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ABSTRACT

Research and theory in bilingual education are reviewed for implications for Puerto Rican education. The review found that the following factors influence language and language learning: cognitive development, the capacity to discriminate and comprehend the speech of others, and the ability to produce speech sounds and sequences of speech sounds that conform to the patterns of adult speech. Two factors that underlie the development of skill in learning a foreign language are intellectual capacity and appropriate attitude toward the other language group, coupled with a determined motivation to learn the foreign language. However, students with low aptitude can learn a language if attitude and motivation are strong. Attitude, motivation, and orientation contribute to the rapid acquisition of listening and speaking skills. These factors affect both the learner's perseverance in language study and the learner's reactions to contact with a foreign culture. (MB)

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# TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE\*

Estoy Reddin

While much has been said and written in recent years about the teaching of second languages this is not a new idea. It has been and is an accepted practice in many countries of Europe, Africa and Asia. It was also an accepted practice in ancient and medieval times. Schoolboys in ancient Rome learned Greek from their tutors, who were often Greek slaves, so that they might study the classics of the Greek world. By the Middle Ages there was a body of literature written in Latin. However, since the vernacular languages were no longer the same as Latin, for those who wished to study in schools and universities Latin had to be taught as a second language all through the Middle Ages and into early modern times.

Nor is the teaching of English as a second language a new problem. It has been a concern on the continent for more than 300 years as the early English-speaking settlers tried to bring those already there into their own language community. The learning of English as a second language likewise became important for later groups coming to the continent who spoke other languages as their mother tongue. Nor is the teaching of English as a second language a new problem in Puerto Rico. The work of Pedro A. Cebollero, "La Política Lingüística Escolar de Puerto Rico", gives ample evidence that the teaching of English has been a concern ever since 1898 when Spanish rule was succeeded by that of the United States.

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203 301

Yet there are some new aspects. It is only in the last twenty-five years that teaching English as a second language has become a profession, making systematic application of a collected body of knowledge about language combined with knowledge of learning theory.

### The Role of a Second Language

A changing concept of the use and value of a second language has been reflected in second-language teaching in recent years. Earlier practices were based on the learning of a second language as a replacement for the mother tongue. For many years this concept was the basis of the language policy used with immigrants coming to the United States. In the state of Pennsylvania, to which many different groups from Germany migrated, a law was passed around the turn of the century making it mandatory that all instruction in the public schools of that state be given in English. It was assumed that a common language would foster the process of integration of different peoples into a homogeneous whole, thus America would truly become a melting-pot. The first language or mother tongue was not to be used nor cherished. Consequently students often hesitated, or even refused, to acknowledge that they knew another language or had contact with another language in their home.

Today there are many who see a second language not as a replacement for the first language; i.e., the mother tongue, but rather as a complement to the first language. This concept has had its basis, in part, in the view of the anthropologists who see language as a part of a person's culture and therefore as something to be prized. Rather than conceiving of a society as a melting pot

where individual differences are lost, many believe that a society should be like a mosaic where the different individual pieces add to the beauty of the whole. Such a concept is helping to bring a change of attitude towards language with many people now developing an attitude of pride in knowing a second language. In a recent university class on "linguistics and education" there had been discussion of the language background of the class members. Afterwards one young woman lamented that she felt different from the others in the class because, unlike them, she had no other languages in her home background. This was quite different from a decade earlier when students had not acknowledged the existence of another language in the home background.

### Development of Bilingual Programs

The changing concept of the role of a second language has had an effect on the schools in that it has led to the development of bilingual programs. Simply stated, bilingualism may be defined as the ability to use two languages effectively for purposes of communication. For a small sector bilingualism is acquired simultaneously as in the case of Steve, a boy in a public school of Pennsylvania, who had learned both Russian and Polish in his home. One language was necessary for communication with his mother, the other with his father. There are children in Puerto Rico, as well as on the continent, who must learn both English and Spanish in order to communicate with parents who use one of the languages but not the other.

For many others bilingualism is acquired through sequential learning. One language is learned first, usually in the home, while the second language

is acquired after some mastery of the first has been attained. It is with this kind of language learning that bilingual education in the schools is concerned. It is interesting to note, in the light of the previously mentioned law passed in Pennsylvania less than a century ago, that Pennsylvania has recently adopted guidelines for bilingual education. These guidelines provide for instruction in the mother tongue as well as instruction for acquisition of a second language.

In a recent publication Cazden (1972, p.180) states:

Too often, "bilingual education" is only a euphemistic name for new means to old goals of teaching children to speak and read and write the dominant language, in our case English, as fast as possible. The clue to true bilingual education is whether the concurrent use of two languages continues through school grades, or whether the non-English language gradually drops out year by year.

True bilingual education will foster the development of effective use of both languages with neither at the cost of neglecting the other. True bilingual education will also give members of the majority two languages as well as doing this for those of minority groups. Such is the demand of French-speaking Canadians in the provinces of Quebec and Ottawa who believe that the schools should be teaching French as a second language to English-speaking children as well as teaching English to French-speaking ones.

Bilingual education should be based on what has been learned about the nature of language and of language learning. Consideration should also be given to what research has shown about factors related to success in second language learning.

## Language Development in the Child

Carroll (1964, p.30) states that in the learning of language:

there are at least three interrelated sequences of development:  
(1) "cognitive" development, that is a child's capacity to recognize, identify, discriminate, and manipulate the features and processes of the world around him; (2) development of the capacity to discriminate and comprehend the speech he hears from others in his environment; and (3) development of ability to produce speech sounds and sequences of speech sounds that conform more and more closely to the patterns of adult speech.

Carroll also states that the last of these three sequences depends on the second, the great dependency of speaking on hearing being demonstrated by the enormous difficulties encountered in teaching deaf children to speak in anything approaching a normal manner. At the same time both the second and third sequences, speaking and listening, depend on the first, i.e., "cognitive" development.

Sometime in the second year of life most children begin to produce meaningful speech, that is, they begin to say words that communicate meaning to those around them. Those words are in the language system used in their environment, the language that they have been hearing all around them since birth. This language would very likely be Spanish in Puerto Rico or English in the continental United States.

The language that the child learns to use is generally the language of his parents since they have been an important source of language input. There are children, however, who learn a different language from that of their parents due to the influence of their environment. Children of English-speaking parents residing in a Spanish speaking environment are more likely

to speak Spanish than English, particularly if the parents speak or, at least, understand Spanish. This is not to say that these children do not develop the ability to understand both languages. However, a preference is usually shown for one language in speaking. Apparently such children are influenced to a greater extent in speaking by the language they are hearing spoken by many others around them because of their desire to communicate with these speakers (Valette, 1964).

The vocabulary development of a child, that is, his acquisition of words, is at first rather slow. He may still know only a few words six months after he has spoken his first "meaningful" word. However, there soon comes a stage when he rapidly acquires words. This seems to occur when his cognitive development has reached the point where he perceives that things, events and properties have names. He learns to ask, "What's that?" "What is that called?" "What does that mean?" The answers to these questions bring about rapid vocabulary growth.

Vocabulary, however, is not the only aspect of a language that a child must learn. While the speaker of any language must learn the morphemes, that is, the basic parts of a word as well as the complete words needed to convey meaning in the particular language, he must also learn the phonemes (sounds that differentiate meaning) and the syntax (structure) of the language. Although there is a great range of possible speech sounds, a given language uses only part of them. The young child in his "babbling" stage produces many more sounds than those used in one language but gradually his

articulation of sounds becomes purposeful and selective based on the input he is receiving from listening to speakers around him. He is also developing the ability to produce, as needed, more and more sounds necessary for the language he is using. Research by Templin (1957, p. 59-61) indicates that by eight years of age English-speaking children are able to produce nearly all the sounds (phonemes) used to communicate meaning in English. At the same time children maintain the ability to produce other speech sounds. Hence they acquire second and subsequent languages more easily than do adults.

The third task in learning a language is the acquisition of the syntax of that language. Words do not just get strung out one after another in any order. A language has its own system of patterns in which words are put together. The changing of a pattern may hinder comprehension or alter the meaning of what is being communicated. As soon as the young child begins to use more than one word at a time he is embarked on the process of learning the syntax of his language, a process that will be continuing through the preschool and elementary school years, as has been shown in the research of Chomsky (1969) and Menyuk (1969).

The process of language acquisition, as seen above, begins before the child comes to school. However, the school can be an important factor in the process since language acquisition is an on-going process through the years that most children in Western cultures are in school, namely, the years devoted to elementary and secondary education. Some people distinguish three periods as being especially important in the acquisition of language. The first of these is that of early childhood in the so-called "pre-school" years. The acquisition

of the sound system of a language is largely accomplished in this period. The years generally spent in the elementary school constitute another important period. By this period children are aware of and become increasingly proficient in using all the basic patterns of structure in English. The years of adolescence are also a time of language growth. In these years one often sees interest in "creating" new languages. At the same time second language learning is often impeded in this period by procedures in the school program which embarrass the sensitive adolescent.

Throughout the course of language acquisition the child himself is an important factor. While the adults around him may facilitate the process through their encouragement and interest, as Brown and Bellugi (1964) have shown, or conversely, hamper the process by constant correction and/or reprimand, it is the learner himself who controls the process as he seeks to know and questions and thus discovers important concepts of how his language functions. It is a process of inquiry rather than the result of teaching or exposition on the part of adults.

#### Factors Related to Success in Second Language Learning

Many factors are involved in the process of learning a second language just as in other learning situations. As noted above the development of both the capacity to comprehend speech and to produce speech depend upon "cognitive" development. Research has shown that "cognitive development" (or mental ability) is also important in second language learning. Jakobovits (1970, p. 98) estimated from a review of relevant research that intelligence accounted for

20 per cent of the variance in achievement in the study of foreign languages. Motivation or perseverance accounted for 33 per cent, aptitude for another 33 per cent and other variables for the remaining 14 per cent. Lambert, et al. (1961, p.155-56) concluded from the findings of studies carried out at McGill University that there are two independent factors that underlie the development of skill in learning a foreign language. One of these is intellectual capacity and the other is an appropriate attitudinal orientation towards the other language group coupled with a determined motivation to learn the foreign language. Birkmaier also noted the importance of these factors in second language learning. She states:

Lambert and his associates found that students with low aptitude can learn a language if attitude and motivation are strong. Even those with unfavorable attitudes succeed if aptitude is high. Aptitude is needed for learning grammar and vocabulary. However, attitude, motivation and orientation contribute to the rapid acquisition of listening and speaking. Certainly these factors affect the learner's perseverance in his language study and his reactions to contact with a foreign culture (1973, p. 1283).

While considerable recognition has been made of intellectual capacity much less attention has been directed to the importance of attitudinal factors in language learning. One of the most important of these attitudinal factors, according to Lambert and his colleagues (Lambert, 1963; Gardner and Lambert, 1959; Anisfeld and Lambert, 1961; Lambert, et al, 1963) is the attitude of the learner to the language and its speakers. They believe that this attitudinal orientation may be of two types: "instrumental", if the purpose of foreign language study reflects more utilitarian values of linguistic achievement such as getting ahead in one's work, and "integrative", if the student is oriented

toward learning more about the other cultural community as if he were eager to be a potential member of that community (Lambert, et al, p.358). They found that achievement in the learning of a foreign language was greater of students with an integrative orientation than of those whose attitudinal orientation was instrumental.

The importance of attitude towards speakers of the language is also seen in studies of other researchers. Spolsky (1969, p.281) concluded, from a study of attitudinal aspects of second language learning, that a person's attitude has "a great effect on how well he learns the language." He states that "a person learns a language better when he wants to be a member of the group speaking that language." Yousef (1968) found students knowing a foreign language and its culture refusing to apply this knowledge in situations where behavior patterns of the foreign culture ran counter to the students' native culture. He also found that the attitude of students from Middle Eastern countries toward American people and culture could be changed through discussion and explanation of the culture.

Birkmeier also states that

There is also evidence that becoming bilingual usually carries with it the tendency to become bicultural. Students' orientation towards other linguistic-cultural groups is largely developed within the family. The relationship between socio-cultural factors and success in foreign language examination of such variables must be incorporated into the design of foreign language programs if they are to be successful (1973, p.1283-84).

### Implications for Puerto Rico

The acquisition of English as a second language in Puerto Rico is not for the purpose of replacement of the first language or mother tongue, but

rather as a complement to the first language. As Hymes (1970, p.70) has noted, a goal of education, bilingual or other, presumably is to enable children to develop their capacity for creative use of language as part of successful adaptation of themselves and their communities in a continuously changing environment. Many realize that those who can use more than one language have greater capacity for communication with others with whom they come in contact.

In an attempt to develop such capacity for communication considerable effort has been expended in Puerto Rico on the teaching of English in the schools throughout the island. Much consideration has been given to the factor of the method of teaching English. Different methods have been tried at different times, but the results have not been as satisfactory as desired. It would seem that consideration should now be given to the role of attitude toward learning the English language as a second language. This would involve investigation of the nature of attitude toward the English language and the speakers of it. It would also imply exploration of the possibility of modifying attitudes in those cases where they are not found to be favorable. At the same time it is obvious, as Cazden (1972, p.180) states, that

. . . schools alone cannot achieve a multi-lingual society. Their success will depend on sociolinguistic aspects of language use in the community, and they must be evaluated in relation to that social context.

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