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BICULTURALISM THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe the English as a Second Language Program developed for educationally disadvantaged Mexican-American adults as part of the educational offerings of Project Step-Up, an OEO-funded demonstration program in San Diego. As stated in the proposal, Project Step-Up, administered by the Adult Division of the San Diego Community Colleges, features a "multifold methodological approach incorporating techniques from (1) life skills problem-solving; (2) programmed instruction; and (3) learning laboratories."

We indicate how life skills problem-solving, the philosophical and methodological rationale for the ESL Program, has led to the extension of the language laboratory into the community. We also describe how this individualized program makes use of a variety of methods, and of programmed and non-programmed materials. The paper delineates the utilization of this approach to develop the program.

The term "biculturalism" in the title indicates the ability to function, operate, or "compete" in two or more cultures. It should *not* be construed as value laden. For example, punctuality, competitiveness, and

the like, are a part of the American value syndrome. Therefore, from our point of view, people opting to successfully "adjust" to the American scene should be aware of the systems within which they are operating. We do not intend the term, therefore, to indicate absolute or universal values, especially not those of the authors. If we were training people to cope in, say, Japanese society, the principles would apply but the content would be different. In short, this term as used in this paper should not smack of "cultural imperialism." It is a pragmatic approach to learning about language and culture.

Program Rationale

We base our curriculum on the premise that language cannot be separated from the culture of a people (Greenberg, 1968; Hall, 1960; Hymes, 1964a, 1964b; Whorf, 1956). Therefore, we use the language class as a vehicle for making the bridge between the culture a person is in and the culture being moved into. By "moving" into the culture we mean approximating as closely as possible the condition of being bicultural. A

student must demonstrate by daily behavior in a variety of situations that at least the outward trappings of North American culture have been internalized.

In Project Step-Up the behavioral objective for a language student is the ability to work and live in this culture with the same opportunity for success as an Anglo competitor. Language training is the means by which we effectively arm students with those skills which allow them to enter the job market and become a knowledgeable member of their communities, with maximum comfort to themselves and minimum abrasion to others.

In the job context we focus on work habits, getting a job, and "work" as a value in North American culture. Some of the survival behaviors related to work habits which we stress are punctuality, consistent attendance, and interpersonal skills with supervisors and peers. We teach identification of job sources, techniques for being interviewed, filling out job applications, and presenting a "pleasant and confident" appearance. We discuss at length the concept of the "hard worker syndrome" in American culture—"To work hard is good"; "Anyone who doesn't work is lazy"; "Anyone can really get a job if they really want it."

We define the community as the place where the target culture is operative and where the student must be operative. Students must go "out there" so that they can try out their linguistic wings in the "real" world. They must get feedback on what they do, their mannerisms, their speech problems, their use of resources, and how they are being received by the "natives." They must learn how to pick up the native's verbal and non-verbal clues for themselves and discuss them in their cultural context. This means contrasting Anglo cultural behaviors with those manifest in their own culture, as for example:

(1) Americans do not always shake hands when introduced and they do not always say goodbye or shake hands when leave-taking.

(2) American children do not speak respectfully to their parents.

(3) American women go to work or school instead of staying home to take care of their families.

(4) Americans are always in a hurry.

In short, as Hymes (1964) has stated, "when structural description is extended outward via the referential function of a language, it leads from analysis of linguistic form into analysis of patterns of use in contexts of situations."

Methodology

We use a decision-making process to enable students to identify behaviors which are culturally different.

The decision-making process consistently follows this sequence:

(1) Awareness of needed skills/information.

(2) Definition of skills/information.

(3) Information gathering.

(4) Resolution of information into alternatives for action.

(5) Selection of choices for action.

(6) Action.

(7) Evaluation of action taken.

(8) Identification of the steps of this process for purposes of generalization to other situations.

Individualized Instruction: Diagnosis/Prescription

The decision-making process is used to individualize a program of instruction for each student. When students enroll we administer the Ilyin Oral Interview¹ to determine their linguistic needs. In-depth interviews in Spanish reveal their job and community survival needs and goals. As a result of the testing and interviewing we, in cooperation with the student, make a diagnosis of problems and write a prescription for language training centering around community and job. After three months in the program, the original diagnosis and prescription is reviewed with each student by the peer group who use this evaluation session to provide feedback about that student's progress in linguistic, job-related, and community-related skills.

Activities and Materials

To implement the original prescription plan of the student, we employ various activities and materials. The ESL group takes part in role playing (usually with video), observation exercises, community research (usually with video), analysis of statistical and cultural data, communication exercises, small group or individual instruction conducted by students, aides, and teachers, student-produced videotape sessions as weekly reviews, vocational games, and the customary language drills familiar to all language teachers.

The ESL section of the Learning Center is equipped with a variety of teaching machines. We make extensive use of hardware, particularly the videotape Porta-Pak (record and playback units), and audiotape players and recorders. We also use filmstrip viewers, slide projectors, audio flashcard readers, and typewriters.

Software used in the program consists of commercial, teacher-made, and student-made materials. The core textbook is in five levels with accompanying workbooks, readers, tapebooks, and tapes. This series is supplemented by a vocationally oriented text, visual aids (vocational and general), vocational resource materials, and community resource materials. The scheduling of community- and job-related activities is determined by the time at which structures applicable to each activity appear in the core text. Teachers, aides, and students have developed programmed audio

tapes and audio flashcards for self-study of the material in the core text. The audio tapes for the Level One text have instructions in Spanish, as well as Spanish translations of the English utterances the first time they appear. The audio flashcards use line drawings with stick figures as stimuli; Spanish translations appear on the backs of the cards.

Audio tapes, videotapes and audio flashcards, and visual aids have also been made for community- and job-related lessons. For example, students seeking jobs as custodians have their own set of flashcards and their own audio tape to practice the vocabulary and structures needed on the job. One group of students visited a used car lot armed with the structures needed for inquiring about prices, condition of cars, and financing, and brought back a videotape which provided them with feedback on their use of the structures they were practicing, their pronunciation, non-verbal behavior, as well as a lesson in consumer practices and the "hard sell."

Community information is collected, discussed, analyzed, and stored (cf. Donoghue, J. D., "A Holistic Approach to Community Development"). Students are given community tasks and sent out into the community after having practiced the structures they will need to obtain the information. These interchanges with the natives are videotaped. The tapes are viewed by the whole group for feedback for the participants and their linguistic and "language in the culture" context.

However, the most important resources we utilize, besides the students themselves, are other people. The Learning Center adult basic education (ABE) students and staff, the man in the street, the restaurant owner, apartment residents, and anyone else who happens to be in the actual physical surroundings. In other words, we have "knocked out" the classroom walls and extended the laboratory into the community.

Placement

After the original diagnoses and prescriptions, students are oriented to the program by their fellow students. Students who are monolingual work individually with audio tapes with the help of the teacher, aide, or other students for five lessons (about two weeks), at which time they are ready to join the larger group. Students who know some English immediately become part of the total group while pursuing individual language study until they command the same structures as the larger group.

For the remainder of their stay in the program, students are members of many subgroups. Placement is dynamic and can depend on any of the following factors, individually or in combination.

(1) Specific linguistic problems: e.g., three people cannot distinguish the sounds b and v; they form a group.

(2) Job interests: e.g., four students want to pass the Smog Device Installer Exam; they use video to interview a licensed mechanic who explains the engine parts; the replayed videotape is used for the creation of vocabulary, pronunciation, and structural exercises.

(3) Community tasks such as using the structure "how much does x or y cost?" when it appears in the text: five students then do a cost comparison study of neighborhood markets; after organizing the data, they report their analysis to the rest of the class using the same structure to practice conversation.

Student Responsibility

The role of the individual is just as ever-changing as is placement in a group. Students are both learners and teachers. They become teachers when they know something someone else does not know. What they know could vary from how to operate the video or other equipment to how many stores are in this block to the ability to use the structures in lesson nine. At various times they are community resources, researchers, supervisors of role playing in a job interview situation, program orientation coordinators, experts on points of grammar, or job counselors. Students may find themselves in any one or several of these roles, but there are three fundamental requirements that are assigned to all students in the language program: (1) they must recognize themselves as being responsible for the growth and development of the language training group, (2) they must determine the directions which their own learning takes, and (3) they must set the pace at which they learn. In short, each student must gradually assume responsibility for becoming bicultural.

Teacher Responsibility

As teachers we design the arena in which students can develop their multi-potentiality. We provide them with opportunities, such as video feedback sessions, to measure for themselves their progress in building competitive skills. The aim is that they sharpen their self-assessment skills in relation to behavioral criteria necessary for survival in the job and community contexts. For purposes of instruction we separate "job" and "community." In practice, of course, these areas articulate with one another and cannot be separated. Therefore, in the generalization step of the learning process we have students test their generalizations in a variety of situations encompassing job, community, and other aspects of culture.

Process Implementation

Earlier we defined bicultural as being able to function in two cultures. Therefore, the activities that are constructed have as their objective the acquisition of those skills which allow the student to compete in the target culture. We force students to take responsibility for decision-making by putting them into situations in which they have to make decisions.

The following example of a language experience that occurred last December shows the decision-making process at work. Process Labels (see Methodology) are in **boldface type**; Process Descriptions are in *italic type*.

Awareness of needed skills/information:

(1) *Expression of the realization that class enrollment had fallen below 18.*

Definition of skills/information:

(2) *"We need more students to maintain the program."*

Information gathering:

(3) *"Why don't we have enough students"? Some people have completed the program; some people got jobs; new ESL classes have been formed in Catholic churches. "Are there more people who need ESL?" "Yes—especially in National City, Chula Vista, and San Ysidro."*

Alternatives:

(4) *Alternative actions suggested: (a) put up posters; (b) talk to friends; (c) make presentations to community meetings; (d) get transportation to bring people to the Center.*

Selection of alternative:

(5) *"Get transportation for potential students from National City, Chula Vista, and San Ysidro."*

Redefinition of need:

(2a) *"We need transportation for potential students from National City, Chula Vista, and San Ysidro."*

Information gathering:

(3a) *Model Cities is going to give buses to Department of Human Resources to be used in the Model Cities area.*

(3b) *San Ysidro in part of Model Cities area, as is Southeast San Diego (location of the Learning Center).*

(3c) *Mr. Sheldon is in charge of this bus service.*

Alternatives:

(4a) *Send teacher to see Mr. Sheldon.*

(4b) *Send a student representative to see Mr. Sheldon.*

(4c) *Have the entire class go to see Mr. Sheldon.*

Selection of alternative for action:

(5) *Have the entire class see Mr. Sheldon.*

Action:

(6) *Practiced structures for conversation with Mr. Sheldon.*

(6a) *Class went to see Mr. Sheldon.*

(6b) *Mr. Sheldon told them to write a petition.*

Information gathering:

(3d) *They brainstormed writing the petition and decided they needed high-level support.*

Alternatives:

(4d) *Write a petition in Spanish or English.*

(4e) *Get a politically powerful individual to support the petition.*

Selection of alternatives:

(5a) *Write petition in both Spanish and English.*

(5b) *Have Learning Center Director attend Model Cities meeting with student to help present students' request.*

Action:

(6c) *Petition mailed; meeting attended.*

Evaluation of action:

(7) *A bus was scheduled that would pick up students in Chula Vista, National City, and San Ysidro, and more students enrolled in the ESL class. Thus, students rated decision as good.*

Process identification for generalization:

(8) *Class reviewed events and applied the process to stages of decision-making.*

This experience forced the students to take responsibility for the continuation of their ESL class. Other linguistic, job-related, and cultural skills were also developed within the lesson.

Conclusion

We have set forth the decision-making process by which we experientially prepare Mexican-American students to assume a productive role in the "alien" Anglo culture. Because each person brings with them to the ESL class their own peculiar set of linguistic and cultural sets, we prepare an individualized program of job and community related materials, techniques, and tasks aimed at making them as bicultural as possible.

We feel that too much rhetoric has been expended by many language teachers extolling the virtues of continuing "one's own" cultural behaviors without taking into account the fact that the foreign student has to be able to move into an alien culture and survive in it. For years we as teachers have been putting the adult student into an almost impossible situation by not letting them identify the behaviors that are acceptable in the society into which they are moving. We have expected them to be a voting citizen, but we did not let them discover what voting could or could not do for them. We expected them to be punctual on the job, but we did not let them experience how and why Americans value time. We expected them to find a job, but we did not give them practice in information gathering and analysis. We expected them to be able to make their own decisions, but we did not include decision-making in their curriculum.

We believe that decision-making in the language context is facilitated by contrasting the student's culture with Anglo culture. For this reason we place students in contexts that allow them to collect cultural information, analyze it, and act on it. Contrast is the catalyst for eliciting information about themselves in relation to their own culture and the alien culture. We treat the

two cultures side by side, one contrasted with the other. Contrast sets, a basic technique of linguistics, is thus extended to the notion of teaching biculturalism.

NOTES

1. A placement test developed by Donna Ilyin of the Allemany Adult School in San Francisco. Project Step-Up is assisting in field-testing the interview.

2. This paper was presented at the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy in Social and Economic Development, Key Biscayne FL, April 1972.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The past several months have been extremely busy ones for Bob Textor, Nancy Modiano, Emily Vargas Adams, and others who have participated in planning the CAE program to be held in conjunction with the AAA meetings in Mexico City in November. A splendid program has been planned which will include several excellent symposia and a number of roundtable luncheons, in addition to the meetings of Standing Committees and the General Membership meeting. Details are given elsewhere in the *Quarterly* and will also appear in the Preliminary Program Announcement of the AAA.

In March Jacquetta Burnett's bibliography entitled *Anthropology and Education: An Annotated Bibliographic Guide* was published by HRAF Press. This is an extraordinarily useful guide to the literature for all of you and many of your students. We will be exploring ways of continuously updating the bibliography so that it remains current.

The establishment of sound organizational procedures for the conduct of CAE business matters has been a major concern of the Executive Committee during the year. The process of affiliating with the AAA Executive Office for the purpose of financial recordkeeping and checkwriting brought to light a number of needed improvements. These include the need for an annual budget, central business files so that past records can be easily located, annual auditing of our financial records, and ways of providing organizational continuity between one group of officers and the next. These matters are currently being resolved.

Past CAE records have been deposited in the AAA Executive Office so that future officers and committee chairpersons may have ready access to them. The Steering Committee will adopt an annual budget for 1974-75 during the summer. Arrangements have been made for a formal audit of CAE financial records. The Executive Committee is in the process of trying to

develop methods for alleviating some of the inevitable problems of organizational continuity that arise in a national organization with geographically dispersed officers who change annually.

In addition to new business procedures, the Executive Committee has given attention to new CAE activities. Two *ad hoc* committees have recently been appointed. Emily Vargas Adams is chairing a committee on International Development Education. The second committee is concerned with anthropology and social studies, and is chaired by John Herzog. The purpose of these committees is to make recommendations to the Steering Committee about activities CAE might or should undertake in these two areas. If you have special interests or ideas about these topics, the committee chairpersons would welcome hearing from you.

A third *ad hoc* committee will be organized during the summer. The special purpose of this committee will be to consider potential CAE activity related to the employment of educational anthropologists in non-academic settings. This committee will be chaired by Elizabeth Eddy, who will also welcome ideas from those of you interested in this problem.

Elizabeth M. Eddy

ERRATA

Please note—Several paragraphs in the article by Hervé Varenne (May 1974) were transposed. The paragraph beginning with "What happens is that the teacher . . ." on page 10, through the paragraph which ends "all the units are the same and are ranked according to the same principles." on page 11, should follow the paragraph which ends "the teachers to lunch with, but not allowed to choose students to teach." on page 14. Our apologies to the author.