher must not be considered trained to do an adequate job of teaching English. . .as a foreign language simply because he speaks the language as a native and has studied the conventional grammar (UNESCO 1953:700).

Andersson and Boyer (1970:113) also emphasise that English speaking teachers who are teaching English to children whose first language is not English require special training for Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

From the preceding quotes, it is apparent then that these people feel strongly that some training in the teaching of English as a second language is essential. This training would need to include a study of English as well as teaching principles. Such a course would apply not only to teachers in a bilingual programme, but also teachers who teach the large numbers of children in Australia for whom English is not the mother tongue.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There is much to be learnt from reading what others have said in relation to the transition from literacy in a vernacular to the national language--in this case English. Five things become clear:

- i) The fact that there is no one answer and there is no one method which applies to all situations even within the limitations of bilingual schools for our Australian Aboriginal children.
- ii) The fact that there are certain general principles which apply and those who are involved in transition from an Aboriginal language to English should endeavour to fulfill the requirements of these principles and apply them to our particular programmes.
- iii) There is a great need for existing programmes, particularly relating to Aboriginal bilingual schools to be documented and made available to others working in this field.
- iv) Further research into this and related areas of study is also needed. Garcia (1974:472) presents quite a comprehensive summary:
  - a) When should the second language be introduced?
  - b) When should the second language be taught?
  - c) By whom is the second language to be introduced and taught?
  - d) The degree to which the use of one or other or both languages is encouraged during, prior to and after schooling.

With these I wholeheartedly agree and would also add two more:

- e) Are babies actually taught to speak or is it instinctive within them so that speech develops according to the environment in which they are brought up and the community in which they live? The answer to this question would help in the way we teach a second language.
- f) We need more knowledge and research into the whole area of second language learning by both children and adults.

- v) There need to be more courses available for teachers of English as a second language. Courses that are already available need more publicising and need to be more accessible to classroom teachers. Perhaps there could be a course specifically related to Aborigines--this may be so. But I am unaware of it and this brings out my previous point that what is available needs more publicity.

It is now up to those involved in bilingual programmes and particularly those at the transition level to write up our findings, and perhaps research ourselves, but more particularly to share our failures and successes with others at work in Aboriginal communities with bilingual programmes in their schools.



## APPENDIXES

- A. Programmes Available.
- B. Suitable Readers for Use  
During and After Transition



## APPENDIX A

The programmes I have listed here are those already commercially published. In many cases they are not, in their entirety, suited to Aboriginal bilingual schools. They do have, however, aspects, ideas, methods, books, aids, etc. which can be used, adapted and modified to suit the needs of individuals and classes.

1. Tate Oral English Curriculum has been used in Northern Territory schools with Aboriginal children.
2. Northern Territory Oral English Syllabus. This course is specially geared for Northern Territory Schools and therefore to Aboriginal children. It uses an everyday English form with a situational approach. Emphasis is on the use of standard and correct forms of English but not at the expense of children's confidence and fluency.
3. TESL. TESL curriculums have been used by the Commonwealth Education Department and by individual State Education Departments in migrant teaching and should prove useful, particularly for activities.
4. Minenda Reading Scheme. Published by Jacaranda. This scheme has been written for PNG and has an oral strand which could be used as a guide. Teachers Guides are available for all Primary Grades--Standards 1-6.
5. The Van Leer Project. This is a language development programme devised and developed by the Queensland Education Department particularly for Aboriginal children. It is funded by a grant from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, hence the name.

The major aim of the program is to help the children to develop facility in the use of the language structures of S.E. (Standard English). . .

The second aim is to help each child to develop a favourable self concept. . .

The third aim is the stimulation of cognitive development. . .

The fourth aim is the fostering of creativity. . .

(Dept. of Education, Qld., 1971:iv-v)

The oral English strand of this programme is particularly good. It is based on children's speech.

Radio microphones fitted into special jackets were used to collect extensive samples of children's speech in a variety of natural situations. These language samples were coded and computer-analysed in order to identify and compare the language structures most commonly used by Aboriginal children from two large Aboriginal communities and by children living in a middle-class suburban area and speaking standard English. Information concerning other aspects of language competence of young Aboriginal children was obtained from the application of a series of tests. The language analyses and test results were subsequently used in the compilation of a language development program for school starters (Dwyer 1974:100-101).

This programme covers three years and integrates all aspects of school subjects around language units. It can be used both before, during and after transition. The four strands of the programme are:

- a) oral language patterns of S.E.;
- b) reading and writing skills;
- c) perceptual skills (listening, looking, touching);
- d) problem solving and critical thinking.

(Dept. of Education, Qld., 1971:xi)

Dwyer (1974:112-113) outlines the main elements of this approach to teaching. I have summarised them here:

1. An emphasis on cultural difference rather than deficit.
2. 'Children learn to talk by talking.'
3. Primary language leads to secondary language.
4. Development of language structures and vocabulary.



5. Based on children's interests.
6. Build on the children's strengths rather than lament their weaknesses.
7. Discovery learning.
8. Experience and/or environmental reading as a part of a multi-strand approach to reading.
9. Use the environment.
10. The importance of home/school relations.

6. (i) Breakthrough to Literacy.

This scheme is published by Longmans, London, and is available in Australia.

'Breakthrough to Literacy integrates the production (writing) and the reception (reading) of written language' (Mackay, Thompson and Schaub 1970:3).

Other fundamental beliefs underlying this approach are (Mackay, Thompson and Schaub 1970:3-4):

1. Reading material should be linked to spoken language.
2. Reading material should be closely linked to the children's interests and experiences and should include imaginative writing.
3. The teacher should be an active participant in the child's learning process, constantly offering guidance and help.

It is basically a language experience approach with elements of sentence, word and phonic approach also incorporated.

(ii) Modified Breakthrough.

This approach has been devised by Ian Bachelor, a Northern Territory Reading Advisor. He (1975:10) advocates a Language Experience Approach to reading with Aboriginal children for the following reasons:

1. Aboriginal children have superior visual skills.
2. Language experience makes the best use of the child's and community's unique environment.
3. It makes use of natural and not middle-class English. It uses the child's own speech patterns for determining the structure and content of reading matter--thus he (the child) is decoding his own language in a written form.
4. A language experience approach builds up a sight vocabulary very quickly.

Before the Modified Breakthrough approach is commenced he recommends (1975:10) that the following three aspects be dealt with:

1. An individual English word frequency analysis.
2. Modifications to the basic breakthrough vocabulary to suit the individual community. Addition, deletion and change in the form of modifying will need to be done--e.g. Mama for Mother.
3. A structured phonics approach after approximately 150-200 words are known by sight.

A knowledge of the breakthrough approach and materials is needed before commencing on a modified scheme.

7. LERP. Language Experience Reading Programme is a Canadian scheme and has been used with some success in at least one Aboriginal school. The programme is divided into units, each of which deals with all of the following:
  - a) phonic skills
  - b) discussion
  - c) word building
  - d) written/writing activity

Reading comprehension activities are also used.

A teacher's guide is available and also work books, reading books and phonic skill cards.

8. JILAP (Jacaranda Individualised Language Arts Programme). Published by Jacaranda, this can be used as a complete language course or as a valuable supplementary course. It includes Oral Language, Reading, Word Analysis, Spelling and Written English produced in a kit form. It includes quite a bit of material including writing books and readers.
9. Reading Programme and Phonic Cards. These books are designed for use with Happy Venture Books but can be used by themselves once children are ready to work with phonic analysis of English. Published by William Brooks and Coy., (Q.) Pty. Ltd.
10. PPA (Progressive Phonic Activities Books Intro -- 4) by Pauline Grewar 1970. Published by Carrolls Pty. Ltd. These books aim to provide a systematic sequence of sets to introduce phonics. These could be used as a guide to part of the phonic section.

## APPENDIX B

### PM BOOKS

- a) Instant Readers 1-24 books. Individual and large sizes available.
- b) Story Readers: Red, Yellow, Blue and Green sets. Published by Methuen.

### ENDEAVOUR SERIES

This series is divided into three phases--Pre-reading, Reading Skills and Extended Reading and is designed to cover the primary stage. Provides basic readers, extension readers, library books and workbooks as well as activity cards at nineteen levels. Published by Jacaranda Press.

### READY TO READ

Twelve books. Published by Methuen.

### MINENDA BOOKS

See Appendix A. Series from First Reader through Primary School. Designed for use in PNG. Published by Jacaranda.

### DO YOU KNOW WORD BOOKS

Designed for the recognition of specific words. Resources for Reading--just beginning. Published by Methuen.

### PACIFIC READERS

Two series, Infants and Junior. Written for Pacific countries. Published by A.H. and A.W. Reed.

### LINGUISTIC READER

By Stratemeyer and Smith 1968. Books 1-3. Phonic and Whole Word approach. Published by James Nisbet & Coy. Ltd.

## KIWI AND KOALA READERS

By Moira Pye--about Australian and New Zealand birds and animals. Very simple. Books 1-6. Published by Reed.

## LEGENDS OF THE ABORIGINES

Written by Isobel Weir. A series of twelve Infant Readers which depict stories of Australian Aborigines. More difficult series. Published by Reed.

## BOWMAR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERIES

Hard cover, beautiful coloured illustrations, various ethnic groups. Published by Bowmar Publishing Corporation.

Part 1. About Myself. Seven books.

Part 2. The World Around Me. Nine books.

Part 3. I Talk, I Think, I Reason. Fourteen books.

## LEARNING ENGLISH IN AUSTRALIA

Designed for use largely with migrant children aged 8-12 years, with little knowledge of English. Provides reading practice based on the structural patterns and vocabulary learned orally in Learning English in Australia. Prepared by Department of Education for Migrant Education Programme and published by Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1973. Not for sale commercially.

## KIDSBOOKS

Edited by June Factorad and Gwendda McKay. A series of books with three levels of difficulties written for children in early years of primary schools. Published by Pergamon Press 1975.

## NATURAL ENGLISH

Written by John Rudder and designed for use with Aboriginal children who speak their own form of Aboriginal English. It is based on a Gudschinsky approach and is of a high interest level to Aboriginal kids. Printed in the Northern Territory.

## Other Suitable Books

Young Australia Series  
Structural Readers - Longmans  
LERP Books  
Reader's Digest Series  
Cowboy Sam Series

Butch Readers  
McDonald Firsts  
McDonald Starters  
McDonald Countries  
'Dr. Seuss' type books  
Here Is the Family Series  
This Is the Way I Go Series  
Domino Series

This list is by no means complete and I would appreciate any contributions you have to make.

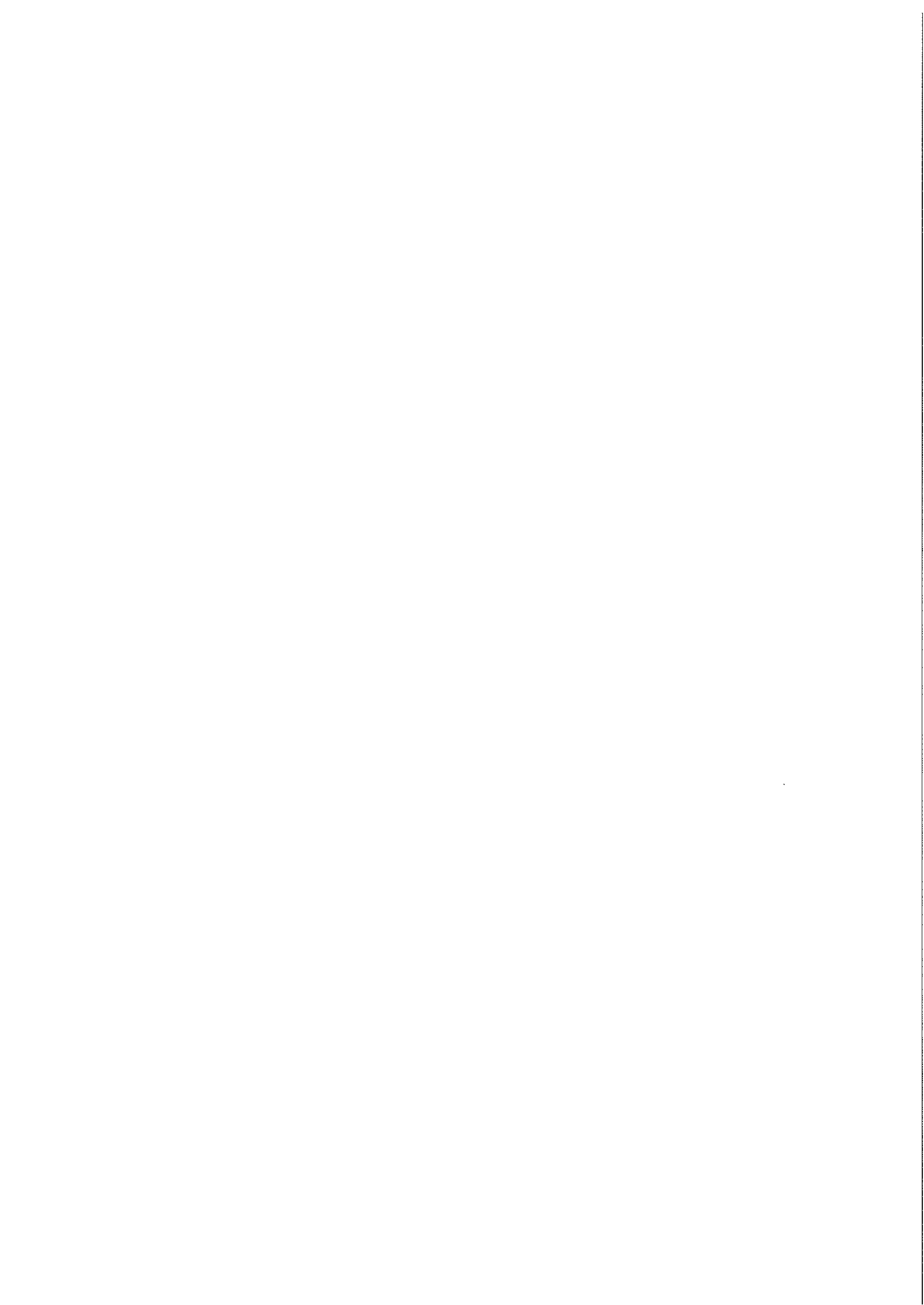
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A LITERACY PROGRAMME FOR MAXIMUM COMPATABILITY  
WITH TEACHING METHODS USED  
IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

Amee Glass

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A recent article by Kathleen Bosscher and Carol Porter (1976) of SIL Philippines describes the changes they made in their primers when they were asked 'to give specific attention in your project to finding a way in which we can accomplish our goals (reading with comprehension) with a very minimum of retraining on the part of public school teachers who will use our materials'.

From the article it appears that in Philippine schools students are taught to memorize the whole alphabet, and then the syllables, before reading words or sentences. Therefore, as Bosscher and Porter designed a literacy programme for maximum compatibility with teaching methods used in these schools, they adapted the Gudschinsky method by deleting the introduction of functors as whole words and altering the introduction of phonemes so that functors also could be sounded out from known syllables.

Since many linguists working with Australian Aboriginal languages have been asked to prepare materials for use with children in bilingual programmes in schools, I would like to consider what would be

involved in designing a literacy programme for maximum compatibility with teaching methods used in Australian schools.

#### WHAT ARE THE TEACHING METHODS USED IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS?

It seems to be a general practice for teachers to try to develop sight vocabulary skills and also word attack skills. It is generally advocated that these two types of skills should be developed concurrently.

The development of sight vocabulary is usually associated with 'look-and-say' approaches associated with basal readers,<sup>1</sup> or the use of a 'language experience' approach (Ashton-Warner 1966) where the children's actual language is written down and 'experience readers' are produced.

Word attack skills are usually developed through some programme of phonic teaching. This may or may not be associated with the use of phonic readers which may be used to supplement the basal readers or experience readers. It is quite common to find all three methods being used in one classroom.

If then, teachers in bilingual programmes would expect to use basal readers, phonics, and a language experience approach, in order for our programme to achieve maximum compatibility it may need to consist of:

1. A set of basal readers.
2. Some guidelines for 'language experience' work.
3. A phonic programme.

As a linguist, your initial reaction to such a programme may be that it is too much work. Surely it would be better to produce just one set of reading books, combining aspects of these three basic approaches. However, on the other hand, it may be easier to produce three separate sets of materials rather than try to lump everything in together.

#### CAN A METHOD BE TOO ECLECTIC?

I clearly recall a remark made by one SIL linguist, that 'making primers is like making square pegs for round holes'. Most of us have experienced the difficulties that are inherent in trying to construct what have come to be known as 'Gudschinsky-type' primers. We have tried to combine controlled gradual introduction of phonemes with

using the most natural and interesting words to make the most interesting stories. This can often be quite frustrating.

In the 'Gudschinsky-type' primers in Ngaanyatjarra,<sup>2</sup> we could kill an emu by having a dog bite it in book 1. We could also cook it, but we couldn't eat it until book 2, nor finish it (idiomatic and almost essential) until book 3. Even in book 1, only the grandmother could cook it! Kangaroos, the favourite meat, could not be killed until book 3.

It would seem that in most languages, to compose natural sentences on topics of high interest to the speakers of the language, will require the use of most, if not all, the phonemes of the language. Any 'piecemeal digestion of alphabet' plan (Townsend 1948) must leave until late in the programme some phonemes required for natural speech on high interest topics.

Therefore, it may be an easier task to construct the basal readers and the phonic programme separately. For the basal readers, our main consideration will be to use topics of high interest to children, also vocabulary and structures commonly used by them and to carefully control the rate of introduction of that vocabulary. We can utterly disregard any thought of the phonemes contained in the words.

For the phonic programme we can teach phonemes gradually without having to pay too much attention to natural stories. Perhaps we will do it through workbooks and other word-building activities. Perhaps we will have storybooks where the words which pupils are learning to build will be supplemented by the already learnt sight words to construct high interest stories.

How then do we go about preparing these three types of materials?

#### BASAL READERS

In order to determine the vocabulary and topics used most by 6-7 year old children, it would be advisable to record these children telling stories. I have found that the children quickly become used to the tape-recorder and vie with each other to tell stories. From a suitable corpus of text, the 100 most common words could be discovered. In most schools children are encouraged to give items of daily news. If these are given in the vernacular, the teacher could help by keeping a record of them and passing them on to the linguist.

Topics of high interest with the children at Warburton Ranges are:

playing - in water, in a shelter, in a car, in a tree, by a fire, let's pretend;

activities of mother and father - coming and going, hunting;

being afraid - of the feather-foot, of spirits, of camels, of the rain, of adults who scold.

With this information, simple readers can be constructed probably with just one or two sentences per page to begin with.

#### GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE-EXPERIENCE WORK

In many bilingual programmes it may be that the Aboriginal teacher is not confident in writing and spelling in the Aboriginal language. For this reason, it will be difficult for her to write directly onto the blackboard what the children tell her, or to write their own captions underneath their drawings, as is required for a language-experience approach.

One way to get around this difficulty is to develop a 'Breakthrough to Literacy' kit (Mackay, Thompson & Schaub 1970) for your language. This consists of a cardboard folder in which are found 100 commonly used words and 50 commonly used affixes. Children then use these words and affixes to construct sentences they wish to make in small plastic stands. Words not in the basic core are written out on card by the teacher when the child wants to use that word in his story. Although the teacher will still have to write some words, the bulk of them will be on the prepared cards and her knowledge of the spellings will improve with use.

The same 100 common words which form a basis for the basal readers can also be used in the Breakthrough folder.

The exercise of making sentences with the Breakthrough kit can be very helpful in teaching one-to-one correspondence of words (sound units and word cards), left-to-right placement of print, and the fact that speech can be written down.

#### PHONIC PROGRAMME

Phonics is usually understood to mean 'the sounding out of individual letters in a word and the blending of the sounds to make the word' (Drummond & Wignell 1975:21). I wish to redefine it slightly to mean the learning of the units of sound in a word and the blending of these to make a word. These units of sound could be syllables

progressing later to phonemes. The order of teaching these syllables and phonemes could be the same as that used for a 'Gudschinsky-type' primer.

If this is the order chosen, it may be possible to make a conglomerate primer, which works gradually through the sounds of the language and uses these sounds to build words from which stories can be composed. However, to prevent these stories from sounding stilted and unnatural, the words built from the sounds taught could be supplemented by common sight words already learnt by the pupils.

It may be that another order for the introduction of sounds may be chosen, one that yields words--but perhaps not story material. In this case workbooks may be constructed. The programme may also be supplemented by work with a 'Breakthrough to Literacy' word-maker. After considerable indecision as to whether the word-maker for an Aboriginal language should contain syllables or symbols, I am currently experimenting with word-makers with symbols. The pupils use the symbols to make the syllables and then the words.

## CONCLUSION

It is widely acknowledged that different approaches to the teaching of reading suit different pupils and also different teachers. For the teachers to feel at home with our materials, it may be best for us to try to produce the different kinds of materials as I have described above. We may also find that in so doing we have made our own task a more straightforward one.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Basal readers are those in which:
  - (a) the number of words is limited;
  - (b) the words are repeated throughout the texts; and
  - (c) there is a development in the complexity of sentence structure.
  
2. Ngaanyatjarra is spoken at Warburton Ranges, Jameson, Blackstone, Giles, Cosmo Newbery and Laverton in Western Australia. Some speakers also live at Docker River in the Northern Territory.



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