

SUMMARY
OF THE ANNUAL REPORT (FINAL)
OF JOHN B. HENRY
FOR
THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 1957

Liberia

Post: Specialist in the teaching of English.

Program: From 1 March 1957 thru 31 August 1957 the Participation Program and from 1 September 1957 thru 28 February 1958 (end of contract) the Technical Assistance Program.

Job Description: (Cablegram) HENRY WILL BE STATIONED MONROVIA AND HELP SUPPORT BUREAU FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION BY POSSIBLY REVISING TEACHING FOR TRIBAL SPEAKING PEOPLE WHICH IS IN ENGLISH BUT ALSO TO TEACH CLASSES AND WRITE TEXTBOOKS AT KLAY BUT HE WILL HAVE TO MAKE THE WORK AND BUILD HIS OWN LINE - BIAW (Chief of Mission).

A. Bureau of Fundamental Education

Fundamental education has had no aims. Mr. B. Rudnasoorthy, Specialist in Fundamental Education, Mr. A. W. P. Wilkinson, Special Adviser in Visual Education, and I presented in May a working report which we hoped would form the basis of discussion amongst those concerned with fundamental education. We were never able to get a discussion of our proposals, and our efforts to help define aims went unheeded. The Bureau of Fundamental Education has been barely staying alive. It may get a reasonable budget for 1958 and thereby begin to function more effectively.

B. National Fundamental Education Center at Klay

At the time of my arrival the students were in the field getting practical training. This group was graduated 18 July, so nothing could be done with it. I withdrew from fundamental education around that time since I felt that, if the persons concerned with it did not regard it seriously enough even to discuss it together, I could add nothing by trying to function in that area. The Center needs an overhauling from top to bottom, but this can be done effectively only if there is an over-all fundamental education policy.

C. Teacher Training

Mr. V. E. Hearles, Specialist in Teacher Training, invited me to assist him in his work. This I tried to do. I gave a course in the Teaching of English to two students at the University of Liberia. The results were poor. I have been working for months on a Teacher's Manual for the teaching of oral English to non-English speaking children. Although I have tried for months to get a commitment from Government, I still do not know whether the book will be used. Nothing has been offered in the way of materials to reproduce it. I lectured on Methods of Teaching Elementary School Subjects to Non-English Speaking Children during the Annual Supervisors' Workshop. Also I led a group on Pre-School Units of Work. Achievements in all areas of work have been practically nil.


John B. Henry

ANNUAL REPORT

To : Chief, Bureau of Relations with Member States, Unesco, 19 Avenue Maber, Paris XVI, France. (Through Dr. H. H. Grantham, Chief of Mission, Unesco Technical Assistance Mission for Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia.)

From : Mr. John B. Henry, Specialist in the Teaching of English, Unesco Technical Assistance Mission for Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia.

Subject : Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 1957.

Introduction

I was recruited under Unesco's Participation Program as of 1 March 1957 and, because of budgetary reasons, I was transferred to the Technical Assistance Program as of 1 September 1957.

When I was persuaded to accept this post in April 1956, it was intended that I would work at the National Fundamental Education Center, Klay. Mr. Hollinshead visited Liberia in March 1957 and, finding no one who knew anything about the assignment, he cancelled the post on the spot. After he returned to Paris, it was decided that I should come to Liberia anyway.

When I arrived in Paris on 21 March 1957 for briefing, it was still understood that I would be at Klay, although a modification of the job description was expected at any moment from Mr. A. Shaw, the Chief of Mission at that time. The following cablegram was finally received:

HENRY WILL BE STATIONED MONROVIA AND HELP SUPPORT BUREAU FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION BY POSSIBLY REVISING TEACHING FOR TRIBAL SPEAKING PEOPLE WHICH IS IN ENGLISH STOP ALSO TO TEACH CLASSES AND WRITE TEXT-BOOKS AT KLAY STOP HE WILL HAVE TO MAKE THE WORK AND BUILD HIS OWN LINE

SHAW

At the end of my stay in Paris, Mr. John Bowers and I outlined a plan by which a mass language and literacy campaign might be conducted in Liberia. The idea was that, if I felt such a campaign had any real chance of succeeding, the plan would be presented to Government. After examining local conditions and resources, I concluded that there was no likelihood whatever of any such campaign succeeding, and I recommended that all resources, both financial and human, should be directed towards the development of a strong and effective Bureau of Fundamental Education.

A. Nature and aims of the project

The project I came to work on was fundamental education. For practical considerations fundamental education had to be viewed as consisting of two parts, that is the work being carried on by the National Fundamental Education Center, Klay, and the Bureau of Fundamental Education, since each has functioned as a separate entity.

Despite the fact that the trainees at the National Fundamental Education Center come under the Bureau of Fundamental Education upon graduation, the Bureau has nothing to say as regards the kind of training they are to receive.

Mr. B. Rudnasworthy, Specialist in Fundamental Education, and Mr. A. W. F. Wilkinson, Special Adviser in Visual Education, were working with the Bureau of Fundamental Education at the time of my arrival on 1 April 1957. The three of us conferred at length and we eventually compiled a working report which we hoped would serve as a basis for discussion amongst those concerned with fundamental education. (Please see Appendix I for my part of the report on language and literacy.) We strongly urged that the persons concerned with fundamental education should be brought together to form some sort of Executive Committee which would determine policy on a national scale and at the same time co-ordinate the work in fundamental education. The Executive Committee has not been formed, and we were never able to get discussion on our proposals. Essentially fundamental education has had no aims, and our efforts to help define aims went unheeded.

In June, Mr. Rudnasworthy left to return to India. Mr. Wilkinson and I hoped to carry on, but we met with little success. Mr. Shaw suggested soon after my arrival that it might be advantageous if I were to take over as Director of the Bureau of Fundamental Education in order to provide it with a stronger administration. Nothing came of this. Mr. Shaw asked Secretary E. J. Yancy what Mr. Wilkinson and I were to do, and the answer was that we could wait.

Mr. Wilkinson continued his interest in the Bureau of Fundamental Education and did a laudable job in helping to prepare a budget for 1958. The Bureau has never had a budget. A grant of \$55,000 has been given each year even though the personnel to be paid has increased with each graduating class from the Klay Center. This year's graduates were forced to sit around Monrovia for months because there were no funds, and it was only with the greatest effort that money was found to send these people home, not even to the field to do the jobs for which they were trained.

As for the possibility of working at the National Fundamental Education Center, at the time of my arrival the students were in the field getting their two months practical training. Since they were to be graduated on 18 July, there was nothing that could be done with this group. If work were to be done at the Center, it would have to start with the new class.

I had to make a decision. Mr. V. E. Hearles, Specialist in Teacher Training, who was to go on home leave the middle of July, invited me to join him in some of his projects so that I might take over during his absence. This meant taking on committee work and courses at the University of Liberia. The decision was not difficult to make.

I decided to shift from fundamental education to teacher training. Mr. Hearles had been working very hard trying to effect better English teaching, and his project was a going concern. It seemed reasonable to go into something where some success might be possible. My feeling was that, if the persons concerned with fundamental education did not regard it seriously enough even to discuss it together, there was little likelihood that anything I might do at the Klay Center would

have much of an immediate or a lasting effect.

My project, then, became teacher training.

B. Achievements and results

Achievements and results have been practically nil. I shall discuss under several headings work undertaken.

1. Freshman English.

Mr. Mearles succeeded this year in getting an examination adopted which was taken by all freshmen at the end of the first semester. Those failing had to repeat the first semester's work during the second semester. In the past those failing went on with the second semester's work, and at some time before graduation they were expected to repeat the first semester's work, a highly unsatisfactory arrangement. I was asked to take the group repeating the first semester's work in English.

Shortly after the semester began Mrs. Dillard arrived from the United States for the purpose of working with remedial English. As a consequence this group was turned over to her.

2. Course in Teaching of English

I had two senior students for a course in the Teaching of English. During the semester I was able to cover approximately ten percent of the syllabus. Absenteeism was chronic. Assignments were virtually never done. Both students were graduated in November.

3. Sub-Committee on Curriculum Development in the Language Arts (Elementary Level)

The Department of Public Instruction set up a number of sub-committees for the purposes of developing curriculums and selecting textbooks for the various subject fields. Two sub-committees were set up for English, one for the elementary level and one for the secondary level. Mr. Mearles invited me to join the sub-committee working on the elementary level.

Although the sub-committee recognized that English is not the native language of the overwhelming majority of children in Liberia, it elected to recommend the Macmillan Series (USA) to Government. I voted in the negative. The Series, though visibly attractive, is hardly much of an improvement over the textbooks now in use. It is designed for children who are native speakers of English and live in an English-speaking society. What is needed are textbooks designed for children who are not native speakers of English and live in a non-English-speaking society. The fact that the Macmillan Company offered a 45 percent discount on all books and generous credit terms tended to influence the sub-committee members unduly. Even with the discount the books are highly expensive in view of the economic standard here.

The sub-committee realized that there was a great gap between the language ability of the children from English-speaking homes and the children from non-English-speaking homes at the time they entered school. To narrow the gap the sub-committee recommended that children from non-English-speaking homes have one year of oral English before starting work in the first grade. The sub-committee asked me to write a Teacher's Manual designed to provide practice in oral English. I agreed to this.

I began the Teacher's Manual a few months ago. I have planned it so that there would be a lesson a day. In completed form there would be something like 170 lessons in the Teacher's Manual. Each lesson would have practice exercises in pronunciation and the basic structural patterns of English. A set of pictures for the pronunciation exercises and wall charts for the exercises with the structural patterns would accompany the Teacher's Manual.

Specimen lessons were written and submitted to the sub-committee and they were very well received. Mr. Wilkinson was kind enough to do the illustrations to accompany the specimen lessons. These were submitted to Dr. D. Johnson, Chairman of the parent committee on curriculum development. He in turn has submitted them to Secretary Massaquoi.

I have tried from the beginning to get a commitment as to whether the Teacher's Manual would be used if I wrote it. I have had no success. I have asked whether there would be stencils and paper in order to mimeograph it, but I have had no answer. I have asked about materials for reproducing the illustrations with the same result.

Dr. H.H. Grantham, Chief of Mission, recently asked me about my plans. I pointed out that the book could not possibly be completed by the end of February, the time my contract expires, and that I would be willing to take an extension of four months in order to finish the job. I would not, however, be willing to accept a contract for another year. This arrangement was unacceptable to Secretary Massaquoi, so I shall leave at the end of the present contract, i.e. 28 February 1958. Since there is no one to carry on the work, it is unlikely that the book will ever be used.

The sub-committee requested that I revise a year-by-year spelling list which a number of people had devised over the years. I spent a few weeks on this. It was back in July. The new list has been printed by ICA without including the revisions. I was assured the other day that they would be included in the next printing.

4. Annual Supervising Teachers Workshop

The Secretary of Public Instruction requested by letter that I assist in the Fifth Annual Workshop for Supervising Teachers and Selected Public School Principals and Teachers. The Workshop began on 4 December and ended on 17 December. The Workshop consisted of daily lectures and daily meetings of groups each of which dealt with some phase of education and supervision.

For the lecture part I was given three days to discuss Methods of Teaching Elementary School Subjects to Non-English Speaking Children. For the group activities I was assigned as resource person for Group I which had as its topic Pre-School Units of Work.

This was the first time that teachers had been included in the annual workshop. The teachers attending were kindergarten teachers and they had been brought in solely so that I could give them orientation in the use of the Teacher's Manual. Yet, I had no copies of the book to work with. In fact, I still do not know whether it will ever be completed or used. All that I could do under the circumstances was to discuss general principles underlying the teaching of English as a second language. The response to the work I was trying to do was enthusiastic indeed. However, it would be highly unrealistic to assume that I had in fact accomplished anything very concrete. There were fourteen people in Group I, the largest of the Workshop.

This section can be summarized by saying that various activities were undertaken and none of them proved to be fruitful.

C. Methods of work

Since I have failed to solve a single problem by my methods of work, I feel there is nothing I can contribute here.

D. Working conditions and support from government

Working conditions are difficult at best. The situation would be much improved if Government were to supply support in the way of more definite decisions.

E. Personnel and fellows

For the first few months I was trying to engage myself in fundamental education, no counterpart personnel was offered. Eventually Mr. Hillary David was assigned to the Bureau of Fundamental Education. He had had no training or experience in fundamental education, so Mr. Wilkinson and I gave him things to read and had discussions with him. We decided it would be useful to have him work at Klay for a period so that he would get a better picture of fundamental education as well as some practical experience. Unfortunately, he was in an automobile accident and was laid up for a long time. Just where he is at the moment I cannot say.

Aside from Mr. David, no counterpart personnel has been assigned. Although one of our major purposes is to train persons to take over from us, we cannot do the impossible when no one is appointed to work with us.

F. Liaison and co-ordination

Dr. Sadler and Dr. Spehr, both of the Lutheran Mission, have been very helpful by supplying their work on the Loma and Kpelle languages. They encouraged me to do a book on English pronunciation which they felt was badly needed. I started on this, but I had to drop it when I began to work full-time on the Teacher's Manual. Both men are trained linguists, and anyone

working on language in Liberia would do well to consult with them. Miss Norma Bloomquist and Miss Margaret Miller are also valuable contacts in the language field.

I was associated with the University of Liberia from July through November, and during that time I worked along with those teaching English and with Mrs. Kermit Brown, Director of Teacher Training.

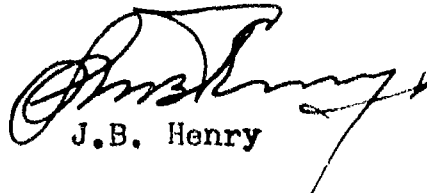
For the most part, however, I have been working on my own.

G. Information

Nil.

H. Future work

In view of the fact that I shall not be here to complete the Teacher's Manual, I am admittedly somewhat stymied at this point. Mr. Mearles and I have been discussing in what way I might make a contribution in the short time that remains. He has suggested that I try to outline the rest of the book as best I can so that perhaps someone else can carry it on. This will not be easy, but I shall give it a try. If I can complete this, then I shall try to write as many lessons as time permits. I shall proceed on the assumption that the book is wanted.



J.B. Henry

Copy submitted to Government

APPENDIX I

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN LIBERIA

1. THE PROBLEM

Liberia is a multi-lingual nation. On the one hand there is English, the official language of the country which is used in conducting the affairs of Government and as the medium of instruction at all levels of education. On the other hand there are the many vernacular languages, estimates ranging from 20 to 30, which are used by the tribal peoples in conducting their every day affairs. Although a few of these vernacular languages have been provided with an orthography, there are relatively few literates in any of these languages. For all practical purposes the tribal peoples of Liberia must be regarded as illiterates. They constitute an overwhelming proportion of the population of the country.

The announced policy of Government is to make English in fact the national language of Liberia and to provide for literacy in English throughout the country. This raises a unique problem. Liberia is the only country in the world which is making an effort on a mass scale to provide its adult population with literacy in a language that is not its native language. Since this is unprecedented, the problem will have to be worked out and resolved locally.

There is a fundamental question which must be raised and then answered in the most basic and realistic terms. The question, simply stated, is this: Why should the tribal peoples of Liberia become literate at all? Although the answer to this question might appear to be obvious to literate persons, it cannot be assumed that it will be obvious to the tribal peoples. One must recognize that these peoples have existed and survived throughout their histories, as far as we know, without benefit of any written form of their languages. Historical conditions and circumstances were never such, apparently, as to give rise to a written form of these indigenous languages. What conditions and circumstances are now present which will induce the tribal peoples to become not only literate, but literate in a new language?

This brings us to the oft-times ignored but most vital matter of motivation. Any campaign to provide literacy in English must be recognized and regarded as an open invitation to the tribal peoples to enter into a new economic, political, and social way of life. There is a value judgment involved here, a value judgment which says that there is a better way of life than that presently enjoyed by the tribal peoples. And in addition this value judgment says that there are certain basic changes and requirements needed before this better way of life can be achieved.

The average tribal person today is relatively self-sufficient. For the most part he exists off what his immediate environment has to offer, and what he has is usually the result of his own efforts. What he produces is primarily for his own use although some of this may be used for purposes of barter. Where there is a demand, and transportation facilities are available, some of what he produces may find its way into a money-exchange market. For all practical purposes, however, he can not now be considered as existing in a money economy. Except for what he produces for his own use, he adds little or nothing to the gross national wealth.

There has been a small but significant break in this pattern occasioned by the mining operations at Bowd Hills and the rubber producing operations.

The tribal person producing in these operations is not producing for his own personal use. For his efforts he is rewarded in currency which he exchanges for goods and services. His efforts are contributing to the gross national product and national wealth. If the gross national product and national wealth are to continue to rise, a greater proportion of the human resources of the country must be brought into operations that produce wealth.

Literacy as an end in itself is meaningless. Moreover a literacy campaign in its first stages is not a motivator, but must itself be motivated. In this instance the motivation must come from need, and the need must be demonstrated in the most practical terms. Before literacy classes are undertaken in any area, there should first be a period devoted to building up a literacy readiness. This would be accomplished by the Fundamental Education workers through their various projects and programs.

A rough example of what this means follows. A team of fundamental education workers go into a particular area. The team has a specialist in agriculture. We will, for example, say that the area has numerous citrus trees. The people use what they need and the rest are left to rot. The area is a few miles off a major road. The fruit is of reasonable quality but could be improved, and the fundamental education worker gives advice and encouragement. In time he leads the growers of citrus fruit to see the advantages of marketing what they do not use locally. In order to market their product, a road is cut through to the major highway.

Perhaps the growers decide to form a cooperative. Such an enterprise requires records. There will be shipping schedules that must be read, sales orders, letters to and from customers, and so forth. As money income increases, there will come the need for banking services and the paper work that entails. There will be simple pamphlets from the Department of Agriculture dealing with marketing of produce, diseases which attack citrus trees, soil, and so forth. As producers and contributors to the national economy our growers will have a greater interest in what is happening in the country and will therefore have a need for newspapers and magazines. Our growers, then have moved from a system in which literacy had been non-essential into a system in which literacy is an essential. More important yet is that our growers have moved from a relatively self-sufficient state into a more interdependent state, have become active participants and contributors in a larger social, political, and economic unit.

To go into an area and set up literacy classes is not likely to get results, at least lasting results. Literacy must answer a need, a very real and practical need. It must lead to something. To tell a person he needs to be literate, regardless of how true this may be, is not the same as having a person arrive at the same conclusion because of his own personal situation. Fundamental education can assist the person to arrive at the stage where the need for literacy is apparent to him. In this climate, literacy classes will achieve their best and most lasting results.

2. APPROACH TO LITERACY

A sound and intelligent approach, based on modern linguistic and pedagogic principles, is essential to an English literacy campaign. As already indicated above, the literacy problem here is unique. In usual literacy programs where the purpose is to provide adults with literacy in their native tongues, the learners have had experience all of their lives with their languages. They have heard and spoken all of their lives in conducting their affairs. This is not the case with English in Liberia today. The overwhelming majority of the tribal peoples are non-English speakers, and they do not conduct their everyday affairs in English.

It is necessary to understand first of all what a language is. A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which a social group cooperates and interacts. The important words for our discussion here are vocal symbols. Language is an oral event. In language we are dealing with sounds, the noises we make with our faces and hear with our ears. Writing is not language. In writing we are dealing with visual symbols, the marks we make with our hands and can see with our eyes that stand for or represent the vocal symbols.

There is general agreement among language experts today that regardless of what the ultimate objective of learning a second language might be, be it only the ability to read or to write in the second language, the most efficient approach is through oral work. It is logical certainly that, if writing is the visual representation of speech, the thing it represents, speech, must come first. An illiterate English-speaking adult, who wishes to become literate in English, already knows the system of vocal symbols English utilizes. (Note: Know in the sense of ability to use rather than in the sense of knowledge or knowing about.) His problem, therefore, is to acquire the ability to recognize and to use the visual symbols which English uses to represent its vocal symbols.

The tribal adult in Liberia knows the system of vocal symbols his native language utilizes. He does not know the system of vocal symbols the English language utilizes. Before he can be taught the visual symbols of English he must first be taught the vocal symbols which the visual symbols represent. To fail to do so is to provide an entirely meaningless symbolization. Regardless of time and money spent, any literacy program in English which fails to make adequate provision first for oral work, is doomed from the beginning to failure.

Fortunately the advances made in the fields of linguistics and pedagogy enable us to teach second languages much more efficiently and rapidly. The application of the tested and proved principles in these fields should go a long way in improving language teaching in Liberia.

5. LITERACY BUREAU

It would be more accurate if the Literacy Bureau were renamed the English Language and Literacy Section of the Bureau of Fundamental Education. Literacy Bureau is misleading in this situation since it implies at least work being done to provide literacy in the vernacular languages, which it is not doing. Also having a Literacy Bureau and a Bureau of Fundamental Education makes it appear that each is a separate organization which they are not under the reorganization scheme.

The Literacy Bureau is rightfully a part of the Bureau of Fundamental Education. Its work is dependent on the work carried out by the Bureau of Fundamental Education in its various field projects and programs. Its work is part of a broader educational picture, and it should be carefully coordinated with the other work of the Bureau of Fundamental Education.

The work of the Literacy Bureau can be divided under two major headings. The first is the training of personnel and the second is the production of instructional materials. These are the immediate needs.

a. Training: There is a need for training teachers in the procedures, methods, and techniques of second language teaching and literacy. Personnel recruited for the English language and literacy program should first be given a period of intensive training. Those now conducting classes should be re-trained so as to bring their work into line with what an English language and literacy program requires. The training programs should make provision for

improving the teachers' spoken English, for knowledge of modern methods and techniques of teaching a second language, and for practice teaching under supervision. The best results will be obtained when training classes are kept to a maximum of ten persons.

There is a need also for training supervisory personnel to assist language and literacy teachers in their work, and to co-ordinate the over-all program. Supervisory personnel should have the same training as teachers plus training in supervision.

It would probably prove expedient in the beginning to commence training with those who are now teaching literacy classes. After this group has been given training, programs can be conducted for newly recruited personnel.

Within the near future someone must be recruited and trained to conduct a methods course in the teaching of English as a second language for the students at the National Fundamental Education Center at Klay. The person should be permanently attached to the staff of the Klay Center.

The immediate need is to improve first what we already have. Then the language and literacy program can be expanded as rapidly as circumstances and resources permit.

b. Materials: The most vital need is for language and literacy materials. The preparation of these should be started at once. While these are being prepared, we should continue to use the materials now available for literacy classes.

- i. Language - The first need is for graded language materials. These would provide for practice in hearing and saying the common structural patterns of English, and also practice in reading and writing these patterns. Pronunciation exercises on sound segments, intonation, and rhythm are of major importance. The Unesco expert would undertake to write these.
- ii. Literacy - Supplementary readers are needed next to give further practice and experience in reading in English. These should be prepared under the guidance of the Unesco expert.
- iii. "New Day" - The magazine "New Day" has proven itself to be an important and useful publication for new literates. When possible it should be expanded in size, and it should be published more frequently, at least every two weeks. It is essential that new literates have material to read.
- iv. Other - The Literacy Bureau can provide a useful service to other government agencies. Information which government agencies want to get into the hands of the people can be prepared, then submitted to the Bureau for re-writing in language that new literates will be able to understand. This will not only help the agencies concerned, but it will also provide an additional source of reading material for new literates.

The above, then, is the general line that the Literacy Bureau can follow with the most profit. What can be achieved will depend on the resources available, both human and financial.