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**THE ROLE OF VERNACULAR VERSUS
PRESTIGE LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY
EDUCATION**

Mildred L. Larson

INTRODUCTION

The bilingual education program of the Peruvian jungle began in 1953. While a period of five to ten years is often too short to see the significant results of such an experiment, it has now been a quarter of a century since the first bilingual schools were opened in scattered, isolated villages of the Amazonian jungle, and a report is therefore in order. The purpose of this book is to make available the details concerning the program and to record the impressions and recommendations of linguists and educators who have been involved in this bilingual education program.

Attitudes towards the use of the vernacular languages in primary education have changed throughout the world during these past twenty-five years. The UNESCO report of 1953 clearly stated that:

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue... we recommend that the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible (UNESCO 1953b:11, 47).

Nevertheless, up until that time most countries had a policy of eliminating the vernacular through education in the national (prestige) language. That attitude towards the vernacular languages has changed, and today many countries around the world have bilingual education programs that emphasize the use of the mother tongue in primary education. Have some of

the factors changed? Or is it the evaluation of the factors that has changed?

It is an interesting coincidence that the Peruvian jungle experiment got under way the same year that the UNESCO proclamation came out. Before going into the details of the Peruvian program, it is important to see the historical perspective behind the prestige-language-versus-vernacular-languages controversy going on at that time.

Since language is the primary mode of education, it is understandable that throughout history much education has centered in other-language learning. Until recently education was not only primarily language learning, but also primarily for the elite class, and centered in the study of other languages for religious and scholarly purposes. As Lewis (1948:35) points out:

... the traditional center of all school education and its characteristic achievement is the initiation of the child into language. It is true of every civilized society of whose educational system we have records; of ancient Greek and Roman education, of Hebrew, education throughout the Middle Ages and later, of Chinese education, almost wholly linguistic for more than twenty-five centuries. And it has been the tradition of modern education since the Renaissance. To recognize this enables us to understand some of the difficulties of education in our schools today. The linguistic tradition is one of the chief clues to the history of education in the modern world and therefore to some of its strange aberrations, particularly to the oddity in European societies—the persistence of an apparently inordinate attention to the study of two ancient obsolete languages, often at the expense of the living mother tongue. Throughout all the changes that have taken place in education, the school is still influenced by its heritage of the linguistic tradition.

In the sixteenth century, with the education movement, the use of the vernacular was not considered. "Children were sent to school in order to learn Latin.... Calvin's teacher in a

picture of the good student writes—'Never does he speak French'. The problem of bilingualism did not at the time exist for the teacher'' (Malherbe 1937:82).

The mother tongue gradually came into the schools, with growth of nationalism as an important factor in this development. The use of the mother tongue became more prominent, and by the nineteenth century, with an increase in literacy, there was a conflict between ancient linguistic traditions and the political, social, and economic needs of the various countries. This led to what Lewis (1948:38) calls a "stratification of education according to social classes." The elite were given the traditional linguistic education, known as secondary education, while the masses were to be content with elementary education, which consisted of reading and writing in the vernacular.

In the early years of the twentieth century, there were many bilingual schools throughout Europe, and considerable discussion took place about bilingual education. "As early as 1910, Ghibu was able to list almost a hundred items of bibliography on bilingual schools in German, French, Hungarian, and Rumanian" (Weinreich 1953:121).

"In earlier times [in Europe] there seems to have been little systematic attempt to impose the language of a conquering people on the subject people" (Sapir 1949:30). However, in colonial times, with the development of the idea of linguistic symbols to correspond to a sovereign state, there was increased pressure on the peoples within the borders of the state to learn a state language, and thus the antagonism between the vernacular and prestige languages arose.

Because of this background many countries throughout the world insisted on education in the prestige language, in spite of the fact that the people being educated did not speak it. Historically, the two main forces were the tradition of education as language learning and the concept of education as a political process and, therefore, the use of the state language by all.

The UNESCO (1953b:46) report defines a vernacular language as "a language which is the mother tongue of a group

which is socially and politically dominated by another group speaking a different language." A vernacular language, as the term was used then, stood in contrast to a prestige language—the language used by the group which is socially and politically dominant.

When the Peruvian jungle experiment began in 1953, the question of which language to use in primary education was being debated. Reasons were expressed for the use of the prestige language and other reasons for the use of the vernacular. These reasons can be summarized under six main topics, all of which are still relevant in today's discussions concerning bilingual education.

REASONS FOR THE USE OF THE PRESTIGE LANGUAGE

The reasons given for the exclusive use of the prestige language in primary education are summarized below. They are ordered here according to the importance placed on them in most situations where the prestige language has been chosen as the language of primary education. This is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion but rather a brief survey of the reasons that were being given for using the prestige language at the time when the first Peruvian jungle bilingual schools were being established.

Political reasons

The idea of a national language as a symbol of political unity is a relatively recent development heightened by the printed word. The stress on dividing up Europe on a language basis at the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War added new emphasis to this idea. There are countries, such as Switzerland, that lack linguistic unity but still have attained political unity. Nevertheless, there is a certain reality to the fact that language may act as a factor in integration of the political unit.

This fact has been used in a distorted way by colonial

administrations in order to keep people down, while all the time suggesting that it is the best way to unity. As Kennedy (1945:317) states, "Colonial administrations, indeed, are not merely disinterested in native education; they distrust and even fear it, and with reason." According to him,

... deliberate or not, this lack of attention to education makes very good sense when considered in connection with the other elements in the colonial system. Education of natives would threaten the whole structure of political and economical super-ordination and subordination. Education would be dynamite for the rigid caste systems of colonies (Kennedy 1945:311).

However, in the majority of the cases, the governments involved honestly felt that the use of the national language in education was the quickest way to teach the various groups in the country the national language and thereby make them a useful part of the country. Indeed, many have felt this so strongly that they have condemned the use of the vernacular in any form in the educational system.

Socioeconomic reasons

Certainly one of the main reasons individuals desire education is to gain position in the society and then be able to earn a good living. In many countries people desire education in the prestige language because it will give them personal economic advantages in job acquisition. Often it will put them in an elite class. The mastery of the prestige language is, therefore, a means of social advance, not just communication.

LePage (1964:24) says that, inasmuch as one of the functions of education is economic, the goal must be to learn one of the major international languages, which will enable the children to learn about science and thus "transform their country in as short a time as possible." The goal of education in a major language is often given as a reason for not using the vernacular language in primary education.

Financial reasons

Whatever educational program is undertaken, the financial problems must be carefully considered. One of the reasons often given for using the prestige language only is that it is much less expensive to produce all books in one language. The expense of production of literature for small language groups is purported to be too great to make it worthwhile. The following observation was made in the UNESCO (1953a:29) study of the problem in Africa: "... the presence in the country of a number of vernacular languages spoken by very small groups makes the development of these languages as adequate school media too expensive and difficult to be practicable."

Along with the expense of producing literature is the problem of training teachers for a program using the vernaculars, i.e., training native speakers of the vernacular to teach the material in the vernacular. It is claimed that in cases where there are numerous small language groups, this would be too difficult and too expensive.

Psychological reasons

It is argued that the use of the prestige language gives a security to the student since it makes him feel a part of the national life, i.e., one of the elite class. This factor, however, is a very complex one, as LePage (1964:24-25) indicates:

There can be no doubt that to educate a child in a language which is not that of either of his parents tends to alienate him from his parents; to educate him in a language which is not one of the indigenous languages of the country tends to alienate him from the culture of his country. If he grows up with one language for schoolroom and another for the world outside the schoolroom he may well develop a kind of dual personality, one side of which—that which is being developed by the ideas which he encounters and the training he receives in school—is

sealed off... from the side which makes the everyday social and cultural and moral decisions.

On the other hand, the provision of education in the vernacular rather than in an international language often arouses fierce resentment among the students themselves and among their parents. Because of the difficulties in the way of providing higher education and professional training in the vernacular, ambitious students find themselves in a dead end when they finish their primary education.

The psychological reactions depend heavily on the individual situation. "School bilingualism itself may take very different shades according to whether the language used in school is a language eagerly sought for, or the language of a nation feared, hated and despised" (Malherbe 1937:84). If the prestige language is learned in emotionally favorable situations, then good psychological results may come from whatever language is used. In such an ideal situation, the use of the prestige language could well give a feeling of security and of personal identification with the larger society.

Educational reasons

The preparing of material not only raises financial problems, as mentioned above, but may also be a problem from an educational point of view if the vernacular language is used. In most cases the vernacular languages lack the technical and scientific material needed to bring the students to the present state of scientific progress. The vernaculars do not have a vocabulary covering these fields. The use of a prestige language, especially an Indo-European language, would give the students access to present knowledge on science and technology. Students using only the vernacular would be cut off from this knowledge unless it could be incorporated somehow into materials in their language, which would be an immense task. As Bram (1964:54) states, "What will the natives read after having mastered the limited elementary manuals prepared for them? How far, in

other words, will the newly acquired literacy take them toward their goal of direct communication with the world?" Without a doubt advanced material would involve a great deal of borrowing of terms from the prestige language, and it may well be argued that it would be better for the students to learn in the prestige language to overcome this problem.

Linguistic reasons

Many countries are faced with the problem of multilingualism: within their borders there are numerous distinct languages and local dialects. For these countries the use of the prestige or national language presents itself as a way of overcoming this multiplicity. By the use of only one language in education, it is hoped that linguistic unity will eventually be attained. In countries with multilingualism, the need for communication between the various groups within the country is a strong reason for carrying on education in a uniform language.

Under educational reasons we have already mentioned the lack of scientific and technical vocabulary in the vernaculars. There is also the added linguistic problem of devising orthographies if the vernaculars are to be used. This would involve linguistic help in determining the phonological systems of the various languages. General use of the prestige language would eliminate the need for such linguistic work.

REASONS FOR THE USE OF VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

While the factors mentioned above were being offered to defend the exclusive use of the prestige language, these same factors were also cited to defend the use of vernaculars. However, the order of importance is different, and the way of looking at each topic is different. The factors mentioned above are again discussed below from the point of view of the use of the vernacular in primary education, but the ordering of the topics is changed since the relative importance is different.

Psychological reasons

There is no doubt that for children beginning school the psychological adjustments are greatly intensified by the use of a foreign language as the medium of education. The extent to which they have had contact with this foreign language, and the intensity of their desire to learn it, will affect the degree of adjustment.

It is generally agreed by educationists and psychologists that a child should first learn to read and write in the language spoken in his home and in which his first verbal communication with parents and siblings takes place. When this foundation has been laid he can acquire a full command of his own and, if necessary, of other languages; without it, there is danger that he will never achieve a thorough command of any language (UNESCO 1953a:67).

In the listing of reasons for the vernacular, the UNESCO report on Africa goes so far as to indicate that the emotional and social adjustments which need to be made if the mother tongue is not used are "... almost overwhelming. He needs as much moral support as can be given him and nothing can facilitate his familiarization with the school as much as a teacher who uses his mother tongue" (UNESCO 1953a:27).

The psychological adjustment to school life is certainly important, but the relation of the child to the learning process is even more vital. This will be discussed in the following section, but from the psychological point of view we should note that:

The mother tongue also plays an indispensable role in the formation of the child's concepts of the world and of his categories of thought. By the time the young child comes to school he has attained a considerable mastery of a complex instrument of learning, his mother tongue, and this forms a natural and easy means for his further linguistic, intellectual and emotional development. To use any language other than the mother tongue is to jettison

the child's acquired store of experience and language, and to compel him to seek new symbols of communication and thought.... The mother tongue is a medium used to integrate the work of the classroom with the experience of children outside the school (UNESCO 1953a:27).

Weinreich, (1953:76) in his discussion of order of learning in bilingualism, says that "the distinction of having been learned first is so great that the first-learned language, the 'mother-tongue', is generally considered dominant by definition." Although we are not dealing with bilingualism here, except as education in the prestige language would lead to bilingualism, the concept of the dominance of the mother tongue is a factor in favor of using the vernacular. There is certainly strong emotional attachment to the mother tongue even after a second language is learned.

The insistence on a prestige language for education makes speakers of the vernacular feel that in some way their language is inferior and, hence, that they themselves are inferior. It is a psychological boost to a people to have their language in writing and used as a vehicle of communication in written form. "The effect of substituting a language would mean loss of pride, of selfconfidence, in the people whose language and tradition are treated as inferior" (Malherbe 1937:88).

There are also the psychological problems which arise between the generations if the children begin learning in a foreign language. "The children who learn the new language are ashamed of their parents, become disrespectful, and are ashamed to introduce their new friends to their people" (Malherbe 1937:91).

The psychological effects are even more pronounced when some of the students in the class know the prestige language and some do not—a situation which has occurred frequently in the United States. Scotford (1953:40-41) gives some very forceful illustrations of Mexican children in American schools. The following is one such case:

To the American child the first grade teacher is a mother substitute to whom he can turn with some assurance of

being understood. With the Spanish-speaking child this usually does not work. The teacher may not understand his language. She is alien to him, he does not trust her. Oftentimes a most unfortunate attitude toward the school is developed.... He does not feel at home... therefore he resists that which is offered.

... The work of the school may be both difficult and uninteresting. The language must be learned, as well as the usual lessons. Almost inevitably little Benito and his sister Carmencita are retarded. They may be kept in first grade for two or three years, becoming increasingly bored....

What a difference it would make psychologically if such children were taught to read in their own language first, a relatively easy matter in Spanish, and had a teacher who could explain things to them in Spanish. The learning of English as a second language could then become a joy and not a frustration.

Concerning these psychological factors LePage (1964:22) says that "Apart from innate intelligence the most important factor in determining how quickly a child learns is the attitude of all concerned—parents, teacher and child—towards the medium of instruction and the subject-matter."

Nida (1949:19) says that,

it is impossible to overemphasize the psychological importance of the first step in learning to read. Those of us who are constantly surrounded by pictures and signs from our earliest childhood do not appreciate the problem of the illiterate native who has no comprehension of the significance of a symbolization such as letters imply.... Anyone who has had experience in teaching natives to read will recognize that the grasping of this essential value of symbolization is infinitely more easily taught if the symbolism reflects his own language rather than one which is unfamiliar, or perhaps only partially familiar to him.

We can only imagine how different the situation of the North American Indian would be today if the United States had used a policy of education first in the mother tongue and later in

English. "Margaret Mead has instanced the example of American Indians, whose capacity for dealing with the English language, particularly the written language, was well below their general intelligence. She attributes this to the fact that they had not written their own language" (UNESCO 1953a:41). From a strictly psychological point of view, the use of the vernacular is the choice in primary education.

Educational reasons

Closely tied to and overlapping the psychological reasons are the educational ones. Children have a freedom of expression and a participation in school activities when their mother tongue is used that is not possible when instruction is in a foreign tongue. They are able to associate their school work with their own ideas and interests, and it is much easier for them to keep their attention on the work in the classroom. If the teachers and students speak the same language, it is much easier for a teacher to be sure that the children understand and that they are actually learning.

A significant reason for using the vernacular centers around the very nature of the educational process, i.e., the nature of learning to read. Gray (1948:35-38) sets up four major stages of reading: perceiving or recognizing words, grasping or comprehending meanings, reacting to the ideas acquired, and integrating what has been read. The carrying out of such an ideal reading program could only be done in a language well known by the student.

In beginning reading the process is association of written symbols with oral symbols. If children are familiar with the spoken form, then reading becomes a process of learning the symbols for the spoken forms which are meaningful to them. If reading is taught in a foreign language, children are no longer making this simple association. Since the spoken form has no meaning for them, they must also try to attach meaning to both the written and the spoken form. Otherwise they merely become parrots, associating the oral form with the written form but with no meaning content for either form. Learning to read

in a foreign language may become nonsense to children because the spoken form related to the symbols has no meaning.

Learning to read and learning a language are two different educational processes. Teaching reading in a foreign language is confusing these two processes, and the unfortunate part is that often the teacher does not realize that this confusion exists. As O'Kelly (1961:24) states from her experience in Cameroun, "Considerable experience is required to teach literacy successfully in a foreign language."

Reading is not the only field in which the use of a language other than the vernacular leads to confusion for the student. In arithmetic it is very difficult to teach the concepts of numerical process when the students do not have a grasp of the meanings behind the words being used. By using the vernacular, the concepts can be easily understood, and the student grasps arithmetic at a normal rate, rather than being frustrated by having language learning mixed in with arithmetic learning.

From the point of view of educational processes, the use of the vernacular in the learning process is, in most situations, superior to the use of a foreign language.

Linguistic reasons

As pointed out above, linguistic reasons for the use of the prestige language have to do primarily with multilingualism and with the lack of scientific and technical vocabulary in the vernacular language. From the point of view of the vernacular, the linguistic reasons for its use are of quite a different nature, being concerned primarily with orthographies, linguistic interference between the two phonetic systems, and the influence of this interference on the ease or difficulty of learning to read.

In reference to general language learning, Weinreich (1953: 18-19) classifies "phonic interference" into four types: (1) underdifferentiation of phonemes, (2) overdifferentiation of phonemes, (3) reinterpretation of distinctions, and (4) phone substitution. In further discussion of these, Piroch (1955b:81), reviewing Weinreich, says:

Under-differentiation of phonemes means to the teacher that the learner of the new language uses his native one phoneme where the foreign language has more than one.... Over-differentiation of phonemes means that the learner uses two or more of his native phonemes where the foreign language has only one.... Phone substitution means that the learner substitutes his native phoneme for a foreign language phoneme whose phonetic realization is more or less similar. Reinterpretation of distinctions does not add anything to the other concepts, which in my view cover it.

The discussion cited above deals with language learning in general, but is very basic to seeing the problems that arise in teaching reading in a foreign language. All of these types of interference will cause confusion for the child, even when the language being used is written in a near-phonemic alphabet.

Weinreich (1953:1) also states, "The greater the difference between the systems, i.e., the more numerous the mutually exclusive forms and patterns in each, the greater the learning problem and the potential area of interference."

If children are taught first in the mother tongue, with an alphabet that is more or less equivalent to their phonological system, they will learn to expect a symbol to correspond to a significant difference in pronunciation. Thus, they will have learned easily a basic tool of reading and writing. Once the child has acquired this tool, then "... when he finds new symbols in the major language, he expects to learn new pronunciations for them. Learning the pronunciation contrasts is not easy, since it involves learning a new phonemic system, but at least the learner is not hindered by the bad habit of ignoring distinctions" (Gudschinsky 1959:68).

Since it is the phonological system which is concerned most directly with the reading process, it is of greatest significance in the question of which language to use in primary education. However, the other structures of the two languages also need to be considered as well. Reading is more than correlating sounds to symbols; it includes comprehension and expression of ideas. Reading in a foreign language leads to an idea of

reading as a purely mechanical act without thought or comprehension. By learning in the vernacular first, children learn that reading has meaning and that ideas are involved. When they begin reading a second language, they will then be looking for the meaning and trying to comprehend what they read.

Another linguistic problem is dialects and how far to go in setting up vernacular education in each dialect. Gudschinsky (1959:70) suggests that,

In languages without a written tradition, dialect difference may be a special problem in the preparation of primers and reading material. If the dialects are very divergent, it is probably better to make separate sets of primers for the beginners even though the same advanced literature is to be used in both dialects. This avoids initial confusion which may discourage the beginning pupil or delay his learning.

In the matter of orthography, the alphabet for the native language should be as simple as possible to make initial learning easy. Once the process of reading has been learned, more complicated orthographies are not as formidable as they would be in the beginning stages of learning. If the orthography of the vernacular is patterned after that of the prestige language, it will be a help in learning that language later.

Socioeconomic reasons

In most cases the prestige language will have the greatest economic and social advantage for the students. The argument for the vernacular is not that it will bring social or economic advantage, but rather, that it is the best means of ensuring a satisfactory adjustment; that is, it is a bridge to the prestige language. There is a generation gap if there is too rapid an acculturation process. This can often be alleviated by use of the vernacular preceding the prestige language in education, thus avoiding the forcing of rapid acculturation.

In an era of rapid technological and social change, there are many problems which arise as the sanctions of the past lose

their authority and as the system of values which has stabilized the society is questioned by its members. If, along with this change, a drastic language change is also demanded, the speed may be so extreme that it brings about a chaotic state in the society and serious emotional disturbances in individuals. Means must then be found to avoid forcing the process. (For a discussion of the inevitability of change, see chapter 22.)

In studying what he calls "incipient bilingualism" among the Huave Indians of Mexico in their initial acceptance of Spanish-Mexican culture, Diebold (1961:100) says that there are two principal sociological results that can follow from language contact in a given speech community. "First, there may be indefinitely prolonged bilingualism, such that both languages continue to be learned, although perhaps in determinably different contexts and functions. Alternatively, one of the two languages may fall into disuse, such that fewer and fewer and finally no new speakers learn it." A use of the vernacular in education would tend to cause the first situation to exist longer and not to precipitate the second. This slowing down of the acculturation would lessen the stress on the society and make for a smoother adjustment.

Political reasons

One of the primary reasons given for the use of the prestige language was political. This seems, however, to be contrary to actual experience. The UNESCO (1953a:29) report pointed this out in saying that, "The interests of a nation are better served by the maximum effectiveness of its schools rather than by premature use of a medium not easily understood and perhaps limited in its use to the confines of the school."

Certainly, if the real desire of the state is the integration of vernacular-speaking people into the society and their learning of the national language, the use of the vernacular is the most effective means of doing so. It may seem contradictory to say that the use of the vernacular speeds up the learning of the prestige language while at the same time saying that it will avoid a precipitous acculturation process. However, the use of

the vernacular, while it does facilitate the learning of the national language, also tends to prevent serious acculturation problems by keeping both languages in use over a longer period of time, thus giving a smoother adjustment to the overall change process.

Financial reasons

In the discussion above, financial problems were given as a major reason for using the prestige language. However, money spent in education in the prestige language may fail to accomplish its purpose in that monolingual vernacular speakers are those who most often drop out of school without having actually learned to read. The investment, then, does not result in literacy. In a vernacular-oriented program, the same money brings better results in terms of literacy. There are fewer drop-outs and thus more positive results. Even though the initial cost for vernacular programs may be more, in terms of final results, the total investment brings greater profit. Kitchen (1931:18), in his evaluation of the problems in Bengal, stated that because the Santal children got discouraged with Bengali, the number of dropouts resulted in a waste of money as well as effort.

The financial problem becomes more acute in countries where there are many small groups and where the problem of preparing primer material in the various languages is encountered. However, countries like Peru, which have actually done this, have found their money well spent in terms of numbers of literate people. It is not a waste to put money into vernacular education programs.

The most extensive program of this kind was that of the USSR. In their intensive education program, which began in 1918, it was a stated part of the program that "where the prevailing language was not Russian, the pupils were to be taught in their native tongue" (Mazour 1951:384). In their literacy campaigns, they also used teachers from the local populations and trained them. Literature was published in the vernaculars. As Nida (1961:33) notes,

few people have realized as the Russians have, the importance of the indigenous languages. The use of the many local languages within Russia during the last ten years of intensive literacy campaigns has revealed amazing literacy gains. In order to accomplish a record of change from a pre-1918 figure of some 33 percent literacy to a present 93 percent literacy, the use of the more than eighty indigenous languages of Russia has been an important factor.

Such an educational program was certainly a very expensive undertaking. But the final results in literacy and in learning the national language were accomplished in a relatively short time.

VERNACULAR LANGUAGES VERSUS SPANISH IN THE PERUVIAN JUNGLE SCHOOLS

In the early 1950s, as the Peruvian government considered its desire to bring literacy to the many language groups living in the large jungle area of the country, it had to consider the conflicting arguments presented here to decide if education should be conducted in Spanish or in the vernacular languages of the area or in both.

In 1952 the Peruvian government, in collaboration with SIL, began plans for an experimental bilingual school program for the jungle Indians. The strength of this program, which got under way in January 1953, has been in the fact that it did not choose between the vernacular and the prestige language, but rather set up a program in which each was used for specific roles. In this way the arguments on both sides could be synthesized to the advantage of both the vernacular speakers themselves and the nation as a whole. The details of this program are described in the chapters that follow. Before turning to these details, let us look at the way in which the advantages of using the vernacular and the advantage of using Spanish were brought together in the program. This will be discussed again from the point of view of each of the six factors previously outlined.

Psychological factors

The bilingual education program was set up in such a way that the vernacular was the primary language used in the first few years of school with a gradual move into Spanish during the course of the total primary education program. This meant that the students received the security of learning the Spanish language and belonging to the educated class without having to go through severe emotional adjustments when they came to school for the first time. They felt at home because the teacher spoke their vernacular language and was probably their relative. They were able to respond and to fit their new experiences into their own environment.

The generation problem was not acute because the students could share at home what they were learning in school. They could read to their parents and be understood. Parents were proud of their children when they learned to read. Many adults also attended these schools, and it was not uncommon in the early years to have a father and son or daughter in the same class.

The learning of Spanish was not an experience filled with fear, but rather just one of the many things the child was doing in school. In a relaxed situation, in which the teacher spoke the language of the child, the second language, Spanish, was learned without trauma. Learning Spanish in an emotionally favorable situation resulted in a positive attitude toward the national language, which was very important for students who later desired to continue with their education in Spanish.

Educational factors

The need for materials for the schools was taken care of by the preparation of a limited amount of material in the vernacular languages. As soon as the students reached a level of competence in Spanish sufficient to make the transfer, the regular Peruvian school books were used. The lack of technical and scientific terminology was not a problem because by the time the students had reached the level where they needed it,

they were using Spanish and the teacher could explain new words to them in the vernacular.

The educational processes were not mixed; rather the child learned one thing at a time. The complications of teaching reading and a foreign language at the same time were eliminated. Students first learned to read and then to write in the vernacular. Later they applied this knowledge of reading to the new language, Spanish. But before they did so, they had been learning this new language orally. When they had sufficient vocabulary and could use the basic sentence structures of Spanish, they began to read and write in their new language. In arithmetic and social studies, they learned the concepts first, and then, when they understood them in the vernacular, they learned the Spanish terminology with which to talk about them. Through the bilingual approach, therefore, language learning and learning to read and write were kept separate.

Linguistic factor

The problems of multilingualism with which Peru had been confronted ever since becoming a nation were finally being overcome in the jungle. By using the vernaculars, the people in the various language groups were learning Spanish faster. Through the teacher-training course in which speakers of the various languages were brought together, there was an exchange of ideas and a unity of purpose that could never have come about if the groups had not been in contact with one another. On the other hand, the interaction between members of different cultures led to a respect for linguistic and cultural differences and a pride in one's own language and culture.

The problems of linguistic interference were minimized with the bilingual approach. By learning to read first in the vernacular, a much better adjustment was made to speaking and reading Spanish. This is illustrated by the contrast between the Aguaruna who first learned to read in Spanish monolingual schools and those who learned to read in bilingual schools. I personally know a number of Aguaruna men who went to

Spanish schools and learned to read and write in Spanish without first learning in Aguaruna. Even now, after years of practice, they cannot write, nor do they pronounce in their reading the distinctions between the Spanish *i* and *e* and the Spanish *o* and *u*. They have never learned to keep *m* and *b*, nor *n* and *d*, separate in Spanish, and they continually confuse *l* and *r*. Since each of these pairs is paralleled by one phoneme in Aguaruna, the Spanish distinction is not in their native phonological system. In reading Spanish, they pronounce both phonemes the same, and in writing, they use one or the other and often choose the wrong one.

Quite in contrast to this, the students in the bilingual schools, who learned to read and write first in Aguaruna and then later made the transfer to Spanish, read with a clear distinction between these Spanish sound pairs and have much less trouble in writing Spanish. Through their reading in the vernacular they have learned the principle of correlation of sound and symbol, and they have used this tool to focus on the necessity of hearing and reproducing the distinctions made in Spanish for each of these pairs.

Again using the Aguaruna for illustration, I have noticed that those who learned to read in Spanish first read mechanically and often stop at the end of the line in the middle of a thought, using pauses and intonation patterns which indicate that they have no concept of reading as a means to communicate ideas. Those who have learned in the vernacular and who have become accustomed to understand what they read carry this tool over into the second language as well, and try to group meaningful units, and stop at periods rather than ends of lines.

Socioeconomic factors

One of the socioeconomic reasons given for using the prestige language rather than the vernacular in primary education was economic advantage in obtaining jobs. The initial entrance into the Spanish language through the idiom in no way hinders attaining this ultimate goal. The student gains this tool, but the

use of the vernacular first permits a slower and better adjustment into the Hispanic culture by those choosing to move into the second culture.

With education comes a new desire for economic equity. Knowledge of the real price of things made the jungle Indians very unhappy with the traders in the area who had overcharged and underpaid them in the past (see chapter 5). Naturally enough, they desired to be free of this injustice. Money came into the economy, and through the teachers, cooperatives were organized in some groups, making it possible for the Indians to run some of the unfair traders out of the tribal area. The Indians also became interested in planting cash crops such as rubber, cacao, and coffee, which were introduced by the teachers, who received instruction in agriculture as part of their training course. Students finishing the bilingual schools went on to study agriculture, commerce, mechanics, etc. Promising young men, who a few years ago would have left the tribal group, now stay in the tribe and become a part of the development which they see taking place. Some who had left have returned as they saw the new day of opportunity.

The schools have without doubt been an instrument of social and economic reform and of effective interchange with the national culture, with what, hopefully, has been a minimum of shock and frustration. This would have been impossible if only the prestige language had been used.

Financial factors

It is a fact that the Peruvian government has been putting a considerable amount of money into the teacher-training course, the preparation of materials in the vernacular languages, and in salaries for the bilingual teachers. But the government has received more for its money than it could ever have received with monolingual Spanish schools in the jungle. After a few years of bilingual education, more had been accomplished toward the integration of the jungle ethnic groups into the Peruvian system than had been accomplished in decades. The government continues to appropriate funds for bilingual

education, indicating that it is not disappointed in the returns on its investment.

Political factors

The impact of the bilingual school program on the unity of the country has also been evident. The Indians gather from the various tribal groups for their training courses and interact with one another, study together, observe one another's customs and languages, and in many cases become close friends, all within an atmosphere of patriotism. As a result of this experience, the tribes of the jungle have come to feel, for the first time, that they are a part of a larger unit, the country of Peru. Through this interaction, they have also gained a tribal consciousness which is very healthy since it is fitted into a national setting.

The schools in the tribe, with their emphasis on patriotism, the use of the flag, singing of the national anthem, and the keeping of national holidays with instruction from the teacher as to their significance, have fostered a loyalty to Peru on the part of the jungle Indians. The teachers have received their official documents and thus are recognized as full citizens of the country.

Dr. Efraín Morote Best (1961:307), eminent Peruvian folklorist and educator, made the following comments after the first few years of bilingual education:

It was, evidently, a revolutionary step from the educational and social point of view. An enormous barrier of inducement (to learn Spanish) is overcome and the native is given an opportunity, for the first time, to feel his worth as a human being and the value of the resources of his own culture.... The teachers, members of the societies of the jungle, use their own languages as the initial instrument of teaching, in order to teach the students Spanish, the language of the country, within a reasonable length of time.

As a result of the reports on the success of the program in

Peru, a recommendation was made by the Third Inter-American Indian Congress in La Paz, Bolivia, which translated into English reads: "To recommend to the Governments of the countries of America which have populations of indigenous jungle peoples, that they consider the experience of Peru concerning teaching in the vernacular language and with native teachers, in order that they may contemplate the possibility of applying this system" (Morote 1957:13).

In spite of the fact that governments have tried to use education in the prestige language as a way of forcing political unity, the Peruvian experiment has shown that bilingual education leads to faster and more stable results.

CONCLUSIONS

There are basically three alternatives that can be chosen by bilingual societies regarding language for educational purposes in the primary grades. They are (1) the use of the prestige language at all levels, (2) the use of the vernacular at all levels, and (3) the use of the vernacular in the beginning stages of learning, proceeding gradually and systematically to an acquisition of the prestige language.

Kitchen (1931:16), in his discussion of the problem in Bengal, quotes a Dr. West as having said, "the educationist has the choice of the language of the pupils, or the language of the knowledge to be imparted (the prestige language); and whichever he chooses, in leaving the other, he is bound to be wrong." Dr. West is quite right, but he does not suggest the third alternative, the use of both.

We believe that the best solution to the vernacular-versus-prestige-language problem is the third choice, the use of the vernacular in the first years of school to pave the way for the learning of the prestige language to be used in advanced education. In areas faced with the dual language problem, primary schools should be bilingual schools if they are to satisfy the needs of the individual student, the desires of the country for educational advance, and the healthy social integration of

minority groups, while encouraging maintenance of the ethnic identity of each.

In bilingual primary education the vernacular should be used (1) to initiate the child into school life; (2) to teach the processes of reading, writing, and arithmetic; (3) as a tool for oral learning of the prestige language; (4) as a diglot in advanced materials in arithmetic and social studies so that the student can understand the concepts being taught in the prestige language; (5) by the teacher to make explanations of material being taught in the prestige language for the advanced classes which are using material in that language; and (6) for the writing of tribal histories, legends, poetry, ballads, and other vernacular literature that reflects the distinct tribal identity.

The prestige language should be used (1) as a second language which is introduced orally, (2) for reading and writing after the process has been learned in the vernacular, (3) as another system for talking about material learned in arithmetic and social studies, and (4) as a second language to be learned well through pedagogical materials containing explanations in the vernacular. The prestige language should thus be learned well enough so that the student is able to continue his advanced education in this medium.

By using both languages, each with its specific roles, the total process of primary education becomes meaningful to the individual students and to the Indian communities, and at the same time helps governments solve their multilingual problems.

During the twenty-five years in which the Peruvian experiment with bilingual education has been going on, there has been a gradual change in the attitude of many countries towards the use of the vernacular in primary education. A desire to maintain indigenous languages and cultures has made education in the vernacular more acceptable. Monolingual prestige-language education has been seen to destroy the native culture and language, whereas the use of the vernacular in primary education, particularly in a bilingual school program, has been seen to help maintain the vernacular and many aspects of the indigenous culture, and at the same time, bridge the gulf between the national and the indigenous societies.

Being convinced of the effectiveness of the bilingual schools of the jungle, Peru in 1972 declared itself a multilingual country, and an official national bilingual education policy was drawn up. On February 8, 1973, a Supreme Decree authorized bilingual education among the vernacular-speaking sectors of the population and also advocated conservation and promotion of the vernacular cultures and languages (see Appendix B).

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