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ABSTRACT

The aims of this paper are to: (1) emphasize the need for language planning in efforts to solve the sociolinguistic problems of bidialectal and bilingual indegenous peoples in Australia, (2) demonstrate that these problems are not confined to Australia, and (3) show that methods of language planning and research in language attitudes developed in the United States are applicable in Australia. The observations in the paper are based on twelve years of linguistic and field experience in Queensland, supplemented by papers by Spolsky and Shuy delivered at the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics in 1972, and briefly outlined here. The sociolinguistic problems associated with the education of aboriginals in Australia are discussed, particularly the implications of linguistic variety for the choice of instructional medium. In this area, three choices are apparent: (1) instruction at least at the primary level in the aboriginal vernacular; (2) instruction in the Aboriginal English L or familiar form; (3) instruction in Standard English H or General Australian English. The best basis for planning and developing educational programs is formed by research into language attitudes and language maintenance initiated by government authorities and administered by community leaders. The linguist's role in language planning is discussed, and specific language planning efforts in Australia are briefly mentioned. (CLK)

8. LANGUAGE PLANNING IN RELATION TO THE EDUCATION OF BIDIALECTALS AND BILINGUALS

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1.1 The aim of this paper is to emphasize the need for language planning in efforts to solve the sociolinguistic problems of bidialectal and bilingual indigenous peoples which are at this very moment facing Australia; to emphasize that these problems are not confined to Australia, but are widespread throughout the world; and to show that methods of language planning and research in language attitudes developed in the United States to solve such problems are also applicable in Australia.

2.1 The present observations are based upon twelve years of linguistic and field experience in Queensland, supplemented especially by papers delivered in August, 1972, by Professors Roger W. Shuy and Bernard Spolsky, at the 3rd International Congress of Applied Linguistics, Copenhagen (Shuy, 1974; Spolsky, 1974). My paper, read at the same Congress, was published in 1972 in Kivung.

Spolsky deals with sociolinguistic and educational problems especially of bilingualism among the Navajos who still speak their original American Indian vernacular. Shuy deals with similar problems, but rather of bidialectalism, among speakers in the Norfolk, Virginia, community whose L form is Vernacular Black English. In a sociolinguistic and educational project, Shuy and his Georgetown University associates conducted workshops for selected Norfolk teachers, dealing with problems of teaching reading,

writing, and oral English to black American children arising from their use of Vernacular Black English and of developing pedagogic techniques and preparing teaching materials to meet these problems.

The observations of both scholars, it will be shown, are relevant to Australian conditions.

2.2 The interest shown at the Copenhagen Congress in sociolinguistic problems of bilinguals and bidialectals was most notable. It showed that such problems are world-wide: Europe, the United States, Africa, India, and other countries are all in some way concerned with them. This is the age of self-determination and the search of minority peoples for cultural identity. As language is culture-bound, the struggle for cultural identity is also the struggle for linguistic identity. Even France is not without a sociolinguistic problem. A manifesto distributed at the doors of the 11th International Congress of Linguists at Bologna in 1972 called on the people of Occitania (original speakers of the langue d'oc) to reassert the identity of their language and literature against the dominant North. In the same year a press report (Courier-Mail, Brisbane, 23/11/72) stated that a Belgian Government resigned because of a deep division over how to settle the country's language problem; and riots, with bloodshed, were reported from India over the choice of an official language medium. Later, in Malaysia, riot police were alerted through fear of violence because Chinese children had failed in school examinations and attributed this to the then recent introduction of Malay as the teaching medium in schools.

2.3 Thus it is clear that in bilingual and bidialectal communities, the choice of one language or one dialect rather than another as the medium of educational instruction, or as the official language of administration, commerce, or cultural exchange, is very delicate. The issues are related: if the medium of instruction used by the teacher is not readily intelligible to the pupils, their educational progress (especially in abstract subjects like mathematics) will be retarded. This subsequently will restrict their ability to participate satisfactorily in the political and social life of the community at large and to compete for jobs in the economic world. Thus, in the last resort, lack of ready mutual intelligibility between teachers and pupils will lead to social unrest.

3.1 What are the sociolinguistic problems associated with the education of Aboriginals in Australia?

The first is their complexity. In Cape York Peninsula, for example, and around the Gulf of Carpentaria, some communities are still in full possession of their original vernaculars. Even here, however, social circumstances are contributing to the alteration of the original forms through language contact, as for example in Weipa and Doomadgee. This is particularly true where partial mutual intelligibility exists between adjacent vernaculars. On the other hand, it is a great mistake to suppose that all Aboriginal vernaculars, even in the same area, are even partially intelligible. A conversation in English was recorded between two Aboriginal informants from the same area. One of them lapsed momentarily into his

local Aboriginal vernacular. Afterwards the tape recording of this was found not to be intelligible to the other speaker.

The English of Aboriginal speakers shows complexity and variety. Linguistic description of English language data gathered from 30 Aboriginal communities between 1960 and 1968 reveals linguistic variation between the extremes of a familiar L form (Ferguson, 1959 : 327) and an H form approximating to the General Australian English of teachers and administrators. The use of these was found to be socially determined, being appropriated to different societal domains and roles. Aboriginals use the familiar or 'L' form for intragroup communication in the home domain, and their best approximation to the H form for intergroup communication with non-Aboriginals, especially administrators and teachers. Intermediate varieties between the H and L forms are found. A continuum of variation between the H and L forms is stylistically determined by the role relationships of the interlocutors, by features of the language situation, and by differences of topic, message and message form. The mutual intelligibility rating between the extreme L form of Aboriginal speakers and the H form of non-Aboriginals reaches to below 40%.

Bilingualism (as between speakers of Aboriginal vernaculars and some form of English) and bidialectalism (or 'diglossia', in the sense of Ferguson, 1959) may be found in speakers of the same community. Here the use of the vernacular, as against some form of English, is also appropriated to specific societal domains and roles.

Aboriginal English throughout Queensland is not homogeneous.

The 30 communities include some in which the Aboriginal vernaculars have fallen into general disuse. Here social differences are manifested in variation between the H and I forms. In other of these communities, however, where the Aboriginal vernacular is still in full use, socially determined uses of the different forms of English co-exist with socially determined choices between English and the vernacular, in a complex three-way relationship. Special linguistic varieties of the L form are found in the Torres Strait Islands, due to different language contact origins, and in Bamaga (Cape York Peninsula), where Queensland Aboriginal English is influenced by contact with Torres Strait Islands speakers living in the same community (Dutton, 1970).

3.2 The broad sociolinguistic features of the complex diglossia and bilingual situation which examination of the Queensland data reveals are not dissimilar from those described by Jernudd (1971) for the Northern Territory, and Douglas (1968) for South-Western Australia. The linguistic varieties are not, of course, the same, since the social, historical, and linguistic circumstances of those areas are not identical. Douglas distinguishes between Nyungar (denoting collectively the original related Aboriginal dialects of the area); Neo-Nyungar (the everyday speech of Aboriginal peoples, which has been influenced by contact with English); Wetjala (the normal Australian English of the area, with dialect varieties); a form of 'trade' English; 'simulated Wetjala' (an impressionistic caricature in appropriate situations of normal Australian English); and Yeraka (a play language of women and girls).

As it may safely be assumed that the Aboriginal English varieties in South-Western Australia are not exactly the same linguistically as those in Queensland, the Australia-wide picture of Aboriginal English is one of great complexity.

3.3 Aboriginals are indeed accustomed to switching between different socially determined forms within their own respective vernaculars. In a Northern Territory community the Aboriginal vernacular speech of the two moieties was found to be differentiated by certain minor, yet regularly and clearly distinguishable, grammatical differences. The recorded speech of informants within the same moiety showed also idiolectal differences, though not always consistent and regular, according to age, degree of education, and amount of contact with English-speaking communities. Dixon (1971) has described lexical and semantic variations between 'mother-in-law' and 'everyday' language in Dyirbal.

4.1 What is the implication of all this linguistic variety for the choice of teaching medium in the education of Aboriginal children, and for their social and economic progress?

Three choices appear to present themselves:

(a) Teach Aboriginal children in their Aboriginal vernacular, at least at beginning school level.

This is the approach being developed in South Australia, the Northern Territory and elsewhere. The Department of Education in South Australia, for example, has started to use Pitjantjatjara in the

early stages of education at five special Aboriginal schools among Aboriginal tribal populations. A correlative three-week course in Pitjantjatjara is part of the Aboriginal Studies course at Western Teachers' College, followed by refresher courses at the Adult Education Department of the University of Adelaide.

Preservation of the language and culture of a minority people has many advantages. It may, among other things, lead to the enrichment of the national culture. Integration may come gradually. The use of the mother tongue bridges the gap between the two cultures.

The difficulties in the application of this on a nation-wide basis in Australia is, firstly, that it is scarcely applicable to Aboriginal communities which have largely lost their vernacular, or even to those where a mixture of Aboriginal vernaculars in the same community has affected the structure of each language. This point was made by Dr. Sarah Gudschinsky in a recent lecture to an S.I.L. school.

The other difficulty is that the multiplicity of languages and dialects, and the existence of social varieties and idiolects within these languages, make any unified plan difficult. If, even in the same restricted area, two Aboriginal languages are not mutually intelligible, how easy will it be to develop a literacy programme for all the languages and dialects throughout Australia?

Obviously language planning is necessary here. In a multilingual situation, which languages shall be maintained by the development of literacy programmes? Is education to be monolingual or bilingual? Many

factors are relevant here, especially the number of speakers in the community and their predictable future. American experience is relevant here.

Spolsky (1974), in describing language planning preliminary to the Navajo Reading Study project, remarks that its aim was "to develop and make available information that will permit the Navajo people, working through their own institutions, to make informed decisions about language education policy." His investigation revealed that over two-thirds of six-year-old Navajo children in the schools would experience serious difficulties of intelligibility if faced with a monolingual English teacher. The language situation among these six-year-old children was clearly complex. In 10% of the cases, "a nearly complete switch to English" was found, and in another 20%, "a kind of bilingualism that can only result from extensive use of English in the home"; but in the remaining 70%, it was clear that parents at home were speaking only Navajo to their children.

Further investigation revealed interesting differences of language attitude among adult Navajos. Among the traditional rural Navajos, whose children mostly attend BIA schools, Navajo language maintenance is much higher than among the progressive 'urban' Navajos, living in the growing semi-urban communities at the edge of the Reservation, whose children attend public schools. Development of teaching materials in Navajo had to face doubts among the progressive Navajo that "teaching in Navajo is really a neo-colonial policy aimed at preventing the people from gaining access to progress."

Another fact of great sociolinguistic interest, complicating the educational problem, was revealed by the investigation. A diglossia of medium, between the written and spoken channels of communication, was found to exist. Tribal council meetings and business, chapter meetings, and tribal court sessions are conducted mainly in spoken Navajo, but virtually all minutes, records and legislation are written in English. Radio stations broadcast partly or wholly in Navajo, but the tribal newspapers are entirely in English.

A further, more purely linguistic, difficulty complicates the teaching problem. The Navajo language in use is variable, and "will require serious language planning for modernization and standardization", to enable it to serve as the teaching medium in schools.

The language planning preceding the Navajo Reading Study was initiated by the educational authorities, but it was carried out by the Navajo people themselves, using twenty-two different Navajo interviewers, most of them teachers or teacher aides, recording tape conversations with different groups of Navajos throughout the Reservation. Only on the basis of such an investigation could educational measures suitable to the language situation and acceptable to the people themselves be formulated.

The Navajo Reading Study aims at teaching children to read in their own language first. "The materials are as Navajo as possible; they are written in Navajo by Navajos, and not translated from English."

Along with this, however, a curriculum for teaching English as a second language to Navajo children is being incorporated in the general

school programme.

A corollary of the reading study is the training of qualified Navajo-speaking expert teachers, and efforts are also being made to train Navajos in modern linguistics. Various measures are being taken to meet the problem of Navajo language variation.

Like Spolsky, Shuy, in his educational programme for bidialectal children, stressed the importance of the teaching of reading. Like Spolsky also, he stresses the importance of modern linguistics for the teacher, and also urges linguists to realize the relationship of their discipline to education. In accordance with very recent linguistic research, Shuy recommends the incorporation in the teaching materials, not only of isolated sentences, but also of various units of discourse, at the more advanced stages.

(b) The second possible choice of teaching medium is the Aboriginal English L form.

This certainly has the advantage of enabling the teacher to enter into the child's cultural world, and to lead him from this into the European culture of the community at large.

The difficulties of the application of this in Australia on a nation-wide basis are, firstly, the variety of the L form, and secondly, the fact that, though it is eminently suitable for the expression of all the children's needs in their home domain and rural environment, it is not immediately suitable for expression of all concepts of a very different and more complex modern technological culture. Recently

the same difficulty has been experienced with New Guinea Pidgin. The interpreters in the House of Assembly in New Guinea are finding the need to develop what they call "Sophisticated Pidgin," which includes many modifications, chiefly lexical borrowings from English, adapted to the New Guinea Pidgin phonology and structure.

The third difficulty in adopting the Aboriginal English L form as the teaching medium is pedagogic and sociolinguistic. Its constant use would reduce the amount of practice received by the children in understanding and using the English H form, which they need to master for their educational progress and advancement in economic status.

Shuy, in his address at the Copenhagen Congress (1972), reported surprising results of a recent attempt, elsewhere in the United States than in Norfolk, Virginia, to use Vernacular Black English as the teaching medium in schools, for black children. It met with sharp opposition from the parents themselves. They felt that the use of their dialect held their children back economically, and they wanted them to be taught in standard English.

Shuy also reported verbally, from his own experience as director of his sociolinguistic educational project, that black teachers, not only parents, disliked the use of Vernacular Black English as the teaching medium: they felt that it marked them out as inferior socially and economically. Moreover, they reacted unfavourably to its use by white Americans when speaking to them or when in their hearing, perhaps because they regarded this as an intrusion on their cultural domain.

None of these verbal reports appear in Shuy's 1974 published version.

(c) The third possible choice of teaching medium is to use the standard English H form (General Australian English).

In this case, however, the teacher needs to be sufficiently familiar with the Aboriginal English L form, or the vernacular, or both, to be able to understand the child's language, and, without repressing it or showing any attitude of contempt for it, to lead the child to understand General Australian English, thus assisting his educational progress. This method, especially suitable with children who have largely lost their vernacular, has been successfully applied in the Van Leer Project (Department of Education, Queensland, December 1972).

4.2 Enough has been said to show that the linguistic and socio-linguistic problems involved in the education of indigenous peoples in Australia and in the United States are complex, and that no one uniform programme is applicable without variation in all cases. The great variety between Aboriginal vernaculars and within Aboriginal English, like the similar variety in Navajo and Navajo English, creates similar educational problems. Recent observations during field work in the Northern Territory (1973) suggest that a diglossia of the spoken-written medium, similar to that noted by Spolsky among the Navajos, may be developing there. The increasing participation of Aboriginal councils in the administration of their communities necessarily involves reading administrative and commercial documents in formal written English, but administrative matters are often debated

in the Aboriginal vernacular. Members of Aboriginal communities appear to experience less difficulty in communicating in some form of English when speaking to non-Aboriginal Australians living among them than in learning to read formal written English. Special attention given to teaching Aboriginal pupils to read formal English appears to be as necessary in fully bilingual Australian Aboriginal communities as Spolsky and Shuy found it to be among the Navajos and black Americans.

If the complex language problems of educating indigenous peoples in Australia and in the United States are thus broadly similar, so also will be the solutions. Language planning involving research into language attitudes and language maintenance, initiated by governmental authorities but administered by the Aboriginal community leaders and their assistants, form the best basis for planning and developing educational programmes, which will vary in some ways between community and community, according to varying educational needs. Literacy programmes can be initiated where these are requested and needed, using the Aboriginal vernacular in the beginning stages. Programmes for teaching English as a second language, giving special attention to the teaching of reading as well as of oral English, can be developed alongside these.

4.3 Here the linguist has a role. Linguistic description begins where sociolinguistic language planning leaves off. The preparation of vernacular literacy programme teaching materials demands the most thorough description of the Aboriginal vernaculars by the methods of modern linguistics, and also a knowledge of modern language teaching

pedagogy. The teaching of English as a second language demands both of the text-book writer and the teacher an adequate knowledge of the first language of the pupils, as well as a sound knowledge of modern linguistics and modern language teaching methods. Even when the Aboriginal children have largely lost their vernacular, and use their English L form instead, thorough linguistic description of the L form is a necessary prerequisite of teaching materials preparation. Educators in the United States (e.g. Robinett, 1969) have realized this, and also stress that the methods of teaching English as a second standard dialect differ, at some points, from those of teaching English as a second foreign language.

4.4 The complex tasks of text-book preparation, teaching, and teacher training are best carried out by team work, combining the skills both of the Aboriginal who is expert in his own vernacular and has learnt English and the non-Aboriginal Australian who is expert in English and has an adequate knowledge of the Aboriginal vernacular and Aboriginal English. Where the problems of Aboriginal English are already being successfully attacked, such team work has been found advantageous.

4.5 Let it be emphasized that steps similar to those being successfully taken in the United States to solve the linguistic and socio-linguistic problems of indigenous bilingual communities are already being taken by educators in different areas of Australia. Almost of necessity, measures of language planning (though not under that name)

are being applied, through consultation between the educators and the local Aboriginal councils. In different centres, dedicated teachers have already been at work for many years, describing the local Aboriginal vernaculars in detail, training Aboriginal teachers and assistants, and preparing teaching materials. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies has promoted and subsidised the work of linguists, many of them in University departments (who were among the first in the field), published descriptive studies and bibliographies, and developed a central library of materials.

Much could still be done to co-ordinate these activities. Language planning on a co-ordinated national basis could facilitate exchange of information between workers in widely separated areas dealing with varying problems. It could point, for instance, to the need for decentralized training centres for Aboriginal teachers and linguists: great distances and consequent heavy travelling expenses make it difficult to bring Aboriginal students to urban centres for training. Such co-ordinated language planning could ensure that money granted for the education of Aborigines, contributing materially to the solution of their socioeconomic problems, would be most effectively and economically spent.

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