



The Quality Link

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New Directions in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning *by Rick Donato*

Classroom foreign language learning has recently become the topic of intense research. The results of this research have challenged the traditional belief that language learning can be achieved through the memorization of vocabulary lists, grammatical rules, syntactic patterns, and unauthentic dialogues. Research has also shown that using the foreign language for real purposes in normal conversational and literate ways results in language development. Conversely, foreign language instruction emphasizing low-level drill, repetition, and memorization is destined to student failure and teacher frustration.

As is well known, the language learning situation in Mali represents a case of *foreign* language learning as opposed to *second* language learning. In a second language situation, the learning of the new language takes place in a context in which the language is used extensively by native speakers. In the case of foreign language instruction, language learning takes place in a context where a language other than the new language is spoken as the first language. In Mali, although French is the national language, a child learns first to speak a vernacular language spoken in the home and community. Thus, a relatively small percentage of students bring to the classroom well developed oral ability in French. This situation makes the research on foreign language all the more relevant to Malian children who are required at the onset of schooling not only to learn a new way of coding

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UGANDA JOINS IEQ!!!

IEQ welcomes Uganda to the IEQ partnership. IEQ will work with the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) to assist the Government of Uganda's long-term effort to rehabilitate primary education. The Primary Education Reform Program (PERP) is supported by USAID through the Support to Ugandan Primary Education Reform (SUPER) Program, the World Bank through the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project and by various other donors and NGOs. These reforms aim to improve students' mastery of literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills; improve schools administration, management, and accountability; and reduce inequities among different groups of children.

IEQ and UNEB will launch their program in October 1994. UNEB, which was formed in 1980 as a professional testing institution, will be responsible for overseeing a competitive re-

search program that enables a broad range of researchers to design and conduct studies linked to the reform.

IEQ's research objectives include:

- ❖ illuminating the progress and the impact of efforts to reform and rehabilitate primary education in Uganda.
- ❖ responding to the information needs expressed by key stakeholders in primary education.
- ❖ providing formative information that can feed into the design and correction of interventions and validate policy reforms in primary education.
- ❖ providing information on the impact of educational reforms and other efforts to improve educational quality as these efforts mature.
- ❖ contributing to baseline data on the primary education system in Uganda.

Preliminary plans are underway for hiring Ugandan staff, establishing a UNEB/IEQ office, developing procedures for conducting research, and holding a start-up conference for the Ugandan educational community.

IEQ in Ghana

Last fall, the CRIQPEG team developed curriculum-based assessment instruments for oral language, reading, and writing using the syllabi and textbooks from Ghanaian primary schools. In each area, the skills assessed range from very basic (e.g., letter recognition and responding to simple oral questions) to grade level appropriate (e.g., reading a passage of average difficulty from the English textbook with a least 70% accuracy). The instruments were pilot tested, revised, and administered in January and February. Individual results were aggregated by classroom, school, and overall.

The most common learning difficulties revealed by the performance assessment are in the areas of listening comprehension, oral and written expression, and reading, both decoding and comprehension. This performance pattern seems to reflect an emphasis on copying and choral repetition as opposed to comprehension and open-ended oral or written expression. Further, results indicate that most pupils have not mastered the language skills necessary for basic oral and written English communication. This confirms the hypotheses generated by the Phase I research that children do not have the skills to use textbooks efficiently and that they need more opportunities to practice and apply beginning English skills.

Findings

Oral Language: The oral language assessment includes functional, listening comprehension, and oral expression questions. Performance on questions measuring basic functional English (e.g., “How old are you?”) suggests that pupils acquire functional English throughout primary school. In second grade, only 13% of the pupils perform at the full mastery level, whereas by fifth grade, more than half of the pupils demonstrate full mastery and fewer than 10% performed at the non-mastery level. On listening comprehension questions (e.g., “Point to the black goat.”), pupil performance is uneven. Across the grade levels, the majority of children perform at a par-

Project Summary: GHANA

In Ghana, IEQ's effort is linked to the Government of Ghana/USAID Primary Education Program (PREP). IEQ's collaborating institution in Ghana is the University of Cape Coast's Centre for Research on Improving Quality of Primary Education in Ghana (CRIQPEG). The first phase of IEQ research examined the availability, source, and use of materials in six schools in the Central Region. Now, CRIQPEG is turning research into action! Initial Phase II research activities developed profiles of the English language proficiency of children in grades 2-5. CRIQPEG assessed the reading, writing, and oral language abilities of over 1000 children in 14 schools in the Central and Western regions. CRIQPEG is sharing these research findings with circuit supervisors, head teachers, and teachers to improve language learning in seven participating schools.

tial mastery level. Pupils experience the most difficulty on questions requiring them to express themselves orally. For example, over 85% at all grade levels assessed perform at the non-mastery level and almost none (less than 2% overall) of the children perform at a full mastery level.

Reading: Pre-reading includes skills such as letter recognition and basic questions about print, as well as reading skills involving word and passage decoding and passage comprehension. On the pre-reading skills, there was a steady growth from second to fifth grade. About 1/4 of the grade 2 pupils performed these skills at a full mastery level.

One reading assessment task required children to read lists containing the most common words used in the Ghanaian textbooks. When children had difficulty decoding these words independently, the CRIQPEG examiners simplified the task to word recognition. This “aided” reading task provides a diagnostic bridge between pre-reading and reading. At each grade level, a greater percentage of children could recognize the words than could read them. Also, there was a steady increase in the proportion of children who demonstrated full mastery from 3% at grade 2, to 40% at grade 5.

When children read and responded to comprehension questions on passages from the English textbooks, several important findings emerged. First, a substantial proportion of the children at all grade levels are non-literate (i.e., unable to read 30% of the word in a primary school passage). Even at grade 5, 40-50% of the children are unable to decode typical passages from the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade books. Only about 1/6 of the grade 4 children and 1/3 of the grade 5 children can decode with at least 70% accuracy. CRIQPEG also found that even when the children can decode accurately, reading comprehension is very low (regardless of grade level). When performance of upper primary pupils is examined, data suggest that passages in the 2nd and 3rd grade textbooks are not easier than passages in the 4th and 5th grade textbooks. A review of the reading rate (words per minute) is being conducted to evaluate this preliminary finding.

Writing: While most Ghanaian children can copy letters (93% by grade 3 and 99% by grade 4) and write their names (60% by grade 3, 79% by grade 4, 95% by grade 5), they have more difficulty when asked to write words. The children were encouraged to write any words that they knew and were prompted with possible words. Not surprisingly, the younger children found this task more difficult. Seventy-five percent of second grade pupils and 57% of third grade pupils wrote fewer than six words (including their names). By fifth grade only 31% of the pupils wrote fewer than six words and almost half of the pupils wrote more than 15 words.

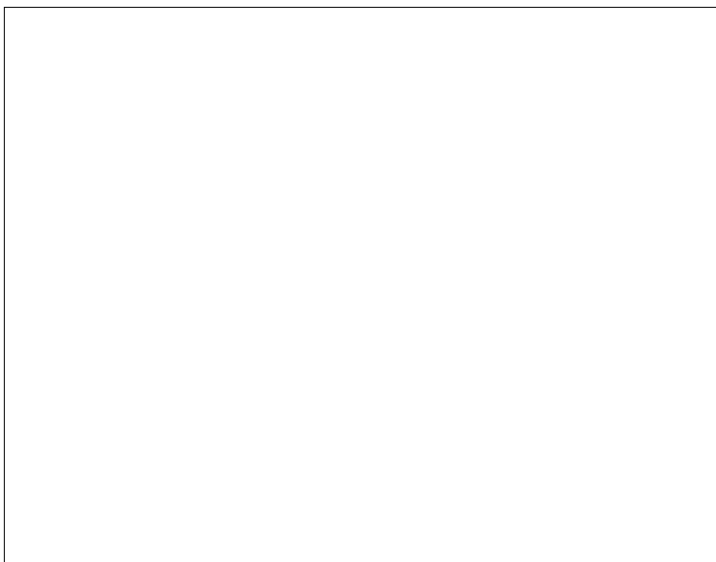
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Interviews and Classroom Observations

In conjunction with assessing pupil performance data, CRIQPEG collected extensive interview and observational data. The team interviewed circuit supervisors, head teachers, teachers, parents, community leaders, and pupils to gain insight into the factors affecting language learning. Classroom observations assessed existing instructional practices and the children's current exposure to printed and oral English in the classroom and school. The findings will be reported in the next issue of **The Quality link**.

Transforming Research into Improved Practice

From the beginning, CRIQPEG team members have been committed to expanding the research agenda to active participa-



The three major instructional goals of the Phase II intervention.

tion in improving Ghanaian primary education. Thus, the Phase II design uses research findings from the 14 schools as the basis for identifying potential strategies for improving English learning, then collaborating with local educators to introduce these strategies into seven of the 14 schools. In May, CRIQPEG identified three major instructional goals: (a) constant practice in oral English, (b) constant exposure to print, and (c) instruction geared towards making every pupil a successful learner. CRIQPEG

team members, head teachers and circuit supervisors from the seven intensive intervention schools, worked with Aida Paigna of the Institute for International Research and Abi Harris of Fordham University to refine these goals and to develop strategies for implementing them.

The first two goals require as much "immersion" as possible in oral and written English--increasing proportionately in both frequency of usage and scope of content and skills as the grade level goes up.

- ❖ The first goal encourages teachers to **constantly use English so as to provide practice in both listening comprehension and oral expression**, particularly in meaningful situations and in routine classroom activities.
- ❖ The second goal encourages teachers to **surround the pupils with reading opportunities** -- e.g., taping printed labels on common objects found in the classroom, using the textbooks as frequently as possible, allowing the pupils to take the textbooks home, obtaining food labels, old newspapers and magazines, and having the pupils circle all the words they can read from these materials and cut out words, phrases or sentences they recognize to make flashcards; etc.
- ❖ The third goal **insures that learning does take place after initial instruction by providing timely and appropriate remedial help** to the pupils who have learning difficulties. This goal borrows basic concepts in teaching-learning from the mastery learning model, emphasizing that the school and the teachers' main responsibility is to help all pupils to learn by giving pupils the opportunity to attain their fullest potential.

Collaboration, Partnerships, and Research

Working together at each of the seven intensive intervention schools, CRIQPEG team members, head teachers, and circuit supervisors discussed the research findings and the three major instructional goals with classroom teachers. CRIQPEG offered support and encouragement for teachers to reflect on how the findings pinpoint opportunities for improving how they teach and what students learn.

Next Steps

In the 1994-95 school year, CRIQPEG will continue to collaborate with local educators in the intervention schools. The instructional goals will be reinforced by introducing more strategies such as pupil peer tutoring

and other ideas for helping teachers to manage teaching, remediation, and enrichment within the same classroom.

Research into the factors affecting language learning and textbook usage will continue. USAID has helped the project immensely by expediting the process of securing enough textbooks for all 14 Phase II schools. This makes it possible for CRIQPEG to compare textbook usage in the seven intervention schools and the remaining Phase II schools. CRIQPEG hopes to provide USAID and Ghanaian educational leaders with suggestions for enhancing the usefulness of Ghanaian textbooks and improving language learning.

Beatrice Okyere & Abi Harris

Project Summary: GUATEMALA

In Guatemala, IEQ is working with the Ministry of Education to study the implementation and impact of Nueva Escuela Unitaria (NEU), Guatemala's adaptation of Colombia's Escuela Nueva program. NEU's principle characteristic is multi-grade classrooms, in which children are divided into groups by grade level, participate in peer teaching, use instructional guides, learn in activity centers, and receive individualized instruction from teachers. The NEU program is being implemented in 100 schools. IEQ is studying a 10% sample of schools in two regions, one with a predominantly indigenous population and one with non-indigenous, or ladino, children.

During the 1993 school year, which corresponded to the first full year of the NEU program, IEQ conducted testing and classroom observations of first and second grade children at 10 experimental schools and 10 comparison schools. IEQ's design was a pre-post study for second graders and a post-test-only study for first graders. Children were tested on reading, mathematics, creativity, and self-concept. Spanish language proficiency was also assessed in the region with a predominately indigenous population. In addition, IEQ observed a subsample of experimental and comparison children at each of the study schools for two month-long periods during the school year. Twice during the school year, IEQ questioned parents and teachers regarding their satisfaction with the curriculum. IEQ assessed the differences in the test performance of experimental and comparison children and by gender and language. Observational data were coded by the nature of the interaction engaged in by the target child and these interaction codes were summarized and correlated with the children's academic performance on the tests. IEQ researchers also gathered information on how well the NEU program has been implemented, based on four areas: schedule and organization; physical space; instructional materials; and instructional strategies.

Overall, higher academic achievement was found in the experimental schools carrying out the NEU program as it had been designed.

In Region II, where the NEU program was fairly well implemented in four of the five experimental schools, the significant differences in test scores favored the NEU children on eleven of twelve comparisons. These results were consistent for both schools in Alta Verapaz, a Mayan-speaking area, and Baja Verapaz, a Spanish-speaking area.

In Region IV, however, the NEU program was well implemented in only two of the five experimental schools. In that region, only one of the four significant differences found between experimental and comparison children favored NEU.

Where the NEU program is well implemented, it can contribute to increasing cross-sex interactions and to girls' achievement.

One of the hypotheses of decentralized programs such as NEU is that they allow children of different sexes greater access to each other, thereby helping to break down traditional stereotypes. To investigate this contention, IEQ calculated the relative frequencies of interactions with same and opposite sex peers. In Region II, girls in both first and second grade at each NEU school interacted with boys with greater frequency than girls in the corresponding comparison schools. This trend was not found in Region IV, however, where girls in both types of schools had similar interaction patterns.

In Region II, eight of the nine significant test results favored NEU girls. In Region IV, three of four significant differences favored girls in the comparison schools.

Use of both Mayan and Spanish by children whose dominant language is Mayan is significantly related to achievement in NEU schools.

At the time of the pre-test, Mayan children participating in the NEU program were significantly less proficient in Spanish than the comparison children. However, by the post-test, NEU children performed as well as the comparison children on all Spanish reading measures.

Despite similar overall patterns of language use, the relationship of language use to academic performance differed greatly in NEU and comparison schools. The use of Spanish was significantly correlated with vocabulary, comprehension, overall reading and mathematics at the first grade level in NEU schools. Spanish comprehension was also correlated with the use of the Mayan language, suggesting that constructing knowledge in the native language aids children in understanding the content presented in a second language. No significant relationships were found between language use and achievement among first graders in comparison schools.

In schools where the program was well implemented, both malnourished and well-nourished children participating in NEU had higher academic achievement than comparison children.

The mediating factor in the relationship between nutrition level and achievement in the NEU schools is context and the type of interaction that this new methodology provides. Where teachers implemented an active teaching style, the pupils with a low level of nutrition were compelled to participate in the classroom activities despite their low activity level and tendency toward isolation. This did not occur where the NEU program was poorly implemented or in traditional schools.

Parents generally had highly favorable perceptions of the NEU program.

By the end of the school year, parents who had children in the NEU program were more satisfied with changes in the school than those parents

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In a large-scale pilot project, a single year of implementation is not sufficient to see changes in academic achievement or classroom strategies at all schools.

Although all schools had the physical setting and materials of a NEU program, not all had mastered the program's instructional strategies. While students in the less successful NEU schools were organized in small groups, their tasks were often those of drill and memorization common to the traditional multigrade schools. Greater success had been achieved in one region of the pilot project than in the other, but both regions contained schools that had not effectively implemented the NEU's instructional strategies by the end of the first year.

Yetilu de Baessa & Ray Chesterfield

IEQ conducted testing and classroom observation of 1st and 2nd graders at 10 experimental and 10 comparison schools in Guatemala.

who had children in traditional schools. Furthermore, the percentage of drop-outs from NEU schools was significantly lower than that of comparison schools. These two findings are yet more relevant if it is considered that the parents of the NEU schools have an average education significantly lower than that of the parents in the comparison schools.

Implications

IEQ's findings suggest several implications:

Carrying out strategies that allow children to interact with teachers and peers to construct meaning is essential to increased academic achievement.

Children in well-implemented NEU classrooms tended to work with teachers, peers, and materials in a decentralized manner. In less successful NEU schools, the teacher usually initiated and evaluated the discourse related to knowledge acquisition, thus requiring students to perform in ways that met the teacher's expectations. Students internalized knowledge through memorization but were not allowed to discover knowledge on their own, as occurred in well implemented NEU schools.

The decentralized constructivist approach of NEU has potential for aiding second language acquisition in rural schools serving indigenous populations.

Young children were observed to use both Spanish and Q'eqchi' to further their comprehension of subject matter in the NEU schools. The freedom to work with and alter the content and context of classroom discourse appears to aid in acquisition of both vocabulary and comprehension in a second language.

IEQ Partner: *IISE at the University of Pittsburgh*

The University of Pittsburgh's Institute for International Studies in Education (IISE) is one of the three U.S.-based institutions that make up the IEQ Project team. Founded in 1787, the University has a student body of approximately 30,000 (1/3 graduate students) and more than 2,600 full-time faculty.

Pitt, as the University is informally known, has a well-established track record and an outstanding reputation for internationally-oriented research, teaching, and service. Approximately half of the School of Education's 120 faculty members have extensive international experience and interests. In its four departments -- Administrative and Policy Studies; Health, Physical and Recreational Education; Instruction and Learning; and Psychology in Education — these international functions are coordinated and performed by IISE.

IISE's goals are to: 1) encourage and facilitate international scholarship in education; 2) recruit and attract internationally-oriented students from the USA and abroad; 3) develop school and university curricula with international content; and 4) support technical cooperation projects and specialized training programs for international educators and policy makers. IISE-coordinated initiatives also involve faculty from other departments in the University, teachers and administrators of local school districts and colleges, and senior scientists associated with Pitt's Learning Research and Development Center.

In addition to IEQ, IISE has collaborated on several major projects such as:

- ❖ the Foreign Language and International Studies in Schools Project;
- ❖ the Indonesian Integrated Management Educational Program;
- ❖ an in-service program in Francophone Africa for teachers of French;
- ❖ a Latin American studies outreach to teachers of Spanish and social studies;
- ❖ networking with Mongolians involved in reforming labor force participation;
- ❖ staff development for Indonesia's Examination Center;
- ❖ a short course on technical, practical, and theoretical issues for Indonesian educational policy analysts.

IEQ FORGES PRO

IEQ creates opportunities for dialogue and partnerships among researchers and educators

IEQ ON EMAIL

Many people involved in the Improving Educational Quality Project can now be reached by electronic mail, including the host country research teams in Mali and Guatemala. This linkage has greatly facilitated the information exchange throughout the project. Following is a short list of IEQ staff and their email addresses. For a more complete list, please contact Ina Laemmerzahl at IIR.

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MALI GHANA

In April, IEQ sponsored the first ever dialogue among Mali's educational stakeholders. (See page 4.) Two professors from the University of Cape Coast, IEQ's institutional partner in Ghana, attended this landmark event and shared the Ghanaian perspective on strategies to improve language learning.

GHANA, GUATEMALA, MALI USA

Representatives from IEQ's three Host Country Research Teams -- Beatrice Okyere and Francis Amedahe (Ghana), Yetilu Baessa and Erick Macz (Guatemala), and Sékou Diarra and Brehima Tounkara (Mali) -- conducted a study tour to the U.S. in March. The purpose of the trip was to present IEQ's research at the annual Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference in San Diego and to participate in a series of professional development activities organized by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for International Studies in Education (IISE).

IEQ's two-session panel presentation, "Improving Educational Quality: Classroom and School Level Research and Practice in Ghana, Guatemala, and Mali," featured as one of the CIES program highlights, attracting some 80 educational researchers and development professionals. Jane Schubert (IEQ Project Director) began the dialogue with a vision of the overall IEQ Project. Country representatives followed this introduction with specific country presentations, including vivid videotaped classroom scenes from each country. Don Adams (University of Pittsburgh) chaired the sessions, while discussants Stephen Heyneman (World Bank) and Wes Snyder (Ohio University) provided positive comments and suggestions.

The formal sessions and extensive informal interchanges with conference participants generated a high level of excitement about the IEQ Project. The participants were particularly intrigued with the cycle of sharing classroom-based research findings with teachers, administrators and policy makers and converting them into improved instructional practice. The country representatives also attended and participated in many other conference sessions, which extended and strengthened contacts with internationally-oriented colleagues.

Following CIES, the country teams travelled to Pittsburgh, where they presented their research at an IISE Symposium and part in workshops on: qualitative data collection and analysis; involving school and university-based educators in classroom research; language teaching, learning and assessment; preparing documentation for cross-site comparisons; and collaborative cooperative learning approaches. The country teams also visited schools in the Pittsburgh public school system.

Overall, the March study tour was very productive, both in developing the capacity of HCRT members and in fostering professional exchanges among HCRT members and between them and a range of colleagues from the U.S. and other countries.

PROFESSIONAL LINKAGES

Seeking to improve educational quality at local, regional, national, and international levels.

GHANA SWAZILAND

In January, Dr. Beatrice Okyere, CRIQPEG's Research Coordinator, was invited to participate in the Workshop on Qualitative Research, an effort to build on African initiatives supporting qualitative research methodologies focusing on the classroom. The workshop was held in Mbabane, Swaziland and was jointly sponsored by World University Services of Canada (WUSC), USAID, and the Swazi Ministry of Education. The workshop, led by Dr. Diane VanBelle-Prouty, was attended by Swazi primary school teachers, WUSC volunteer secondary school teachers, and researchers with the Ministry of Education, the National Curriculum Centre, teacher training colleges, and the University of Swaziland.

Dr. Okyere did an outstanding job of presenting the Phase I results of IEQ's efforts in Ghana and the plans for Phase II. Her presentation was enthusiastically received because it provided realistic insights into the collaboration between classroom teachers and researchers in learning to enhance reflective practice in the African context. Videos of urban and rural classrooms in Ghana were shown in tandem with her discussion and greatly enriched the session.

SOUTH AFRICA USA

September marks the first visit to the U.S. by IEQ's South African colleagues. The visit will enable IEQ staff and SABER grantees to strengthen professional linkages in program monitoring and evaluation and to collaborate with U.S. counterparts to complete the Educare impact assessment design. Each of the eight representatives holds responsibility for program monitoring and evaluation in their respective organizations. They will also attend the annual Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) conference at the University of California at Los Angeles, visit the Head Start center at the University of Southern California and the Southwest Regional Laboratory, and converse with U.S. researchers on evaluation and preschool quality of care issues. The next issue of **The Quality Link** will report further on this visit.

SWAZILAND GHANA

The Swazi-Ghana exchange continued when four educators from Swaziland's Ministry of Education -- two of whom participated in the Mbabane workshop -- visited CRIQPEG in May.

The purpose of the visit was to familiarize the Swazi researchers with CRIQPEG's research activities and to swap ideas on primary education reform. The visitors arrived while CRIQPEG was organizing a three-day seminar on Phase II intervention strategies for seven of the fourteen sample primary schools. The Swazis participated fully in the seminar and visited a local school where they discussed continuous assessment practices with teachers.

On the whole, it was a very fruitful trip for the Swazi researchers: they had the opportunity to meet the University of Cape Coast's Vice-Chancellor, the Dean of the Faculty of Education, CRIQPEG researchers, as well as some head teachers, circuit supervisors and primary school teachers. CRIQPEG also benefitted greatly from the Swazis' memorable visit, for it was a chance to discuss issues of mutual interest and learn about the educational system in Swaziland.

Beatrice Okyere

IEQ in Mali

In April, the IEQ Mali Project held a seminar in Bamako to conclude the Phase I research activity and to present its research results on language learning in primary school.

The purpose of the seminar was to: (i) bring together local, sub-regional, regional and central educational actors, decision-makers, and partners to discuss issues related to language learning through reading, writing and speaking; and (ii) engage Mali's educational partners in a continuing and constructive dialogue on academic and extra-academic factors that influence language learning. Discussions were based on personal experiences and focussed on the child's condition, the learning environment, and teaching strategies.

The seminar was a big success. First, there was large-scale participation on the part of parents, teachers, and school principals, and summaries of the days' events were presented each night on national

Project Summary: MALI

In Mali, IEQ is supporting USAID's Basic Education Expansion Program (BEEP). IEQ is collaborating with two educational research organizations: Institut Pédagogique National (IPN) and the Institut Supérieur de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée (ISFRA). During Phase I, IPN and ISFRA conducted field research on the learning process in the first two years of primary education, contributing to a better understanding of the link between classroom practices and pupil performance. The two institutions produced a joint preliminary report of Phase I activities and held a concluding seminar in Bamako in April.

This collaboration is a grand premiere in Mali! Third, the seminar decentralized the identification of interventions and implementation strategies; they were designed by the same people who will be implementing them.

Based on their discussions, participants identified and elaborated pilot interventions that may improve pupils' language learning in primary school:

- ❖ teacher training in the manipulation of didactic materials (particularly teacher's guides), the use of folktales for language learning, and the pedagogics of large groups;
- ❖ pupil transportation using local resources such as carts and bicycles to alleviate the distance and fatigue impact on children;
- ❖ introduction of school canteens to improve pupils' nutritional health conditions and increase school attendance; and
- ❖ establishment of community study centers in the canteen spaces to provide rural pupils with further opportunities for learning activities.

Perhaps the greatest impact of the three-day effort was the complete appreciation by all the participants, including the IEQ research team, of the role of consultation and collaboration in all stages of the education reform process. In an interview during which he was asked about his feelings on the seminar, one parent declared:

"This project is no longer your project, it's our project--all of us--because we have reflected together. We have together identified what is good for the learning of our children..."

Next Steps

After the seminar, the IEQ team discussed plans for the Phase II research component. The team agreed to use both quantitative and qualitative methods; this "wide-angle approach" will capture a host of behaviors, changes, interaction patterns, achievements, attitudes, and classroom experiences.

The research aims to measure and document the effects of the teacher training interventions on the academic achievement related to language learning in the context of the child's total experience (as opposed to measuring performance on a test exclusively).

Phase II research will be divided into two components: *language achievement* and *classroom culture*. The *language achievement* research will compare baseline data on the language abilities of pilot school students with performance on these measures at the mid-point and the end of Phase II. Research on *classroom culture* will aim to document and analyze the context of instruction, how this context changes and improves over time, and how it compares to the classrooms studied during Phase I and to other non-intervention classes.

Sékou Diarra, Rick Donato & Josh Muskin

The collaboration between IPN & ISFRA is a grand premiere in Mali.

television. Second, the presence of two professors from Ghana's University of Cape Coast and Dr. Joshua Muskin and Professor Richard Donato, two long-term consultants for the IEQ Mali Project, displayed a rising institutional collaboration which will benefit the project. IEQ's biggest accomplishment in this respect has been the harmonious and successful landmark collaboration between IPN and ISFRA--institutions from different Ministries--around the same research project.

Program Evaluation Workshop *by Thuli Dlamini*

In June, I attended a week-long workshop on program evaluation along with eighteen participants from twelve USAID/NGO grantees. Dr. Patricia Campbell, a U.S.-based evaluation expert, conducted the workshop under the spicy banner, *Program Evaluation: Let's Do It!* The other participants and I met the workshop with mixed expectations and feelings, as experts from developed countries do not always offer the best opportunities for learning. How was Pat going to handle it?

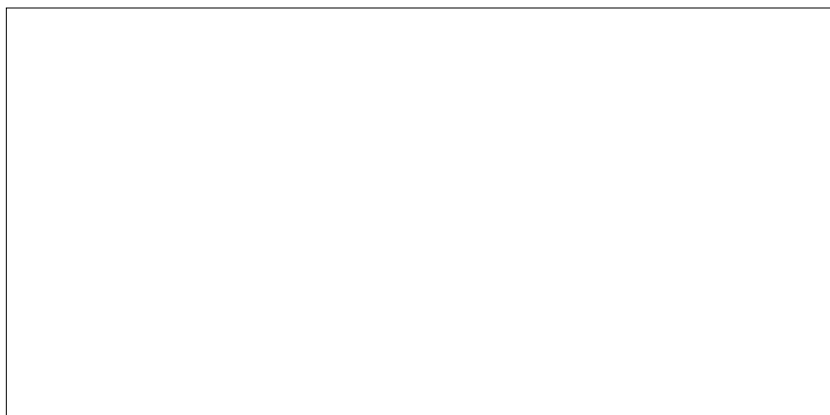
Pat started on a very high note, beginning with an overview of the workshop goals. This was delivered with such enthusiasm that she not only broke the ice but also de-mystified evaluation.

Participants learned a variety of essential evaluation skills. We learned to define and refine the goals of an evaluation. Even though the participants had always considered stakeholders' interests in their programs, the workshop showed us how to incorporate these interests consciously and systematically. We learned to select and develop measures of evaluation, coded and analyzed the data set collected in the grantees' evaluation exercises, and got hands-on experience using a computer spreadsheet program (Microsoft Excel) to present data in an effective, parsimonious, and eye-catching manner. The climax of the week involved designing evaluation plans for programs within each participant's organization, so that the participants could return to their organizations with implementable designs.

All of us found the workshop extremely useful and attributed its success to the good teaching qualities and infinite energies displayed by Pat, who kept us highly motivated throughout the week. We felt so engaged in the workshop that we lingered past closing each day, only leaving when Pat "kicked us out."

In response to the participants' evaluations of the workshop, the IEQ South Africa Project plans to: a) host a follow-up conference in October 1994 on using computer software to analyze data; b) provide on-site support for implementing

evaluation plans; c) create opportunities for participants to visit U.S. program evaluation centers; and d) review regularly each grantee's progress towards implementing a well-defined program monitoring and evaluation system.



Thuli Dlamini is a member of the IEQ South Africa staff who is assisting several NGO grantees to design and implement program evaluations. For the Evaluation workshop, Thuli led two small group sessions on the graphic presentation of data using Microsoft Excel software.

WHAT A MOMENT!: A New South Africa

by Jonathan Jansen, IEQ South Africa Team Leader

The night before we were partying till 3:00 am singing, toyi-toying, and sharing thoughts on what the new day mean to all of us. We reminisced about those who had died in the struggle, who missed this historic opportunity: First, Hani, Tambo, and most recently, Keane. Tears flowed openly. At 6:00 am, Grace and I moved to the polling booth in Retreat (where I grew up) determined to be the first to vote when the polls opened at 7:00 am. Alas, there were already 300 people in line. Great excitement! Strangers talking loudly and openly to each other, much laughing, celebrating, joking. Surprisingly, no talk of politics; except for a few ANC caps and rosettes (and 1 conspicuous DP), everyone was colourless. The violence and racial division in the pre-election period had silenced the crowd with respect to political talk or party symbolism.

I knew in my heart as I looked around that most of these now-500 people were solid Nationalist Party (pro-government) voters even though they were all Coloured, all victims of apartheid who lost homes in District Six and Tokai, some who lost loved ones in the torture chambers of the NP. The fear of Africans (a successful NP election strategy) outstripped the fear of Whites; "better the Devil you know" argued some. But for a brief moment, it did not matter who they voted for...what was important is that the struggle of many millions brought us the opportunity to vote freely for the government of our choice. Many poignant moments: old persons in wheelbarrows being brought to the polls; the aged, the ill, some literally crawling, to make their mark for freedom. Tears as some approached the booths; red eyes as others emerged.

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THE REVOLUTION IN WORLD EDUCATION: Towards Systemic Change

A USCEFA Conference

The United States Coalition of Education for All (USCEFA) will host an international conference, entitled *The Revolution in World Education: Towards Systemic Change*, from December 11-15, 1994 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. This conference will provide a unique opportunity for educators from around the world to explore the rapidly expanding parameters of education reform. IEQ will present policy implications of its research and experience in two areas: the use of knowledge about the classroom experience within culturally diverse environments; and the approach to systemic educational change from a South African perspective.

The USCEFA conference is designed for educators, reformers, decision-makers, and implementors who wish to help set the education agenda for the future. Participants will be invited to cross current professional, sectoral, and geographic boundaries to examine the connections, interdependence and tensions among school-based education: early childhood development and adult education; health and nutrition; business and industry needs; mass media and emerging information and communications systems; social, economic and environmental imperatives; and the reality of global interdependence.

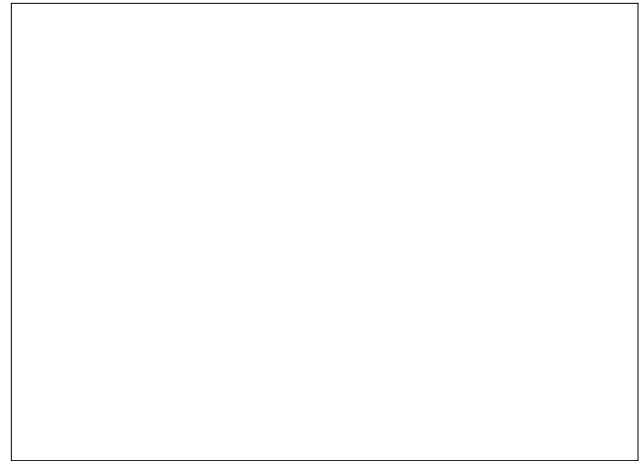
One of the conference's main goals is to promote critical partnerships, coordination, integration, and synergy, both domestically and internationally, in the creation of effective educational systems. The conference will explore three major themes:

1) **Emerging Understanding in Education** (or Why Systemic Change is Necessary) will examine new learning theories, information and communications technologies, motivational, cultural and contextual issues, and emerging economic imperatives;

- 2) **Expanding the Reform Agenda** (or What Must Be Done) will examine a lifelong learning approach for the future, integrated community education, new partnerships, and family involvement in education; and
- 3) **Approaches to Systemic Change** (or How We Can Do It) will explore research and policy connections, system change at different levels, feasibility, entry points, sustainability, and major foundation approaches to system reform.

Leading thinkers in all these areas will interact with domestic and international participants. Colleagues from each of IEQ's partner countries will participate in the discussions.

For more information about the conference, please contact: Eileen St. George, Program Director, USCEFA, 1616 N. Fort Myer Drive, Suite 1100, Arlington, VA 22209. Phone: 703/528-7474; Fax: 703/528-7480.



South African reform in action at an Educare facility.

What a Moment!: A New South Africa (continued from page 5)

My time came. I was nervous. My hand shook as I tried to find the block next to the face of my hero, Nelson Mandela. I made the mark. Involuntarily, my arms reached upwards...thank you, Hector Zolile Pieterse (the first student to fall during the Soweto Uprising of 1976)! But much joy and humour, such as the man in Thornton (Cape Town) who expressed dismay that Oom Jannie (Jan Smuts, a pre-war Prime Minister) did not feature on the ballot paper; or the woman who came to vote "for Jesus;" of the semi-blind Coloured pensioner who ran his fingers down the list, under the supportive eyes of two voting officials, and stopped at the face of the first white man (Constand Viljoen) to make his mark (De Klerk was lower down). Then there was the placard of the ANC-aligned Call of Islam displayed throughout Cape Town: Your Vote is Secret...But not to God, So

don't vote NP; rumour has it that the NP took the group to the IEC Court...the case? Divine Intimidation.

In the end, the ANC walked away with an overwhelming majority (possibly 2/3rds) except in the Western Cape and, possibly, in KwaZulu-Natal. The celebrations have started in earnest. Our new President will be inaugurated on Tuesday, 10 May 1994. A better caption could not be found: From Prison to the Presidency.

What a moment!

NEW DIRECTIONS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

(continued from page 1)

the world but also to produce and comprehend this code while simultaneously learning new concepts in academic disciplines. The research on foreign language instruction and learning can, therefore, directly inform this language learning context.

The following is a summary of the literature concerning effective foreign language instruction. This summary represents the results of extensive research studies on a variety of learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Further, this research applies directly to cases where learners acquire a new language for the first time, as is the case of the majority of Malian children who enter first grade.

In order to be effective, foreign language instruction should provide learners with regular opportunities to:

- 1) **Listen to and comprehend personally relevant and useful talk in the foreign language.** This assertion means that extended language input is critical for developing competence in a learner. In addition, this language input needs to be of high quality, interesting to the learner, and slightly beyond the learners present level of competence.
- 2) **Read authentic texts that capture the interest and imagination of the learners. Authentic texts are, contrary to intuitive notions, easier to comprehend than edited or abridged selections.** Natural redundancies and repetitions provide support for learners to construct meaning from texts. Additionally, authentic texts encourage the student and teacher. Effective reading instruction in the foreign language class also requires that students have some prior familiarity with the contents of the text to be read. Teachers who help students activate prior knowledge or build pre-requisite knowledge of what is to be read can greatly enhance reading comprehension.
- 3) **Interact verbally with the teacher and each other in the foreign language in an effort to create meaning and extent and refine developing linguistic resources.** Verbal interaction here means using questions that assist learners in producing language rather than merely assessing them on the accuracy of their production. Research shows that the quality of student production is often directly connected to the types of questions a teacher asks.
- 4) **Express thoughts, ideas, and feelings in extended writing activities.** Rather than waiting until learners have “mastered” all the grammatical elements of a new language, teachers can provide opportunities for creativity in writing short texts from the beginning of instruction. Reactions to student writing should center on the content of the text rather than on its form. Research indicates that when given frequent opportunities to write and to receive feedback from the teacher on content, students make significantly greater progress in their writing ability than when writing is delayed or teacher feedback focuses on explicit grammar correction.
- 5) **Have the freedom to make mistakes which are recognized by the teacher as normal and essential for language development.** Anyone who has ever learned a foreign language knows that errors are inevitable. Research shows that grammatical development follows a fixed sequence and that formal instruction on grammatical forms does not always influence the productive use of these structures. In other words, there are similarities between first and second language learning concerning the order of acquisition of certain grammatical patterns. A surprising finding is that these developmental sequences are similar across learners from different first language backgrounds: a structure learned early by one child is learned early by another. Moreover, what appears to be an error may in reality be movement toward the target structure. That is, although still not native-like, the student’s production may be different from previous errors, indicating that the grammar of the language is changing and being restructured toward target-language norms.
- 6) **Learn from teachers who assist learners to extend their language abilities in new directions and who “value” student language rather than merely “evaluate” it.** Teaching requires a form of “scaffolding”, whereby teachers assist learners to extend their knowledge in a supportive, discursive interaction. In first language learning, caretakers often simplify their speech, slow down the rate of delivery, and rephrase statements to assist the learners’ comprehension. In addition, caretakers support production by asking questions, modeling words and phrases, and recasting what the child says in the correct form. Language teachers use these techniques to render their input comprehensible and to assist the learners in expressing themselves. Research shows that “scaffolded interaction” produces learners who develop both communicative competence and confidence.
- 7) **Learn content through the medium of the new language rather than focusing exclusively on the language itself as the objective of each lesson.** When the new language is placed in a meaningful context, learning is facilitated. The context for instruction can be a story known to children, an unfamiliar story, or an academic lesson. When the focus is on content rather than on the language itself, forms and meanings are more easily bound together and more easily recalled.

(continued on next page)

New Directions... (continued from page 11)

- 8) **Use the language to perform a variety of functions that are found in real life, such as expressing likes and dislikes, narrating events, describing family and friends, asking for information, etc.** Students do not transfer grammatical knowledge to functional language ability. No amount of drill and repetition of grammar rules, verb paradigms, or vocabulary will ever produce a competent speaker. To gain competence in using language, students need frequent opportunities to perform language functions for real purposes.
- 9) **Negotiate meaning with the teacher and each other through a variety of comprehension checking strategies, clarification requests, and confirmation checks.** Numerous studies show that, through the negotiation of meaning, language is made comprehensible to the learner. As stated in #1, comprehension is a critical component for language acquisition to occur. Through comprehension of the new language, learners can hypothesize about how the language works, compare their output with what they hear from the teacher, and expand their linguistic resources. Effective language instruction starts with comprehension activities before requiring learners to produce the new language. Empirical studies indicate that students need time to listen to and comprehend a new structure before being required to use it productively.
- 10) **To link the new language to concrete, here-and-now experiences that take place in the classroom.** The “here-and-know” principle anchors language instruction in the concrete reality of the students. This contextual support, through visuals, objects, or gestures, enables learners to quickly assign meaning to the words they hear and to recall these words with greater facility than if learned in a memorized dialogue or a list of disconnected vocabulary words.

What do classes based on the principles derived from research and listed above look like? In classes where students have the opportunity to develop linguistic proficiency,

regularly-planned meaningful interaction with the teacher and each other is routinely observed. Students hear the teacher talk about meaningful topics, tell stories, and teach academic lessons at appropriate levels of language complexity. Teachers also attend to comprehension and use a variety of strategies to ensure that students comprehend the new language and verify their level of comprehension. Students also have the opportunity to talk to each other, are challenged to express their meanings in speech and writing and are encouraged to communicate in any way they can. Students are guided by their teacher to listen to extended discourse, hypothesize about the language they are learning, and act out new vocabulary or everyday situations. Students may participate in storytelling activities, create written stories with their teachers on the blackboard, or explore other academic disciplines in content-based language lessons. Students are also observed to work cooperatively on projects in group work or pair work activities. The hallmark of these classes is the belief that to learn a foreign language requires “talking *in* the language and not just talking *about* it.”

It is hoped that this brief summary captures several of the new directions in foreign language instruction. Since the early 80s, our understanding of how languages are taught and learned has been greatly expanded. The points raised in this discussion are not intended to provide all the answers. They can, however, serve as guiding principles to language instruction. In this way, teachers and educational researchers can engage in a cycle of reflective practice that is informed by current research and theory on language learning and further shaped by the specific contextual and cultural factors of their own classrooms and schools.

*For a full list of bibliographic references, please contact the editors of **The Quality Link**.*

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