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ABSTRACT

English language instruction in schools for American Indians has progressed from the era when there was an effort to eliminate tribal languages and replace them with English. From 1932 until recently tribal languages were encouraged, but the emphasis was on English. During the past four years, bilingual education has emerged. There has been significant activity in curriculum development, in testing English as a second language, and in research. In the United States and Canada, the trend seems to be toward use of the native language as well as learning a second language. It is unfortunate that bilingual education has not been a basic element in language learning; in addition to providing instruction in the native language, it develops dignity in the child. The elimination of the American Indian languages would be a great loss. (VM)

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TEACHING ENGLISH TO AMERICAN INDIANS

Thomas R. Hopkins

It is a curious occasion when predominantly English speaking North American peoples discover, as has occurred during the 1960's and on into the 1970's, that language diversity might be a source of societal strength. In a sense, this is a sad discovery for the language diversity of twenty, forty and seventy years back no longer exists, at least not with American Indian languages. English is the lingua franca of most American Indian tribes today and indications are that the shift in this direction will continue until tribal speakers will be rare and unique. When this does occur, and in the opinion of this writer it is only a matter of time until it does, our current linguistic sadness will turn to linguistic despair. Even though their languages

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may be sacrificed in the process, it can be hoped that the dignity of American Indians so frequently portrayed will be assimilated into the American fabric so we can all lay claim to having sprung forth from the loins of North American soil and heritage—something to which only the Indian can now attest.

Be that as it is, the purpose of this discussion is to briefly outline English language instruction in schools for American Indians up to the 1970's.

Christian missionaries were the first Europeans to work extensively to establish and conduct schools for American Indians (Adams, 1946; Berry, 1968). Their hold over the schools continued down to the conclusion of the 19th century. The language policy of missionary groups was to teach English to the Indians in order to Christianize them. Exceptions to this policy were to be found among the Spanish missions in Mexico, the French missions of Canada, and the Russian schools for Alaskan natives. In this respect, Spanish, French, and Russian were the second languages. At the close of the 19th century English was the language of instruction in the majority of schools in the continental United States and the Territory of Alaska. This policy looked upon tribal languages as inferior and as a threat to the purpose of the school. It should be realized that most early missionaries to American Indians erected schools as soon as possible after having established themselves among the natives (Hopkins, 1970). Hence, schools (and consequently English) have from the beginning of the relationship between non-Indians and Indians been a symbol and an institution representing non-Indian behavior, and have been considered by Indians as existing for the express purpose of changing behavior of the young from Indian to non-Indian.

When the Federal Government assumed total control for the education of Indians it adopted the missionary language policy but for different reasons. The Government wanted to "civilize" the Indian and employed punishment to stamp out tribal languages. The various histories discussing early Indian schools are replete with expressions of this general approach.

The anti-tribal language policy existed until it was effectively disposed of by the famed Meriam Report (1928). This was followed closely by the New Deal and the creative policies of Commissioner John Collier. From 1932-1952 the policy of the Government was to encourage tribal languages and at the same time to develop special approaches to teaching English.

The language policy from 1952 to the present has been to recognize tribal languages as an intimate aspect of the child's behavior but to concentrate on teaching English (Bauer, 1968). Recently, during the past three years, bilingual programs which use both the tribal language and English in the primary years have again been started (Bauer, 1969).

In summary, until 1932 the English language policy in schools for American Indians was one that was more anti-tribal language than pro-English. The long-range effect of this, even though it was reversed in 1932, has been detrimental, to say the least.

Nineteenth century curricula for Indian children were the same as those for other common schools of the day. However, there were instances of creativity. One curriculum guide of 1904 sounds very modern in its suggestions concerning content selection in English, good pronunciation and plenty of practice until the children learn it (U. S., BIA, 1904).

The New Deal ushered in a group of innovators headed by Willard Beatty, who brought about linguistic studies and specialized instruction in English (Beatty, 1944, 1953). Robert Young, William Morgan, and Ed Kennard did basic linguistic work in tribal languages (Young and Morgan, 1945; Kennard, 1948), that was used in education programs. Hildegard Thompson, fresh from an experience in the Philippine Islands, developed manuals for

teaching English to Navajos that anticipated audio-lingual techniques. In fact, Thompson has written prolifically in English language pedagogy for American Indians (Thompson, 1962, 1965) and most all of it is practical and still pertinent.

The culmination of the twenty years, 1932-52, was the development of a set of curriculum guides called "Minimum Essential Goals for Indian Children." These were first published in 1952-55 and revised again in 1964 (U. S. BIA, 1953). A comparison analysis of the English language pedagogy and the "Minimal Essential Goals" found a fair degree of correlation between them and Robert Lado's 17 scientific principles of language teaching (Hopkins, 1964).

Special mention should be made of the 1960's as a decade of unusual significance in the English education of American Indians. First, most activity was centered on the very large (the largest) Indian reservation, Navajo. Early in the decade linguistic knowledge began to be incorporated into the curriculum. The American English Series was the first to be used and adapted to elementary children. Teachers participated in excellent summer training programs made available through the NDEA and EPDA programs.

Special curriculum development projects have been made possible through ESEA Title I and Title III. Currently, most teachers in Federally operated schools are at least knowledgeable of English linguistic structure and acquainted with basic ESL methodology. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) also conducts workshops in modern ESL pedagogy and did so before the NDEA and EPDA programs added their vital contributions.

Movements in English language education for Indian America have frequently been known by the individuals who have fought doggedly for them. Wayne Holm (1964), Dr. Elizabeth Willink (1965), and Ruth Werner (1966) are three who have done much to foster modern ESL pedagogy throughout Indian lands—starting in 1957 in Shiprock, New Mexico. All, of course, are under the influence and leadership of Dr. William J. Benham (1966), a Creek Indian.

There has also been significant activity in curriculum development, ESL testing and, more recently, research. Curriculum development is restricted mostly to the Navajo tribe. Adaptation of the American English Series has gone ahead and is still widely used. New interdisciplinary ESL materials are also being attempted. These are being done by Dr. Robert Wilson (1969) of UCLA and English Language Consultants.

No discussion of English for American Indians would be complete without mention of the assessment made by the Center for Applied Linguistics in 1967 (Ohannessian). This report has been followed rather closely and many of the recommendations have been implemented. To name one, the newsletter, *English for American Indians* (U. S. BIA, 1970) was started in the school year 1968-69 and is being continued. The research study in Reading in Navajo, being conducted by Dr. Bernard Spolsky (1969), University of New Mexico, is another recommendation of the CAL study.

ESL testing has progressed as never before. Dr. Elizabeth Willink (1969) conducted a project in ESL testing and produced one of the early prototypes for American Indian children. Dr. Eugene Briere (1970) of USC has done extensive ESL testing of American Indian children and is due to complete a special English language proficiency test for elementary school children during the school year 1970-71. His work has involved five language groups and has ranged from the Eskimo of the Arctic slope to the Choctaw of Mississippi, to the Hopi and Navajo of Arizona. Using preliminary data from Dr. Briere's test it is estimated that 63 percent of the children enrolled

in schools operated by the BIA speak English as a second language. Additionally, TOEFL has been administered to several groups of Indian high school students and all tend to reflect the same pattern reported by Hopkins (1967) which pertained to Fort Wingate High School on the Navajo reservation. There are numerous reports of conventional achievement test scores that have been compiled especially during the past five years. So far they all reflect the same pattern reported by Coombs (1958).

Other developments in Indian education in the United States include the creative writing project sponsored by the BIA through ESEA Title I program. T. D. Allen (U. S. BIA, 1969, Curriculum Bulletin #2), a well-known author in the Southwest and a very gifted teacher, has teamed with John Povey of UCLA to develop a creative writing project in high schools operated by the BIA. The project produced one book of student writings at the conclusion of the first year and a teacher's manual to assist teachers in the classroom. This is one of the very creative approaches to the secondary English language problems of American Indian students.

The Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) professional organization was contracted by the Navajo Area of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to evaluate their English as a second language program. The report has been finalized and submitted to the BIA. Five recommendations have been made and deal with teacher training, relationship between ESL and the regular English language arts program, student attitudes, flexibility in the adoption and use of materials, and employment of language specialists (Harris, 1970). It should also be noted that teachers from Indian schools are very involved in professional activities in the English language arts and have been consistent contributors to professional journals for at least the last 25 to 30 years.

Bilingual education, mentioned briefly above, has emerged during the past four years with, again, major efforts being made on the Navajo reservation. Rough Rock Demonstration School (Johnson, 1968) run by a Navajo school board, has done much to foster bilingual schooling. The BIA has also started another Navajo bilingual program at the kindergarten level that was conducted during the school year 1969-70 in six kindergarten classrooms. This program will be expanded to include the first grade during the 1970-71 school year. The BIA in Alaska is also mounting a bilingual program in isolated day schools in the Bethel (lower Kuskokwim and Yukon River region) area of Alaska. This project is dealing primarily with the Yuk dialect of Eskimo.* All the bilingual programs have been well planned, involving community consent and approval along with cooperation between educators and linguists.

As most specialists in bilingual education have pointed out, non-linguistic factors are more frequently than not the crucial issues in the success of a program. This has been the case in those which have been started during the past three years by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Careful planning has accompanied each (Ohannessian, 1968). In fact, current bilingual programs have benefited from community involvement, cooperation of linguists and educationists as well as from a general popularity as a desirable method of schooling culturally different children. Yet, they have at times almost floundered due, in the opinion of this writer, to the fact that Indian and Alaskan native peoples have been taught over the decades that their native languages have little utility in a school setting. Many times it is the community people who have questioned the efficacy of bilingual programs. This is a sad but nonetheless a true occurrence. In this respect, Indian people have almost passed the readiness stage for bilingual programs and it is problematic that those currently starting will ever reap the benefits that could have accrued

* It is too early for published documents describing these two projects.

had those started thirty years ago not been interrupted by the Second World War.

It should be recognized that the content of this discussion pertains primarily to those American Indian children who attend Federal schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This represents about one-third of the total estimated national population of Indian children. Bureau of Indian Affairs schools enroll approximately 50,000 children and youth, ages 5-21 (U. S. BIA Statistics, 1969). The remainder attend public and mission schools with the vast majority being enrolled in public schools. It is difficult to isolate data on Indian children and youth who attend public schools. The policy of "Termination" which was followed during the 1950's and on into the 60's sought to turn operations over to public schools as soon as possible. For several years no data were kept on the children other than a mere head count. However, recent concern for Indian children in public schools has been expressed and some studies have been conducted to determine school drop-out and achievement. The studies report that Federal schools have better holding power for Indians than do the public schools but that achievement of Indian students in public schools is higher. It is hypothesized that the higher achievement is reflected as the poor achiever drops out or transfers to the Federal school which has a greater toleration for his Indianness (Aurbach, 1970).

A brief comment on Canadian Indian education shows that they too are experiencing vigorous developmental activities. Education of Canadian Indians and Eskimos started in earnest during the 1950's. Previous to this time education among the Indians was confined to the reserves in the more populated provinces with only limited opportunities available for children in Northern Territories. The Indian Affairs Branch of the Dominion Government had primary responsibility and the basic approach was to finance school operations to institutionalized Christian churches. The policy of church-controlled operations is only now experiencing change and, rather than shifting to the Dominion Government, the shift is to provincial control of Indian education (Northian, 1969-70).

The language policy for Canadian Indian education had more variety than that of the United States. Canadian Indians in schools operated by the Indian Affairs Branch had English as a second language and French as a second language options. Rose Colliou (1958) (Singleterry, 1969), Language Arts Specialist, of the Indian Affairs Branch, developed a set of ESL materials for Canadian Indian children that, among teachers in that system, was (is) very popular. It should also be noted the Colliou materials are popular with the teachers of Alaskan natives in isolated day schools where English is a second language.

Perhaps the most comprehensive survey of the conditions of Canada is given in the Hawthorn Report (1967) which treats almost every side of Indian life. The recommendations pertaining to the language situation in Canadian Indian education are presented under the general subtitle, "Special Educational Services." Of the six recommendations under this section, the first four pertain to the language situation. It calls for special courses in ESL pedagogy for teachers of Indian children, the use of linguistic studies (linguistic knowledge) in teacher training programs, remedial courses in Indian schools and curriculum guides and materials on Indian languages. These recommendations are similar to those made regarding the American Indian education situation.

The shift from Federal to provincial control of Canadian Indian education is surrounded by much politics and at times it becomes very heated. Often linguistic policy is at the heart of political moves. The Quebec Eskimo language project represents an effort by the province to teach school in the first four years in Eskimo, then, giving the community the option of English or

French as a second language starting in the fourth grade. They have developed Eskimo language instructional materials and have started implementation (MacGregor, 1969). The Northern Territories section of the Dominion Government was developing Eskimo language instructional materials and has an orthography that is based on sound linguistic knowledge (Indian Affairs Branch, 1967).

The Ford Foundation, The Arctic Institute of North America, along with the support of some of the governments involved, sponsored a first conference in August of 1969 in Montreal. The meeting was called, "Conference on Cross-Cultural Education in the North," and included an international group of educators, natives, linguists, and government officials all involved with education at the top of the world.

Though not intended, informal comparisons made during the conference indicated that those countries using bilingual education for the longest period of time had a more viable school situation than those which did not. Countries represented at the conference were Canada, United States, USSR, Sweden, Norway, France, Finland, and Denmark. A report on the conference is to be published sometime in 1970-71.

In closing, it can be seen from the above that the field of teaching English to American Indians has been very active over a considerable span of years. In fact, the role of language in the schooling of Indian children and youth has always been emotionally laden and somewhat of a fulcrum for success. It is unfortunate that bilingual education has not been a basic assumption in the process as it reflects more than language instruction in a native tongue—it carries and ascribes dignity to the child. Closing on a bilingual note might seem strange for an English language journal. However, experience has shown that bilingual education might be an effective avenue to English fluency for American Indian children and youth.

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