TEACHING OF LEBERIAN LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS

by A. Babs Fafunwa

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At the request of the Government of Liberia, the Director-General of Unesco, within the framework of Unesco's Participation Programme for 1979-1980, instructed the consultant, Mr. A. Babu Fafuwa, to undertake a mission to Liberia, with the following terms of reference:

(1) to advise on teaching Liberian languages in schools with English as a second language;

(2) to help in designing the curriculum in Liberian languages and in unifying the writing (script) of the languages;

(3) to conduct a training programme to prepare Liberian teachers to teach Liberian vernacular languages, supervise the teachers in the teaching of languages and assist them in developing aids and materials for the language programme;

The consultant carried out his mission in Liberia from 28 December 1979 to 26 January 1980.

After holding preliminary discussions with the Deputy Minister in charge of Instruction, Mrs. Christine T. Norram, her staff members Messrs. Delano Cooper, Edward Gouto and Sylvannus Tucker as well as the members of the Institute of Liberian Languages, Dr. Don Kovac, Mr. Richard Thompson and Mrs. Nancy Lightfoot of the Methodist Church Literacy Programme, the consultant with the assistance of the Ministry officials, drew up a schedule of work to cover his activities while in Liberia. (See Appendix I).

Also, as a result of consultation with the Ministry officials, the Institute of Liberian Languages and the Deputy Minister for Instruction, Mrs. Christine T. Norram, a "Unesco consultant's work programme" was prepared. It was an amplification of Unesco's terms of reference as perceived by the Ministry officials and covers the following tasks to be undertaken by the consultant:

(1) study of the current status of the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme;

(2) visits to the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme Centres.

(3) interviews with the various people involved with the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme, as well as other interested persons;

(4) to suggest a syllabus design for the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme;

(5) to suggest components for an evaluation programme to monitor the effectiveness of the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme;

(6) to make recommendations relating to the scope, the organisation, staff pattern, etc., for the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme.

The consultant arrived in Monrovia on 28 December and left on 26 January. Between 31 December and 23 January 1980, he visited Cuttington College near Gbarnga, the Improved Efficiency of Learning Project (IELP) in Gbarnga, Totota Center for Kpelle language, and Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute by road with the two Ministry of Education officials assigned to him as counterparts, Mr. Edward Gouto, Co-ordinator of the Ministry's Liberian National Language Experimental Programme and Mr. Sylvannus Tucker, a newly recruited staff member, who has been working on
Vai language at the missionary-sponsored Institute of Liberian Languages. The team also visited Medina Centre for Vai language. They travelled by air to Tokoin/Swedru which is the centre for Krah language teaching; from Swedru they travelled by car to Jumndii 60 miles away. The only centre not visited was Belloh Centre.

At each centre and institution, the team had discussions with teachers and administrators, acquainted them with the purpose of their visit and examined their programmes and publications. As the schools were on holiday in Liberia, they were unable to see the children at work. Adult literacy classes in action in Krah language in Jumndii village were observed.

At the University of Liberia the consultant held discussions with Dr. Mary Brown Sherman, President of the University, Dean Theodora Jackson of Teachers' College and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Dr. James T. Tarpeh, and the three language lecturers in Vai and Ipelle (the two languages being studied at the undergraduate level), Messrs. N. Gray, J. Allison and J. Barclay. He also held a seminar with the joint staff of Teachers' College and the Liberian College. He later gave a lecture to the students of the William V. Tubman Teachers College at the invitation of Dean Theodora Jackson and her staff.

As mentioned earlier, the consultant held several meetings with the Deputy Minister, Mrs. Christine Norman and her staff. He also had interviews with Mrs. Zoe Caines, Curriculum Material Specialist, and Mr. R.G. Henry, Post Literacy Officer, both of the Ministry of Education.

The consultant wishes to express his gratitude to Mrs. Christine Norman, the Deputy Minister for Instruction for giving all the logistic support needed; to President Mary Brown Sherman of the University of Liberia, who co-operated in every way possible; to Dr. Don Novac of the Institute for Liberian Languages (TILL) and his colleagues, who spared no pains to give him a complete picture on the activities of the Christian missions in Bible translation, adult literacy and their close collaboration with the Ministry of Education in promoting Liberian languages in and out of school. The consultant also wishes to thank the staff of Cuttington College, Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute as well as the staff, teachers-in-training, the adults and the young learners encountered for their interest and co-operation. Finally, the consultant wishes to express his appreciation of the kindness and support of his two counterparts, Mr. Edward Gouto and Mr. Sylvanus Tucker, who were his constant companions and advisers throughout his stay in Liberia and during his travels which covered over 1,200 miles round trip by road and air.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION ........................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS .........................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General ...............................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language policy ......................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cuttington college ...................................</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Totota Centre ........................................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kakata ................................................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Liberia ..............................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tchien - Zweedu - Jaundii Centre ..................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medina Centre ........................................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion ...........................................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS ......................................</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of a language for the proposed model building experiment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The proposed action-oriented research project ...</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational design for the proposed project</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposed time-table for the implementation of the proposed local language project</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
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</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

1. The need to introduce languages into the school curriculum dated as far back as 1970 when a national curriculum revision exercise was embarked upon. Of the various committees set up at that time by the then Minister of Education, the one on Elementary Education raised the question of the place of Liberian languages in the school and called for appropriate experiments. Specifically the committee said inter alia:

"The medium of instruction should remain English, a greater emphasis being on spoken English and the use of English as a second language than now is the case. However, a Liberian language, the selection of the particular (one) to be related to the area of the country in which the school is located, should be introduced..."(1)

At the final sessions of the full session of the National Curriculum Review Committee, guidelines for reorganizing the curriculum were proposed and it was recommended that:

"The medium of instruction will be English, which will also be taught as a subject approached as a second language. The dominant Liberian language of the area where the school is located will be taught in addition to promote comprehension. For most children in the area, this Liberian language will either be the mother tongue or the language best understood..."(2)

2. As a follow-up of the National Curriculum Review Committee's Work, "The Liberian Curriculum Task Force" was set up in 1972, and was charged with the responsibility for developing "oral fluency and written materials in the eight major indigenous linguistic groups of Liberia". The eight languages selected out of the sixteen languages were: Bassa, Gio, Vai, Kpelle, Lorma, Kru, Grebo and Krain.

3. It is to the credit of the Task Force that it prepared comprehensive syllabuses for Elementary I to VI in each of the eight languages recommended. These syllabuses will be useful whenever plans are finalized to introduce any of these languages into elementary schools. It will be necessary however, to design syllabuses on other subjects e.g. social and cultural studies, science, and mathematics in each local language and also in English as a second language (see chapter III: Recommendations).

4. As stated in one of the Ministry of Education's Reports, "the magnitude of the task (recommended by the Task Force) in terms of personnel and resources was such that further inquiry was deemed necessary prior to the implementation of such a programme". (3)

5. In August 1972 the consultant was invited by the University of Liberia's College of Education to give a lecture on "Language and Culture in African Education". It was understood that the lecture reinforced the stand of the Liberian educators, Ministry officials and missionaries on the need to introduce the mother tongue into the school curriculum.

6. The Report of the Task Force led to the setting up of the Special Commission for the National Language Programme in February 1974 by the President of Liberia, Dr. William R. Tolbert, Jr. and headed by Dr. Augustus F. Caine, Director of the Institute of Public Administration. Its term of reference were "to review

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(1) President Mary Brown Sherman's memo to the Deputy Minister for Education, Mrs. Christine T. Norman. Ref 842/UL/79 of Oct.3, 1979 p 1
(2) See above, p 1
and make recommendations for the Government’s consideration on a submission by the committee on curriculum co-ordination of the Ministry of Education, with reference to the preparation of syllabuses and primers of eight Liberian languages for use in Liberian schools.

7. The Special Commission made the following recommendations to the President in a letter dated 5 December 1973:

1. "Language is the basic tool for the transmission of cultural heritage, the development of social skills, the formation of values and norms, and the facilitation of social participation;"

2. "Language influences what a person perceives, what he learns and remembers, how he thinks, and what his attitude will be;"

3. "The use of Liberian languages as media of instruction and/or courses of instruction in our school system will undoubtedly serve Liberia's goal of national integration. In addition to reinforcing the learning process for the Liberian child, the languages will stimulate an appreciation of Liberian cultural heritage among Liberian youths;"

Based on the above considerations the Committee recommends:

1. That the proposal to teach a few Liberian languages in our school system should be approved by government;

2. That a programme of Liberian languages have the following objectives:
   - (a) to develop within every Liberian youth literacy in at least one Liberian language;
   - (b) to encourage the use of Liberian languages as media of instruction and communication;
   - (c) to develop a sense of pride in and appreciation of Liberian cultural heritage among the Liberian people;
   - (d) to preserve Liberian languages through the development of literature;
   - (e) to collect and collate Liberian oral histories, folk-lore, legends, dramas, etc.

3. That four (4) Liberian languages be introduced into the school system on a trial basis, beginning with the 1976 academic year;

4. That selection of the four (4) languages be based on the following criteria:
   - (a) the size of the language group or the total number of persons who speak it, based on the 1962 and 1974 censuses;
   - (b) the number of qualified and experienced teachers in the country to teach the Liberian language;
   - (c) the availability of instructional materials.

5. That additional languages be introduced into the school system as the requisite instructional materials and personnel become available;
that the 1975 school year be devoted to preparatory work, during which the Ministry of Education would arrange for the collection and compilation of all existing instructional materials, published and unpublished, in each of the four languages selected. It would also compile a list of the qualified and experienced instructional personnel for each language;

(7) actual teaching of the languages in the school system would begin in the 1976 school year;

(8) there should be an Advisory Committee consisting of educators and social scientists, whose members shall be appointed by the Minister of Education. It shall be the responsibility of the Committee to advise the Ministry of Education on Liberian language instruction."

8. The President in a letter dated 27 December 1974 addressed to the Chairman of the Special Commission, accepted the Commission's recommendations and advised it to "collate data preparatory to selecting the initial four language and determining methods to introduce them within the school system".

9. This led to the setting up of another presidential commission in 1975 headed by Dr. Mary Brown Sherman, then Dean of Education and now President of the University of Liberia. The Commission met and recommended the implementation of the Caine report of 1974. Therefore, the Sherman Commission did not submit any special report.

10. Then in February 1978 the Deputy Minister of Education for Instruction, Mrs. Christine T. Norman formed a committee to define the steps necessary to implement a pilot programme in bilingual education. The committee was headed by Mr. Edward Gouto. The committee submitted a proposal for the setting up of a pilot programme in selected Liberian languages and the schools where they were to operate the scheme. With the approval and support of the Deputy Minister, the "Liberian National Language Experimental Programme" was inaugurated in 1979. The goals and objectives of the programme as stated in the Ministry of Education's Project Document are as stated below (See Project Document, November 1978 pp. 3 and 4):

(1) General goals of the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme are:

(2) to develop in every Liberian student a sense of pride in and an awareness of his linguistic heritage, thus stimulating an interest in preserving the values of national culture and oral traditions.

(3) to follow the natural pedagogical sequence of teaching students basic literacy skills in the vernacular and then transferring these skills to the reading and writing of English.

(4) to develop in every Liberian student oral fluency and literacy competence in at least one of Liberia's vernacular languages.

(5) to assist the student to better understand the structure of the English language and to use it more fluently in education and daily life.

(6) Specific Objectives of the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme are:

(7) to teach the student to read a Liberian language written with symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The IPA will be used for all beginning teaching because of its transferability to other writing systems. Where a language possesses its own script (as is the case for Vai and Bassa), these may be introduced in later instructions as material of significant cultural value.
(3) to teach the student to:
   (a) communicate in writing in the language
   (b) record oral traditions
   (c) write creatively in the language

(9) to familiarise the student with the literature available in the language:
   (a) tribal histories
   (b) outstanding men and local heroes
   (c) religious beliefs
   (d) customs
   (e) folklore, proverbs, word games and songs
   (f) geography, etc.

(10) to establish literacy skills that can be transferred to the reading and writing of English and as a tool for the learning of English and for advanced education.

(11) to give the student an appreciation of the rich heritage of national life and local tribal customs.

(12) to make the student aware of the importance of the local language for education, communication, and as a part of the heritage of people.

11. The Liberian Language Experimental Programme's pilot projects consist of five centres:

   Kpelle at Totota Centre  
   Bassa at Buchanan  
   Vai at Medina  
   Krahn at Zwedru  
   Belleh at Belleh Balcom Centre

   These centres coincide with the areas where the missions have been working for a number of years on Bible literacy irrespective of distance and number of the speakers of a given language. For instance, Belleh, which according to 1962 census is spoken by less than 6,000 people, can only be reached by a small four seater plane which the missions use from time to time when going on inspection or when transporting the supervisor to the headquarters in Monrovia for consultation.

12. The Liberian National Language Experimental Programme's Executive Committee consists mainly of education officials with the Deputy Minister as Chairman, while the Committee for Implementation is headed by Mr. Edward Couto, the Ministry's Co-ordinator for the National Language Programme who also served as counterpart to the consultant, other ministry officials and a representative of the missionary sponsored Institute of Liberian Languages.(1) Dr. Don Novac.

(1) The Institute of Liberian Languages was established in 1970 by the Lutheran Group with different denominations; their major interest is Bible translation in Belleh, Krahn, Vai and Bassa and they have done a lot of work in these areas.
CHAPTER II

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

General

13. It is quite clear from all written records examined and the oral interviews conducted by the consultant that the Liberian Government, the Ministry of Education officials, individual educators and missionaries are committed to the idea of introducing Liberian languages into the school system. Indeed several attempts have been made in the last ten years to bring this idea into fruition, as could be observed from the efforts of the recently established Liberian National Language Experimental Programme's pilot projects located at five different centres - Kpelle in Totota, Bassa in Buchanan, Vai in Medina, Krahn in Zwedru and Balomo in Bellah Baloma. The modest budget for each centre is estimated at $1,655.00 or $8,275.00 when all the centres become fully operative.

Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost per Item</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250 pre-primers</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 primers</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>$375.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 readers</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total for materials per project</td>
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<td>$875.00</td>
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</table>

Teacher training at VITAL per teacher

- Tuition and materials: $30.00
- Transportation (estimated round trip fare by taxi from Language Centre): $20.00
- Six weeks per diem at $5.00: $210.00

- Total per teacher: $260.00
- Three teachers per project: $780.00
- Total subsidy per project: $1,655.00

14. The present pilot projects are aimed at producing reading materials or, more specifically, primers for 250 pupils and in training three teachers per project language centre. The idea behind this project is to introduce some of the Liberian languages into the elementary school system as a subject.

Language policy

15. At present the medium of instruction from Elementary I to VI in Liberian schools is English. The President of Liberia in one of his speeches in the early 1970's, proposed one national indigenous language for the country. The Caine Commission, which the President set up to look into the whole issue in 1972, recommended the introduction of four indigenous languages. But the Ministry of Education preferred dominant languages spoken in given areas of the country, probably eight in number. It was understood that the President later accepted the Caine Commission's recommendations.

16. To clarify the issue, the consultant had an interview with the Deputy Minister of Education for Instruction, Mrs. Christine Norman, who has been the moving spirit behind the establishment of the new Liberian National Language Experimental Programme and whose department initiated the request for the services of the Unesco consultant.
The consultant sought answers to the following questions:

What is the Ministry’s position on the following issues which have re-echoed during his interviews with various people and through his study of the various reports and documents:

1. to introduce a local language as a subject from Elementary I while English remains the medium of instruction throughout the six years of elementary education or

2. to introduce a local language as a subject from Elementary IV while English remains the medium of instruction from Elementary I to VI or

3. to introduce a local language as medium of instruction from Elementary I to III and English as a second language from Elementary I to VI.

17. The Deputy Minister agreed that it was an issue still to be decided and that it was the duty of the consultant to advise on the most effective approach. She added, however, that proposition (2), cited above, is the least desirable. She said, "the National Curriculum Committee proposed the introduction of a local language in Grade IV but experts know that when you learn your language so late, you don’t get maximum effectiveness for two reasons: one, it feels foreign and appears as just a literary exercise; two, you learn faster in your mother tongue and the earlier the better". She continued: "the purpose of this experiment (the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme) is to find the more effective method between the local language as a medium of instruction for the first three years, with English as a second language (proposition 3 above), and (b) the introduction of the local language as a subject introduced in Grade IV – a comparative study". The Deputy Minister felt that there had been too many time lags between recommendations and proposals and implementation. She was therefore anxious to "do something concrete about this language issue". The Deputy Minister was also interested in identifying "the most dominant language or languages spoken in any given area of the country". Finally, she hoped that the Unesco consultant would help design an experiment that would help to answer the questions raised. Also, she had no illusion about the time factor. She felt that such an experiment might be of six years’ duration, but she was keen to get it started as soon as practicable.

Cuttington college

18. The consultant and the two counterparts stayed the night at the college on 14 January 1980 and were well received by the Dean of Academic Affairs, Dr. S.M. Yekeekon and the Dean of Administration, Dr. Father Henry G. KweKwe. The consultant held a seminar with the staff from 9 p.m. to 11.30 p.m. on "Education in the mother tongue". He also explained the purpose of his visit to Liberia and hoped that many staff members would be interested in assisting the Liberian Government achieve its objectives in the promotion of the mother tongue. The staff showed keen interest and raised many pertinent questions which were clarified by the consultant.

The seven who attended the seminar were:

Dr. Father Henry G. KweKwe, Dean of Administration and Acting President (Dr. F. Johnson, the President, arranged the meeting before he travelled abroad).

Dr. Stephen M. Yekeekon, Dean for Academic Affairs
Mrs. Janice M.T. Vani – Education
Fr. Benedict S. Vani
Mr. Mustapha – Science
Mr. M. Paniker – Indian Lecturer
Mr. P.M. Pillei – Indian lecturer
and the two counterparts. The college was on holiday and most of the staff were away.

19. The team also visited Gburunga, where Liberia and USAID are running an experiment on "Improved Efficiency of Learning Project" (IELP), headed by a lecturer at Cuttington College, Mrs. Janice Vani. This project and the proposed experiment in "Education in the mother tongue" have a number of things in common and one may have something to contribute to the other.

Totota centre

20. On 15 January, the consultant and his two counterparts visited the Totota centre of the Kpelle Experiment organized by the Ministry of Education. The schools were on holiday, but the team met two of the four teachers and their supervisor, had discussions with them on their work and held a seminar with them and others interested in the language programme. The twelve present were:

Mr. James Whayne (Kpelle speaking)
Mr. Henry V. Kaimoh  
Mr. George Y. McKay  
Mr. John S. Smith Gbandi  
Mr. John S. McKay, Totota Supervisor of Schools  
Mr. John K. Wornor, Totota District Chief Education officer  
Mr. Dunne Samnah - college Freshman, (Kpelle speaking)
Mrs. Elizabeth Coleman
Pastor Jerome K. Roberts - Principal, Totota Primary School
Mr. George Scott
Rev. William G. Margwardt, Priest
Rev. Theodore E. Leidenfrost, Priest

There was considerable enthusiasm for the language programme and those in attendance expressed their willingness to participate in the project, if invited.

Kakata

21. On the afternoon of 15 January, we visited Kakata Rural Teacher Training College. The college was on holiday, but the few teachers who were on the campus attended the seminar. The topic "Education in the mother tongue" was warmly received and the members present were interested in assisting with the programme, when launched. The seven present were:

Mr. Drake M. Sadi - (Mandi and Gbendi speaking)
Mr. Amos A. Padmore - (Bassa/Gio speaking)
Mr. Joseph Johnson - (Kru speaking)
Mr. George B. Kenneth - (Kpelle speaking)
Mr. John S. Williams - (Mendi speaking)
Mr. Stephen Neube - (Zulu and Xhosa speaking)
Mr. Sam S. Adjai

University of Liberia

22. On 16 January, the consultant held a joint meeting with the staff of William V. Tubman College of Education and the Liberal Arts College. The Deans of both Colleges were present as well as the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Dr. James T. Turpeh. The meeting was arranged by the President of the University, Dr. Mary Brown Sherman.
23. The consultant discussed his mission with the staff and talked about the importance of "mother tongue and education". The talk was well received and, in fact, the University is currently running courses in Kpelle and Vai at the undergraduate level. There was consensus among the staff on the issue. However, the question concerning which language or languages to choose for the initial experiment generated considerable discussion, as was the case at Cuttungton College and Kakata Rural Teacher Training College. The staff of both colleges expressed their readiness to participate in the experiment, if invited.

24. The nineteen present at the meeting were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Native language(s)</th>
<th>Teaching subjects/positions</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>F.F.K. Edwuh</td>
<td>Ewe</td>
<td>English Lang. &amp; Linguistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.E. Muagrive</td>
<td>Kio</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.N. Kasasa</td>
<td>Ugandan</td>
<td>English &amp; Education</td>
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<td>John Y. Barclay</td>
<td>Kpelle</td>
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<td>E. Boima Gray</td>
<td>Vai</td>
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<td>Joseph T. Allison</td>
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<td>James T. Tarpeh</td>
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<td>Theodora W. Jackson</td>
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<td>Dean, Teachers College</td>
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<td>A. Bebe Faruwa</td>
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<td>Victor E. Lawson</td>
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<td>Vai</td>
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<td>Kona Khasu</td>
<td>Gola/Bessa</td>
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<td>Josephine Richards</td>
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<td>Virginia Sherman</td>
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<td>Mowoe Cassell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sylvanus A. L. Tucker</td>
<td>Vai</td>
<td>Assistant Co-ordinator</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Tohien - Zwedru - Jaundii Centre

25. The consultant and his two counterparts made a trip to Zwedru by commercial airline and drove sixty miles by road to Jaundii. At both places lessons in Krahn language were observed. The team was enthusiastically welcomed by the missionaries, the villagers and officials of the county administration and by the local education officer. At Zwedru, the consultant addressed the teachers on the importance of the mother tongue in the education of the child. Mr. James Leach, a missionary who is stationed at Zwedru, discussed his work in Grebo with the team and invited the members to his office where some of the Grebo primers have been produced. Mr. Herb Tisher, another missionary who has been working in Krahn language and who was chief host to the team, drove the members to Jaundii, a small village, sixty miles from Zwedru, where they met adults and children who had been expecting them all day. Demonstrations were given by young and old, showing their reading skills. The consultant addressed them through an interpreter and encouraged them to carry on the good work. The team stayed the night at the village and returned to Zwedru the following morning.

26. Back at Zwedru they met the County Superintendent and the Chief Education Officer both of whom received them warmly. The purpose of the mission was explained to these officers and they responded positively.
27. The consultant and his two counterparts also visited the Vai Centre at Medina. They were met by some thirty adults, three of whom are Vai teachers, who are assisting the Ministry of Education’s Experimental Programme.

28. The consultant addressed the adults on the importance of the mother tongue in the child’s education. The talk was well received. Vai is one of the very few African languages that has a distinct writing script of its own. Some of the adults therefore wanted to know whether they had to abandon their script for IPA script. The team explained that the Vai script should be preserved for its cultural value and should therefore be studied and used by the adults for internal communication. As for the child, he should be taught through IPA in order to make transferability easier when studies in English are started. Even then the child should study the Vai script as a cultural subject, preferably at a much later stage.

29. In attendance at the meeting were Mr. A.T. Sherman, Paramount Chief, Mr. Boima Freeman, Clan chief, Mr. Varney Passewe who keeps his accounts in Vai, and Mr. Sekou Doli, who carries out all his business transactions in Vai.

Conclusion

30. To assist the Liberian Ministry of Education realize its language objective, it is necessary to set up an action-oriented research project of a four or six years' duration in one or two of the major Liberian indigenous languages. One language is proposed for two main reasons. First, there is need to build a model with one language and then apply the model to other languages with necessary modifications to reflect the socio-cultural environment of these other languages. Secondly, the cost of establishing and administering four or eight language experiments simultaneously is enormous and would overtax the already limited manpower resources of the country.
Recommendaions

31. The Unesco Monograph on Fundamental Education, VIII, published in Paris in 1953 and entitled, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, stated, inter alia:

"It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding; sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium."

Both the Philippines' experience and the Six-Year Primary Project at the University of Ife upheld Unesco's statement.

Choice of a language for the proposed model building experiment

32. As we have observed earlier there are sixteen linguistic groups in Liberia and some work is being done in five of these - Kpelle, Belleh, Bassa, Vai and Krahn by the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme, a Ministry of Education Unit in co-operation with the Institute of Liberian Languages (TILL), which is sponsored by the Christian missionary groups and is primarily interested in Bible translation and adult literacy.

33. It is recommended that one of these languages be chosen for the proposed "Model Building" project. Once a model package is developed over a period of three or four years, the model will be used in later years for as many languages as the Liberian Government wishes.

34. The next question is "which language?" The language which stands out as the most appropriate is Kpelle. According to the 1962 census, Kpelle is spoken by 211,000 people; Bassa is next with 166,000 followed by Gio, 93,000, Kru, 80,800, Grebo, 77,000, Mano, 27,000, etc.

35. It is therefore recommended that Kpelle should be used for the Model Building Project.

The proposed action-oriented research project

Preamble

36. Language patterns and the cultural milieu are so closely interwoven that there is a reciprocal influence between them. The child's language is an integral part of his culture and the mother tongue is the best medium for educating him. This proposed project is therefore predicated on the hypothesis that:

(a) the Liberian child will benefit culturally, socially, linguistically and cognitively through the use of his mother tongue as the medium of instruction even for the first three years of elementary education and

(b) that his mastery of English will be improved if he is taught English as a second language and as an entirely separate subject during the first three years of his elementary education.
Aims and objectives

37. The main objectives of the proposed Liberian project are:

(a) to develop an elementary education curriculum which can lead to sound achievement by those children whose education may terminate at the end of elementary school and constitute a solid foundation, culturally and cognitively, for those children who will pursue secondary and post-secondary education;

(b) to design and develop materials with appropriate methodology for teaching the proposed curriculum effectively;

(c) to employ Kpelle as the medium of instruction for the first three years of education in order to demonstrate that education, when given in the child's mother tongue rather than in a second or foreign language, is more effective and meaningful;

(d) to teach English as a second language through specially trained teachers for the first three years of elementary education;

(e) to evaluate the project continually with a view to determining the presence or absence of certain significant differences between the project children and children in non-project schools.

Organizational design for the proposed project

38. In order to guarantee continuity and sustained interest in the use of Liberian languages, it is proposed that a permanent Commission on Liberian Languages be established, with an eminent educator as chairman (see Organization Chart, Appendix III). The Commission's terms of reference would be to keep under constant review (a) the development of all Liberian languages (b) the activities of the proposed action-oriented research project and (c) advise Government from time to time on ways and means of promoting Liberian languages in the Liberian school system.

39. The Commission which should comprise a top Ministry official, the Dean of William V. Tubman College of Education, and a representative of TILL, should have not less than five or more than nine members and should meet at least twice a year.

40. It is also proposed that a Steering Committee be established to advise and assist the secretariat in the implementation of its language projects. This Committee should be headed by the Dean of the Teachers' College and should include the Head of Education at Cuttington College, a linguistics expert, the Principals of KMTI and ZMTI, the Director of the Language Experimental Programme, a member of TILL, a Ministry official, an elementary school headmaster and a supervisor of schools, preferably the supervisor of the area where some of the experimental schools are located. The Committee should meet frequently - at least six times a year.

41. A separate and distinct office or secretariat should be created and headed by a Ministry of Education official as its Director, preferably, the present Director of the Liberian National Language Experimental Programme.

42. The set-up of the secretariat should be as follows:

1 Project Director
1 Field Co-ordinator
2 General Assistant/Store Keeper/Accountant
1 Resident Artist
1 Stenographer/Secretary
2 Computer/Files Clerks
Local and foreign consultants (as required on short-term basis).
43. The major task of the secretariat is to plan and execute the proposed action-oriented research project which has six major components.

A. Writers' Workshops

44. The writers' workshops constitute the backbone of the project. There will be a writing team in each of the following curriculum areas:

(a) social and cultural studies which embrace folklore, literature, music, art, civics etc.;

(b) primary science including health and sanitation;

(c) primary mathematics;

(d) language arts (Kpelle);

(e) English as a second language.

45. These workshops will be held during long and short vacation periods for 3
to 6 weeks at a time and writers will be drawn from the University of Liberia, Cuttington College and teacher training colleges and include heads and teachers of elementary schools as well as Ministry officials. There should be a team of at least five writers for each area. All writers must be speakers of Kpelle and must be qualified in a given subject -- science, mathematics, social studies, Kpelle, English and teaching methods and strategies.

46. The first writers' workshop should be for a duration of four to six weeks.

It is proposed that a team of six be invited either from the Philippines or the IPE Project to spend one week with the writers, for orientation and training on writing strategies for primary education. The six consultants will represent each of the five subject areas plus one linguistics expert.

47. The first two weeks of the workshop will be devoted to orientation, strategies and the drawing up of syllabuses for the first two years of elementary education. The remaining period will be devoted to production of schemes of work, teachers' guide books and pupils' books in each of the first four fields in Kpelle and the fifth group in English as a second language.

48. It is advisable that the writers be provided with board and lodging (as necessary) and with stipends on the basis of either a six-day week or on a monthly basis.

B. Material Production Unit

49. A decision should be taken as to whether this activity should be carried out by the secretariat of the project or be given to a printer/publisher. Experience elsewhere has shown that if the project is to move by its own momentum and not be held to ransom by an outside contractor, it is advisable that a production unit be set up internally, equipped with special typewriters, scanning machine, duplicating machine, artistic equipment etc. to allow the books to be stencilled and run off without delay as required by the experimental schools.

C. Teacher Training

50. The training of teachers for this type of project takes place at four levels:

(1) regular in-service programme during the long school vacation;

(2) weekend seminars;
(3) on-the-job training by visiting supervisors and headmasters and
(4) periodic consultations.

51. Teachers may also be sent to some of the countries where similar projects
are being run e.g. Philippines, Ile in Nigeria, etc.

52. The project teachers should also participate in the writers' workshops.
    They can be of considerable assistance to the subject experts who need the
    guidance of the elementary teachers on the type of materials that may or may not
    be appropriate for the children. Indeed, good elementary teachers are experts
    in their own right at that level. Later, some of the teachers will acquire skills
    in writing materials for their own classes.

D. The Project Schools

53. It is proposed that at least twenty schools, ten from urban areas and ten
    from rural areas, be selected for the project. As far as possible, the
    schools in each area should not be too far apart to enable teachers to consult one
    another and to bring them together for weekend seminars. Proximity will also
    reduce the cost of constant supervision and monitoring. All schools should be
    accessible by road.

54. Only Elementary I Class in each school should be used during the first year.
    When Class I moves to Elementary II at the beginning of the second year, the
    new Elementary I will constitute the second class in the second year. The pro-
    cess will go on until there are Years I, II and III of the project in the third
    year as shown below:

    TABLE SHOWING AN EXAMPLE OF IN-TAKE PATTERN IN ONE SCHOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elem I</td>
<td>35 pupils</td>
<td>35 pupils</td>
<td>35 pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elem II</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>35 pupils</td>
<td>35 pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elem III</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>35 pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35 pupils</td>
<td>70 pupils</td>
<td>105 pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Evaluation Unit

55. This is an essential component of the experiment. Evaluation is a continuous
    exercise and should be built into the system from the outset. The children's
    cognitive and affective domains have to be measured over the three-year period.
    The other schools outside the experimental ones will serve as control.

56. It is proposed that the International Centre for Educational Evaluation (ICEE)
    at the University of Ibadan be requested to help design the necessary strate-
    gies for this purpose. A representative of that centre should be invited to the
    first writers' workshops.
7. **Criticisms**

The secretariat should also encourage and facilitate work in this area. The secretariat should seek the close co-operation of individuals and groups such as the missionaries in furthering this work in as many languages as practicable. The Commission itself should consider work in this area as one of its major assignments.

8. **Bible translation**

TILL has been doing valuable work in this area for the past several years. While the secretariat will not be interested in Bible translation per se, for mutual assistance it should establish a working relationship with the TILL group.

9. **Equipment**

Apart from the provision of an office building with the usual office furniture, the secretariat will require:

1. Special typewriters with Kpelle characters (2)
2. Scanning machine
3. Duplicating machine
4. Artist's equipment
5. Land Rovers (2)

10. **Lexical Committee**

There is a need for a lexical committee that will consult with people in the villages on words and concepts in a given language before new words are coined or borrowed.

11. **Funding**

A number of agencies may be consulted for financing part of the project. Such agencies may include the following:

- (a) Unesco
- (b) Ford Foundation
- (c) Carnegie Foundation
- (d) German Foundation
- (e) UNICEF

12. **Leadership for the project**

To ensure continuity it is strongly recommended that this project should be under the joint leadership of the Teachers' College, University of Liberia and the Ministry of Education.

13. **Costing**

The time available is too short for the consultant to provide a budget for the project. A modest estimate for this type of project is in the order of $50,000 a year or roughly $200,000 over a period of three to four years. In comparison with the current USAID - Liberian Government Programme on Improved Efficiency of Learning (IEL) Project at Gbarnga this is a very modest estimate.

14. **Basic requirements for setting up the proposed Liberian Language Project**

The basic requirements for setting up the proposed Liberian Language Project are similar to those of the IEL except that the former does not require resident writers or expatriate staff except on part-time or visiting consultancy basis.
M. Proposed time-table for the implementation of the proposed local language project

(a) Year I

1. Inauguration of the Liberian National Languages Commission and the Steering Committee
2. Establishment of a secretariat
3. First writers' workshop to draw up syllabuses, schemes of work and the preparation of written materials for Grade I in the five subject areas.
4. Materials production
5. Crash teacher training for 25 teachers who will teach 20 classes in 20 schools the following year

(b) Year II

1. Admission of the first group of Grade I pupils (600 to 800 pupils in Kpelle speaking area)
2. Writers' workshops for producing materials for Grades II and III
3. Materials production
4. Teacher training workshop for Year II (Grade II pupils) and also on-the-job-training and weekend seminars and workshops

(c) Year III

Same as Year II above.

1. Grade I admission
2. Writers' workshop for Grade IV materials
3. Materials production
4. Teacher training
5. Evaluation

(d) Year IV

1. Admission of new Grade I
2. Introduction of Kpelle language materials to Grade IV classes

Items 3 to 5 as for previous year

(e) Year V

Evaluate both programmes and take a decision

(f) Year VI

1. Apply whichever programme is accepted to four or eight other local languages by direct translation of materials produced into these languages with necessary modification as distinctive environmental and cultural characteristics dictate; produce materials and train teachers.
APPENDIX I

CONSULTANT'S SCHEDULE OF WORK

28 December — Arrival in Monrovia and visit to Ministry of Education and UNDP
31 December — Meetings at Ministry of Education
2 January  — Meeting with TILL: Programme Review, Mr. Gouto
3 January  — Meeting with TILL: Programme Review
4 January  — Meeting with TILL: Belleh Co-ordinator; Nancy Lightfoot, Methodist Church Literacy Supervisor
8-11 January — Interview with Father C.K. Kandakai (on Vai); Dr. Brown-Sherman, President of the University of Liberia on University participation; Deputy Minister, Mrs. Christine Norman, Dr. Johnson, President of Cuttington College; Mrs. Zoe Caine of Ministry of Education
14 January  — Travel to Cuttington College and address to staff on mother tongue
15 January  — At Totota and Kakata Rural Teacher-Training Institute and address to teachers
16 January  — Seminar for staff at University of Liberia Teachers College and Liberal Arts College
17 January  — Travel by air to Tchien (300 miles); to Jamburi by road (60 miles) from Tchien
18 January  — Met and held meetings with teachers of mother tongue (Krahn)
21 January  — Travel to Medina (70 Miles) to address teachers of Vai language
22 January  — Writing
23 January  — Special seminar with students of Teachers College, University of Liberia
24 January  — Writing
25 January  — Final meeting with Mrs. Christine Norman, Deputy Minister and her staff
26 January  — Leave Monrovia for Lagos
APPENDIX II

LIBERIAN LANGUAGES

(officially recognized)

KRUAN          MANDE
1. Grebo        7. Vai
2. Kru          8. Mende
4. Bassa        10. Mandingo
5. Dai          11. Mano
                 13. Loma
                 14. Kpelle

WEST ATLANTIC
15. Gola
16. Kissi
APPENDIX III

LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION

Population census 1962

The 1962 Liberian Population Census showed the following figures for the 16 languages spoken in the Country:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kpelle</td>
<td>211,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassa</td>
<td>166,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gio</td>
<td>93,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kru</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grebo</td>
<td>77,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mano</td>
<td>72,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loma</td>
<td>53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krahn</td>
<td>52,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gola</td>
<td>47,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kissi</td>
<td>34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandigo</td>
<td>29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vai</td>
<td>28,800*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandi</td>
<td>28,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belleh</td>
<td>5,500*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De</td>
<td>5,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mende</td>
<td>4,974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Languages which are being actively worked upon at 5 Centres.
APPENDIX IV

ORGANIZATION CHART FOR PROPOSED PROJECT

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

PERMANENT COMMISSION ON LIBERIAN LANGUAGES

STEERING COMMITTEE

PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OR OFFICE HEADED BY A DIRECTOR

WRITERS' WORKSHOP | MATERIALS PRODUCTION | TEACHER TRAINING | EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS | EVALUATION UNIT | ORTHOGRAPHIC WORK | BIBLE TRANSLATION TILL