A Whole Language approach to transition literacy

A Peruvian Quechua trial

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1. Introduction

This paper is an effort to explore the research and to apply the principles of Whole Language reading to the realities of literacy in a Quechua-speaking mountain area of Peru. It will focus specifically on transitional approaches for readers who have had some exposure to literacy skills in Spanish. The paper will not attempt to address the needs of the completely monolingual illiterate, though we now have some ideas as to how that sector might be approached as well.

2. Literacy and the Peruvian Quechua

2.1. The Quechua people of Peru

The Quechua people of Peru—numbering 10 to 12 million—love and use their language(s) in most familiar contexts. However, efforts to develop literacy and/or education programs based on Quechua have generally met with little success.

Why is it that Quechua literacy appears to be so difficult? After 20 years of good, but sporadic attempts in various dialect areas, very few programs have really taken hold and produced a literate community. Granted, the conditions are difficult. Four hundred and fifty years of cultural domination have undermined much of the Quechua people's motivation to read in their own language. Poverty and subsistence farming leave little time for study or pleasure reading. Furthermore, the dearth of adequate reading materials in Quechua complicates the picture, while persistent and emotive debates about orthography issues make it equally difficult to produce literature.

2.2. Educational policy

The current government school system in Spanish has had some success in producing Quechuas who are literate in Spanish. Many of these, however, have in the process lost their rural Quechua culture and learned to belittle their own Quechua language. In the rural communities of South Conchucos, many students who enter a Spanish first grade classroom are monolingual in Quechua. For these, the dropout rate before Grade 4 exceeds 50 percent. By Grade 6 (end of primary school), another 20 percent leave school. Less than 10 percent will complete high school (personal communication from education office—Huari, Ancash) In the towns, the numbers improve somewhat, but at even greater expense to Quechuan language and culture.

To counter some of these tendencies, the Ministry of Education is seeking to develop strategies for the Quechua areas. However, this effort is still in its infancy and it is difficult to predict how it might do. There has been some resistance to the idea of bilingual education on the part of Quechua parents, because of the perceived advantage of Spanish as the language of economic advancement.

The multimillion dollar, 10-year Puno project, sponsored by the German government in southern Peru, has been abandoned as unfeasible, largely due to parental resistance and a lack of government and community support.

Limited economic resources for school districts means a lack of even a minimum supply of books and materials. Together with poorly trained, underpaid teachers lacking enthusiasm, it is evident that the prospects for significant changes or improvements in the existing system are not good.

There have been various SIL attempts to produce Quechua primers, such as the Waran Waran series from the Huánuco area and the Allichu primer (1983) in Huaraz, but these have not been used extensively. They have not produced significant numbers of literates. The Sacred Heart Women's University, in conjunction with the Ancash Quechua Academy, has also adapted primers from the southern dialects and produced a nice children's reader. These, too, have met with a similar lack of enthusiasm.

2.3. Linguistic difficulties within Quechua

Another stumbling block appears to be the language itself. Quechua is a family of agglutinating languages which features verbs with up to 15 suffixes per word (4.1 suffixes per average verb) in the South Conchucos dialect (Easthouse: unpublished calculations for South Conchucos). The complex linguistic structure of the language makes Quechua challenging for the reader. There has been much debate about the orthography, and the decision to use certain sound representations is not well motivated linguistically. There needs to be more study of the use of diaeresis for vowel length, as well as the interrelation of stress and length. It may be that not as much needs to be written as linguists have previously assumed. Many of the languages are apparently undergoing a loss of inherent length. The day may come, when length will not need to be specified in the central Peruvian dialects (D. Weber, personal conversation).

The lack of a "standard" Quechua—a functional equivalent to "High German"—that is accepted by the majority of Quechua speakers means that written materials are, at the very best, of value only within the region for which they are produced.

The need to produce multiple versions of materials implies, of course, greater costs for materials for teacher training and for supervisory structures for each local area.

The government, at one point, attempted to impose the Cuzco dialect as a standard Quechua, but was not successful because of the magnitude of differences between the southern (standard Quechua A group, according to Torero) and central dialects (Quechua B group). Central speakers cannot understand southern speakers, so that, in effect, the standard from Cuzco became another second language to the central areas competing with Spanish in its own sociolinguistic contexts.

Yet, there are bright spots. After 20 years since the bilingual education project ceased in Ayacucho, we find thousands of literate Quechuas seeking copies of the newly published Bible (September 1987) and other religious materials. It is apparent that the highest achievement has been among religious groups whose apparent motivation was to be able to read Scripture (Whalin 1993:170). The number of Quechuas, in the Ayacucho area, able to read exceeds the most optimistic expectations based on the history of the project.

2.4. Political insecurity

The influence of the well-publicized antigovernment movement, known as the *Sendero Luminoso,* is still felt in much of the Andean area. National and expatriate educators and fieldworkers are not able to move freely in order to plan programs, distribute materials, hold training sessions, and so forth. The unstable political situation continues to restrict classes or other community meetings in some rural areas.

Any kind of a literacy program developed in this context must consider such limitations. Accordingly, we envision learning taking place in a small group (family unit, church group, and so forth) with a self-teaching cassette packet that can be played over a number of times. After the material in this packet has been mastered, the packet can be exchanged for another of the same level or a progressively more difficult packet of reading materials.

3. The Whole Language approach

3.1. Whole Language: A definition

The Whole Language approach is, in a sense, a methodology as well as a theory. The impetus for Whole Language reading has come from the perceived failure—in at least some cases—to produce successful readers using traditional word attack-based approaches. In searching for solutions, researchers and classroom teachers began to reassess the practice of teaching reading, and found that, in some situations, little meaningful reading was done by the learner in the process of learning to read. Some compared the process to learning to drive. The learner can be given all of the rules and know all the things one needs to do to drive. However, it is not until the student gets behind the wheel and actually starts to drive, that he really learns to drive. Real stories, it was argued, are like real cars; you only learn by doing.

The Whole Language approach is, in essence, a return to literature. Reading is learned by listening and observing others reading, by practice—reading real stories by learning letter and world attack skills in context, and by participating in writing meaningful pieces that are read to or by someone else. Whole Language proponents want to immerse their students in the world of print. Furthermore, all contact with print should be meaningful. From the first word to the last, the reading process ought to communicate something. It should provide ready movement between the written page and the reader's world.

Numerous studies have pointed out the gains made by children who are read to regularly in contrast to the handicap of children who have not been exposed to such immersion in print. Researchers have noted how frequently children have taught themselves to read while listening to older siblings or "playing" with recorded storybooks. This is not to endorse much of the "child-centered" educational philosophy that has become associated with Whole Language, rather, to lift the reading element out of the backdrop.

The whole "cognitive" academic discipline has emerged that seeks to explain how meaning is derived from print. The overwhelming evidence is that people, children and adults, learn to read by "guided" reading.

3.2. Guided reading

In Whole Language, teachers are an important part of the learning process but they do different things. The teacher's role is to guide the reader and to help him/her gain meaning as well as processing skills. Thinking out loud has proved to be an effective modeling procedure, showing what good readers do in the process of reading.

Drawing from the work in second language acquisition, teachers have come to see the importance of hearing before producing and understanding before correcting. In many ways, it appears that the process of learning to read is similar to that of mastering a second language. It is learning a new language—the language of print.

3.3. Whole Language: Key components

Theory about teaching reading can be generally divided into two schools of thought (Evans and Carr 1985; Fox 1987). The first, focuses on the instructional techniques which assume that reading is the

"consequence of mastery of a series of discrete tasks" (Weir 1989:456). Phonics and basal readers which focus attention on letters and individual sounds are examples of this approach. The second category, "is premised on the belief that during literacy acquisition, all forms of language competence (reading, writing, listening, speaking) develop concurrently. Understandings about print are extrapolated by children across experiences that permit meaningful interaction with oral and printed language" (Weir 1989:456). Language Experience, Big Books, and Process Writing are examples of this approach. These techniques are often referred to as "holistic" or "global."

Whole Language is part of this second family of methodologies. It seeks to create a literate environment and to help the learner take advantage of that environment. The key components of whole language are

(1) a print-rich environment

(2) a holistic approach to language (speaking, reading, writing, listening)

(3) an emphasis on the process and purpose of print

(4) extended interaction with print and oral language

(5) effective models of the cognitive process, and

(6) the use of natural text (stories, poetry, dialogue).

In *The Reading Teacher*, March 1989, Michael Tunnel and James Jacobs (Tunnell and Jacobs 1989:470–477) present an excellent summary of the current research and extrapolate a detailed list of the key elements of Whole Language instruction. The following list is a summary of their review. (The explanations of each point are mine.)

3.3.1. Premises learned from *natural readers*

Whole Language advocates view the process of learning to read like the process of learning to speak or learning a new language. Children who have taught themselves to read with no formal instruction, have much to teach in relation to what is the process of learning to read. Tunnel and Jacobs cite several studies that have reinforced the intuition that early reading in the home and extended interaction with print lead to strong readers. "Immersion in natural text at an early age has the same effect on reading as immersion in aural and spoken language has on speech" (Tunnel and Jacobs 1989:474).

3.3.2. Use of natural text

In all of the research literature about cognitive processing and reading, it has become clear that superior progress is made when the literature used is uncontrolled, natural language. Language that is controlled tends to create stories that lack contextual clues, grammatical function clues, predictability, and style. Children find controlled literature more difficult to read than uncontrolled natural language (Goodman 1988).

3.3.3. Neurological Impress method

This is often referred to as *repeated reading.* Carol Chomsky's 1978 study of "reading" with a tape recorder demonstrated significant gains among stalled readers. The original design called for the introduction of analytical lessons tied to each story and to be done after the story had been mastered with the tape. Her results indicated that the gains were made, whether or not the analytical lessons were completed. The children learned to read by developing the cognitive processes necessary through the repeated reading of the same story until they could read it fluently.

Big Books, reading pairs, and cassette books all accomplish the same process.

3.3.4. Reading aloud

Being read to is critical to learning to read. Learners need to hear what good reading sounds like. This is a companion skill to neurological impress and modeling. It is interesting to note how many reading programs assume reading, but do not actually include reading anything more than a lesson plan and an occasional simple sentence to the learners. This is especially problematic for adults who can understand far more than they can produce (from the printed page) and need the stimulation and encouragement of models (natural text) that are appropriate to their lives.

3.3.5. Sustained silent reading

New readers need time to be alone, uninterrupted, with books. The more exposure to the printed page, the better the reader becomes. Anderson, and others in *Becoming a nation of readers* (Anderson 1985:119), say that the time children spend in independent reading "is associated with gains in reading achievement." Rereading is as effective and often more effective than something new (Dowhower 1989).

3.3.6. Teacher modeling

Learners need to see examples of successful reading in a variety of contexts. Motivation to read is provided by seeing someone else successfully use reading for personal advantage, whether for pleasure or for business.

3.3.7. Emphasis on changing attitudes

Students who learn to read by practicing reading, love to read. Wide and consistent exposure to the written page brings an appreciation and love for reading. This may be a critical factor in the Quechua situation. Books, lots of books, in their language gives Quechua prestige. Seeing others read, enjoy, and value their literature and language counteracts one of the devastating factors that has constrained the development of Quechua literacy up till now.

3.3.8. Self-selection of reading materials

Tunnel and Jacobs say, “Every study examined had a time when students at every age level were encouraged to find and read books of their own choosing” (Tunnel and Jacobs 1989:476). This presupposes the availability of books, and encourages the production of a wide variety of local books as part of the program.

3.3.9. Meaning oriented with skills taught in context

Letter lessons and analytical skills have a critical place in Whole Language, but they are drawn out of the material being read and are quickly moved back into the “real” reading for practice (Chomsky 1978; Eldredge 1986; Holdaway 1979). Skills come as a result of exposure to text. It is a consolidation process that helps the learner formulate premises and word attack skills based on familiar material.

3.3.10. Process writing and other output skills

Because the emphasis is on integrated skills, reading naturally leads to and comes from writing. Chomsky (1978) states that students who pursued vigorous writing progressed the best, both in writing and reading. Some kind of output needs to accompany reading to consolidate the gains made. Writers’ workshops, dictated stories, and creative writing exercises need to be incorporated into reading lessons.

3.4. The role of repeated reading

Particular elements of Whole Language theory seem highly relevant to the Quechua situation. I turn now to a consideration of those elements, to show their possible role in a transition literacy program for Quechua.

The technique of repeated reading has particular significance for adult literacy in the Quechua context. Repeated readings of natural text is a device for developing, as well as recovering, skills that have been lost through years of nonreading. In many cases, particularly with adults who may have completed one or two years of school as much as 20 or 30 years ago, reading skills are rusty, if not lost altogether. They lack confidence in their ability to read. In many cases, the mere knowledge that they do not have to read a text perfectly the first time, gives the new reader the courage to give it a try.

The research that has focused on the effects of repeated reading (RR) on oral reading comprehension and fluency is most interesting. The influence of reading in Spanish, which is often simply phonetic decoding with complete loss of meaning, has influenced the Quechua learner. The result has typically been a stilted and artificial reading style which falsely models the process of “true reading.” The Quechua must often master the notion that reading is for meaning, as well as learning to read printed text in a manner which mimics the oral production of similar material.

3.5. Rereading increases retention

Rereading is a strategy which produces a marked increase in factual retention. The whole process of comprehension and retention is benefited. For new readers, the first time through a passage requires such

concentration on the reading process that the reader does not catch much of the content. Rereading enables them to focus on other levels of mental processing and sort out the content. The time taken to focus on content the second or third pass through improves retention.

Levy and others (1986) claim that rereading increases processing speed and allows students to detect errors, even as they gain in speed and familiarity with the material. Other studies show gains in the retention of structural details, such as main ideas and themes. Often the first reading is mechanical, but subsequent readings enable the reader to assimilate and synthesize the material (Bromage and Mayer 1986).

"Comprehension takes time, and to expect complete understanding after one oral reading is not appropriate" (Dowhower 1989). Hoskisson (1979) says that "natural readers solve the problem of learning to read as they construct their knowledge of written language." He suggests that there is no such thing as a hierarchy of skills that needs to be mastered, but rather that the learner will assimilate that which his cognitive processing level is able to accommodate with each pass through the material.

In language acquisition, the incremental approach to vocabulary portrays the point well. On the first pass through a list or text, the learner picks up certain new words, but as he gains understanding and cognitive pegs to hang the new knowledge on, each new pass brings more words under the control of the language learner. Repeated readings function in similar manner for the control and retention of the content of a text.

Repeated readings can be an oral read—along with a tape or partner providing a model which is referred to as *assisted repeated reading.* Repeated readings can also be accomplished by means of independent practice on a text that has not been previously modeled, referred to as *unassisted repeated reading.* "In either case, students reread a meaningful passage until oral production is fluid, flowing, and facile" (Dowhower 1989:504). Practicing one passage until a set speed rate and fluidity is achieved leads to the same increase in speed and fluidity in new passages. Dowhower claims that assisted and unassisted rereading procedures are equally effective for speed and accuracy.

Dowhower (1987) also found that practicing a series of passages of the same reading level seems to be more effective than one passage in isolation or a rapidly graded series of readings. When good control of that level is achieved, the learner can then proceed to a more difficult level of text. Each learner will determine his own need in terms of how many times he needs to listen to a particular text and how many texts of that level he needs to read to gain fluidity on the first reading of new texts of that same level.

The same study also suggests that short passages or stories of 50 to 300 words are best. In order to determine his/her level, the learner should recognize 85 percent of the words after the first reading, before beginning to practice read. If word recognition is much below that, the story or passage is too difficult. Significantly, based on this criteria, nearly 100 percent of the Quechua target audience would be considered illiterate for even the simplest Spanish materials.

In summary, Whole Language teaching incorporates a variety of methods while focusing on the use of literature. Whole Language teaching does not claim that there is no place for the skill lesson and for worksheets. Rather, it asserts that these elements play a significantly different role in the learning process. Whole Language is literature driven rather than textbook driven and, therefore, less controlled and

measurable along the way. However, the end results have been significantly better in some contexts than the traditional controlled vocabulary and/or basal textbook programs.

4. Review of other Whole Language experiments

In this section, I wish to review programs of non-English adult literacy where some or all of the tenets of Whole Language have been incorporated into the program. Some of these programs incorporated Whole Language elements by design, whereas, in other cases it happened by trial and error without a great deal of theory. In either case, I believe we can point to such programs as providing evidence for the validity of the Whole Language approach.

Clearly, Whole Language theory has been primarily developed with and for children in a classroom setting in an English-speaking environment. The following short case studies, however, not only shed light on the use of Whole Language with adult and nontraditional education programs, but also incorporate languages other than English.

Raymond Gordon (1989) reports good results with a methodology he developed and called "a group dynamic method of learning to read." He has used it with bilingual Crow speakers in Montana. Each student had some basic reading ability in English, so, in effect, it was a transitional program to teach mother tongue reading skills to those who already possessed at least a minimal reading skill in a second language.

The key components in Gordon's program were repeated reading, echo reading, modeling, and skill teaching of points that presented difficulties in the repeated readings.

> "In a matter of three months—once a week sessions—most of the participants became fully independent skilled readers. This was in contrast to many months of formalized classroom instruction as part of a bilingual education teacher-aide program that, in general, failed to produce independent, confident readers" (Gordon 1989:29).

A second program of interest took place in Irian Jaya, under the *Program Kerjasama Universitas Cenderawasih.* Delle Matthews (1989) has developed a basic lesson plan for semiliterates which focuses on moving from the barely reading stage to the reading to learn stage.

It has long been recognized in third world literacy that the first stage of learning to read is not sufficient. Unless a new reader gains fluency through practice, he soon reverts to illiteracy. The second stage is referred to as *reading to learn,* and it is at this stage that a learner is able to read, comprehend, and assimilate material beyond his own local cultural reference (MacDonald 1983). This basis led to the development of the Matthews program, which concentrated on comprehensive and easy-to-adapt lesson plans to guide new readers.

The lesson plan can be incorporated into any one of the various languages of Irian Jaya and can have virtually any story or passage plugged in, making it flexible, yet easy for local teachers to master. It

focuses on cognitive development and comprehension, but provides modeled reading and plenty of repeated listening and production of the story as each student reads out loud.

A final program of significance to the Quechua situation has been developed in literacy work with the Cheyenne. Hazel Shorey calls it the Passive Literacy method. "...Cheyennes learn to read best, and enjoy it most, when the reading process is not the focus of the session" (Shorey 1989:41).

Generally, the material is read or sung aloud or from tape while the learner listens and follows along in his own copy. No pressure is put on the learner to read out loud until he feels comfortable and feels able to do so. Several advantages noted are that it takes advantage of available literature (a native speaker needs little special training in order to teach someone else) and it fits into the cultural patterns.

5. A proposal for South Conchucos Quechua

5.1. Methodology and theoretical basis

Taking the principles and knowledge gained in the Whole Language process, we have developed a methodology for transition skills aimed at the already semiliterate Spanish reader whose mother tongue is Quechua (See Appendix A).

We believe a person learns to read by reading. Exposure to a wide variety of good literature in the target language, along with an opportunity to interact with the materials and draw out the necessary skills, is critical to successful and continued reading. This presupposes the production of books containing poetry, expository texts, narrative texts, fables, legends, traditional folktales, informational texts, and so forth. An exposure to all the Quechua genres and a variety of styles constitutes sufficient exposure. Over the long run, this will sharpen reading skills and establish the reading habit through practice.

We believe that reading is a process of integrating new stimuli into the already existing knowledge and thought patterns. Reading is not just the exercise of the sum of all the right skills taught in the right order. Reading is a means to communicate, and carries all the elements of successful communication. Learning to read Quechua should be enjoyable and motivational for the Quechua speaker.

We believe that the current research around the world on thought processing (for example, Piaget and others) and the process of reading (for example, F. Smith and others) show that the basal reader approach with restricted vocabulary and grammatical structures has not always been successful in cross-cultural contexts.

We believe that the text materials presented should be "natural Quechua." Stories should be culturally appropriate for the mountain communities. Therefore, it is not our aim to control the ordering or introduction of letters or vocabulary. Rather, the direction lies in providing reading stories which are socioculturally meaningful, along with successful practice readings and an introduction of the letters that differ from Spanish. The basic ability to decode the Spanish letters is assumed through the definition of the target audience as those who already have primitive Spanish skills. The texts used are "graded" in the sense that the early stories use simple sentence structure and do not exceed two sentences of large print per page. See Appendix B for a statement of the levels.

We believe that in order to achieve a "critical mass" of readers (and eventually writers) along with sufficient literature to sustain community-wide literacy, we must concentrate on specific group(s) within the culture. Specifically, we propose to focus on those groups which are moving along the path to literacy and are most likely to draw others with them, due to their social prestige as well as their active and personal encouragement. The bilingual native Quechua speaker, who is fully literate in Spanish, is the easiest to bring to full literacy in Quechua. The already available transition materials are sufficient in most cases for this group. The large group of semiliterate bilinguals or semibilinguals is the second category that could move fairly quickly into Quechua literacy and is the focus of this project. It is predicted that this group will also have the highest motivation to become literate in Quechua, because of their closer ties to the Quechua community and their lack of skills in Spanish.

5.1.1. Target audience

We have, therefore, chosen that group of people, ages 12 to 55, who have completed at least Grade 2 but not more than Grade 7 in the government school system in Spanish and have minimal decoding and word attack skills in Spanish. They should be able to read simple narrative texts in Spanish dealing with known subjects with reasonable comprehension. These people fit into the definition used by adult education specialists as *semiliterate* in Spanish. They may even handle written Spanish sufficiently well to cope with the basic requirements of living in a Spanish-dominated country but would not be able to read or write formal Spanish (business letters, official documents, newspaper, and so forth). They must be native speakers of Quechua.

The target audience are primarily those that will start at Level 1. For those who have better Spanish skills or who have had extensive experience and training through a translation or church program, it may be possible to start at Level 2 or even Level 3. If the person in question is able to read a book for that level with reasonable fluency and comprehension without listening to the tape, he should be encouraged to move to the next level for active learning. He may benefit from passive listening at the lower level and could aid others who need the lower-level materials by providing a good reading model.

A feasible method of entry-level placement is an informal assessment of ability to read the booklets of a given level without listening to the tape. For those who are marginal (between one level and the next), they should be encouraged to complete at least one or two stories of the lower level to reinforce their skills and then move up. Quick learners will only need to listen to each tape once, while slower learners or those with less skills will need to listen to each tape four to six times.

The members of the target audience chosen to distribute the packets (books and cassette tape) and check up on the group later must be proven, respected community leaders. In many cases in the central dialect areas, that person will be the lay church leader. Others in the community, who are well respected, will also be encouraged to use the packets in their family or community groups.

5.1.2. Literature

The literature chosen for this project reflects the community interest in Bible materials as well as local stories about known people and customs. These materials are written in a simple format that tries to

restrict the number of subordinate clauses but does not restrict word choice. Word and sentence length were not determining factors. No effort was made to restrict which letters are used in any given lesson. Careful attention was given to linkers and discourse features to insure natural fluid story lines with good Quechua style. Level 1 contains very simple stories, while Level 2 and Level 3 will move quickly to the full range of sentence types and discourse styles. It is hoped that by the time a person has worked through the full program, they will be able to read anything written in their Quechua, including translated materials such as Scripture, with good comprehension.

Because this is a literature-based program, the emphasis is on natural text material. The letter lesson follows the mastery of the story as a reinforcement of what was picked up globally in the repeated readings of the text. The process of analytical discovery takes place in the context of the already learned and comfortable story. The letter lesson becomes, then, a conclusion drawn from the lesson, rather than a skill necessary to attack the lesson and enjoy the story.

5.1.3. Fluency

A reader will be considered fluent for any given lesson when he can read with natural intonation, speed, and expression the material that has been presented in that lesson. He will be able to read it a week later with little hesitation and will be motivated by his current fluency to proceed to the next level of difficulty. It is understood that with the early, easier stories, fluency may be reached by memorization of the story, but that is an acceptable first step in a literature-based reading program.

5.1.4. Comprehension

Comprehension is an integral part of the process. Prior to listening to the story the first time, the tape asks three or four preview or prediction questions, in order to focus the listeners' thoughts on the key parts of the story. These questions are not meant to be answered, but to orient the listener to what he will hear. After the first listening, the tape asks the participant three or four comprehension questions and then tells them to turn off the tape recorder and discuss these questions. The discussion and repetition of the focus questions with repeated listenings will further the comprehension process.

5.1.5. Repeated reading

Repetition is also an important feature of the methodology. Participants are asked to repeat any given story until they feel comfortable and can read the story fluently. It is assumed that some in the family group will be ready for the next story after just one listening session, while others may want to repeat the process five or six times before proceeding to the next story. This is the reason for lending packets for one-week periods. We hope that those who need the practice will listen to the tape once a day.

5.2. Cultural acceptability

Storytelling and listening are traditional activities among the Quechua. In many households, this traditionally took place snuggled in bed in the early dark. However, with the advent of kerosene lanterns,

candles, tape recorders, and radios, families stay up later and sit around listening to the news or music. Market day, harvest times, fiestas, and churches bring together groups to visit and to tell stories.

The *moraleja* genre 'stories with a clearly defined cultural moral' is highly developed and used by parents to transmit values to their children. There are many positive stories modeling what should be done, as well as negative stories warning against what should not be done. Some of these are being incorporated into the taped books.

Helping each other and prompting or shadow reading for a slow reader are natural skills which surface with no outside instruction. Though more study needs to be done, it is obvious that there is no one culturally enforced learning style. However, there is a notable tendency, more pronounced among women (probably due to less exposure to the analytical Spanish school system), towards a global learning style characterized by modeling and hands-on practice to attain new skills. The process of listening to a tape and then reading along can be repeated as often as needed, to provide the practice before a reader is expected to produce on his/her own. Because of the well-established oral tradition of the Quechua, repeated readings are not seen as boring.

Quechuas tend to work by family consensus rather than following a strong leader/teacher. The techniques of paired reading, choral reading, and cassette as "teacher," are well received. Loyalties and a willingness to be vulnerable still fall very much within family units, even though they live in communities. Open classes that mix families and expect participation have proven difficult in agriculture, health, and other community development projects in the region. The one exception, is within a tight-knit evangelical church where the unifying force is their common faith.

Most Quechuas have experienced failure to one degree or another in learning to read in Spanish. Therefore, the self-pacing program is nonthreatening. The option of being able to listen various times before producing, enables the learner to save face and to continue learning. An unfortunate fact of the formal education system is that it produces "readers" that do, not expect to understand anything from what is read. "Literate" is therefore defined by the education establishment as the ability to decode the letters of the alphabet and write one's own name (conversation with various teachers and educational administrators). The fact that what is being decoded is in a language which the reader does not control is not considered important. Therefore, the proposed program will focus on comprehension, oral participation and discussion to overcome the ingrained understanding that "reading" does not carry any communication value.

The Quechua's event-driven lifestyle follows the agricultural cycle and requires that people move from their homes to distant fields and pastures. A regular class schedule is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. A cassette-based program allows each group/family to proceed at its own pace as farm and home duties allow. As well, it makes the teacher "portable" when the family moves and facilitates the catch-up necessary for those who miss any given session.

5.3. An intergenerational benefit

Since one of the major stumbling blocks to successful bilingual education in Quechua areas has been parental resistance, we have been searching for a way to involve parents and children together. Barriers to past programs have been

- inability on the part of illiterate parents to help and encourage their children in either Spanish or Quechua reading
- lack of normal reading readiness and prereading activities at home
- lack of modeling of the value and purpose of reading, and
- lack of community and parental acceptance, respect for and support of outside teachers assigned to the local school.

With these factors in mind, the program is aimed primarily at the mother and child, together with over-the-shoulder use by fathers and young men. It is expected that men will participate passively at the lower levels since their level of education is generally higher. However, arriving at the more advanced levels should then challenge the men to keep up with the women and children.

We hope that even grandmothers and older adults associated with the household or small group will participate passively, though we have no expectation that they will master reading. Several grandmothers have already proven good motivators in encouraging young people to be involved. They enjoy listening to the stories and then proceed the next day to tell all the other families and brag about how well their grandchildren are learning!

One of the goals of the program is to help parents overcome their fear of the "unknownness" of school and reading. The cassette "teacher" that speaks Quechua is nonthreatening and a novelty that they seem to enjoy. It has provided a unifying force to help stem the generation gap between "illiterate/peasant" parents and their "Spanish-schooled" children by providing a learning activity that puts them on an equal footing and allows them to learn together.

An additional benefit has been a somewhat increased acceptance on the parents' part of Quechua use in the schools. Once they begin to understand that education in Quechua is possible, they are less resistant to their children learning Quechua in a bilingual or parallel language program. Because they feel less "ignorant," they feel more confident in approaching the primary teacher and being more involved in their children's education.

5.4. Recommendations for the program

In the process of trials in a dialect of Huánuco and, later, when establishing the program in South Conchucos, we have further defined the practical application of Whole Language theory in the context of cassette-based self-teaching lessons. The following factors need to be taken into account in program planning and implementation.

1. There needs to be a continuous source of new, graded materials. Some learners may need as many as 20 titles at each level (Chomsky 1978), while others will progress well with five or six titles.

2. Writing lessons need to be developed to go with the Level 2 lessons. We would like to see, as well, even some elementary writing skills and dictation in Level 1. However, the logistics of how to supply paper and pencil in the face of the extreme economic crisis encountered in the mountain areas has prevented development of this area of the program. Consumable books that provide the space to write are out of the question due to the necessity of sharing "loan" books for the classes. Even though each student is encouraged to buy a copy, it is realized that few families will be able to buy more than one copy, which will then be shared.

3. Constant monitoring and evaluation of new stories is required in order to handle unexpected difficulties. These, then, should have a lesson or explanation page prepared and added to the tape before general circulation.

4. The initial lessons need to be "alike" in the sense of level, style, cultural content, and so forth to get the learner used to the system. Level 2 and particularly Level 3 need to use a variety of genres and writing styles while still retaining the graded reading level. Music and songs work exceptionally well.

5. Each tape needs to invite those who wish to read out loud to do so, and to reassure the others that they should wait until they have listened to the tape several more times if they feel hesitant.

6. The program could be expanded, eventually, to include the participation of monolingual nonliterates by significantly increasing the number of stories in the first level and introducing each letter in the same way that the non-Spanish letters are introduced. We are currently considering the feasibility of producing one book for each letter of the alphabet at Level 1. Level 2 books could carry grammatical function lessons to aid in developing automaticity in the decoding.
   Level 1 lessons would carry an explanation of letter formation for those that do not know how to write the alphabet yet. Creative writing could be similarly introduced in Level 2.

7. The books must be available for sale, and preferably, the class packets would have 20 or more copies, so that one is available to each person present.

8. The technical difficulties and price restrictions of hand-crank or solar cassette players is yet to be addressed. The cost, unavailability, and misuse of batteries makes supplying them unfeasible as a long-range solution. The tapes should have the same thing on both sides, so that those using crank or solar machines do not have to wind all the way through the second side to repeat the first lesson. In Cajamarca, they will experiment with a bilingual lesson (teaching parts in Spanish with Quechua story) on one side, plus the fully Quechua version of the same story on the other side.
   In the past, most families had at least one cassette and enough batteries to have made the program workable with no outside assistance. The economic downturn has made the purchase of batteries prohibitive to the target audience. Most families no longer have the resources to listen to even the radio news once a week, let alone repeat a tape at will until it is mastered.

6. Conclusions

The results, so far, have been encouraging. We have not been able to publish books or produce tapes fast enough for the demand in the areas where we are providing cassette machines and/or batteries for the trials.

In one of the first trials with just rough, photocopied mockups for books, we asked a neighbor to invite a few ladies from her family to listen. The first night we had six people, including the two kids who took turns cranking the hand-crank tape deck. The next night 18 turned up, and by the end of the week there were 40 ladies and a few extra children crammed into the tiny room sharing the 10 copies of the book.

One of the young ladies that attended one evening, came out of curiosity and informed us at the outset that it was impossible to read Quechua. She was in the Spanish high school and read reasonably well in Spanish. She sat at the back and did not need to share a book, as she was just there to listen. Half way through the tape, she borrowed her friend's book and by the end, she was one of the first to volunteer to read the book to the group. Upon leaving, she asked to buy a book and wanted to know when the next one would be ready.

The men also had a trial class but their comments were, "This is too easy. When will you bring books for us? My wife could even learn to read with this."

In South Conchucos, the early books from Huánuco were adapted and two new local stories were included. After hearing one of the tapes in a demonstration hour during the teacher training course, one of the students came and bought a copy of the tape and 20 books, and is now holding class in his tiny rural community. Another of the cotranslators was so excited that he came up with a solution for the problem of the cost of the tapes. He owns a large two-cassette tape deck that makes good copies. He now takes a master tape with him when he goes to a village. He takes along his big tape deck and plays the tape. Anyone who brings him a blank tape, gets a free copy and then he sells the books to go with it.

The spread of the program was initially hampered by restrictions on publication in Quechua, due to unresolved (until recently) orthography problems, mechanical difficulties in getting the tapes prepared and duplicated, the slowness in getting books through print shops, lack of personnel, and insufficient capital to pay for the initial expenses of printing and tape duplication. However, everywhere the program has been introduced, it has been well received and has produced new readers and increased interest in Quechua materials.

Postscript

To date, three communities have used the program extensively and have produced a good core of readers in each community. Numerous other groups and individuals have acquired various packets, but there is no controlled and accountable program in place.

We have also experimented with the religious education class in four classrooms of fifth and sixth graders. Instead of the tape, a trained promoter is following the program orally. It has been well received and to date, 90 students have learned to read fluently. This contact has led to the request by the four schools to train other teachers in their schools to conduct the course. The promoter will be starting in new schools this year.

One solution to the "power" problem has been to train volunteers and local leaders to orally lead a group through the questions and readings. They easily memorize the patter and seem naturally patient in guiding groups. Each leader has the tape to listen to, but does not necessarily use it in the class. So far, seven lay leaders from one town have been trained and are under the direction of the local priest.

Appendix A. Characteristics of semiliterates

[Topics: literate persons, semiliterate persons]

Taken from "Teaching reading fluency," Delle Matthews (1989:35–36).

1. They read slowly.
2. They read word-by-word (or syllable-by-syllable) and do not usually make natural phrase and clause breaks.
3. They sound out words they do not recognize syllable-by-syllable.
4. They do not always understand what they read.
5. They often correct themselves and repeat what they have just read.
6. They find reading difficult.
7. They prefer to read aloud and find it difficult to read silently. (People usually learn to read by reading aloud and then learn to read silently.) At a later stage, they may begin to find reading aloud difficult and must develop the art of oral reading or audience reading.
8. They have not developed the skill of purposeful reading and are not skilled in reading a variety of materials other than stories and simple cultural books.
9. Their comprehension skills of interpretation and application are not developed.

Appendix B. Some suggestions on *graded levels* developed by trial and error

Level 1. Local tooics (large print)

Text

- Simple stories, no complex sentences (few subordinate clauses) but not with restricted vocabulary or letter choice
- No more than two sentences per page.
- Large print (16 point)

- Highly cultural local content

Picture

- Very important at this stage as clues to meaning of text
- One per page (large, but clear; not "busy")

Level 2. Cultural topics (medium print)

Text

- No more than two sentences per page.
- May have relative or adverbial clauses
- Medium print (12 point)
- Cultural stories, but may introduce ideas or things from other Quechua areas (for example, story about going to the jungle or coast)

Picture

- Not quite as important, yet helps in comprehension and attractiveness (sale value!)
- One per page

Level 3. Technical topics

Text

- Three to five sentences per page
- May be complex sentences
- Translated or more technical/informational topics (for example, Biblical passages, description of school activities, and so forth)

Picture

- Interest generating; visual appeal
- Perhaps fancier cover
- One per page, though picture is smaller, due to text load per page

Level 4. Free reading

That is, neither "classwork nor homework assignments," but rather a time in which the reader can attack a "real story" representing **all of the flavor and richness of Quechua literature.** Give them something to shoot for!! "Is Quechua literature really worth the effort to learn to read, or not?"

Text

- "Reading to learn" stage materials. Minimum of 50 sentences?

Picture

- One per three to five pages, with decent front cover. Visual appeal, white space, and layout are still important, so as not to overwhelm new readers. Lots of illustrations and diagrams needed, if it is informational or teaching a new skill, technique, or idea.

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