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## 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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NORTHERN TERRITORY BILINGUAL EDUCATION  
(WITH A PREVIEW OF A SELECTION OF PROGRAMMES  
IN SIX OTHER COUNTRIES)

E. S. Furby

0. INTRODUCTION

The reform, or even initial implementation, of the education of minority groups has been slow to eventuate in many countries--even in those who pride themselves on the high degree of social reform accomplished in recent decades. This paper has been written to examine very briefly the progress of educational advancement in a selection of countries with experience in bilingual education, and then to examine in more detail, its progress in Australia. Bilingual education is not reviewed as a whole in each country, but certain aspects which have contributed largely to the success of the programme, receive more attention than others. It is not my intention to emphasize, for example, the teaching methods employed. It will be seen that the programme in the Northern Territory of Australia has endeavoured, largely successfully, to embody those factors which experience of other countries has proved essential to a successful programme.

Bilingual education is not a new system of education, but until comparatively recently, it has not been widely adopted as a system of education for communities speaking a language other than the national language.

Everyone is an accomplished speaker of his own language, whether or not he has made any formal study of it, and so generally he considers his intimate knowledge of that language as sufficient to entitle him to vent an authoritative opinion on matters affecting language, particularly in the field of education--a subject that is of general interest to the literate world. Among the teaching

profession and the general public, there have been many who hold very decided views on bilingual education, and its antagonists have often been more vehemently vociferous than the protagonists of the system, with little or no regard to the evidence of the results of experiments in other countries. Nor have government authorities, in the past, been greatly concerned with the problems of illiterate minorities who often have a very limited and inadequate control of the national language.

In recent decades the emergence of minorities from positions of hitherto political obscurity into one of political prominence has resulted in a much greater awareness of many of the problems of minority groups. The advancement of science in the fields of transport and communication has brought these problems to the fore, as well as the emergence of many small nations to a position of independence, and their struggles for equality with older established nations and their vital need for economic advancement. This has had the result of highlighting the inadequacies of existing educational methods and the long overdue need for revision.

## 1. BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Adoption by educational authorities of the principle of bilingual education has marked the greatest advancement in the field of education of minority groups. Bilingual education is a term used very loosely to describe an educational curriculum which uses more than one language at some stage, as the medium of instruction. However, some schools have claimed to be bilingual solely on the grounds that they teach more than one language. Today this is not regarded as being a bilingual situation. There have been many definitions of the term, but one which is suited to the topic of this paper is that used by American authorities to describe programmes used in schools with a curriculum designed to initiate learning in a minority language, with a transfer to the national language at a later stage. This definition is as follows:

Bilingual Education is the instruction in two languages and the use of those languages as the media of instruction for any part, or all of the school curriculum. Study of the history and culture associated with a student's mother tongue is considered to be an integral part of bilingual education.

### 1.1 CATEGORIES OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Fishman and Lovas (1972) list four categories of bilingual education programmes in their discussion of bilingual education in

a sociolinguistic perspective. Their first category, 'Transitional Bilingualism', is a programme in which the mother tongue is used in the early grades to adjust to school and/or to master subject matter until the student's skill in the national language is developed to a point where it alone can be used as the medium of instruction.

The second category, 'Monoliterate Bilingualism', describes a programme which is concerned with development in both languages of oral-aural skills, but is not concerned with literacy in the mother tongue. Primarily these programmes would be designed for pre-school children and for parents, with focus on the ultimate development of literacy in the national language, without reference to similar development in the mother tongue. Many programmes fall into this category owing to lack of written literature and teaching materials.

Category three, 'Partial Bilingualism', uses a programme which aims for literacy in both languages. Literacy in the mother tongue is restricted to certain subject matter, generally related to the ethnic group and its cultural heritage. Limited materials are available and this often tends to imply that only the national language can control the language of the modern technological age.

The fourth category, 'Full Bilingualism', is a programme in which students are taught to develop all skills in both languages. Both languages are used as media of instruction, and the programme is directed at language maintenance and development of the minority language. The aim is to produce a generation of fully bilingual as well as bicultural people. A balanced bilingual community would be impossible to maintain, as balanced competence implies functionally equivalent languages, and a balanced biculturalism implies the maintenance of two cultures balanced to meet the needs of that generation in its society. No society can be motivated to maintain two languages if they are culturally equivalent as this means that one or other of the languages is completely redundant. Nor can two differing cultures meet the needs of one community as each culture has differing values in different areas, and one facet of culture could be redundant to the other, or could be directly opposed to the other. Therefore, while the system of education described in this category would perhaps be possible to implement, the final attainment and maintenance of its aim would be impossible.

Fishman and Lovas recommend the making of a detailed assessment of the situation in which a bilingual education programme is proposed, in order to ascertain which of these four categories would be most desirable and practical to implement. It is pleasing to note that official decisions on bilingual education and the category chosen are not often made without an emphasis on the needs and desires of the community involved. The imposition of an official policy has little

or no success, in education as in other fields, unless it satisfies the needs of the community, as well as having its approval. A thorough investigation of the language situation that exists should be made, as well as a calculated estimate of the situation that would be best to exist in the community, so that the best system of education can be provided, both in terms of the existing situation, and the direction and extent of change in that situation. From this assessment, the system should develop instructional methods appropriate to the situation, avoiding teaching students what they already know, and what they do not want to know, at the expense of developing greater skills in those areas which the community recognises and wants developed.

## 1.2 OBJECTIONS TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION

As mentioned in the introduction, many people have raised objections to proposals to institute bilingual education programmes in specified areas. Unfortunately, a great majority of these objections are raised by people who do not have a well informed knowledge of the subject. These objections generally can be divided into what may be called the mechanical aspect, and the predicted results of such a programme. Objections in both these areas would be refuted emphatically by a study of established bilingual programmes in the world-wide educational field. Bilingual education achieves those results that are most desired by those who oppose it.

The mechanical aspect would comprise those objections which argue that a bilingual programme would be impractical owing to lack of materials for instituting the programme, the difficulty encountered through insufficient teachers being available, a lack of analytical data on the vernacular, etc. These may all be perfectly valid objections at the time, or some may be valid while others may have only a small degree of validity, or none at all, but it is reasonable to assume that all these difficulties can be remedied.

Two of the main objections having regard to long-term effects of a proposed programme are, as Sarah Gudschinsky (1975) submits, fallacies and not facts. Claims have often been made that too many languages in a national setting tend to divide a country, and that the student can learn a second language if he is divorced from the vernacular. Bilingual education does, in fact, tend to correct the tendency towards divisiveness. Minority people often have a sense of inferiority, and this is a prime factor in their inability to take a rightful place in the national society. Bilingual education fosters a sense of personal worth, achieves a sense of identity, and gives courage to continue study of a second language. The attainment of the goal of literacy in the national language fits the student,

through better education, to take part in the national and social life. Bilingual education is the direct road to incorporation of ethnic minorities into national life.

## 2. EARLY BILINGUAL PROGRAMMES

Bilingual education is not a new system of education. In this section reference is made to some of the earliest programmes, records of which have been available to me for the preparation of this paper. The following is a brief account of a selection of programmes taken from records of the programmes conducted in various countries. Each programme has been selected either for its early institution and/or its feature of a particular facet contributing largely to its success, both in the immediate and permanent results. The accounts are not necessarily comprehensive. It is worth noting that some programmes have been initiated, generally in a comparatively isolated and small ethnic group such as is found in New Guinea and South America, and progressed with reasonably successful results, but owing to lack of continuity of supply of reading materials and also lack of continuing motivation (the latter often caused by the former), the people have once again reverted to illiteracy.

### 2.1 A BILINGUAL PROGRAMME IN WALES

One of the earliest records of a programme of bilingual education is that of a programme instituted in Wales in 1737. Thomas (1952) records the interesting story of a system of schools instituted by Griffith Jones. The schools were run by itinerant schoolmasters and supported by the parish which sponsored the classes. Teachers were trained in Griffith's parish, and then sent out to conduct the classes in parishes at the request of the local incumbent. The classes were for teaching reading only. Instruction was given in the Welsh tongue, and courses were of three months' duration only, but were held during the day and the evening as well. Their popularity grew quickly and the teacher training programme was soon inadequate to meet the growing demand for teachers. During the period 1737 to 1761, 3,495 schools were conducted and taught 400,000 students--practically the whole population of Wales. The people's enthusiasm was no doubt a factor in the success of the programme; they learned fast, even allowing for the long hours of instruction, and the progress of pupils was equal to that of English schools in achievements in English and general education.

## 2.2 EARLY PROGRAMMES IN AUSTRALIA

Hart (1974:55, 61) tells of the early mission schools in South Australia. The first school established for Aborigines in Adelaide by Schuerman and Tercholman in 1838 used a bilingual approach. This school used the Kaurna language as a basis for instruction and as an approach to literacy. When the children were able to read in their own language they were also taught English. A fellow missionary, Meyer, started a similar school at Encounter Bay in 1840, and it was then that it was discovered that there was more than one language. Schuerman also learned another language when he started a school shortly afterwards at Port Lincoln.

The first New Testament in an Aboriginal language was published in Dieri in 1896. The Dieri people were the tribe who gave assistance to the only survivor of the Burke and Wills expedition at Coopers Creek, and as an expression of gratitude to these people a Lutheran mission was set up there in 1868. The children learned to read and write their own language and also English.

Hermansburg Mission, founded in 1877, adopted a similar policy, and used the language Aranda for initial instruction. Better training was given here to Aboriginal teaching assistants and they later had a widespread effect on the development of their communities.

These early mission schools did not consider the possibility of teaching the Christian way of life without denouncing the Aboriginal customs. However, one of the men whose work was largely responsible for a change in this attitude to Aboriginal culture was Professor A. P. Elkin.

When a school was started at Ernabella in 1940, the vernacular approach was used, and English taught as a second language. However, a much more sympathetic approach to the Pitjantjatjara people and their culture encouraged pride in their heritage as well as in the new learning. The programme at Ernabella approaches very closely the ideal of bilingual education as it conforms to the definition later adopted by the Northern Territory Administration. (See Section 4.)

## 2.3 A PROGRAMME IN U.S.S.R.

In 1919, efforts were made in the Soviet Union to abolish illiteracy but little progress was made, even though people were allowed time from work to attend literacy classes. At that time the government was not sufficiently well established to continue the effort, and it soon lapsed (Kautaissoff 1952).

As early as 1927, the U.S.S.R. recognised the value of education in promoting national unity. Ivanova (1959) describes the campaign implemented in that year to abolish illiteracy in the Soviet Union. In the 15 republics of the union, there are 100 languages spoken by more than 400 people (figures taken from the 1959 census). At the time of launching the campaign, only 12% of the population was literate. The definition of literacy adopted to make the distinction between literates and illiterates was based on three points of attainment. (1) Being able to read a story silently and retell it, and to read a newspaper. (2) Being able to read aloud without distortion of words, and with correct intonation, reflecting observance of punctuation. (3) Being able to write receipts and letters, and to fill in forms. All these requirements were for literacy in the vernacular.

Instructors for the campaign were chosen from all walks of life in each language locality, and were drawn from college students, technicians, and literate peasants. They were trained by professional educators in what were termed basic schools. Professional supervisors were available to conduct regular checks in the schools, and instructors attended annual refresher courses. Unwritten languages were analysed and orthographies assigned. Primers and textbooks were prepared and all literature was graded to correspond with the psychology and the experience of the adult pupil. Literacy for new readers included newspapers and various educational pamphlets.

Illiterate and semi-literate people were grouped in separate classes, which in turn were regrouped according to age, ability, and occupation of the students. The basic course for illiterate people included arithmetic and literacy in the vernacular, while the semi-literates' course included geography. Additional instruction in the Russian language was given in all grades. The syllabus for one year was the equivalent of two years of elementary school. Examinations were conducted and students were required to stay at school until a pass was attained, and certificates and awards were presented each year.

The success of the programme was spectacular. In 1939, only twelve years after the inauguration of the programme to reduce illiteracy, the percentage of people passing the above test for literacy was raised from the 1927 figure to 87%!

The programme is now part of the elementary school where children are taught to read in the vernacular, while Russian is introduced orally and later in reading and writing in the second term of the first grade.

## 2.4 BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN U.S.A.

A brief look at bilingual education in the U.S.A. shows an interesting history (Andersson & Boyer 1970). Ten percent of American people are not native English speakers, and there are more than fifty languages commonly spoken in the country.

During the period 1839-80, German was the only non-English language admitted as a medium for teaching, except for French in Louisiana, and Spanish in New Mexico after 1848. In the period 1880-1917 there were many German-English schools. German was taught in many others but was not used as a medium of instruction towards an English programme. In spite of the success of the German-English bilingual schools and the high standard of attainment in both languages, current thinking about bilingualism as applied to an education system has not been uniform, and even in recent times the question of its desirability as an educational system is still raised, both in regard to a national viewpoint and for the individual child. There have been two official views on bilingualism. (1) The eventual elimination of all but one language by education and by decree, and (2) the recognition and preservation of important languages, supplemented by universal use of one or more languages to serve for official purposes and for communication across language barriers. The advantages of the latter policy in the national scene are obvious in their assistance towards international relationships with all countries in the world in the fields of diplomacy, trade, security, technical assistance--in fact, in every field where communication is desired with another country. The success of America in all these fields often depends on the cultural sensitiveness and the bilingual or multilingual skills of American representatives. For the individual child the answer is also obvious. To argue that children of a low socioeconomic class will never need to use a language other than the national one is, in effect, to deprive them of the opportunity to become eligible for such participation. To deprive a child born into a non-English situation of education in his natural language amounts to a virtual betrayal of the child's potential.

Several bilingual programmes have in fact been in use, particularly with the American Indian tribes, with marked success after many years of unsuccessful attempts to provide education in English--a language not suited to the culture of the people, nor one in which the people desired education. One of the most publicized programmes is that instituted for the Navaho Indians. Areas such as these, where the people are predominantly of the same language, is comparatively easy to institute.

Much research into bilingual education has been done in the U.S.A. in recent years, and one result has been the passing of the Bilingual



Education Act, which now makes the principle of bilingual education an official system of education for language minorities. This will go a long way towards solving the problem of inefficient education systems, particularly in city areas where there is a multilingual society. It is not easy to find a solution to an education problem in any society, especially in a country of the size of the U.S.A. where the problem is so widespread. At present it seems as though the only real solution lies in the formation of small schools geared to a programme suited to each of the major minority languages. Educators throughout the world will be watching the progress of bilingual education in these areas with interest, and no doubt they will set a pattern for reduction of illiteracy, or semi-literacy in similar situations throughout the world.

## 2.5 BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN MEXICO

Since the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1552, the government and mission schools have failed to educate all but a few of the Mexican people to a stage of fluency in Spanish. Under the rule of President Cardenas, a bilingual programme was instituted in 1939 for the Tarascan Indians. It was distinctly successful in that students made rapid progress in literacy in the vernacular and a similar rapid progress in Spanish. But owing to financial and political reasons, this and other later projects did not always have government support. Nancy Modiano (1968), Professor of Education at New York University, reports that since then some 4,000 instructors in bilingual programmes have been trained by the Department of Education. Bilingual programmes have been continued in many predominantly monolingual communities with excellent results. Most programmes aim for one year of bilingual instruction and have resulted in a significantly greater proportion of children able to read, with significantly greater comprehension. Another feature of Modiano's report of her survey was the greater success using a bilingual programme attained by girls, who are the more resistant members of the community. She proposes three factors to account for these results:

1. Learning to read in a foreign language is much more difficult than in the mother tongue, and a more skilled approach is possible by using the vernacular.
2. Attitudes influence perception--vernacular reading is more cultural, more desirable, and less frustrating.
3. The teacher's ability to communicate in the vernacular is much greater.

## 2.6 TWO BILINGUAL PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA

Sections 2.6.1 and 2.6.2 contain a very brief survey of two of the many bilingual programmes instituted in Africa. Both are selected to show the successful results obtained and the high degree of initial and continuing motivation, and community involvement in the programme.

### 2.6.1 THE PROGRAMME AT WOZI

During the 1950's, Dr. Wesley Sadler, from the Lutheran mission at Wozi in Liberia, set in progress a bilingual programme for the Loma people, numbering about 25,000 (Sadler). For the teaching staff of the campaign, 18 full time teachers were recruited and trained for work in 32 villages. Earlier attempts at teaching literacy in English had been disappointing, but motivation for the bilingual programme was good, and was attributed to three factors as follows:

1. Dr. Sadler's high degree of rapport with the people.
2. A single page news-sheet was produced and distributed regularly, and helped to foster the desire to read. The literacy teachers were conscripted as authors, and readers also contributed to it. By 1964 the news-sheet had expanded to four pages.
3. The news-sheet contained a summary printed in English. The literacy programme included materials designed to assist the transfer from the vernacular to the national language, English.

A not inconsiderable factor in the continued interest and rapid expansion of the programme was the large amount of reading material provided. Literates received a book each month, and by 1964 there were 200 duplicated books in circulation, the subject matter being of wide variation, from the translation of the Gospels, religious stories, edited literature from external sources, Loma clan histories, to English lessons. It was the responsibility of the teachers to keep in touch with people who had graduated from the literacy programme, and to bring to their notice each new publication as it became available. Sadler wrote much of the material originally, but soon changed to an emphasis on the use of materials produced by local writers. He stated that tribal writers need training in writing skills, but for literacy to be effective, it must be written by Africans, not necessarily all by the Loma people.

Dr. Floyd Shacklock, of the Committee for World Literacy and Christian Literature, visited the area in 1959. His comment (UNESCO

1959), on the success of the programme, was that the permanency of the work at Wozi was a factor in its success when compared with so-called 'special literacy campaigns carried out by literacy teams.'

Although the campaign was directed mainly at literacy in the vernacular, provision of materials for transfer into English was also made, and the latter stages of the course focused on English. For the students wishing to continue with reading in English, ample materials were available.

## 2.6.2 A PROGRAMME IN SWAHILI

Another programme of bilingual education was instituted in 1955 among tribal groups to teach Swahili. For twelve years prior to this, efforts had been made to teach Swahili in a monolingual school setting, with little success. After consultation with the chiefs and elders of the Ilamba and Turu tribes, it was decided to use the vernacular languages, Lyamba and Rimi, as an initial approach to reading. The programme involved using the vernacular until learners mastered the complex reading skills. Thereafter, the programme was continued in Swahili, the lingua franca. In 1956 primers and first stage readers were drafted at a workshop in seven vernacular languages in Tanganyika. Dr. Wesley Sadler headed the six member team from World Literacy and Christian Literature. During the next two years Swahili primers and four vernacular series of primers were produced and printed in the languages of Lyamba, Rimi, Jita, and Sukumu.

A two week workshop was held to brief 28 volunteer teachers, many of whom were chosen by the people themselves. The launching of the literacy campaign was co-ordinated with parish evangelism, and the Community Development and Agricultural Officers were invited to attend. At first, 28 classes were held, scattered over an area of 150 x 70 miles. The programme met with enthusiasm, and in the next few years, areas which originally held one class, multiplied into 15 or 20. The greatest difficulty experienced was in the supply and maintenance of teachers, who, due to family and economic pressures, were difficult to retain in the teaching corps. In four years, 900 teachers were trained for the work, which has met with great success compared with the failure of the original Swahili programme (UNESCO 1959).

## 3. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND GROWTH OF ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

In 1937, the Commonwealth Government, which is responsible for the administration of the Northern Territory, stated that any attempt at assimilation of the Aborigine should be preceded by a system of

education for him. Until this time, no attempt had been made for the education of the Aborigine other than that sponsored by missions.

### 3.1 THE INITIAL ATTEMPT AT EDUCATION

In 1948, a conference of Commonwealth and State authorities concerned with Aboriginal welfare was convened in Canberra. This conference reported that

1. Increased provision for the education of natives should be made by the governments concerned.
2. Provision should be made at suitable centres for the education of children of working natives, and that teachers should be fully qualified teachers of the education department--preferably those having a knowledge of anthropology and native education. The aim of the programme should be to give natives--full and mixed blood--training to fit them for an ordinary vocation in life with a view to their absorption into the general social and economic structure, and to qualify them to hold positions of responsibility in government institutes. Bursaries for post primary education should be provided.
3. Standard regional curricula should be prepared by commonwealth and state authorities directed along the lines to fit the Aborigine into state economy and
4. where education is imparted by missions, teachers should be trained in methods of native education and the mission schools' curricula should conform to regional curricula referred to in 3.

It was further resolved that instruction should be in English except when local conditions made it necessary for the teacher to have some knowledge of the local language.

In 1950, the Commonwealth Office of Education assumed responsibility for the administration of education of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory, including the staffing, curriculum, establishment of schools, the inspection and supervision of mission schools, and recommendation for assistance for mission schools. This responsibility was handed over to the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory in 1955. The first four schools were established in 1950 with a roll of 158. By 1963 this number had increased to 1,065. In addition to the 1950 roll, there were 12 mission schools with a roll of 597.

### 3.2 THE WATTS' GALLACHER REPORT

In 1963 Dr. Betty Watts, Lecturer of Education, University of Queensland, and Mr. J. D. Gallacher, Inspector of Schools, Welfare Branch, Northern Territory Administration, were appointed to investigate curricula and teaching methods in Aboriginal schools. The terms of reference were (Watts and Gallacher 1964:Preface):

- (1) . . . a comprehensive review of curricula and teaching methods . . . [In order to]
  - (a) lay down precise principles which should govern the construction of the curriculum;
  - (b) review the curriculum in the light of such principles and recommend a comprehensive course of instruction;
  - (c) recommend teaching methods appropriate for Aboriginal children at various levels in the primary schools, bearing in mind changes in the curriculum; and
  - (d) during the course of the inquiry to conduct a number of pilot experiments in a limited number of schools on certain aspects of curriculum and teaching methods.
- (2) Report to the Minister for Territories on all aspects of (1) above.

The report makes interesting reading and deals with the education system as it was at that time, before dealing comprehensively with what the aim of education should be, and how best to achieve it under the then policy of assimilation.

An experimental pre-school had been established at Bungalow in 1953, and had made a promising start though beset with staffing problems. Aboriginal teaching assistants had been recruited in 1953. The role of the Aboriginal teaching assistant was to prepare teaching aids, the care of equipment, assist in the correction of assignments where possible, the supervision of periods of instruction such as handwork and physical education, supervision of children's ablutions. For four years, 1960-63, courses of training for Aboriginal assistants were provided, resulting in a significant increase in the numbers of assistants available. The range of duties increased with full responsibility taken in some cases.

Mission teachers were often not fully qualified. Government assistance in the form of subsidies and teacher training had been given. Many missions had established adult education classes during the 1950's in subjects such as general education, health and hygiene, child care, home management, social studies, political education and trade training.

There was a growing awareness of the shortcomings of the policy of assimilation in seeking to educate the Aborigine into the European-Australian culture without particular regard to his own culture. Recognition that education should seek to prepare a child to take part in life to the same degree as the white Australian, but that to introduce the Aboriginal child to the same curriculum as the white does not imply that his progress towards the ideal will be as rapid or complete. How is this ideal to be accomplished? It became obvious that a different curriculum was required, one that would give the child consciousness of his own worth in the present society, and this necessitated an awareness of, and pride in his own culture. Thus the Aborigine child's workload in school years is greater than that of the white child. It is essential to formulate a programme that recognises the realities of the present situation, and is designed to foster further development within their own context, rather than to attempt to force a bridge across the tremendous cultural gap between the parents and the European community. Conflict between school and home must be avoided and the educational programme must be designed not only for the pupil to find his place in the Australian world and divorce himself from his home environment, but to combine these two. The education programme must be aimed with an awareness of the need to include parental participation through parent-teacher associations, informed talks, and open days at school. An Aboriginal teacher should take a prominent part in training in arts and crafts, dancing, music, and as story tellers, such teaching to provide an awareness of worth and basic pride in heritage.

Aboriginal education and Aboriginal advancement are tied together, and any education programme must be formulated with this in mind.

Awareness of the desirability of instruction in the child's own language was recognised by the committee, but was conceived impossible of achievement. It was argued that it was unreasonable to expect a teacher to learn the local language, having in mind the movements of teaching staff. In spite of this awareness, Watts and Gallacher put forward the recommendation that English be the language of instruction in all schools.

Criticism of past government policy concerning the education of Aborigines for almost a century could easily be made. The fact that no definite government policy in education was made until 1937, and that little or no progress was made even then in the Northern Territory until 1950, is surely a matter of concern. But criticism or condemnation of past policies are of no value unless such criticism can be used to influence further improvement in policy. Similarly, one could perhaps criticise the Watts Gallacher committee's opinion that bilingual education was a desirable but impossible system to implement in the Northern Territory, and that greater efforts were

not made by the committee to investigate further ways of implementing such a programme at least in those areas which could be considered more suitable. But it must be remembered that at that time analyses of Aboriginal languages were not available in any extent, and this is essential before any bilingual programme could be instituted.

#### 4. THE BILINGUAL BOMBSHELL

. . . on 14 December, 1972 the Prime Minister announced that the Federal Government would "launch a campaign to have Aboriginal children living in distinctive Aboriginal communities given their primary education in Aboriginal languages." The Minister for Education then set up an Advisory Group to prepare guidelines for the incorporation of the Aboriginal language and other aspects of Aboriginal culture into the normal school program. This Group consisted of Dr. Betty Watts, Reader in Education at the University of Queensland; Mr. J. L. Tandy of the Department of Education, Canberra; and Mr. W. J. McGrath, an Inspector of Schools in the then Aboriginal Branch in the Northern Territory. The result of nearly four weeks of visiting Aboriginal communities and discussions with representatives of these communities, and with teachers, Education Department Officers and other interested people, was the report "Bilingual Education in Schools in Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory". This report is now the basic guideline for the development of bilingual programs in the Northern Territory.

The above is a quotation from the First Annual Report of the Bilingual Education Programme in Schools in the Northern Territory (McGrath 1973:1). 'As a working definition of bilingual education the Northern Territory Education Division has adopted that formulated by the United States in framing its Bilingual Education Act . . . ' The definition is as follows (McGrath 1973:2):

Bilingual education is the use of two languages, one of which is English, as mediums of instruction for the same pupil population in a well-organised program which encompasses part or all the curriculum and includes the study of the history and culture associated with the mother tongue. A complete program develops and maintains the children's self-esteem and the legitimate pride in both cultures (Bilingual Education Act, U.S.A., Title VII ESEA).

The Prime Minister's announcement came somewhat in the nature of a bombshell in the Northern Territory, particularly as the government had been in office only about one month. The implementation of the scheme was, in the opinion of many members of the education field,

impossible at that time owing to lack of preparation of materials and staff necessary for such a radical change. Nevertheless, in spite of the obvious difficulties, the programme commenced in 1973 in five schools in the Northern Territory, and in six more in the following year.

#### 4.1 CONSTITUTION AND FINDINGS OF THE ADVISORY GROUP

At the request of the Minister of Education, following the Prime Minister's announcement concerning bilingual education, an advisory group was constituted and convened in Darwin in January 1973. The group comprised Dr. Betty Watts, Reader in Education, University of Queensland; Mr. W. J. McGrath, Inspector of Schools, Aboriginal Education Branch; and Mr. J. L. Tandy, Department of Education, Canberra.

The task of the group

. . . was to examine the nature and extent of the resources available and in the light of its findings to make recommendations for the implementation and development of a program involving teaching in Aboriginal languages and the incorporation in the school curriculum of further elements of traditional Aboriginal arts, crafts and skills (Department of Education 1973:3).

The following is a quotation from the same source (1973:7, 8) of the recommendations made to the Minister after an extensive investigation of schools, consultations with staff and other interested people, etc.:

- 1.2.1 The school should be the agent of cultural continuity rather than of cultural discontinuity, with the non-Aboriginal Australian culture being introduced in a manner acceptable to the people.
- 1.2.2 The school should help to foster the children's pride in their ethnic identity and aid their development of favourable self-concepts.
- 1.2.3 The school, through its teaching personnel, should offer the children effective and acceptable models from within their own ethnic group.
- 1.2.4 The school program should be developed and implemented in such a way that the adults of the community feel an involvement in and responsibility for the education of their children.
- 1.2.5 The above goals can be achieved only when the language of the community is an integral part of the school program.



The report further stated that a survey showed that there are 138 Aboriginal languages in use in the Northern Territory, and that there are only a few areas in which only one language is spoken. In others there is a dominant language with significant minorities of speakers of one or more languages with approximately equal significance. In still other situations there are two or more groups of speakers of languages of approximately equal size, with perhaps smaller minority languages. In some communities a wide range of languages is spoken.

No linguistic analysis has been made, nor is currently proceeding in many of these languages. The diversity of languages in a school area, and this lack of language analysis is a major limiting factor in the practicability of bilingual education. General agreement within the community must be achieved as to the language or languages to be used in a bilingual programme, as community approval is a vital factor in the success of such a programme. However, there are many communities in which a bilingual programme could be successful, even if some pupils have to learn a language other than their own. In some areas, a second language attains a general understanding, even if not spoken. The necessity of learning a second Aboriginal language in order to take part in a bilingual programme is still preferable to a complete programme in English, which is the only alternative.

The report also emphasises the advantages of a bilingual system for the Australian Aborigine, whose position is similar to that of minority language groups in other countries. Motivation, generally very low, is likely to increase considerably when the medium of the child's native language is used. Oral fluency is essential as a prerequisite for successful reading. The learning of reading is a more simple process in the vernacular, partly owing to the correlation between grapheme and phoneme, in comparison with the English language. Results of bilingual education in many countries have shown that the transfer of reading from the vernacular to the national language is much less difficult than the accomplishment of initial reading in the second language.

The advisory group found that among those Aboriginal people interviewed, a general desire for literacy in English was present. It is, of course, essential for the attainment of cultural well-being both within the nation and world-wide. The full range of resources for the development of Aboriginal children could not be translated.

The advisory group also advocated the continued use of both languages in the spheres best suited by one or other, and that the Aboriginal language should remain as that used for instruction in culturally relevant subjects. The goal of the bilingual programme is for children to achieve maximum fluency and command in both languages.

The report lists models for differing programmes after consideration of the Aboriginal cultures and their location within the broader Australian context, educational, psychological and linguistic principles, and the availability of teaching teams comprising both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, and having regard for overseas developments and research projects.

Two main models are proposed, with similar general aims; that of using the Aboriginal language as the main medium of instruction until literacy is mastered. A small proportion of instruction in oral English will commence in pre-school, gradually increasing after literacy has been mastered until about 3/4 of the programme is conducted in English in the post-primary grades. The two models vary in the pre-school and infant schools according to whether the Aboriginal languages have been analysed and recorded by linguists. The variation provides a small increase in the use of oral English in pre-school, and literacy in English with further increase in English instruction. A note of warning is sounded, that there should not be too rapid an introduction to literacy in English, nor to English as the language of instruction. A premature use of English would cause the children to be educationally disadvantaged. Other models provide variations in the programme according to linguistic and social complexities, particularly in multi-lingual communities when one Aboriginal language may not gain universal acceptance.

Emphasis has been placed on the fact that linguistic grounds are insufficient on which to base a decision on the choice of language used for instruction. That decision must be left to the community.

#### 4.2 FIRST PROGRESS REPORT ON THE BILINGUAL PROGRAMME

Since the commencement of the bilingual programme, an annual report has been produced by the Northern Territory Education Division, and they provide interesting and satisfying reading. In spite of the fact that very little preparation time was allowed, the programme got away to a good start, and the first annual report was most encouraging. It is not intended to quote much of this report, as most subjects are covered again in the second annual report. However, in considering the diversity of situations in the Territory as explained in the Advisory Group Report, it is of interest to quote the following (McGrath 1973:7, 8):

Because of the different natures of the communities where bilingual programs operate (or may do so) objectives within the respective programs may well differ from place to place. However, it is generally agreed that the general aims which follow would be applicable to all centres. These aims are not arranged in any particular order.

- (a) To develop competency in reading and writing in the Aboriginal language.
- (b) To develop competency in reading and writing in English.
- (c) To develop sufficient skill in the use of Oral English before attempting to teach specific subject areas in that language.
- (d) To present subject matter of the school program in the language most suitable for the instructional purpose.
- (e) To foster greater proficiency in school subject areas, and better understanding of them, by use of the Aboriginal language where appropriate.
- (f) To develop a more healthy self-concept in each child through the systematic use of the Aboriginal language as a medium of instruction, and the incorporation of studies of other aspects of Aboriginal culture.
- (g) To develop closer communication, involvement and mutual understanding between school and community.
- (h) To develop better understanding of both cultures--that of the Aboriginal people themselves (and not only of a particular community) and of the dominant non-Aboriginal society.

These aims are seen as basic guidelines from which more specific objectives for the school or classroom level can be devised.

The first five schools to use the bilingual programme were set up in areas where linguists had already finalised an orthography for the language after an analysis of the language had been made. The Department has necessarily had to rely heavily on the assistance of linguists for the preparation of materials, assistance in training of Aboriginal teachers and the provision of general advice on linguistic matters. This assistance has been willingly given and is much appreciated by the Department. However, there are insufficient linguists available to do the language analysis, assign an orthography and develop literacy materials in areas that could conceivably support a bilingual programme. In all cases, the teaching of the Aboriginal language is done entirely by native speakers of that language, as is also done in teaching aspects of the Aboriginal culture. In some cases this is done in school time by the Aboriginal teacher; in some others a member of the community teaches these aspects. In some cases the community feels that some cultural aspects need to be done away from the school. In all cases, the wishes of the community are respected. Some trouble was experienced in the retention of Aboriginal staff, as was expected.

However, this trouble became less apparent as the year progressed, and was considerably less than first envisaged.

Literature production is one of the most pressing needs in all areas. Numbers of books of stories and related materials have been produced by mission linguists and by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, though most of this has been geared for use by adults. A number of duplicated stories and other materials have been produced in areas where a bilingual programme is in force, but the Department rightly considers that these materials should be produced in the various Aboriginal languages at a standard at least similar to such materials available in English. The Department is dependent on the Government Printer for the production of such books, and the printer is experiencing difficulty in producing books at the speed required.

#### 4.3 SECOND PROGRESS REPORT ON THE BILINGUAL PROGRAMME

The year 1973 was basically an experimental one as little preparation for bilingual education was done before that year. But in spite of the difficulties, bilingual education was being carried out in eleven schools in 1974.

Four types of bilingual programmes were in operation in 1974 and are briefly described as follows (McGrath 1974:1):

1. Based on initial literacy in the Aboriginal language, followed by literacy in English (dependent on a practical orthography and availability of materials for teaching in the Aboriginal language).
2. Based on early instruction in the Aboriginal language, but with initial literacy in English (no orthography and/or no materials available).
3. Revival program. (Community asks for revival and teaching of the Aboriginal language no longer spoken by the children.)
4. Elective program. (Where, generally in multi-lingual communities, children are given the opportunity to do work in their own language--usually the older groups.)

Pre-school programmes are basically oral and are similar in all schools with bilingual education. No revival programme is yet commenced, but it will involve the teaching of the Aboriginal language and will commence with older groups of children.

One elective programme is operating in a high school using a course in an Aboriginal language with Aboriginal students as teachers. Another school is keen to start a similar course.

All bilingual schools use Aboriginal teachers, though the teaching of aspects of the Aboriginal culture is done by the Aboriginal teacher, or members of the community, or both. In some schools this is done in specially designated areas away from the school.

The following lists the criteria considered essential to the successful establishment of a bilingual programme (McGrath 1974:3):

- (a) Agreement and support of the community in principle for the institution of a bilingual programme. When the proposal is initiated by school staff, the Education Department requires consultation with the community to gauge its reaction.
- (b) Agreement and support of community for the use of a particular language . . . (vital in a multilingual community).
- (c) Availability of Aboriginal teachers for instruction in the Aboriginal language.
- (d) Suitable non-Aboriginal teachers for instruction in the Aboriginal language.
- (e) Basic reading scheme and supporting supplementary materials.
- (f) A resident linguist, or a linguist familiar with the language who is readily available for advice and assistance when required.
- (g) Agreement and co-operation of school staff. The total school needs commitment to the programme or at least have an open mind about it.

The involvement of linguists was again highlighted in the 1974 report (McGrath 1974:5). In general, schools that showed the most advancement were those that could call on the services of a linguist whose services were sought particularly in the following ways:

- (a) preparation of structured reading schemes and other materials in the Aboriginal language;
- (b) preparation of Aboriginal teachers to use the above materials;
- (c) organisation of classes in Aboriginal languages for non-Aboriginal teachers;
- (d) editing stories to be printed in the Aboriginal language; and

- (e) providing linguistic advice to school personnel and advisory staff.

The need for research in many areas is recognised and also an evaluation of the results achieved by children participating in the bilingual programmes. Arrangements have been completed for studies to be made in this area during 1975 and continuing for about 18 months. The findings should form a basis for development of curricula where Aboriginal languages are the main medium of instruction in the early years.

The report (McGrath 1974:13) includes in its conclusion the following:

There has been rapid expansion in the use of Aboriginal languages . . . during 1974. More and more Aboriginal communities are becoming aware that their language can become an important vehicle of instruction . . . more teachers are becoming aware of the principles of bilingual education and promise it has for raising the standard of education in schools in Aboriginal communities. There still remain small pockets of resistance . . . lack of understanding . . . once the concept is explained much of the resistance appears to dissipate . . . A major problem in this regard appears to occur in multi-lingual communities. Plans are in hand, however, . . . for the use of major languages in these communities . . .

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In 1974 Drs. O'Grady and Hale were invited to the Northern Territory to examine and report on the bilingual programme. The experience of both these men suited them admirably for an informed assessment of the programme.

Dr. O'Grady is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, and Dr. Hale is Professor of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States of America. Both men had considerable previous experience in working in Australian Aboriginal languages and are acknowledged as two of the leading authorities in Australian linguistics (Department of Education 1974b:4).

Their report (O'Grady and Hale 1974:3-6) presented to the Cabinet of the Federal Government contained the following recommendations:

1. That bilingual education programs be established as quickly as possible in communities which request them.

2. That bilingual education programs be run on a half-day basis (8.00 to 12.00), at least during the first two or three years of operation.
3. That the Aboriginal base of the bilingual education staff be constantly broadened.
4. That special provision be adopted for the recruitment of non-Aboriginal staff in Bilingual Education programs.
5. That newly recruited non-Aboriginal staff be given time each day for language and culture study.
6. That provisions be made for the temporary replacement of bilingual education personnel who are on leave for various courses of study.
7. That adult education facilities at the site of each bilingual program be strengthened and that language-related study constitute a regular component within it.
8. That efforts be continued to develop curricula relevant to the needs of each Aboriginal community with emphasis on the use of the Aboriginal language in teaching aspects of these curricula.
9. That efforts be begun as soon as possible to broaden the scope of educational materials in Aboriginal languages.
10. That the principles of Language Engineering be made known on a community-wide basis so that the conceptual apparatus of the vernacular can be brought as quickly as possible into alignment with the modern world.
11. That efforts be made to solicit from the A.I.A.S. linguistic and anthropological research felt by each community to be relevant to the implementation of the Bilingual Program.
12. That the School of Australian Linguistics be approached about making a feasibility study of the use of linguistics as a means of teaching scientific method in bilingual schools.
13. That a growing library of tape recordings be established in association with each bilingual education program for the purposes of documenting the oral literature and specialized knowledge of the community.

14. That non-Aboriginal linguists (or anthropologists) doing independent research in a given area be encouraged to involve themselves in the establishment, maintenance, and broadening of Bilingual Programs.
15. That in multilingual communities, community feeling and the degree of similarity among the various languages be primary factors in determining the precise form of a Bilingual program.
16. That in implementing Bilingual Education in communities where the linguistic usage of adults and children is markedly different, studies be undertaken to determine which variety of language the children feel most comfortable with, and that they be taught in this medium in their initial school experience.
17. That the English-based creole be used in early education in communities where children speak it as their first language.
18. That the introduction of literacy in English be adjusted according to the proficiency of children in vernacular literacy and oral English.
19. That each new bilingual education program seek to provide training in vernacular literacy for all school children enrolled at the inception of the program.
20. That a finalized orthography not be viewed as the sine qua non of a bilingual program.
21. That communities with a beginning Bilingual Program be imbued with the slogan "Flood the Place with Literature" as a means of encouraging the most rapid and effective attainment of literacy in the vernacular.
22. That Aboriginal communities be encouraged to appoint individuals or committees to draft a Guide to Manners for non-Aboriginal teachers entering the Bilingual Program, and that this document be translated into the English language and be made available in the form of a bilingual brochure.
23. That selected high school students resident at the three Collegès (Dhupuma, Kormilda, Yirara) be enabled to offer Aboriginal language instruction to individual students from the local high schools.
24. That previous efforts to explain the nature of Bilingual Education to a wider Australian audience be expanded.



25. That the Department of Education arrange for the production of one or more feature-length films depicting the Bilingual Education program in operation.

Further to this set of recommendations is an admirable summary (source and date unknown) of the aims of the programme and what should be expected from it in the future of the Aboriginal.

Acceptance of the principle of Bilingual Education in any country is valuable in many respects. Not only will it increase the amount of literature in the minority language, which will have a reciprocal effect in that increased literature will increase interest in the language. But Bilingual Education is not an end in itself. It must be regarded as a means to an end, and the broadest vision of that end must lead to an ever increasing effectiveness of the program. It must fulfill the primary purpose of fitting the student into a position of importance in the national life, instead of one of obscurity. There must be made available positions of employment for the school leaver--positions that have the possibility of advancement. Higher education must be available to the student if he desires to continue his general education, or to specialise in some field. In other words, the bilingual program will have failed if it does not fit the Aborigine into as good an opportunity in the Australian community as is obtainable by the European student. Certainly there are other factors influencing this, but it must be the aim of the Department of Education to see that the Aborigine has the chance to attain what Governments in the recent past have stated as their aim--to improve the lot of the Aborigine. His lot must be improved, not only by the granting of land rights, extending the privileges of citizenship to equal the degree enjoyed by the white Australian, but to have him graduate from school, proud of his racial origin, of the skills of which he is master in his own cultural setting, and yet be able to consider himself as the equal of others in the broader Australian culture.

## 6. CONCLUSION

It appears that bilingual education has certainly made quite a spectacular entrance into the educational field in the Northern Territory of Australia, and the results can confidently be expected to far exceed earlier attempts to give the Aboriginal the education that will go a long way towards fitting him into the broader Australian culture. One of the most valuable results will be to give him a respect for himself that has not been possible since his early contact with the white man--a respect for his language and culture which has for so long been derided. It is more than pleasing to note the

change from an early view that the Australian Aborigine was a human being of such low intelligence that he was impossible to educate! Yet that was a widely held belief not too many years ago.

Again I would quote from O'Grady and Hale (1974:1):

We are extremely impressed with the Northern Territory Bilingual Program--so much so that we are inclined to assert that this program constitutes one of the most exciting educational events in the modern world.

To those of us who have had the privilege of working with the Aborigine, this is indeed true.

The Australian Government has undoubtedly been slow to learn from the experience of other countries in the field of education--the results of bilingual education have been widely published and available to educational authorities for some considerable time--some of them from as long ago as, or earlier than the Commonwealth's first decision to provide education for the Aborigine. But recriminations are worthless, and it must be admitted that official policies of integration, and later, assimilation, have not lent themselves to a recognition of the value of the retention of Aborigine culture or language, nor of the necessity of adapting it to fit into the broader Australian culture. It is apparent that the Federal Government has, once the decision to introduce bilingual education was made, made a wise selection in the composition of the Advisory Group constituted in January 1973. This group was responsible in so large a part for the incorporation into its suggested programme, of the necessary features shown by the experience of other countries to have been essential for the success of the programme.

The programme in the Northern Territory has a lot to commend in it, and the Department of Education is to be congratulated on the progress made in spite of so little opportunity to prepare for it. But had the department not been 'bulldozed' into the programme as it was, I wonder how long it would have been before it would have been fully prepared to institute a bilingual programme? How long will it be before other states in Australia will adopt the same official policy?

The Department is doing its best to fit the Aborigine into the wider Australian scheme of life, but there are obvious problems ahead for the Aborigine in the Territory--can it absorb the educated Aborigine into the work force of the future? Education can fit him into a position to enable him to qualify for equal opportunity with the white Australian, but it would seem that the future could still be bleak for him unless more opportunities are created for full

employment. Some of the lack of motivation for learning in the past has been due to his inability to find it useful--even those few who have had an opportunity to learn trades have found no outlet for their newly attained skills. This is a problem not only for the Government, but for all Australians to accept the responsibility as theirs also.

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