

READ

Vol. 7 No 2

The Adult Literacy Magazine

April 1972

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Quarterly

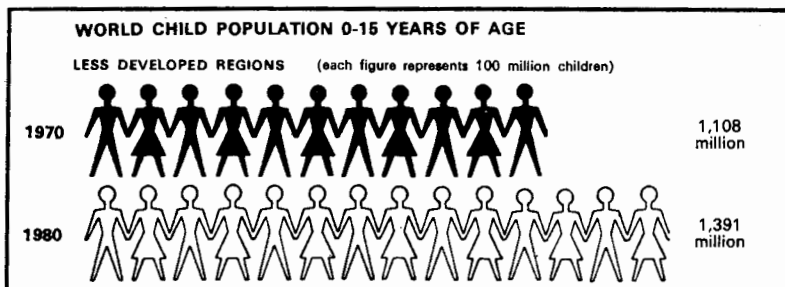
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WHAT DOES THIS SAY TO YOU ?

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Looking at this diagrammatically it does not look too bad—at first glance. Only another three little stylised figures. What of it. We live in an age of statistics and unless the statistician can produce something really startling we don't look twice at his figure.

Before you turn the page I beg your patience for a few moments to give some serious thought to the above diagram.

First, this only represents the child population of the 'Less Developed Regions' of the world.

Secondly, this represents an average increase of 28.3% in only 10 years. That will mean over 39,000,000 increase a year - more than 3 times the present population of Australia.

Thirdly, if this increase is maintained it will give us 1,785,000,000 by 1990 and 2,300,000,000 by the turn of the century - or 23 little stylised people - more than double the 1970 population of under fifteens.

In an article by Anthony Brock,¹ he makes a classic understatement, "And even on the most optimistic projections, the number of illiterates in 30 years is not likely to be less than 650 million or about 15 per cent, so the problem of illiteracy may not be solved this century".

In another article (appearing in this edition of "Read")² we read that even though percentagewise the rate of illiteracy will decrease in Middle Africa from 77% to 68% there will be an increase in the actual number of illiterates from 4.1 million (1960) to 5.2 million in 1975.

To aggravate the problem further there is the added difficulty of drop-out.³ Although it is not possible to arrive at a mean average, figures indicate that drop-out from adult education courses is high even when modern media such as radio and television is employed.⁴ The answer may not lie in modern technology after all.

The question asked by one of our writers in this issue is,⁵ "Has literacy had its day?" With the discouragement of the foregoing statistics and a host of

influential educationists asking the same question⁶ even the hardest champions of literacy may quake and concede defeat.

Admittedly, it would be naive to believe that illiteracy can be eradicated in this century. At the same time this is no reason for despair. Your job, my job is not to eradicate world illiteracy. We will leave this up to the statisticians! Our part is to do our utmost in our small corner as catalysts.

It is heartening to read about the work at Madang and that the first major writers course has been completed⁸ and that a new Writers Association has been formed. CWAMEL⁹ is only newly born, but at least it has been born. As it staggers to its feet to make its tracks across the arid desolation of blank paper which represents indigenous Christian literature in Melanesia to date it goes with our blessing. We wish it every success and this goes for Glen Bays too - a true catalyst.

Now, over to you. Turn back to the diagram and ask yourself "What does this say to me?" And then ask yourself what effect you are making to your small corner.

Roy Gwyther-Jones.

Footnotes:

1. "World Literacy Drive at Crucial Point; 600 Million New Literates in 20 years." Unesco Regional Centre for Book Development in Asia Newsletter, October 1971.
2. "The Problem of Illiteracy" Unesco Release ED/MD/5.
3. See "Drop-Out: A summary of the situation world-wide" this issue of "Read" page 10.
4. *ibid.* para. 3. page 12.
5. "More about Cassettes" Velma Foreman. This issue of "Read" page 19.
6. See "Using Modern Technology in Basic Education" Professor R.T. Theobald "Read" October 1971, Vol. 6 No.4 PP.21/22.
8. "The First Long Course Ends" Walter Darius. This issue of "Read" page 5.
9. CWAMEL - Christian Writers Association of Melanesia. This issue of "Read", page 16.



RENEWING SUBSCRIPTIONS

Would subscribers kindly take note of the new subscription rates on the back cover. We regret that it has been necessary to make minor increases owing to the re-valuation of major world currencies.

THE FIRST LONG COURSE ENDS

The longest, most intensive writing course ever held in Papua New Guinea ended recently. It was conducted by the Creative Training Centre (CTC), Madang.

The nine students taking part in the three and one-half month course came from various churches, missions and government departments of Papua New Guinea.

The instruction covered journalism--including writing for newspapers, magazines, and the radio--and methods of writing short stories, poetry and dramatic plays. We students spent most of our time reading and writing, as this is the best training for beginning writers. We also took short trips for broadening our knowledge of communication and for giving us experience in gathering information.

The CTC has its own little library where we could go for interesting reference and readable books on many subjects. School hours began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 4:30 p.m., five days a week. Sometimes lectures and films were continued at night. Students were free to continue working up to 11 p.m., and a few often did.

Most of the teaching was done by Glen W. Bays, the CTC training officer. He is an experienced writer and editor and is also theologically trained. Mr. Bays invited several guest lecturers to assist him. They covered such fields as photography, social problems, religion, and creative writing. A regular lecturer was Dr. Wesley Sadler, a linguist who is preparing Pidgin literacy materials.

The instruction was in English but we were encouraged to write in Pidgin. Some students used Pidgin almost all the time. Many of the things we wrote were published in a duplicated paper named Nobonob Nius.

"Nobonob" is the place where the CTC is located. It is about 1,000 feet above sea level, some 11 miles north of Madang. The two classrooms at Nobonob can accommodate 46 students each. There is dormitory space for approximately 100. A dining hall and chapel complete the facilities, which are administered by Kristen Pres, New Guinea's chief Christian publishing concern.

Some travel and accommodation expenses for those studying at the CTC are paid for by Christian Literature Development. CLD is a Fund supported by many Christians throughout the world, for the purpose of helping churches and missions in developing areas to train writers, editors and book-store workers.



Some of my fellow students received scholarships from overseas churches. In my own case, as a trainee of the Department of Information and Extension Services, I paid half of my expenses while the government paid the remainder. The cost of the course was \$192 per person.

My opinion about this pioneering writing course is that the game of chasing a wounded, wild duck was longer, tougher and more exhausting than I had expected! But what I see now tells me that my efforts have not been in vain. I have learnt a lot, not only about writing, but also about where exactly I stand in this new, changing country. Most of all, I realize that this young country needs literature of all kinds, written by Papuans and New Guineans.

I go out from the course to meet the demands of this country, not only as a journalist, but as a witness for Christ. Certainly the course has done me a great help, in my job and in my personal life too. If others can realize the great need for literature, Papua New Guinea will soon have a new history book.

Walter Darius.



A survey in London in 1965 showed a very high percentage of Indians with degrees working as bus-drivers and conductors in the city, because they have little chance of employment in their fields of qualification at home. Western Malaysia produces more than 35,000 Form 5 graduates annually with job openings for less than 5,000.

Have we in P.N.G. ever thought about the thousands of Form 4 graduates in 10 years' time and their aspirations of highly rewarding jobs?

INDIGENOUS WRITERS *in the making*

REPORT ON A RECENT WRITERS COURSE

The day of literature has not yet arrived for the peoples of the Pacific. This was one view expressed at a recent conference on Christian communication. It felt that because it is still too early to concentrate on literature we must place more emphasis on electronic oral media. We agree that these are important in that oral communication is the traditional method of communication but we also feel that the preparation of literature and the training of writers to meet the needs of the present literate minority, and against the time when the majority will want to read, must not be neglected.

There are four sources of literature - oral literature, original writing by speakers of a vernacular, original writing by outsiders and translated literature. We will concern ourselves only with the first two in this article.

Amongst New Guinea tribes there is a wealth of oral literature. This mostly reposes with the older illiterate members of the society and so there is the problem of how to record these stories and histories. At first the European may have captured these on paper or tape but now we must be pressing forward to train indigenes to do this recording. We need to train scribes and editors who understand the language, can write legibly, spell and use correct punctuation, viz. those who can carry the raw oral form through to the printing press.

Comparatively few writers of original material have yet appeared in New Guinea. We suggest that this doesn't indicate lack of potential but rather lack of stimulation because of the scarcity of outlets. However, today there are increasing opportunities for publishing in local or national newspapers and magazines.

In the Atzera Literacy Programme we felt we needed to help potential writers and to give further training to one or two who will edit material. Already there are three possible outlets for literature - the monthly magazine "Atzera Talk"

- booklets in vernacular or diglot
- scripts for a local radio station.

The need now is to indigenize these publications as much as possible. For this purpose, we ran a 5 day course for literacy instructors and anyone else who was interested.

The aims of the course were:-

1. To develop skills of technique (as needed by scribes and editors)
2. To develop skills of perception
3. To develop skills of story writing

The content of the course was in 3 sections in line with these aims;

1. Development of skills of technique

This involved revision and teaching (where necessary) of punctuation, spelling, the use of a dictionary, and the use of correct orthography for the language in which the student is writing.

We also emphasised the need to choose the best word when writing - i.e. the most accurate and the most picturesque. The class members saw the need for accurate thinking and choosing when they were asked to write one word or phrase to describe a situation that the teacher acted. In one series, the teacher picked up a book in different ways - with curiosity, furtively, with enjoyment etc. Students quickly realized they could use more picturesque expressions than merely "picking up". The need for accuracy became obvious when we got about ten different expressions for "carry". By discussion, they decided that only one of these could accurately describe that particular action.

Dialect differences provided interesting discussion material and helped towards a greater appreciation of each others manner of speech.

2. Development of skills of perception.

Although New Guineans live close to nature they still need practice in perceiving and observing. Observation (seeing and noting) must precede perception, therefore we had a daily training session to develop greater awareness through the use of all the senses, and to help students verbalize what these senses conveyed to them.

On the first day students were asked to note all they saw and on the second day, all they heard. Next they had to briefly describe the contents of two trays of unfamiliar food - one to be smelt and one to be tasted. Here they often used similes e.g. cloves were said to smell like the bark of a certain tree. Another valuable exercise was to try to verbalize the physical sensations engendered by different emotions e.g. joy, peace, fear. These expressions were later included in stories. In one the writer hears a noise in the forest. He thinks it is a ghost and so he writes "my chest trembled violently and my skin rose up and my eyes wavered and my feet shook and my mouth was heavy".

There was no doubt that students were more aware of detail and did show better perception even after only 5 days of practice.

3. Development of skills of story writing.

We decided to concentrate on improving the writing of stories in this first course as this is the most familiar oral style. For this reason too, we wrote only in Atzera. However, during the reading and discussion periods we also tried to make students aware of other types of writing - news articles, reports, feature articles, interviews, biographies, radio scripts, pamphlets and letters. We plan to concentrate more on these in Course 2 and will include work in Pidgin English.

It is important to have a purpose for writing. We therefore decided to aim at producing a book to which each student would contribute. The class decided that the subject should be local birds, each person was made responsible for writing about 2 different ones.

In conjunction with the bird stories students learnt about note-taking, planning, paragraphing, re-reading and re-writing and (for two of the men) editing.

Our rules for work were :-

1. Make one word or phrase notes on all you want to say e.g. on the Bird of Paradise - feathers (colour, tail), dancing, habitat, nest, food, head-dresses, male and female differences, shape and size.

2. Put the "short talk" into order and divide it into paragraphs, e.g. A) habitat - B) shape and size, male and female, feathers - C) food - D) nest - E) dancing, head-dresses.

3. Write your "long talk" (on loose paper and in pencil)

4. Read it and correct or rewrite if necessary.

5. Give your story to someone else to read (usually an editor).

6. Correct your copy.

7. Rewrite your story in ink in your book.

8. Read your story to the class or make it otherwise available for others to read.

Articles on birds needed to be planned in a more careful way than, say, a legendary story. However, there is a danger in emphasizing a foreign style of writing so the tutor must be sensitive to the indigenous speakers feeling as to good style in his own language. A good style is not something acquired quickly by the language learner.

Although 5 days wasn't long for a Writer's Course, the 14 students did well in providing vernacular scripts for the Bird Book and other material for the Atzera Newspaper. A weekly assignment (again covering the 3 main content items in the course) will, we hope, provide more literature and consolidate what was learnt in this our first Writer's Course.

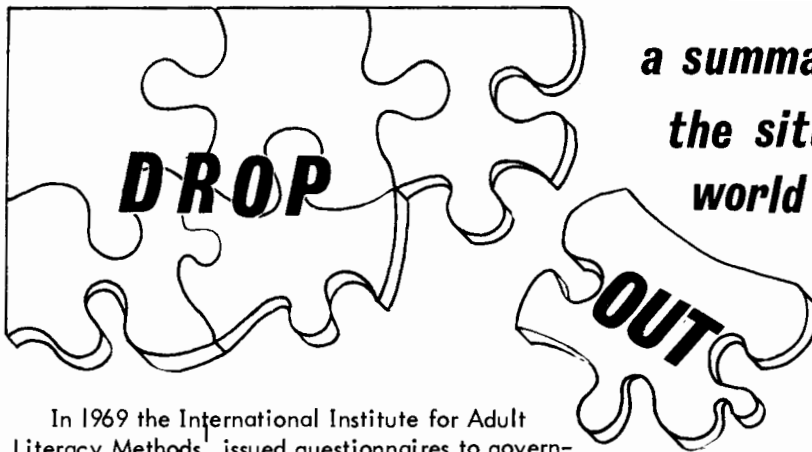
Anne Roke-Cates
S.I.L., New Guinea.



"In many transitional societies a literacy of approximately 25 to 35 percent is common. But closer examination of the level of literacy shows that only 3 to 5 percent can be considered fully literate. This relatively small group is the only portion of the population effectively reached by the mass media system."

Dr. D.K. Smith, Rhodesia.





***a summary of
the situation
world - wide***

In 1969 the International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods issued questionnaires to governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing directly with adult education. About 800 questionnaires were dispatched in 4 languages to 123 countries. The purpose was to receive details on the methods and techniques used in various projects, which might be of interest to other programmes.

The response to the questionnaires was poor with replies from only 10% of the organizations approached. Replies were received referring to 100 projects in 52 countries. The excessive length of the questionnaire may account for part of the poor result.

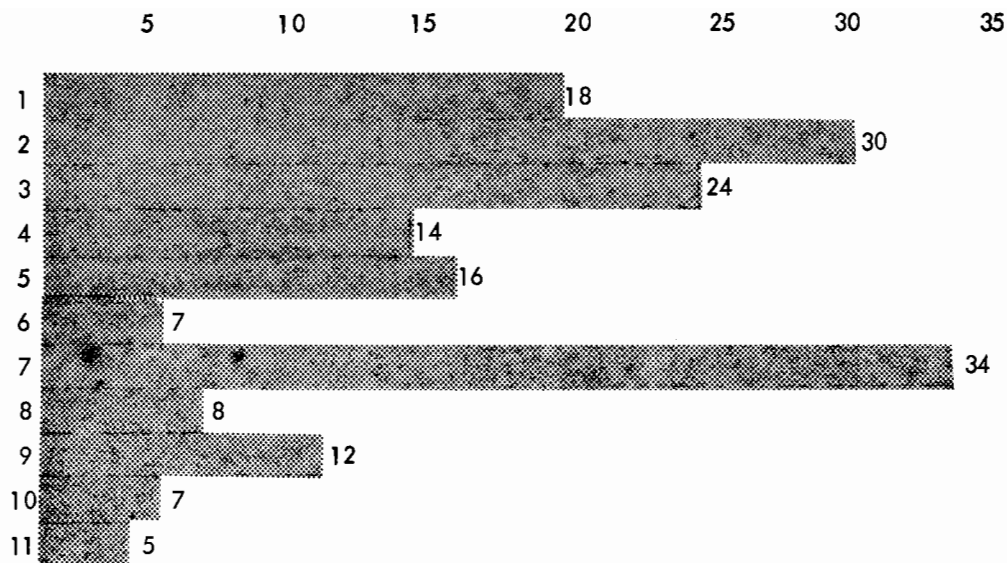
Though far from complete the preliminary research and statistical information reveal some useful findings which may be of value to literacy workers. In its preliminary report the Institute limits itself to general findings but also highlights one important aspect, namely the drop-out problem.

In compiling the statistics the information on drop-out is by no means clear-cut. In some of the projects up to five reasons were given while other respondents provided only one reason for drop-out. Also no specific reason was given by some of the organizations.

The following chart indicates the Variety of Reasons for drop-out and their frequencies.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Seasonal work | 7. Student's low calibre |
| 2. Travel and change of place | 8. Shyness and other psychological reasons |
| 3. Work problems | 9. Household reasons |
| 4. Bad organization | 10. Illness |
| 5. No qualified personnel | 11. Others |
| 6. Shortage of materials | |

See chart on following page ...



The rate of drop-out is affected by many factors. The following variables were tested in relation to the rate of drop-out.

- Duration of the course
- Content of the course
- Students paying for educative materials or not
- Teachers being paid or not
- Implementation of radio and T.V. as a teaching aid
- Time of the start of the project

a) DURATION OF THE COURSE

In the questionnaire the duration of courses was to be expressed in hours and the median for the duration for all projects was 300 hours. Of the 69 projects providing answers there was practically no difference in the rate of drop-out in projects shorter than 300 hours and longer than 300 hours. This finding is interesting, since it is often maintained that short courses would show a low rate of drop-out.

b) CONTENT OF COURSE

Out of the 82 cases having answered both questions (drop-out and the kind of content), 23 projects had a technical content and 59 had no special content. Although the number of cases with a technical content is relatively small, so that it may not be justified to draw any definite conclusions, it would also appear that providing a technical content as such, is no guarantee for a low rate of drop-out. It is possible, however, that the type and quality of the content would be more important than the fact that there is a technical content.

c) PAYING OR NOT PAYING FOR MATERIALS

81 cases responded to this question. Although the level of probability was insignificant (0.05) it is interesting to note that the rate is higher in projects in which students do not pay for the educative materials (46 to 35). Although a firm conclusion may not be justified it

might be an indication that there is merit in making a small charge for materials.

d) TEACHERS BEING PAID OR NOT

Of the 73 cases tested in only 16 the teachers were not paid. Therefore, although the drop-out rate was a little greater for unpaid-teachers (35.82% not paid to 33.19% paid) it would not be justified to draw any conclusion.

e) THE USE OF RADIO AND/OR T.V.

Of the 80 projects responding 29 used these media and 51 did not. By looking at the arithmetical means, there is a higher rate of drop-out in projects where radio and/or T.V. was used (34.95%) than when they were not used (29.68%). Therefore, it might be concluded that there is a slight tendency to have more drop-outs when these media are used.

f) TIME OF START(DATE) OF THE PROGRAMME

The oldest programme started in 1940 while the newest was 1969. Figures indicate that the 22 projects established between 1961 and 1964 were particularly high in drop-outs. It may be that the better quality of the newly established projects (31 between 1965 and 1969) would seem to indicate that in the last 5 years there has grown a greater awareness among the programme organizers about the actual needs of the illiterates, so that they are less likely to abandon a course.

Other features of interest in the report are contained in these tables.

1. The possibility of drop-outs joining the next course.

Often	-	21%
Seldom	-	33%
Never	-	6%
No Answer	-	40%

2. The Incentives to complete a course.

Good teaching	-	5.74%
Advice	-	15.58%
Offering Goods	-	5.74%
Certificates	-	38.52%
Follow-up courses	-	8.20%
Other rewards	-	9.83%
No answer,	-	16.39%

The above is only a brief digest of the report. I would recommend closer scrutiny of it by those actively engaged in organizing literacy programmes. I, for one, look forward to receiving the Final Report of the Institute when it is released.

R. Gwyther-Jones.

Footnotes.

1. This Institute based in Teheran, Iran, is an operation of Unesco and the Government of Iran.
2. Preliminary report on the Replies to the Institute Questionnaire Issued in 1969. Teheran December 1970.
3. Obtainable from The International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods, P.O., Box 1555, Teheran, Iran.

WHICH SCRIPT

That all literacy and literature work has its manifold problems no one will deny.

However, when the language group in which literacy is being conducted is divided by an international border the problems are multiplied. Again, when the official national script of the two neighbouring centres is entirely different though the linguistic difference is a minor dialectical one, then the literacy worker will usually choose the script of the country in which the majority of the language group is located.

When, however, the use of different scripts is legislated by the governments of both of the neighbouring countries this narrows the choice to either working with part of the language group using one script or producing material in the two different scripts.

That was the dilemma facing Miss Enid Parker, a research worker of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa. Miss Parker, who arrived in England 16 years ago as a teacher, and is now a linguist and adult educator working with the Danakil or Afar people, a tribe estimated at at least one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand. Part of the tribe lives in Ethiopia where the official script is Amharic while the remainder live in Territoire Franois Afar et des Issas, known as T.F.A.I. (formerly French Somaliland) in which the official script is Roman.

Miss Parker met with some apathy and scepticism at first. The people believed that their language, hitherto unwritten was too difficult to render complicated material into a written form. Though there are still some linguistic problems unresolved she has mastered the language sufficiently well to produce the first two books, a primer series, in their second revision, as well as other literature for classroom and radio broadcasting use in co-operation with native speakers. Experimental classes have been and are being held. The Gospel of John is currently at the Bible Society in London and being prepared for printing in Roman script for Djibouti dialect. Adult educational material in health, social studies and other subjects has been duplicated and distributed on a limited scale.

With equal concern for the Afar (Danakil) of Ethiopia Miss Parker is also producing educational material in the Amharic script. She is most grateful for the co-operation from the University of Addis Ababa publishing-service. During 1971 some Afar stories, riddles and proverbs appeared in the bi-ennial Journal of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies.

For those of us with phonemic problems in our language it will serve us well to count our blessings and spare a sympathetic thought for the Afar (Danakil) and numerous other tribal groups divided by invisible man-made boundaries.

Roy Gwyther-Jones.



ባ.ሂ ። አማ ሳጋ ባህቴም ሜዒ አዋይ አኑ
 I brought". "That cow that you brought well now I
 አማ ሳጋ ኩኒህ ኤሌም ኢንኪናህ ካጃም ኢንዒቤህ
 that cow them-for that I gave completely greatly I hated
 ሰ-ጌማይ ። ታዋይ ዲራይ ታዋይ ኢሲህ ጌጅ ባስ
 I was-for. Now depart! this minute! yourself go! just
 ባስ ታማ ሳጋ ባህቴክ ዋዲሪህ ። ሜዒህ
 no more that cow you brought-from after". "All right
 ጌጃህ ዩ ዓስ አባው ። ሜዒህ ሜዒህ ጌጃህ
 am going my red father-O. All right all right I am going"
 ኢዩ ኩኒክ ጌጅ ። ዎይሳራ ኩኒል ዩዱራ
 aid them-from he went. That-after them-on he returned
 አይኩ ። ሃዩ ። ኒህ ጋሐሴ ። ዩ አባው
 you" "Well?" "Us-for you returned?" "My father-O
 አኒ ናብሲክ ኤጃጌም ማዩ አኑ ።
 my own self-of that I know I have not I.
 ዩ ሳጋ ቤኢቴሂዩ. ዎ ሳጋ
 w he took for himself and that cow
 ሜጃ ጃጅ ኢንኪናሃይ አኒ
 he wanted completely, my own
 ሌ አሜቴና ለዩ
 I came-like
 ጌጌም
 with the Institute

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY IN THAILAND

Presentation of Materials

Experience in different literacy programmes has pointed out several difficulties resulting from the use of primers presented in book or pamphlet form. The adult illiterate can easily be dissuaded from continuing participation in a literacy class when the task confronting him is seemingly impossible. Reading the first page of the primer is very difficult. The mere thought of all the pages that have yet to be read can cause feelings of frustration and lead to the abandonment of the effort. Those students that persist and do make their way through the reader can derive some encouragement from the fact that the portion of the material that they have mastered grows from lesson to lesson but the overall task is equally as visible on the first day as it is on the last.

Strict adherence to the concept of situation-specificity would necessitate the production of a large variety of different primers, each suited to a different situation. Such an under-taking would, no doubt, prove quite costly.

Finally, it has been observed most forcibly that while the printed word means little to the adult illiterate, the picture or photograph is most meaningful. This has been amply illustrated in the work of Freire in Brazil and Chile and by teams using the Freire method in Ecuador. Freire has pointed out the importance of utilization of drawings or photographs as motivational tools as well as teaching aids in literacy campaigns.

Combining these three factors a system for the presentation of the materials has been evolved, borrowing from an earlier model developed in Israel. This system provides for the preparation of materials on a series of cards, each containing a photograph on one side and an appropriate explanatory text on the other. At the outset of the programme the student is presented with an empty loose-leaf binder. Each of the lessons of the programme are printed on cards and are given to the student only as he learns them. The cards are inserted in the binders, eventually building up to a book. In this way the advancement of the student is evident to him and he has the added motivational force of building up his own book. Furthermore, gaps in the cards (which should be numbered) point out gaps in participation. The ambition not to miss out becomes a motivational factor in influencing participation. Expansion of the programme to other areas of the country does not necessitate the preparation and printing of completely new books or pamphlets but only the insertion of appropriate cards in the appropriate place. Those cards which contain topics useful in many areas can easily be retained. Thus, different portions of the entire text can be exchanged as needed for different situations. Finally, the card format provides a unique possibility for presenting the student with a complete topic at each lesson. The topic relates in all cases to the photograph. The photograph also permits for the conduct of the all-important discussion session prior to the text instruction. Photographs are to be taken in the programme areas so that students should be able to relate to them and discuss their meaning prior to the text reading.

Reading instruction methodology

The adult illiterate comes to an initial reading course with different qualifications than the child. He has passed the motor stages of his development and is quite adept at informal operations. Furthermore, in compensation for the lack of reading and writing skills he is in possession of a highly developed memory. His memory, in fact, must serve him as the sole tool for the retainment of significant information. Word of mouth is the only mode of communication and transferral of information (radio and television, too, rely on a verbal transmission) and the memory the only recording mechanism. It is no accident that entire cultures have come down to the present day by word of mouth. These are the cultures of illiterate populations who, unable to pass their heritage on from generation to generation in writing, did so verbally, relying upon the developed memories of their members for the accuracy and storage.

The reading methodology adopted by the current Thai project is derived from the above factors, both the ability to abstract and the high degree of memory development. In consequence, Learners, from the very first day of instruction will be presented with complete texts. These texts will progress in degree of difficulty of word and sentence structure but at all times will be complete texts presenting entire concepts or pieces of information. Due to the coupling of each text with a discussion focussing on a photograph, it is expected that the students will become sufficiently familiar with the texts to memorize them. Memorization may not accurately follow the printed text but will certainly be sufficient to form an association between the printed words and the concepts they convey.

In each lesson one or a number of key words will be selected for in-depth instruction. The students will be taught to read and write these words as well as understand their phonic composition. These words should be repeated in the text several times so that the learners will form a permanent association between the printed symbols and the words they convey. Every few lessons a series of cards will be inserted to summarize both the words chosen as key words and the phonic sounds covered through them. Eventually, over the course of a programme, all phonic sounds and their symbols of the Thai language will be taught. Teachers should not be concerned with the fact that the texts, especially in the initial stages, will be too complicated for students to read in the accepted meaning of reading. The students will be able to "read" the texts in that each time they look at them they will be able to precisely state what is written in them. If the materials are sufficiently interesting, and functional, it can be assumed that students will read them in this fashion over-and-over. The constant referral to the texts will result in the association of the printed symbols with words, and reading in the accepted sense will occur.

This method is far more stimulating to the adults than existing methods and can potentially turn illiterates into good readers, rather than mediocre ones struggling to identify symbols with sounds and then combine them in words and phrases. One final thought - as many of the students will rarely read materials other than those presented to them in the literacy programme, one can be assured that they will be able to read those materials whenever they revert to them to refresh their memories on the information contained in the cards.

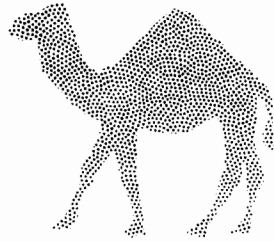
Extract from:-

"A Functional Literacy Project in the Provinces of Lampang and Prae in Thailand" by David Harman and Kowit Vorapipatana.

BULLETIN of the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia, March, 1971.



what is a
CWAMEL ?



A Christian Writers' Association of Melanesia (CWAMEL) is being formed. It was born at the close of a writers' course at the Creative Training Centre, Madang, last December. The group of new writers felt the need for an organization through which they could keep in touch with one another and receive continued help.

CWAMEL will be patterned after a Christian Writers' Association in Africa and the World Association for Christian Communication. These two organizations aid local and regional groups and individuals who seek to publish and broadcast more and better Christian material.

CWAMEL will provide services only. At the beginning these will consist of a journal containing articles of help and encouragement to writers, a manuscript counseling and placement service, and help in getting educational materials to those studying writing methods at home.

CWAMEL will be strictly ecumenical. Its only purpose is to strengthen Christian communicators in the spreading of the Good News.

The word "writers" is meant to include anyone who writes, edits or translates religious matter for print, broadcasting or filming. Anyone who pledges to submit such material on a regular basis is eligible to receive the services of CWAMEL.

"Religious matter" is defined as anything which seeks to help men become reconciled to God and to one another, and which tries, in Christ's name, to make and keep human life more joyful and meaningful.

"Melanesia" is in the title because of interest by persons outside Papua New Guinea.

No membership fee will be charged immediately. A grant to the Creative Training Centre from a church in Arlington Heights, Illinois, USA, will provide services to writers during 1972. It is hoped that local groups and individuals will help support the organization financially later on.

Those who wish to become members of the Christian Writers' Association of Melanesia should write to the Acting Secretary, CWAMEL, P. O., Box 709, Madang.

Glen Bays.



CONFERENCE REVISES COPYRIGHT CONVENTIONS



Representatives of the world's leading book publishing countries have paved the way for developing countries to legally publish and translate the textbooks they badly need under easier terms, thanks to an international diplomatic conference held at Unesco House from 5 to 24 July, 1971.

The conference grouped officials representing their nations in the two international copyright authorities, the Universal Copyright Convention (UCC), adopted under Unesco sponsorship in 1952, and the Berne Convention that dates from 1886 and has been revised four times.

During the morning, the UCC representatives met; in the afternoon, those of the Berne Convention. The overlap in representation at the two meetings was symbolized by Ambassador Pierre Charpentier, head of the French delegation, who was chairman of both.

The conference, marked by hard negotiating and speeches reflecting strong convictions, nevertheless resulted in the unanimous adoption of the proposed revisions by the 60 countries that took part. The new arrangements, once they are ratified by the states concerned, will provide a legal system of international copyright that is flexible, practical and effective, conference sources said.

The exceptional goodwill and success which characterized the work of transforming conflicting interests among the participants into legal proposals acceptable to all was crowned by a demonstration rarely known to such conference: rounds and rounds of applause at the final meeting.

For decades, the problem of translation rights has been a particularly thorny aspect of international copyright regulations. And the emergence of a host of newly independent nations during the past 20 years made urgent the business of revising these regulations.

The new states, faced with an imperative need to greatly expand educational facilities, simply lacked enough authors competent to write the required scientific, technical and educational texts.

Under the terms of what is already known as the Paris Act of 1971, developing countries no longer have to wait seven years after a work's original publication to translate it into their national languages for use in schools and universities. The new regulations provide a one-year delay before translation into local languages. For translation into "languages in general use" as English, French, and Spanish, the period is reduced to three years.

Licence to reproduce works for school, university or research use may be obtained by any

national of a state that ratifies the Paris Act when the original publisher has not sold the rights within five years of first publication. For works in the fields of science and technology, the period is three years, while for fiction, drama, poetry, music and art books it is seven years.

A Just Compensation

Two obligations are imposed on those taking up translation and reproduction rights; the translated and reproduced works may not be exported to another country and the author must receive a just compensation. In addition to the prescribed number of years before the various rights to translate and reproduce become available, the Paris Act provides an additional six-month period for negotiations between the original copyright holders in industrialized countries and publishers in developing countries.

The same system applies to audio-visual material such as television films and sound recordings intended exclusively for educational purposes.

The conference also softened the UCC Article XVII under which any member state leaving the Berne Convention cannot subsequently enjoy protection under the UCC in countries which are members of both conventions. Developing countries will be exempted from this "safeguard clause" because of their need to adjust the degree of copyright protection they provide to the level of their cultural, social and economic development.

In sum, the conference has proposed important concessions in the international copyright system to the benefit of the Third World. The next and crucial step is for the nations that adhere to the UCC and the Berne Convention to ratify the Paris Act.

Georges Ravelonanosy.
Unesco Regional Centre for Book Development in
Asia Newsletter, Karachi, October, 1971.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

THE MEASURE OF ILLITERACY

There are 25% more illiterate women than men in the world. Statistics for the developing countries reveal that 87% of African women are illiterate against 69% of African men; the figures for Asia and Oceania are 61% and 41% respectively, and for the Arab countries 88% and 65%.

more about



CASSETTES

A lot has been said recently about cassette players and tapes. We have been working in the cassette field in the Sepik District for a little over a year now and are sold on it.

In a previous issue of READ (April 1969) Helen Marten wrote about our discouragements in literacy with people with no motivation to read. It's been an uphill battle all the way. It becomes even more discouraging when you have Scripture translated and approved for distribution and no one can read well enough to read it - or even wants to read it.

It was this situation that drove us in desperation to cassettes after we heard what Gospel Recordings were doing with them. A year ago, hardly a Yessan-Mayo person was aware of the Scriptures. Today they are vitally aware of the Scriptures. With a flick of a switch, everyone has an opportunity to hear, and it's been our experience so far that the people are eager to hear what God has to say to them through the cassettes.

To date a tape player and a library of eight tapes has been distributed in ten different villages and hamlets. The equipment belongs to us. We have the villagers appoint someone to be responsible for the player. This man is to take care of the player, keep it operating with fresh batteries (which we supply), and supervises its use. He sees to it that the player goes out to a home every night if possible. In the village of Mayo this worked very well. The first couple of times we asked various people if they would like to take the player and tape to their home that night and listen to the tape. After that we were besieged with people coming and asking us if they could have the player that night! Only once has a Yessan-Mayo come and asked for a copy of the Scriptures to read!

Every two months a visit is made to each village to give a new supply of batteries, to check the machines, and to provide any new tapes available.

The tapes consist primarily of Scripture read by a Yessan-Mayo speaker. Hymns and choruses are used mostly to fill in the ends of tapes. We've found it an excellent way to teach songs. We placed a player and tapes in one village where they'd never heard hymns before. A month later we went back and everyone was singing the hymns!

ADVANTAGES OF USING CASSETTES

1. The most obvious advantage is that the cassette can reach people that the printed page cannot reach. You can go to many New Guinea villages today where you cannot find a single reader. With a cassette player and tapes there is no problem here at all. You aren't

reliant upon readers. Show them how to operate the player and everyone, literate and non-literate, old and young, can hear and understand.

2. The message is heard in good, clear language with the proper intonation which is very often crucial to a proper understanding. We have heard many New Guineans read and very rarely have I heard one read as though he were speaking naturally. To hear them read publically is painful - the stumbling, the pauses, the repetition, the disregard of vital punctuation marks! They may be reading, but they are not communicating! The naturalness of the speech on the tapes has had real appeal to the Yessan-Mayos.
3. Cassette players are simple to operate, and not much can go wrong with them. It is important, however, that the players have a diode placed in them that prevents the player from operating if the batteries are put in backwards. Without the diode the tape can be run off the spools.
4. There is a certain amount of prestige in having a machine in the village.
5. There is great value in hearing the tapes over and over again. Repetition is a vital ingredient of the Yessan-Mayo culture. In speech no one ever says anything just once - the same thing is said again again in a variety of ways to get a point across. Repetition and reduplication is actually a grammatical feature of the Yessan-Mayo language. People sit and listen to the village elders tell the same stories over and over again. People can look at a book for the hundredth time with the same enthusiasm and delight as the first time they opened it. There is very little danger that they will tire of the tapes. On the contrary, they will be listened to again and again and will be memorized.
6. Listening is easy - reading is hard work. You can whittle away at a carving or make a net bag and still sit and listen.
7. The provision of proper lighting facilities for reading has been one hindrance to a Bible study group taking hold in the evenings at Mayo. People can sit in the dark or by the dim light of a glowing fire listening to the tapes and discuss them.
8. It meets their communication needs in a more complete way than does the printed page. New Guinea cultures are not literate or literary cultures. They are not book-oriented as we are. Information is obtained through conversation primarily, and increasingly via the radio.

DISADVANTAGES OF USING CASSETTES

1. The expense involved is probably the biggest problem. A good tape recorder is necessary to do the initial taping. A good cassette recorder is needed to record the cassette tapes. Tapes themselves are expensive. Finally the players for each village must be purchased.
2. The players need to be supplied regularly with batteries. This may involve trips to the villages. On the other hand this has proved an asset to us. Previously we had contact with most of the villages once a year on average. Now we are making regular visits and increasing our contact with the people.
3. There is probably a greater expenditure of the translators' time involved in recording and making the cassette tapes than in having a book printed. (A typescript copy of the tech-

nical details of recording is on file at the S.I.L. headquarters at Ukarumpa.)

However, the disadvantages in time and money pale to insignificance when considering the advantages of communicating the Gospel meaningfully.

Perhaps this is heresy in a periodical dedicated to literacy efforts, but here goes.... Is it possible that today literacy is being bypassed? Has literacy had its day?* The printed page used to be the only way to make the Scriptures or any new material available to the people. But today people don't have to be literate to be exposed to new ideas. Many of New Guinea's most backward villages have transistor radios - but not literates. I believe there is still room for literacy - but for most it will be a long, slow road. A literate and literary New Guinea culture is probably a few generations away. We may not have that much time. Let's take advantage of the times and use the cassettes for all they're worth. Let's make the Living Word of God available to all the people - not just to the literates.

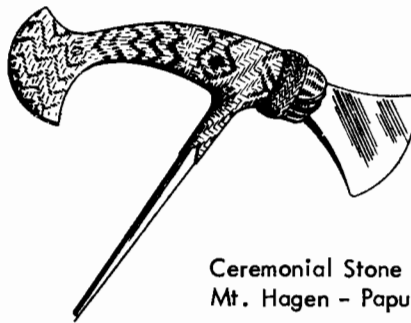
We've tried it and it works.

Velma Foreman, S.I.L.,
New Guinea Branch.

* This is heresy! Editor.

Footnote:

Phillips play back machines are used in this programme. They use 6 'C' cell batteries for about 15 hours playing time. Each village is supplied with 18 batteries at a time which lasts approximately 3 months - price \$2.00 (Aust.)



Ceremonial Stone Axe
Mt. Hagen - Papua New Guinea.

FACT and OPINION

POLITICAL EDUCATION

As the people of Papua New Guinea go to the poll in their Third General Election the Administration is launching a crash political education project in the Goroka area of the Eastern Highlands.

Literature will play an important role in the project. Initially using a booklet on Government and Independence written and translated by members of S.I.L. in English and three vernacular languages, followed by other booklets and pamphlets, literature is to be distributed free of charge after lecture tours by members of the Political Education Committee and university and teachers' college students. Some of the literature is also being re-written for broadcasting over the Administration Radio Station.

The use of vernacular literature in political education is a new departure for the Government who will be using the programme as an experimental pilot project for further development in this field.

With self-government probable during the early life of the present House of Assembly (within 4 years) and the possibility of independence following close on its heels it may be another case of "too little too late".

A NEW FRONTIER - COMMUNICATION

Just a few years ago there were many geographic frontiers on the earth. Today we think of frontiers in more restricted terms: New Guinea, Antarctica and the Moon. Frontiers are wherever new ground is being broken: geographically, technologically, or conceptually. The technology of mass media has greatly affected the art of communication in recent years. Yet, as often occurs in human progress, a technological frontier often pushes at a pace ahead of the necessary conceptual frontier, leaving a sort of back-wash of neglect and ignorance, in which there breeds misuse and disuse of the new technology. Communication technology is not yet properly used - for lack of conceptual understanding and wise applications of new knowledge.

Clearly, the technology is well ahead of its application. Side by side with the technological development of media has been a deterioration of inter-personal relationships - the essence and basis of communication. We can take all sorts of sounds and sights, spool them, can the, snip them, mix them, bounce them into space and mirror them back again. All of this is spectacular and promising. Now if we can just learn how to communicate, we'll really have something!

Dr. Ted Ward
International Institute of Christian
Communication Newsletter, February, 1972.

keeping new literates



Keeping new literates reading is a problem in Papua New Guinea and in other formerly illiterate countries. Reading is simply not a part of their culture. It is inconvenient for them to read. There is no good lighting at night. There are always other people around who demand and deserve attention. People are tired after a day of physical activity and would rather sit and talk to relatives and friends than read.

In Africa it is said that 90% fall back into illiteracy. Why? Partly for the same reasons as above and also because there are no 'bridge' materials. No easy familiar things to read which would help them to bridge the gap to full literacy. There are no reading classes or clubs for those who have finished the primers and are now expected to struggle on their own. India has used a three stage literacy program stretched over a year to help new readers. Three months are spent on primers, then three months reading simple books and then six months or longer with reading clubs and village libraries.

Lots of clear simple, interesting reading material is needed for the new literate. He needs to be personally encouraged to read. Hand him a book to take home. Read together in groups. Sit down next to him and read.

What do they want to read? Most couldn't really tell you because their experience is limited. They don't know what is available or what it's about. Now if you had some of their own stories printed or mimeographed, they would be interested. Yes, their own folk stories that they have heard so many times before are the most popular. Many tribal people want these more than other literature. Record stories from the best village story tellers and transcribe and print them. They will have to be edited and simplified but you won't have to worry about motivation. Stories with local flavor - people, plants, animals, songs, proverbs - are the most interesting. Start with the familiar before going on to the unfamiliar world of agriculture, geography, etc. Get literates to write stories - fact or fiction - in the local setting. Write about local problems and how they can be faced.

Native authors can write much better than expatriates so encourage them. Keep alert for talent. Papua New Guineans are great talkers - get them to write it and give them the credit and reward for doing it.

In Latin America a survey showed that villagers were only able to read a maximum of 800 words at a sitting without becoming fatigued. Retention of material was inversely proportionate to the number of different ideas in the material. Simple, highly illustrated booklets with few ideas per page and of the narrative or descriptive style were most effective.

It is advisable to limit the vocabulary to concrete, common words. Use simple verb forms and not more than two new words per page. Repeat words frequently. Repeat ideas and thoughts. Use personal names and pronouns, short words in active short sentences. Avoid superlatives and use conjunctions sparingly. In most languages, the first 100 most frequent words make up 50% of running text. The first 2000 make up 90%.

Test the material before it is published. Type or mimeograph it and choose a number of subjects who are representative of the target audience to read it. What do they understand and remember? What are the difficulties?

After you have some good material, have classes where you all sit down and read it together. In villages where you cannot go personally, how about recording the material on cassette tapes and have the people listen and follow the written material at the same time? Local instructors could use the tapes as part of their reading classes in the advanced stages. This would help improve reading speed.

This whole field needs imagination and new ideas and experimentation. Let's get involved.

Helen Marten.



Fact & Opinion--continued

CENSUS SHOWS INCREASE IN URBAN POPULATIONS

According to the Papua New Guinea Newsletter, 27 January, 1971 the preliminary counts of the 1971 show that 296,601 people are now living in urban areas throughout Papua New Guinea, this compares with 132,637 at the 1966 census.

Not all of the urban increase was due to natural causes. In many cases, particularly the larger and faster-growing urban areas, the boundaries were extended between 1966 and 1971, thus affecting comparison. Rapid economic development and the growth of industries in major centres were also contributing factors.

The most striking instance of this was the growth of two new townships, Panguna (6,582) and Arawa (5,042), as a result of large-scale copper mining development on Bougainville Island.

The population of Lae, a rapidly developing industrial centre, almost doubled to 34,699 while that of Mt Hagen nearly trebled to 9,609 as compared with the 1966 figures. Port Moresby population increased from 41,848 to 66,244 over the same period.

One can be sure, however, that the provision of opportunities for adult education has not kept apace with the rapid population increase. What an opportunity for the churches to meet one of the great challenges of our day.



NEWS

WRITING WORKSHOP PLANS FOR 1972

In place of one course of 17 weeks as held in 1971, the 1972 programme of the Creative Training Centre calls for two courses of six weeks each. The first one will begin on 4th September and close on 13th October. The second will open on 23rd October and run to 1st December.

In certain cases (such as work being done on a special writing project) it may be possible for a trainee to stay at Nobonob over the total period.

The cost per trainee to church-related agencies will be unchanged: A\$6 per week for accommodation, transport to Madang, and provision of pocket money. The remaining costs, which make up at least half the total, will be provided by Christian Literature Development.

Administration and private agencies must pay the full transport and accommodation costs.

Two five-day writing workshops will be held at Nobonob this year. They have been scheduled for students of Madang Teachers' College but are open to others as well. The first one is from the 17th through the 21st of April and the second one is July 3rd through 7th.

NATIONAL LANGUAGE SURVEY

A national language survey is being carried out jointly by some staff members of the Education Department and Papua New Guinea University students.

The purpose of the survey is to find out which language is used by the majority of people in various districts.

The study will be concerned only with the use of English, Pidgin and Motu.

Port Moresby and the other main centres, including Kavieng, Rabaul and Bougainville will be covered by the survey.

A member of the survey team said the survey was started early last year as part of an English project. It will finish at the end of this month.

He said results of the survey would also give an indication of which language amongst the three was widely used by the majority of people in Papua New Guinea.

The spokesman said the survey was being carried out among different groups, including expatriates, mixed-race people and Papuans and New Guineans.

Papua New Guinea Press Release, Number:0128
20th January, 1972

SYMBOL FOR INTERNATIONAL BOOK YEAR



Unesco has designated 1972 as International Book Year. Left, the world symbol for this occasion designed by the Belgian artist Michel Olyff. Twin figures with linked arms symbolize international co-operation through books and the major role of books in cultural and economic development. Main themes for International Book Year include the encouragement of authorship and translation, book production and distribution, library development and promotion of the reading habit. A Charter of the Book, now being drafted, sets down the treatment which books should be accorded, nationally and internationally, so they can play their full part in education, development and mutual understanding.

LITERACY PRIZES REWARD BURMA AND ZAMBIA EFFORTS

Two annual prizes for outstanding work in literacy teaching were presented at Unesco's H.Q., during ceremonies marking International Literacy Day on Sept. 8. The Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Prize, donated by the Shahinshah of Iran, went to Zambia's Central Literacy Supervisory and Co-ordinating Committee for the campaigns it has carried out since 1969. The Nadezhda K. Krupskaya Prize, awarded by the U.S.S.R., was won by the Zambia Adult Literacy Programme for its efforts during the past seven years. Winners were chosen by an International Committee meeting in Moscow, which made three additional commendations for each prize. For the Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Prize, mentions went to an Indonesian campaign, a U.S. voluntary organization and a Jamaican women literacy organizer. For the Nadezhada Krupskaya Prize, commendations were given to the Organization of the Angolan Woman, the Literacy Section of the Kuwait Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts of the Dominican Republic.

Unesco Newsroom, The Unesco Courier, October, 1971.

USE OF HELICOPTERS IN LITERACY

The advantages of travel by helicopter were evident to Joy McCarthy and Gwen Gibson as they set out to check the progress of 24 Kanite literacy classes. They were accompanied by two Kanite supervisors, Avopi and Toni. In four minutes they flew to a village which usually is a long four-hour hike by trail, and at day's end they estimated that their journey would have taken at least four days of very difficult mountain climbing, four nights of sleeping in villages - and several days to recover! The girls were gratified to find Kanite trained teachers gathering men, women and children into thatch-roofed buildings which they have built themselves, and doing an excellent job of teaching them to read. Joy concluded, "And I wish that you could hear them reading Scripture in unison in their own Kanite tongue!"

Wycliffe World News, Translation, October-December, 1971.



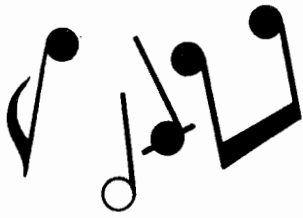
"Few men make themselves masters of what they write or speak." John Selden, 16th Cent.

For the Student of

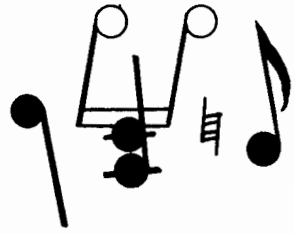
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Remember when HIPPIE meant big in the hips,
and a TRIP involved travel in planes, cars and ships.
When POT was a vessel for cooking things in,
and HOOKED was the thing that a fish might have been.
When FIX was a word that meant mend or repair,
and BE IN meant simply existing somewhere.
When NEAT meant well-organized, tidy and clean
and GRASS was a ground cover, usually green.
When lights and not people were SWITCHED ON and OFF,
and the PILL might have been what you took for a cough.
When CAMP meant to quarter outdoors in a tent,
and POP was what weasels usually went.
When GROOVY meant furrows with channels and hollows,
and BIRDS were winged creatures like robins and swallows.
When FUZZ was a substance that's fluffy like lint,
and BREAD came from bakers and not from the mint.
When SQUARE meant a ninety degree angled form
and COOL was a temperature not quite so warm
When ROLL meant a bun and ROCK meant a stone,
and HANG-UP was something you did to the 'phone.
When CHICKEN meant poultry and BAG meant a sack
and JUNK - trashy castoffs and old bric-a-brac
When JAM was preserves that you spread on your bread,
and CRAZY meant balmy - not right in the head.
When CAT was a feline, a kitten grown up
and TEA was a liquid you drank from a cup.
When SWINGER was someone you swung on a swing,
and a PAD was a soft and cushiony thing.
When WAY OUT meant distant and far, far away
and man couldn't sue you for calling him GAY.
Words once so sensible, sober and serious
are making the FREAK SCENE like PSYCHEDERIOUS
It's GROOVY, MAN, GROOVY, but English it's not...
Methinks that the language has gone straight to POT....

Author unknown



LESSONS IN SONG



The technique of using music and song as a mode of teaching is as old as antiquity. However, as a means of communicating knowledge most would consider it belonged to the age of the bards.

Recently, a Dr. M. Ellis, ethnomusicologist and anthropologist from Adelaide University hit the headlines of press and radio with the proposition that the most effective methods of teaching hygiene to Australian Aborigines may be through song.

She made this observation after extensive study of traditional song makers in the Australian Inland. She contends that even mundane practical messages written poetically and put to music will have more effective results than our western traditional pedagogical methods of disseminating information. Music and song are in fact, used extensively in our society as a form of indoctrination in advertising. The hypnotic power of a catchy advertising ditty is insidiously powerful and persuasive.

Dr. Ellis is however aware of some problems and dangers. Certain types of song may be heard by men only or by members of a particular totem. Many song makers obtain their inspiration through dreams thus limiting them to mythological or spiritual themes. This would need to be overcome if more practical themes are to be applied. There is also the insidious danger of the song being used as a means of indoctrination by undesirables such as confidence tricksters and political agitators.

There is no doubt much merit in Dr. Ellis' proposition and we look forward to State education authorities and adult educators at least experimenting with the method. Experimentation need not be confined to Australia. The use of drama and song has been used to good effect by missions, especially the Lutheran Mission in this country and world wide to illustrate spiritual truths. Notwithstanding, to my knowledge, in Papua New Guinea it has been limited to religious instruction and hymnology.

Singsings (tribal ritual dancing and singing) are an integral part of nearly every festivity and important occasion in this country. The Administration of Papua New Guinea is expending a vast amount of finance and effort on a crash programme in political education preparing the people for self-Government and independence. They may do well to consider encouraging traditional village song leaders to put into song lessons aimed at national unity. Naturally the song leader would need to have a personal conviction of its worth. He would need a working knowledge of the subject and be on side with the Administration.

Like all new notions there will be many who will doubt even the plausibility of such a scheme. But accepting the people's voracity for singsings at the remotest pretext it may be easier to stimulate interest in political education, national unity and anything with sufficiently high emotive content this way than for some Kiap,² for whom there is often an inbred hostility, to harangue the people on the virtue of breaking their spears³ and loving Highlanders and Coastals respectively.

The advantages are obvious. Education through entertainment is both popular and effective. It is the creation of the people and in their own language. Lastly it is far less costly than extensive patrols and flooding the country with literature. The less direct involvement of foreigners, whether they be Europeans or indigenous university students, the better.

But how does this apply to the literacy and literature worker. We cannot afford to make a fetish of literature. Literature has an indispensable role as a more permanent and constant medium of instruction but there is a place for other media either to supplement or substitute literature.

Roy Gwyther-Jones.

Footnotes -

1. Papua New Guinea is administered by the Australian Government.
2. Kiap - a patrol officer of the Administration.
3. Expression meaning to make peace with traditional enemies.



NEWS IS CHANGE

"News is change. To be news it must happen; it may not merely exist. In this case the news is the discovery. What happened is that somebody found out.

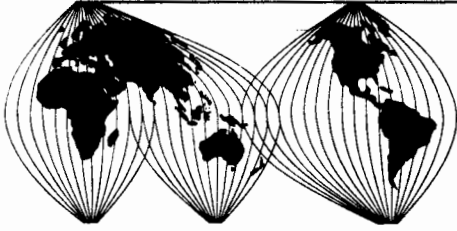
"News is change as seen by an outsider. He may like it or dislike it, but he may not consider himself a part of it. That is the key to professional journalism, to journalism as a profession. In this the reporter is never entirely successful. He is a person and not a thing.

"News is change as seen by an outsider in behalf of other outsiders. These are the people the reporter reports for-the viewers, the hearers, the readers. When they are participants they often tend to dislike the report, usually complaining it is incomplete.

"News is change which is interesting. If it is uninteresting, it cannot be news. It cannot be news to anyone who is uninterested because he will not watch or listen or read."

- Reuven Frank
President, NBC News
The Word at Work
October, 1970.

LITERACY



A NATIONAL MUST AN INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION

Human beings, even animals, have the natural need for a tool or instrument of communication. It may take the form of signs or symbols, movement and noises in the form of speech. Ants for instance, possess a "language" in which they can deliberate and send on messages.

Human beings bestowed by God with brains giving them the ability and power for thinking, need in addition, an instrument of thought and expression. This instrument we call language, either spoken or written in the form of "pictures" or characters. Thus, every group, tribe or nation cannot but have its own language. Every member of such a group is physiologically equipped with speech organs. The maturation of the speech organs and the exposure of the member to the language develop his ability to speak the language. He needs no special training or school instruction to master the language to the level he would require for living in his speech community. In other words a speech community is not compelled to organize speaking classes.

Reading and Writing (and Arithmetic), the 3 R's however, pose a different problem, an ever-growing challenge. They require organized learning..

Script was known and used since centuries before Christ. Plato reached the stage of writing books. But during those centuries the need of the ability of reading and writing was limited to a few: to philosophers and other learned individuals. Religion brought into life another special group, priests who were expected to possess these abilities and for this purpose instruction in the 2 R's was created. In animistic groups "priests" or witches might be encouraged and or forced to learn to show their exceptional ability and status above the illiterate laymen.

Further, in those times everybody so to speak, could earn his living with physical strength and courage. In addition, during the old colonial periods colonizers for the sake of their power and economy or money making, found it more profitable to keep the colonized ignorant, or at least far behind themselves, in knowledge as well as in economic progress. Feudalism, like or jointly with colonialism, serves as a force that keeps people backward. This all brings to light that it was not mere coincidence that ignorance or illiteracy goes along with underdevelopment and poverty and diseases.

From this point of view it is easily understandable that independence and freedom from old colonialism not only created a natural desire for coming out from the darkness, but also encouraged steps being taken to free the people from the darkness, from illiteracy and ignorance. The consequent development and progress in turn will free the people from poverty and diseases,

which again in turn will narrow the gap between the developed, or the "haves", and the underdeveloped, or the "have-nots". Internationally speaking, it will bring the literates to the enjoyment of their Fundamental Human Rights. It will also enhance peace.

Freedom from colonial yokes or from other binding powers creates awareness, and stimulates efforts. People kept backward, once freed, have the psychological pride and moral obligation to show that they can work for their own improvement and progress. To mention a few examples: Russia, immediately after the Revolution in October 1917, took a series of specific measures to wipe out illiteracy. A decree on the suppression of illiteracy was promulgated in December 1926. Between 1920 and 1941, some 50 million illiterates and 30 million semi-literates attended classes. Illiteracy had been practically eliminated by 1941, at the end of 20 years of sustained effort. According to the 1959 census, the literacy rate in the Soviet Union was 98.5 per cent. Mass literacy formed part of the country's development plans.

Indonesia, after the recognition of its sovereignty at the end of five years' fighting for independence, started literacy classes for its people. The illiterates counted for about 90 per cent of the population. On 17 August 1960, by Presidential decree, it embarked on a vast programme to eliminate illiteracy. Activities were extended, province by province, according to planned time-table. Every literate adult had to take part in the national duty. On 31 December 1964 Indonesia was proclaimed free from illiteracy or "letter blindness". More than 37.5 million individuals between 15 and 45 years of age had been made literate. This internationally-commended achievement could be attained only by a feeling of national responsibility and desire, planned activities of local governments, enthusiastic and sustained support of the people: voluntary organizations - political, social, and religious - village committees, and disinterested individuals.

Viewed at a global scope, however, the fight against illiteracy was and is not as successful as that. Surveys and census reports have shown that the absolute number is still increasing though its percentage is relatively decreasing. Asia forms the largest reservoir of illiteracy followed by Africa and Arab States which every year get about 4 million and 1.3 million respectively added to its total number of illiterates.

The fight against illiteracy, indeed, is not only a challenging but also a difficult and complex one. It is as vast as critical.

A few of the grave causes are: lack of primary schools preventing large numbers of school-age children from learning and thus making them future illiterate adolescents; high drop-out rates at primary schools which again increase the total number of illiterates (according to experience and research, only those who have passed four years schooling can remain permanently literate); shortage of capital, manpower etc. and lapse into illiteracy on account of lack of practice and reading materials. Certainly, social traditions, cultural attitudes and resistance to change of the illiterate population form no less serious obstacles.

But above all the most serious, and at the same time the most regrettable cause, is the lack of understanding of the problem or the lack of ability of Governments and leaders in public service as well as in the society. This situation and attitude will certainly change if illiteracy is recognized as an obstacle to human as well as economic development. If literacy is admitted as a factor in development, as an integral part of economic reconstruction,

literacy among workers who form the immediate and readily available production force can increase efficiency and productivity.

In this context it should be noted that the literacy aimed at and needed is functional-literacy which imparts technical knowledge and occupational skills and not only the ability of reading and writing as in traditional literacy.

It may be concluded from the foregoing that literacy is a must, a moral and economic obligation. It is an obligation for national Governments, officials, voluntary organizations and leaders; for ex-colonizers; for international bodies and agencies working in the interest of harmony and world peace.

from "I. A. A. E. Newsletter".
Dec. 1970 of the University of
Ibadan, Nigeria.



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the problem of ILLITERACY

Although the world's rate of illiteracy declined from 44.3% to 39.3% during the decade from 1950 to 1960, the absolute number of illiterates increased from 700 million to 740 million, as a result of the tremendous population growth which took place during that decade. In Middle Africa, an area including 35 countries, the target for a yearly increase of 5% in school enrolment has fallen short by about 3.3% during the period from 1960 to 1965. Even more serious, perhaps, was the drop-out rate in primary schools, which during this same period showed a yearly average of 21%, that is to say that of every 100 children entering primary school in 1960, only 52 had reached the 6th grade in 1965. If these tendencies are maintained, the number of future illiterate adults in Middle Africa will increase from the 4.1 million existing in 1960 to a 5.2 million in 1975, although the rate of illiteracy will decrease from 77% to 68%. Even if these rates are improved, it appears certain that illiteracy will continue to be a problem for a long time to come, and not only in Africa.

Mass literacy campaigns, in the past, have been organized in several countries, but because of the extensive approach used they have often been superficial and frequently have been directed towards people whose motivation was poor. Having nothing to read, the learners have tended to relapse into illiteracy.

These facts point out the need for a new approach, i.e. the functional literacy approach. Literacy should be imparted to selected groups motivated to use it in their daily life and work, to permit it to make a contribution to economic and social development. In this way, literacy becomes work oriented, and vocational training and social and civic education, along with the teaching of reading, writing, basic science and arithmetic, are fused together to make up its curriculum.

The adult in the factory or on the farm comes into contact with many problems of production, marketing, distribution, co-operatives, absenteeism, nutrition, civics, etc. He must think about these problems and try to solve them.

Materials for literacy, therefore, should utilize words needed on the farm or in the factory, so that the adult learners will immediately see the connection between literacy and vocational training.

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BOOK REVIEWS



"USE THE RIGHT WORD"

A Modern guide to Synonyms. Reader's Digest Association, 1970. 725 pp. \$7.28 (Aust.).

The book claims to be the newest, most up-to-date reference guide of its kind. It contains over 1,000 essays that define, compare and contrast 6,000 synonyms and related words. It has large legible type for easy reading. It is all of this - yet a most disappointing book.

It is disappointing that the publishers have fitted so little into so much paper and for such a price. If a little more space had been devoted to providing the user with more reference rather than an outstanding layout and format, then he would feel he was getting his money's worth.

This is not the "indispensible tool whenever you have trouble in finding the right word". A book that limits itself to 6,000 words of the largest language in the world so often does not contain either the right or wrong word that it proves to be a tool with a very dull edge.

Reluctantly I reach for my Thesaurus!

Roy Gwyther-Jones.

LITERACY WORK (Bi-Monthly)

International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods, P.O., Box 1555, Teheran, Iran. 56pp.

The first volume of this new publication appeared in July 1971. Literacy Work is essentially the combination of two former publications of the Institute: Abstracts for Literacy Work and the Acquisition list. These publications were formerly duplicated (mimeographed), this new publication is printed off-set and attractively bound in a plasticised cover. It is a useful supplement to the Institute's quarterly, "Literacy Discussion".

The first volume contains abstracts on Rural Development and Literacy.

LITERACY DISCUSSION Volume II, Number 1, Winter 1971 is devoted to Literacy Experiments outside UNESCO. Amongst the 'Experiments' is one from Papua New Guinea and one from Peru which will be of particular interest to S.I.L. readers.

The bulletin is sent free of charge to Services, Institutions or individuals interested in literacy problems - Address above.

R.G.-J.

