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The choice of a language for adult literacy programs : a guide for decision makers.

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THE CHOICE OF A LANGUAGE FOR ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS:

A GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKERS

A Dissertation Presented

By

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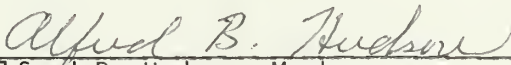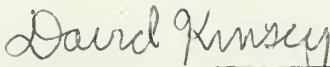
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iii

To

My Mother and Father,
who started me on the long road of formal education

To

Mona and Maya,
who helped me through the last stage of the journey

To

The People of Asuraina Panchayat, Rupandehi District, Nepal,
who introduced me to the richness and problems of multilingualism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A dissertation is the stated product of one person's work, but generally there are a number of people who have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the creation of that final product. I would like to take the opportunity to thank some of the people who have aided me along the way.

Horace Reed has been a solid advisor and good friend who always knew when I needed pushing and a look at the "big picture." Like Horace, David Kinsey was a colleague and advisor throughout my program at the University of Massachusetts. His constant support and incisive comments were a great help. Some of the more enjoyable moments of the dissertation process were the lengthy conversations with Al Hudson in which we chatted on and on about the fascinating topic of language.

At the Center for International Education, I had a veritable host of supporters. Tom Mulusa, Mike Basile, and Margaret Maxwell formed the first "support group" that got me started. Linda Abrams, an early advisor and friend, also bears some of the guilt.

My growing interest in adult literacy was nurtured by stimulating discussions with David Kahler, the paterfamilias of CIE literacy, Paul Jurmo, Steve Anzalone, Steve McLaughlin, Bella Halsted, and David Evans. They helped me to pursue a topic that had been planted in my mind in early 1979 by John Comings and Diane DeTerra. During the research period, I was able to get firsthand reports of literacy programs and language policies from W.P. Napitupulu, R.F. Soedharno, Musa Moda, and

ABSTRACT

The Choice of a Language for Adult Literacy Programs:
A Guide for Decision Makers

(February 1983)

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This study is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of the problem of choosing a language for use in adult literacy programs in multilingual settings. It seeks to identify and describe the major factors that need to be considered in the decision-making process.

Chapter I presents the goals and design of the study. Chapter II traces the language choice question from the early days of writing through the Unesco-led efforts to reduce illiteracy. Drawing upon the reported results of many projects, Chapter III identifies and describes five language policies often used in adult literacy programs.

The heart of the analysis is contained in Chapters IV-IX which look at the question from six perspectives: linguistic, socio-cultural, pedagogical, psychological, economic, and political. Each perspective identifies and discusses major factors affecting the decision and concludes with a list of some general characteristics of the languages that would best meet the concerns of that perspective.

The final chapter suggests that there are three crucial factors that should be at the core of any language decision: the roles of languages in the target environment, the goals of the program, and the goals of the learners. It recommends that such decisions be made at the local level through a negotiation process between program planners and learners which balances the three crucial factors. It concludes that there is a need for programs to use "functional languages"--ones that meet the needs of the program and, most importantly, the literacy needs of the learners.

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INTRODUCTION

Almost all nations of the world are multilingual to some degree. The small nation of Ghana has over sixty language groups. The much more populous state of India is the home of over 845 languages and dialects. Even the tiny city-state of Singapore has citizens who represent over twenty speech communities. Linguists estimate that there are from 2000 to 6000 languages distributed among the more than 200 countries that exist today; estimates vary because of differences of opinion over the definition of "language." In any case, it appears that a high degree of multilingualism is more prevalent among nations than strict mono-lingualism.

Against this backdrop of polylingualism, international, national, and local leaders are engaged in a struggle to eradicate illiteracy. One of the first and most crucial decisions that they will have to make before launching any literacy effort is the selection of the language or languages in which literacy skills will be taught. There is very strong evidence that indicates that this decision is not always wisely made and that the wrong languages are often taught to the wrong people in the wrong places. The most common result of such poor decisions is failure; scarce resources are wasted, program goals are not achieved, and people are not made literate.

A literacy campaign in Ethiopia that sought to teach literacy in the national language, Amharic, suffered an 87% dropout rate.

Evaluators of the program felt a large portion of that rate was due to the fact that many of the students did not know Amharic (Unesco 1976b). Despite poor results from literacy programs run in the official language, English, efforts to launch mother tongue literacy programs in The Gambia were resisted by learners who demanded the opportunity to learn English (British Council 1978). An experiment in Thailand designed to test a bilingual teaching strategy using both the mother tongue and the national language encountered learners' reluctance to devote time to mother tongue literacy, governmental opposition to the use of tribal languages, and problems with recruiting and training teachers able to implement the bilingual approach (Lou Setti 1982: personal communication).

These and many other cases reveal that the issue of language choice is a key ingredient in the determination of the success or failure of a project. One of the striking features of the record of different language policies is that all policies have been both successful and unsuccessful. There is no magic answer to the language choice question. The right choice for a specific program depends on variables within that specific context. Sometimes a mother tongue approach will be exactly what is needed; other times, another type of language will be best. In some cases, no single language will serve the needs of all involved; a compromise will be necessary.

Despite the world's experience with all types of language policies in adult literacy programs, many language decisions still seem to reveal a lack of understanding of the issues involved in the language choice problem. Part of the reason for that lack may be because much of the

world's experience remains unreported and unanalyzed. It is not uncommon to find a lengthy report of a literacy project that does not even mention the language(s) used in the program. This may signify not only a failure in documentation methods but an even more serious failure to consider the ramifications of a given language policy during the planning stage of a project. Up to the present, no coordinated effort has been made to assess the language-related lessons to be learned from the many literacy efforts launched in this century. This is a great tragedy since much of that experience is now lost to us.

There have been other reasons for the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the language choice issue. The sheer complexity of that issue has been a major hindrance. In most multilingual situations, there is an almost bewildering array of factors that may affect the language decision. In different contexts these factors will interact in different ways. A crucial factor in one decision will not even be a major consideration in the choice of a policy for another context.

Another reason for the low level of insight into this issue has been man's general lack of understanding of language itself. Up until this century, relatively little was done on assessing the roles of languages in society, the acquisition of second languages and reading skills, man's ability to manage the development and spread of languages, and other issues that relate to the language choice question. Even with the development of fields of study such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, language planning, and reading theory, there has been a failure to bring the knowledge gained in these fields to bear upon the adult literacy language issue. There is a great need for an

interdisciplinary approach to the language choice question in order to clarify the complexities of the problem. Unfortunately, this has not occurred.

Even if literacy workers had benefited from the expertise on language issues developed in other fields, it is not a certainty that they would have been able to employ that expertise in all situations. In many countries there were powerful forces that came into play that were much stronger than linguistic objectivity. Oftentimes the language choice decision was taken out of the hands of educators and made by politicians. Pedagogical and psychological factors were often secondary to political and economic ones. Needless to say, these politicians often had only a rudimentary understanding of the complexity of the question.

The politicizing of the language choice issue was legitimate to a certain degree. Politics is an important consideration in any language decision. However, political considerations often played a dominant role in the decision-making process, and the ensuing political discussion often obscured some of the other important issues. The language choice question often became a debate between proponents of literacy in the official language and those who favored literacy in the various mother tongues.

Those favoring the use of the official language(s) often cited the need for a single national language to unite the nation and enhance its capacity for economic and social development. They warned of the dangers of divisiveness inherent in the use of multiple languages and cautioned against the enormous expenditures that would have to be made

to provide literacy in numerous languages, especially if many of them were presently unwritten. The supporters of the mother tongue approach maintained that it was common sense to teach literacy in the language that the learners knew best. They pointed out that language was not a neutral instrument but an important part of a group's history, culture, and identity. To deny a group the use of its own language for literate purposes, they claimed, was an infringement of that group's basic human rights and a rejection of the value of its culture.

While each side presented opinions that were valuable input into the language choice question, the polarization of the discussion focussed attention on the issue of assimilation versus ethnic/language maintenance and obscured other issues such as the role of literacy in the society, the literacy needs of the learners, and the fact that there were language candidates other than mother tongues and official languages. The multilingual citizens of these multilingual nations had command over other languages and needs for literacy in languages other than their mother tongue and the official language.

The politicians who dominated the decision-making process in some countries often lacked a realistic view of literacy. Their misconceptions led them to make poor decisions. A prevalent attitude towards literacy in the post-colonial period was that it was a necessary, and even sufficient, condition for economic development. Many politicians were also convinced of the need to establish a degree of language uniformity in their nations in order to prevent disintegration along ethnic and linguistic lines and to foster national unity and social and economic change. In the minds of some, this perceived need for literacy

and language uniformity for national development translated into a belief that adult literacy programs could and should be used to propagate the national language. This overestimation of the role of literacy in development and of the power of adult literacy programs to promote the spread of a national language led many politicians to follow an official language policy for adult literacy that was not justified by the real facts of the situation.

Decision makers who wished to base their policy on an objective analysis of the problem, however, had very little to guide them. From its inception, Unesco played a major role in providing support and encouragement for literacy efforts and in sponsoring conferences which examined the language choice question. Unfortunately, they never undertook a comprehensive analysis of the problem in an attempt to construct a guide that could be used to determine the best language choice for a given situation. For the most part, the Unesco conferences stressed the importance of the use of mother tongues for adult literacy while cautioning that mother tongue literacy might not always be possible nor sufficient to meet the needs of the learners. These conference reports, which constituted the major source of advice for decision makers, often hinted at the psychological, pedagogical, political, economic, linguistic, and social complexities of the language choice question but never comprehensively outlined those considerations in a meaningful way.

The information available to literacy decision makers was also limited in other ways. Many projects failed to report on the language policies they were using and to critically examine those policies to determine the reasons for their success or failure. Observations about

different language policies haphazardly arose out of studies that were undertaken to study variables other than language. There was a dearth of studies that were explicitly designed to examine the efficacy of different language policies. Much of the knowledge that was accumulated on language policies in education came out of research done on the case of the child in the formal school setting. Precious little research was undertaken on the role of language in the adult literacy milieu. In some cases, the findings for children in the formal sector were applied to the adult setting with very little consideration made of the vast differences in the two situations.

This is presently the situation facing the decision maker who has to determine a language policy for his/her program. The issue is widely regarded as being extremely complex. There are some general recommendations in favor of mother tongue literacy and the use of second languages in certain special cases. A great deal of the world's experience with different policies has not been recorded. Much useful information is scattered among a number of different academic fields, but it has not been gathered together nor interpreted in light of its relevance to the adult literacy setting. In short, there is no comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of the language choice issue that can be used by decision makers in the assessment of their own situations and the determination of a language policy that will best meet the needs of those situations. This book represents an attempt to provide such an analysis.

The goals of this work are to give decision makers a sense of the background of the issue and the international experience with different

types of language policies and to enumerate and explain the major factors that need to be considered in making the language choice decision. The author has tried to be as objective as possible in an attempt to make this analysis useful to people with various views of the meaning of literacy who are involved with local or national literacy efforts. Because of the nature of the available information on literacy, there may be an occasional bias towards looking at the language issue as a national, governmental problem. There is also a definite bias towards Third World settings. It is hoped, however, that the diagnostic process outlined in this book will be appropriate for national government programs and local private ones and for the developed as well as the developing world.

The heart of the book lies in the six chapters that look at the language choice issue from six perspectives: linguistic, socio-cultural, pedagogical, psychological, economic, and political. Each chapter identifies a number of key factors that should be considered in making the language decision and discusses the meaning and importance of those factors. The six perspectives' framework permits a comprehensive analysis of the problem that allows for the incorporation of insights from specialized fields outside of adult literacy. There is considerable overlapping between these perspectives; some factors could be logically included under two or more of the perspectives. Their present placement represents a judgement call by the author.

Each perspective concludes with a section that presents a list of characteristics of the languages that would best meet the demands of that perspective. This is an attempt to go beyond the mother tongue

versus official language dichotomy that has long dominated much of the discussion on language choice. That dichotomy is one that has validity from a political or pedagogical perspective, but it should not be the sole framework for viewing the question. There are other ways of viewing the issue that are just as valid. From a pedagogical standpoint, it is important to look at the choice as one between known and unknown languages. From an economic perspective, it is important to determine if a given language will lead to economic opportunity or not. The list of characteristics provides decision makers with another way of viewing possible language candidates and of knowing what it is they should be looking for.

While to some extent these characteristics represent a target that should be aimed at, readers should remember that these characteristics are "ideal" ones. In many cases, decision makers will not find a single language that has all of the characteristics of a specific perspective. They may even find that a language that possesses one characteristic will be in direct conflict with a language that represents other characteristics. The characteristics merely provide another way of viewing language candidates; they do not necessarily lead one to a single solution. They are derived from the discussion of the factors of that perspective. Decision makers who analyze their own language situations in terms of the six sets of factors and characteristics should be able to come to a decision that will be suitable for their context. There may be no perfect choice for all situations, but the process should enable one to find a reasonable choice and avoid the disasterous ones.

Since terminology about language often varies from author to author, it would be appropriate at this point to supply some definitions for terms that are repeatedly used throughout the text. The word language itself is used in the sense of a language variety or isolect and thus may include the meaning of "dialect." In reference to individuals, mother tongue is used to indicate the language used in the home or the one first learned by that individual. Generically, this term is used for all languages spoken as first languages by any speech community. Second language denotes any language acquired by an individual in addition to his/her mother tongue. A "second" language may in fact be a third or fourth language for that person. National language and official language are used interchangeably to refer to languages that have been sanctioned for official use by the central government. In discussions about specific countries, the terms will adhere to the national government policy denoting national/official languages.

No attempt will be made to provide a definition for the most important term of all: literacy. Definitions of literacy vary from nation to nation and range from the "ability to write one's name" to "reading and writing skills equivalent to a fourth grade education" to "ability to read and write everything that one can speak." Since the meaning of literacy is largely bound to specific cultural contexts, no single definition will be used in this study. People who use the analytical process outlined in this paper should first gain a clear understanding of the meaning of literacy in their own contexts. This understanding will be crucial in enabling them to effectively use the process to assess their own situations and their language needs.

It is hoped that the use of this diagnostic process or guide will lead to better language decisions that will result in the implementation of programs having increased probability of success: programs that will meet the needs of the learners and the program planners. Given the limited resources allocated to adult literacy programs in all countries, it is essential that these scarce resources be used wisely. It is understood that this type of rational process may not be applied in all countries given the powerful political and economic forces at work; but at present there is little to guide the planner who desires to follow a rational process based on a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of the problem. This study undoubtedly suffers from the lack of in-depth information on the results of the language policies of many literacy projects, past and present, and from the failure to apply the learnings of related fields to the case of adult literacy. Therefore it represents only an initial step in coming to grips with the language choice issue. This attempt will be worthwhile if others build upon it to increase our understanding of language in the adult literacy setting.

The battle for universal adult literacy is far from being won. Some setbacks in the struggle can be directly attributed to poor language policies. There is increasing evidence that some countries, having survived the threat of post-independence disintegration and increased their understanding of local languages and cultures, are now willing to reconsider their earlier language policies for adult literacy. It is hoped that the guidelines set forth by this study will be of help to those who face the difficult and complex task of choosing a language for adult literacy.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Literacy for Elites

The earliest writing systems were developed over 5000 years ago
in the first big urban centers in response to commercial and military
needs for records (Hoyles 1977). Writing was initially done through
pictures and then through word signs that carried standardized meanings.
These early systems were utilized by a very small elite. One of the
reasons for this was the complexity of those systems. There were over
600 symbols in Assyrian cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphics and 50,000
characters in the Chinese writing system (Goody and Watt 1968). Writ-
ing was not a skill that everyone could afford to acquire. Given its
limited uses, it was not even a skill that many would even want to
acquire. Literacy thus began as a skill for specialists. These spe-
cialists were not necessarily the real power elite. Oftentimes the
nobility of the period were illiterate themselves. However, they had
great control over access to the skill and built up a small group of
people who did the reading and writing for religious, administrative,
and commercial purposes. Both groups used their power over the writing
system to perpetuate their own positions. The masses tended to look
upon the writing systems with respect, but did not consider writing and
reading to be skills that were needed in their own lives.

An important breakthrough in literacy came with the linkage of
symbol to sound instead of to object or idea. The development of

syllabary around 1600 B.C. and alphabets around 1400 B.C. were crucial in making an intimate connection between speech and script. This brought writing systems closer to the speech of the common man and thus signaled a shift from what Hoyles (1977) has called a "theocratic script" to a "democratic script."

The first truly literate societies came into being in the city states of Greece and Ionia in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. (Hoyles 1977). Within these limited areas, literacy became a cultural tradition for large numbers of people. A sign of the extent of literacy in some of these societies is indicated by the Athenian requirement of 6000 signatures for the banishment of any of its citizens (Goody and Watt 1968).

For many more centuries, however, literacy remained predominantly a prerogative of elites. The chosen few learned to read and write in the language(s) of learning in their society (e.g., Sanskrit, Latin, Mandarin, French, etc.) and usually had access to the necessary resources such as pens, paper, books, teachers, and ink. Literacy was the preserve of the church, the legal profession, merchants, and administrators, and it was to their advantage to maintain their control over this skill. Despite the development of alphabaic systems which made learning much easier, the lack of resources such as written materials and the conservatism of the power and literate elites prevented the diffusion of literacy to the general populace of most nations.

The major breakthroughs that made the massification of literacy a possibility occurred in the fifteenth century. One was a technical innovation; the other was a social one. They were the development of

printing and the Reformation.

The development of the printing process made literacy available to the middle class. It ended the domination of priests and scribes and expanded literacy to a wider range of people, topics, and languages. The combination of alphabaic writing systems which could record everyday speech and the printing press which could produce numerous copies of text quickly and cheaply provided the means for a great increase in literacy. The Reformation helped to provide the will to expand literacy.

Religion and the Massification of Literacy

The earliest efforts to develop mass literacy were probably those undertaken by Christian churches, especially the Protestant sects. The schism with the Papacy during the Reformation left church leaders with only the Scriptures as the sole infallible authority to which they could refer (Jeffries 1967). It thus became very important that believers could read these texts to find the solace and knowledge they desired. The Bible was therefore translated into many languages, and the church became a proponent of literacy for Bible study. This pattern of literacy and religion was carried overseas by early missionaries. Frank Laubach, the great literacy promoter and teacher, described it in this way:

> For churches the first great motive in teaching illiterates is to enable them to read the Bible. Literacy and Bible translation are twins. Perhaps it would be better to call them the two legs on which the Bible must walk into every mind and heart on earth (Laubach 1947, p. 54).

In their attempts to save souls through conversion, many missionaries began to study the local languages they encountered, not only learning the languages, but also creating orthographies for many of them. Some of the earliest language policies developed in Africa were a result of these literacy programs in native languages (Okezie 1975). The first book printed in the Tamil language of India, for example, was a translation of the Gospels done by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1714. In 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society began the task of providing every man with a Bible in his own tongue at an affordable price (Jeffries 1967). The Summer Institute of Linguistics, formerly the Wycliffe Bible Society, has carried out a similar mandate for many years, and even today is in the forefront of linguistic work on local languages all over the world. These religiously inspired efforts even reached into the New World. Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries brought bilingual education to the southwest of North America as early as 1550. In New England, the Lutherans took the lead in establishing German/English seminaries and by 1775 had organized over 118 bilingual schools for the religious education of Lutheran children (Garcia 1976).

The by-product of this language effort by religious groups was the detailed study and recording of hundreds of languages. Although Swahili poetry written in the Arabic script dates from the first half of the eighteenth century, the first early scholars of the language were from two missionary groups (Whitely 1969). The first systematic studies and teaching of Swahili were not undertaken until the arrival of these groups in the second half of the eighteenth century. Not all

missionaries, however, agreed on the specific language approach that should be taken. In East Africa, some groups favored the use of Swahili, a lingua franca spoken primarily as a second language, while others favored the use of mother tongues. Language policies often varied from denomination to denomination with the result that competing orthographies were often created for a single language. This created a great deal of confusion in the post-colonial period when newly independent states began to formulate their own language policies and had to decide between those competing orthographies.

In attempting to bring about such an intimate change as religious conversion, the missionaries generally recognized that they had to approach the learner in an intimate way--through the medium of his/her own mother tongue. They reached out to illiterates by learning local languages and preparing their message in those languages so that the illiterate could be made literate and find salvation through the Scriptures. "The African must be reached first emotionally, through his tribal existence," one missionary wrote. "Tribal languages were the key to this evangelism . . ." (Whitely 1969, p. 11).

Culturally and psychologically the learner was more secure than s/he would be if another language was used. A certain degree of salesmanship was also contained in this mother tongue approach in that missionaries were promoting a product that was not necessarily in demand. To have to learn to read in a second language in order to be able to read the Bible was a task that many would not care to undertake. If literacy was in the mother tongue, however, the effort would be seen as less taxing and less threatening. The force of Christian love and the

desire to separate themselves from the Western colonizers they often followed were two other factors that led missionaries to adopt the mother tongue approach.

Colonial Language Policies

The missionary effort in the developing world coincided with the era of colonialism. In some cases the missionaries preceded the colonialists; in others, they followed them. Sometimes they worked hand in hand. Mission schools served to spread the language of the colonial power, create an indigenous educated elite who could man the colonial apparatus, and inculcate Western views and values among the native population. Sometimes they found themselves in conflict. British government officials in Africa, for example, criticized the missionaries for teaching the local languages and discouraging the teaching of English (Mazrui 1971). Just as conflict existed between missionary groups over language issues, the colonial governments often found themselves split on the question of what language to use for education in the lands under their control. In general, it may be said that the French and Portuguese placed an emphasis on the assimilation of the colonized peoples into their cultural pattern. The mother tongue was often prohibited in schools under their control, and the European language was strongly supported. On the other hand, the British and Belgians tolerated, and sometimes even encouraged, the use of the mother tongues (Bamgbose 1976b).

Based on their concept of a future universal civilization with Europe, and particularly France, as leader, the French introduced an educational system into their colonies that was based on their own model. The French language was presented as the main vehicle for thought and communication and an essential prerequisite for all intellectual activity (Awoniyi 1976). It was to be the means whereby their subjects could gain access to modern civilization. As early as 1829, the Governor General of Senegal ordered that all teaching be done in the French language (Bamgbose 1976b). When the first official schools were opened in 1856, Wolof was briefly tried as a medium, but that strategy was soon dropped, and French became the sole medium of instruction. Certain missions continued to operate in French West Africa; however, they also relied upon French and paid very little attention to the mother tongues. This policy led most educated Africans in these terri- tories to look down upon local languages as unfit for modern educational purposes. Beginning in 1918, local languages were used for adult literacy purposes. This policy increased in strength following World War II (Amoniyi 1976).

During the early decades of their colonial period, the British left matters of education and religion to the local people and mission groups (Awoniyi 1976). As time went on, colonial governments found themselves gradually increasing their involvement in educational policy. This was partially attributable to the need of the empire for a trained and edu- cated local bureaucracy to handle governmental functions. Given the impossibility of educating the masses of India, the respected educator Macaulay felt that "we must at present do our best to form a class who

may be the interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Spencer 1971, p. 31). It would be up to that educated elite, Macaulay thought, to refine the mother tongues so that they would be able to serve as mediums of education for the general populace.

During the rest of the colonial period, the British conducted numerous reviews of their language policy. In 1882 an ordinance for West Africa was promulgated which linked government subsidies for education to the effectiveness of the schools in teaching English. The missionaries who were deeply into mother tongue education opposed such a linkage, but the government held that they could continue to use local languages as they wished. It simply would not be a factor that would increase their chances of getting government funding (Awoniyi 1976). In 1895 another regulation required certain Europeans in the colonial government to become conversant in one or more local languages in order to enhance communication with local people and institutions (Awoniyi 1976). This demonstrated a very different attitude from that of the French. The local languages were instruments to be used in maintaining the colonial apparatus. There was also a fear that a spread of English might be harmful to that apparatus. One colonial administrator wrote that "the premature teaching of English . . . inevitably leads to utter disrespect for British and native ideals alike, and to a de-nationalized and disorganized population" (Mazrui 1971, p. 182).

In any case, the British willingness to allow and even encourage the use of mother tongues in education led to a development of local

languages that was unmatched in the French colonial system. The found-
ing of the School of Oriental Studies in 1917 and the International
Institute of African Languages in 1926 spurred the study of local
languages and the training of indigenous people in the intricacies of
those languages and the process of linguistic inquiry. This enhanced
the capacity of those colonies to deal with local languages and to
utilize them for educational purposes in the early primary years.

The Portuguese and the Spanish adopted approaches very similar to
that of the French. They propagated their own languages at the expense
of the local languages, and did so very successfully in many cases among
elite groups. The Belgians and Germans followed a course much more like
the British approach. In the Congo, the Belgians established French as
the language of administration but presented little opposition to the
use of local languages in other spheres of life. For years they con-
sidered the adoption of Swahili as an indigenous lingua franca, although
they were never able to make a final decision on that plan (Whitely
1969). In German East Africa, however, Swahili did become the language
of administration along with German. While the missionaries preferred
to concentrate on other local languages, the administration expanded the
use of Swahili at the lower levels of government and especially in their
contact with village headmen (Whitely 1969).

As the new nations of the twentieth century emerged from centuries
of colonial rule, they carried with them the legacy of that period as
they attempted to deal with their language and literacy problems. On
the one hand, there were some positive aspects of that experience that
would be of help to them in bringing their nations into the modern era.

A great deal of research had been done on local languages, especially by missionary groups. Orthographies, grammars, texts, primers, dictionaries, and other materials had been prepared for many languages, though by no means all the languages. Some local languages had also been modernized and utilized as mediums of instruction for at least some of the primary years. These languages and others gained added status through their use in newspapers, government, and other spheres of life. While general adult literacy was never the goal of any colonial power, a core of Western educated administrators and professionals had been formed which could serve as a resource for a push towards national literacy. This is not to say, however, that these nations would not have achieved this much or more had the colonial period never taken place. Whatever advantages arose out of this period were outweighed by disadvantages that would hinder the development of a sound language and literacy policy. The borders of these nations had been shaped by European political manipulation in power struggles and not according to cultural or linguistic lines. Thus some cultural and linguistic groups found themselves separated by invisible lines drawn in Europe. The educated elite that was left to deal with such problems had been trained in a mode very dissimilar from traditional patterns. Many of them were closer in orientation to their colonial rulers than to their rural countrymen. To varying degrees, they were strangers in their own homeland. They oftentimes held values and beliefs that were very different from the norm in their own country. A few were even isolated linguistically by their monolingualism in the colonial language.

A final burden that the newly independent states had to carry was the generally negative feelings held by many towards their local languages. For years they had been second-class citizens speaking second-class languages in their own land. Even when the ruling elite had attempted to promote the use of their mother tongues and to stimulate pride in their local languages, people could see and hear that the language of power, riches, and modern knowledge was not Mandinka, Bambara, or Quechua, but English, French, or Spanish. They had learned that lesson the hard way, and it would not be an easy one to forget. The learning of literacy and modern ways would depend partially on their ability to unlearn the attitudes towards their own languages that had been the product of centuries of colonial rule.

The Post-Colonial Era

Language policy for literacy was only one of the many challenges that the leaders of the emerging nations had to face, but it was an important one. Literacy was seen as an essential piece in the modernization of any nation. The population had to be educated if it was to bring the new nation to a high degree of economic and social development. It was even thought by some to be the key ingredient for development. However, the question of language policy was one fraught with political danger. Given the multilingual nature of most new states and their general lack of a history of political stability, the language choice question had the potential to become a highly destabilizing issue. The language problem also had several different levels that needed to be addressed. First, there was the choice of a national or

official language for the government. Then there was the choice of the language or languages to be used in the formal education system. Then there was the need for identifying the language(s) to be used for adult literacy efforts. The first two levels were the really difficult ones to solve since they were the high stakes issues: the decisions that affected almost everyone and that touched most directly on questions of political and economic power. Both choices would either give or deny special advantages to segments of the population. Each language group wished to have those special advantages for themselves and/or to deny them to their main rivals. The choice of Hindi, for example, as the sole official language of India would have given native Hindi speakers an advantage in seeking government jobs and in dealing with official channels of power. The choice of Luganda as the language of education in Uganda would have given the Baganda, the native speakers of Luganda, a distinct advantage in the educational system and, thus, in the race for status, good jobs, and economic security. In both cases, English was retained for official purposes to prevent the dominance of one language group.

The question of the choice of language(s) for adult literacy, on the other hand, was not as overtly political a choice. It was probably a decision that would affect the masses, but not the power elites. It was also probably foreseen that adult literacy efforts would not match the level of expenditure and influence undertaken by the government as a whole or even by the formal education sector. However, as those other decisions were made, increasing attention was bound to be given to the adult literacy question by the groups that had lost out on the

larger language issues. That factor had the potential for increasing the political and social complexity of the question and for making it less amenable to a dispassionate, objective, decision-making process.

Joshua Fishman (1971), the noted sociolinguist, surveyed the national language situations prevalent in the world and set forth a typology that grouped these situations into three categories:

Type A: had no single Great Tradition in the form of customs, history, values, etc., that could serve to promote national integration and unity (e.g., Cameroon, Ghana).

Type B: had one Great Tradition that united the nation around a single socio-cultural consensus (e.g., Thailand, Somalia).

Type C: had several Great Traditions seeking separate socio-political recognition (e.g., India, Pakistan, Malaysia).

Given their lack of a single, major language or cultural tradition, Fishman felt that Type A nations would be primarily concerned with political integration or nationism: the need for operational efficiency. This would lead such nations to select a language of wider communications (LWC) as their official language. This would most probably be the language of the previous colonial power. Local languages would be taught to older adults, but the main thrust of language policy would be towards eventual monolingualism in the official language.

Type B nations would be primarily concerned with ethnic authenticity or nationalism: an identity based on broader cultural ties. This situation would lead to the selection of the indigenous language that symbolized the one Great Tradition. It would be modernized and

would eventually supercede an LWC that might be continued for a transitional period.

Type C nations would face the ticklish problem of mediating between a number of traditions that had strong claims to primacy. The eventual language decision might be for an LWC to serve as a compromise choice, just as English did in India. The major languages would be supported in their regions of use, and citizens would be encouraged to attain bilingual proficiency.

Fishman recognized a fourth type of language situation which he felt fell in between Types A and B. This was an environment in which there was no single, dominant, indigenous tradition or language that would serve the purposes of national integration; however, there was an indigenous language with a history of use as a lingua franca between language groups. This raised the possibility of using the lingua franca as an official language, provided it had no present strong association with a single region or group. Fishman identified the Philippines, Indonesia, and Tanzania as representatives of this situation that was in flux between Type A moving towards Type B.

The case of the choice of Swahili in Tanzania is in total harmony with Fishman's description of this situation, however, the other two examples are somewhat different. In Indonesia, the Javanese were a very powerful group that could have promoted their language as a major candidate for official language. At the time of independence, the Javanese constituted over 40% of the population of Indonesia. However, Bahasa Indonesia had become Indonesia's Great Tradition through its association with the independence movement and its traditional and

official use as a lingua franca even by the Dutch colonizers. As early as 1928, the independence movement had adopted the theme of "one fatherland, one nation, and one language" (Alisjahbana 1971, p. 180).

The Philippines was also a somewhat novel situation in that the chosen lingua franca, Pilipino, was at heart one of the major languages of the country, Tagalog. While being the mother tongue of a major language group, especially around the capital of Manila, Tagalog was also a major second language for other mother tongue speakers. It was made acceptable as an official language by a policy of adapting it to its new nationwide status by incorporating many loan words from other languages--thus giving the appearance, at least, that it was becoming a new national language, Pilipino.

These three cases demonstrate that Fishman's typology is not as exact as one would hope, but human behavior is never totally amenable to categorization. However, the general categories used by Fishman do sum up the national language situations of most of the world on the eve of post-colonialism. There were nations which: (a) had many minority languages and no single major one; (b) had a single major language that was the obvious choice; (c) had several major language groups with strong claims to primacy; and (d) could resort to the adoption of an indigenous lingua franca that was acceptable to competing language groups.

Fishman also made the valuable point that the assessment of the language situation prevalent in the country was generally made according to the perspective of the elite. It was they, the decision makers, who decided if there was or wasn't a Great Tradition to follow. To a

great extent that is how language policy--or any policy for that matter--is made. Another important point to remember is made by Bamgbose (1976b) who noted that in many African countries language policies are: (a) rarely stated explicitly; (b) often fluctuating; and (c) often inconsistent in the match-up between policy and practice. This probably holds true for many nations outside of Africa. Language policies are often chameleon-like, sometimes changing form and color and sometimes disappearing altogether from view.

The Challenge Facing Literacy Planners

The people entrusted with the responsibility for the promotion of adult literacy in the post-colonial era did not have a great deal of guidance on what course to take following independence. The general thought on the matter was that literacy was inextricably linked to development and had to be promoted if the Third World was to join its more affluent Western neighbors in enjoying the fruits of a modern economy. A literacy level of 40% was cited by some as the take-off point for economic development (Harman 1974). Reaching 40% in a matter of decades was a challenge that had not been undertaken by many nations. Most Western nations had gradually increased their literacy levels over a period of centuries, primarily through the expansion of their primary education system. This had happened for most of them following the formation of their nation-state, not simultaneous with the process of nation building. In addition, many of them had already resolved their language issues and had settled on one or two major languages that

would represent national aspirations. The newly emerging nations of the twentieth century faced the problem of the expansion of adult literacy without the time, resources, or literate core of citizens that had been available to the West. They needed to make vast strides in adult literacy within a relatively short period of time, to do so with limited financial and human resources, and to achieve this in a multilingual context where anywhere from a few to a few hundred languages were in use.

It probably appeared to be, and probably was, an impossible task. Even in those situations where there was agreement on a language for official and formal educational purposes, it may not have been totally clear that this language would be the natural choice for all adult literacy programs. Literacy planners in all multilingual nations faced an array of choices for the language(s) that could be used for adult literacy purposes. This array consisted of some or all of the following classes of languages:

a. Official/National Language(s). Planners could simply choose
    to offer literacy only in the language(s) that had been chosen
    for official use in the administration, courts, etc. In some
    countries that was a single language; in others it was more.
    Singapore adopted four official languages: Mandarin, Tamil,
    Malay, and English. India established a policy of two offi-
    cial languages (Hindi and English) as well as a second list
    of official regional languages. In any case, the adult
    literacy policy could be made to conform to the language

policies for other parts of the government or educational system.

b. <u>Mother Tongues</u>. Planners would adopt a policy of offering literacy in all or some of the mother tongues used in the nation. Since most of the languages in use in the world at the time were unwritten, a commitment to the use of all languages would have meant a commitment to the development of a written form for those languages. A policy of the use of selected mother tongues could be based on the use of those that already had a written form and some literature, on the basis of the size of the language group, on a regional basis, or according to some other set of criteria.

c. <u>Indigenous Lingua Franca</u>. Some planners faced the possibility of utilizing language(s) traditionally used for interethnic communication at the regional, national, or international level. These were the languages that were popular second languages for those people who interacted with people outside of their own speech community.

d. <u>Language of Wider Communication</u>. These were the exogenous lingua franca that were truly international languages. For most nations, the natural choice would be the language of the colonial power that they had been linked to. In cases where that language was not a bona fide LWC (e.g., Dutch in Indonesia), a country might wish to consider adopting English, French, or Spanish. Literacy in an LWC would be an

asset to adults in countries where that LWC played an important role, such as official language or language of education and commerce. It might open opportunities for employment and economic advancement.

Literacy planners were probably cognizant of their own national language situation and the types of language choices that were theoretically open to them. However, in most countries the official choice of a language for adult literacy was primarily a political decision that was made by those with political power and not necessarily by those with language expertise. In any case, the study of languages in their social context was a new area of academic study about which little was known. Attempting mass literacy by means of adult education was also a new experience for most of the world. It had not been a major concern of the colonial powers at home or abroad. At home they primarily relied on the gradual extension of the formal school system. Adult literacy, for the most part, was left to private groups. In the colonies, the emphasis of the colonial powers was on the production of sufficient trained personnel to carry on commercial, administrative, and military efforts, not to educate the entire country. Adult literacy was left to the missionaries, the "spiritual conquerors" (Kunene 1977, p. 154) who were mainly interested in using literacy for religious purposes. However, they did serve to identify, catalogue, and describe hundreds of languages, to prepare primers in those languages, and to develop methods for the teaching of adult literacy. They had also helped to demonstrate that these so-called "primitive" languages could be used for educational purposes and could be given a written form and

developed to carry modern knowledge. The work of many of these mis-
sionaries was, and continued to be, a staunch base on which to build a
national literacy effort.

There were two other sources of leadership to which people involved
in adult literacy could look for guidance and inspiration. One was a
literacy campaign; the other was an organization. Up until World
War II, the most successful mass literacy campaign was the one con-
ducted by the Soviet state following the 1917 Revolution. It had been
launched on a scale never attempted before and had produced, or so it
was reported, amazing results. The other major source of leadership
came from Unesco: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization. From its creation in 1945, Unesco played a major
role in encouraging and aiding the literacy efforts of all member
nations. It took a special interest in fostering the examination of
language policies for education and adult literacy. More than any other
single agency, Unesco contributed to the development of thought on the
issue of language and literacy.

The Soviet Literacy Campaign

The first great mass literacy campaign, the Soviet campaign, was
conducted in a number of languages in addition to Russian. Lenin main-
tained that "in a society there are not and cannot be peoples of
inferior status, this irrespective of their level of social develop-
ment. To every nationality in the U.S.S.R. is given the right to use
its own language and its own written form for the purpose of raising
its natural culture" (Unesco 1947, p. 114). Prior to 1917, only twenty

of the Soviet Union's 130 languages had written forms. During the extensive literacy campaign of the next three decades, over fifty languages received new written forms (Desheriyev and Mikhalchenko 1976). All peoples were offered the choice of becoming literate in their own language and/or Russian. In 1919, literacy classes were made compulsory for all illiterate citizens from eight to fifty years of age. Labor conscription of literates was also allowed, and two hours of paid work time was given to students (Tonkonogaja 1976). When many people who did not speak Russian asked to become literate in that language, new methods were developed to teach it as a second language including the use of the mother tongue as a bridge. This, however, increased the schooling time by as much as six to ten months (Kazakova 1976). The literacy rate went from 28% in 1897 to 44% in 1920, just after the revolution, to over 87% in 1939 (Kazakova 1976).

The campaign was based on Lenin's concept of the equality of all languages. Because of this philosophy, he refused to sanction the naming of Russian as the official language of the nation. He maintained that he knew the value and necessity of the Russian language as well as anyone, and hoped that all would choose to learn it. But, he said, "What we do not want is the element of coercion. We do not want to have people driven into paradise with a cudgel. For no matter how many fine phrases about 'culture' you may utter, a compulsory official language involves coercion, the use of the cudgel" (Desheriyev and Mikhalchenko 1976, p. 391).

There is some evidence to indicate that Stalin did not eschew the use of the "cudgel" when he came to power. He decreased the status of

minority languages, mandated that all new technical words be borrowed from Russian, and substituted the Cyrillic alphabet for the Latin one used for a number of languages (Trudgill 1974). There is also speculation that the Russian policy was not based on benevolence toward minority languages but on a strategy of divide and rule. Spencer (1963) suggests that the policy, especially in the Muslim areas, was aimed at preventing the rise of widely accepted regional languages that might be a force for national movements by promoting the smaller dialects, eliminating Persian/Arabic loan words in favor of Russian terms, and propagating the Russian language quite forcefully.

This negative perspective of the Soviet campaign was probably not widely discussed or even known to those Third World leaders who had to face the problem of language choice for literacy. In any case, speculation about the hidden political motives of the campaign still could not take away from the impressive achievements of that effort in providing literacy in over seventy languages. It is not known what influence this program had upon subsequent programs in non-communist states; however, it was there for all to see--the world's first great mass literacy campaign and one that was conducted in numerous mother tongues along with the major national language. In addition, it was a program that claimed a 43% increase in literacy in only nineteen years of operation. One can only presume that literacy planners in other multilingual nations paid some attention to this campaign's approach, methods, and organization.

Unesco's Role as Literacy Leader

At about the same time the Soviet literacy campaign was bringing
Russia's literacy rate to 90%, the United Nations was being created in
San Francisco. Soon thereafter, the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) was established. One of
its mandates was to facilitate the sharing of information between member
states on the topic of fundamental education. This led Unesco into
playing a major role in the support of literacy approaches around the
world. One of the issues that it helped to examine in great detail was
that of the choice of a language for education. It is in Unesco litera-
ture that a history of the development of modern thought on this problem
has occurred. It is therefore worth looking at this history in some
detail.

One of the first Unesco documents to discuss the role of language
in education is a report on the work of a 1947 conference called to
examine the issue of basic education, including literacy. This report,
entitled Fundamental Education: Common Grounds for All Peoples, issued
the following viewpoint regarding literacy:

> If the goals are to be literacy, access to world cultures
> as rapidly as possible, and horizontal and vertical mobility
> from the jungle to the metropolis, then certain definite
> steps can be recommended.
>
> If full literacy is to be attained, there are several primary
> requirements: (a) the child who is learning to read must
> become literate in his mother tongue; (b) once literate in
> his mother tongue, he must be inducted as rapidly as possible
> into full literacy in some language which already has a full
> literature; (c) steps must simultaneously be taken to intro-
> duce a need to use reading and writing into the society on a
> community level (Unesco 1947, p. 139).

The report warned, however, that "only by making the use of reading and writing a necessary part of everyday life, for purposes of inescapable inter-personal relationships can literacy of the average population be maintained after it has originally been achieved" (Unesco 1947, p. 140). The report suggested a number of steps that could be taken to stimulate a need for literacy on a community level such as government action in the periodic sending and requesting of reports to and from the villages, the encouragement of written requests, and the posting of price lists and road signs, etc. The recommendation of these feeble and artificial steps causes one to doubt the level of language expertise prevalent among the attendants of the conference.

This possible lack of language expertise was remedied by Unesco in 1951 through the convening of a Meeting of Experts which focussed specifically on the role of vernacular languages in education. Their final report, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, was issued in 1953 and became the main statement on the question of language choice for education. It is still probably the single most quoted source on the question of language choice for literacy even though it too con-centrated mainly upon the case of the child in the formal school con-text.

The committee of experts came out solidly in favor of mother tongue instruction for school children and adult illiterates stating:

> We take it as axiomatic that every child of school age should attend school and that every illiterate child should be made literate. We take it as axiomatic, too, that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil (Unesco 1953, p. 6).

They went on to justify this recommendation by saying:

> It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the best system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identity among members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar learning medium (Unesco 1953, p. 11).

Given its "axiomatic" approach to the question, the committee apparently did not feel compelled to strongly defend its line of reasoning. Its axioms were only partially substantiated. There was little attempt made to marshall overwhelming evidence in favor of its recommendations and to outline its reasoning. This is somewhat surprising in view of the great influence this document came to have in the next decades.

While "axiomatically" recommending a mother tongue approach, the Committee did recognize that the ideal of education in the mother tongue might be one that was temporarily or permanently impractical. Despite their categorical support for the use of vernaculars, the Committee did foresee some instances in which a second language could be used initially or at a later stage. If most of the students had a good knowledge of a prevalent second language, it was felt that that language could be used. In situations where the second language was used by many in the community or where it was very similar to the mother tongue, it was felt that a switch from the mother tongue to the second language could be undertaken very quickly. A lack of inputs such as teachers, materials, etc., or a situation in which students were from a number of different language groups would also lead to a context in which a second language could be introduced early.

The report also noted the important need for a country to promote a national language for unity, administrative ease, intranational communication, and economy. It foresaw that many people would have a desire to learn the national language first if it opened the doors to better economic and social opportunities.

> If, however, a child is brought up in a community which speaks a language different from the official one of his country, or one which is not a world language with a well-developed technological and cultural vocabulary and literature, he needs to be taught a second language; in order to feel at home in the language in which the affairs of his government are carried on; in order to have access to world history, news, art, sciences and technology (Unesco 1953, p. 55).

This, in effect, would mean the learning of at least one, or perhaps two, other languages beyond the mother tongue: the official language of his nation and an international language.

The Committee felt strongly that "in teaching adults to read it is always best for them to begin in the mother tongue," but they recognized that some adults would want to learn in a second language first if it promised more opportunities. The Committee discouraged teaching adult basic literacy in a second language, particularly in cases where the mother tongue and second language were very different. But it did suggest that adults who learned to read in their mother tongues be encouraged to learn to read in a lingua franca or some other language that was of particular value to them (Unesco 1953, p. 58). While staunchly defending the mother tongue first doctrine, it accepted in all probability that the learner would have to learn to read in a second language in order to remain literate by getting access to a literate context and/or meet his/her personal needs for economic, social,

or other motivations.

In his review of the 1953 report, Bull (1964) objected to the Committee's focus on the individual and his/her right to linguistic self-determination and its preoccupation with the psychological and pedagogical issues. Bull argued for a compromise approach taking society's needs into account as well as social, economic, and political issues. Given the vast numbers of unwritten vernaculars and the limited resources available to modernize them to a standard high enough to meet the needs of an educational medium, Bull suggested a process of "planned homogeneity": a reduction in the number of vernaculars through the combination of similar linguistic groups. Rightfully assuming that complete modernization of all vernaculars was an impossible task, Bull argued that a policy of promoting all vernaculars would lead to "intellectual colonization" (Bull 1964, p. 529). Students would be cut off from the vast flow of knowledge available in major languages. Although the 1953 report did anticipate this problem by acknowledging that students would have to learn a second or even a third language in order to gain access to all levels of written knowledge, Bull was correct in faulting the Committee for its belief that a lack of educational materials--and not the impossibility of developing hundreds of vernaculars into modern mediums of instruction--was the major obstacle to the use of vernaculars in education.

Bull's criticism was valid although his call for "planned homogeneity" could rightfully be challenged by those who philosophically support the rights of all groups to the use of their own language. But Bull's hard-headed recognition of the sheer impossibility of dealing with

the thousands of existing languages and his insistence on practical
alternatives were never embraced by Unesco. Unesco continued to support
a series of conferences on the language issue, perhaps hoping that the
exchanges between nations would have more effect than its experts'
recommendations, but its general support of vernaculars never altered.
This may have been because of a philosophical commitment to the intrin-
sic worth of all languages, because of the primacy of pedagogical and
psychological considerations, and/or because of a felt need to resist
the forces that pushed for the propagation of a unifying language in
newly independent states.

The problems of achieving the ideal set out by Unesco were recog-
nized at a 1961 Unesco Conference of African States on the Development
of Education in Africa held in Addis Ababa. Its final report recognized
the psychological and pedagogical advantages of using all mother tongues
but suggested that "political, social, and economic considerations may
lead to a different choice" (Unesco 1961, p. 53). In situations where
the mother tongue was not normally used for literacy, the conference
felt that the learners would directly learn literacy in a second
language--perhaps with the oral use of their mother tongue.

Another conference in Africa in 1964 looked at the language choice
issue and identified four main factors for consideration:

1. Utility to learner

2. Ease of learning

3. Extent and availability of existing literature

4. Feasibility of producing literature

Accepting the premise that the mother tongue would be the easiest to learn, the participants suggested that "the ease of learning is not always the sole consideration in determining the choice of language either on the part of the learner or the programme agency" (Unesco 1964a, p. 25). The conference recognized that the nature of the factors would vary from country to country and that resulting language policies would also vary from the use of one language to the use of several or all languages (where there were only a few languages). They suggested that a new language be taught orally before using it for literacy. They also pointed out the need for a standard orthography that was cheaply reproducible and related, if possible, to the script of the official language.

Later in 1964, Unesco sponsored a Meeting of Experts on The Use of the Mother Tongue for Literacy. The conference considered case studies compiled on Uganda, Niger, and Nigeria, set forth guidelines for the development of orthographies for unwritten languages, described the factors affecting the learner's motivation, and summarized the language policy issue. The experts felt that there were three basic types of policies:

1. Promotion of all local languages on an equal basis;

2. Choice of one African language as the official/
   national language;

3. Adoption of English or French.

The first policy type was felt to be the ideal as long as the governments gave equal status and support to all languages and if "people are going to be made literate in these languages without any

reference to any other outside language" (Unesco 1964b, p. 2). In other words, if all languages were treated equally and the decision were made in a vacuum without considering the broader contexts, a full mother tongue approach would be the ideal policy. It is doubtful if this could or should be done.

Having extolled the ideal (although with some major reservations), the experts discussed other approaches such as the use of the mother tongue as a bridge to another African language or to English or French and the possibility of direct instruction in English/French. They acknowledged that the complexity of the task and the need for sophisticated teaching methods would increase as one moved from mother tongue instruction to the most difficult task of teaching a foreign language. They did express unease over the unproven assumption that mother tongue literacy teaching would help and not hurt the acquisition of a second African language. They did not acknowledge, however, that the use of selected mother tongues would mean the people of the non-selected language groups would have to learn the selected mother tongue as a second language. This is the hidden reality behind many selective mother tongue programs.

In focussing on motivational factors, the Meeting gave attention to the most crucial element in any teaching/learning situation: the learner. The injection of human aspirations into the language choice debate was an important step in coming to terms with the problem and its solutions. Previous reports seemed to forget about the primacy of the learner in their attempts to promote the ideal of mother tongue instruction for all. This lack of attention was indicative of the

general language teaching philosophy of the time. The Meeting, however,
brought the learner's needs to the forefront, saying:

> . . . the team would like to stress that the adoption of a
> language policy for literacy should not be dictated by
> political considerations or by theoretical criteria alone,
> but that the authorities concerned should also take into
> account the wishes and interests of the potential learners
> before committing themselves to a particular approach
> (Unesco 1964b, <u>Conclusions</u>, p. 5).

While they did not actually state the learners should participate
in the choice of a language, but that their needs should be considered
in choosing the literacy approach (e.g., mother tongue only; mother
tongue as bridge to second language), the attention given to the
learner's needs was a step in the right direction. The experts felt the
language chosen should be "useful to the individual wishing to promote
his position, either in trade or government" (Unesco 1964b, <u>Conclusions</u>,
p. 8). While the linking of literacy with only trade and government
may be a narrow view of literacy's multiple functions, the attention
given to the usefulness of the language to the learner is an important
concept that has frequently been lost in language choice decisions.

Subsequent Unesco documents (Unesco 1965a, 1965b, 1976b, 1978,
1980) added little to the discussion of the issue. Perhaps because of
the multinational and political nature of Unesco itself, the discussion
always seemed to be in terms of the need for a national level decision.
The needs of the learners were to be considered; the pedagogical advan-
tages of mother tongue instruction were stressed; but the frame of
reference was mostly a national political one--perhaps reflecting the
need for legitimization of the newly independent Member states. The
issue was generally a choice between the use of mother tongues or the

official language and among strategies to move from the first to the second. It was a debate between the needs of "nationism" (unity and efficiency) and "nationalism" (ethnic pride and cultural maintenance) (Fishman 1971).

It also appears that literacy was viewed primarily as a set of skills necessary for national development. The state should promote literacy as a prerequisite or condition for development. The citizen should become literate in order to participate in national life via government, trade, or the schools. Little was made of literacy's possible psycho-social role in improving self-esteem, empowering the illiterate, and meeting a wide variety of individual aspirations. Literacy seemed to be defined as a set of tools to be provided to citizens by the national government for the purpose of nation building. This was a narrow view but a legitimate one; however, it was not broad enough to provide for a flexible response to a highly complicated problem. Much of the language choice debate became centered on the mother tongue versus official language question and teaching strategies and not on the meaning of literacy and the real language needs of a nation and its people. By the 1965 World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, Unesco's position had shifted from the "axiomatic" promotion of all mother tongues to a vague political approach more palatable to the ministerial level participants. The 1965 Final Report stated:

> The desirable objective of teaching adults to read and
> write in their mother tongues first is endorsed, but it
> is recognized that a multiplicity of languages within one

country may oblige that country to base its literacy pro-
gramme on a single language or on a limited selection of
languages (Unesco 1965b, p. 17).

This was probably a good summation of the state of thinking at the
time, but it and the previous Unesco work had not really fully addressed
the problem of how the language choice decision could be made. Various
conferences examined some of the issues, but apparently no one sought
to construct some comprehensive guidelines for decision makers. Unesco
dealt with this to some extent on a nation-to-nation basis through teams
of experts. One such team helped Mali and Niger with the selection of
orthographies for six indigenous languages (Hoben 1973). A view of
this as a national level decision made for national purposes may have
obviated the need for an in-depth analysis which could be used by
national level planners and by the thousands of local groups world-
wide who were engaged in some of the more effective literacy efforts.
The costs of this national level approach surfaced in the final assess-
ment of Unesco's extensive Experimental World Literacy Programme. The
evaluators found that a number of the participating countries used the
program as a means to propagate a dominant language among minority
linguistic groups who did not speak that language. This had devastat-
ingly negative results on the project's main goal of linking literacy
with functional/vocational skills. Students learned neither the
language nor the information taught in that language. Analysis of the
results led to the assessors to conclude that "the closer the language
used to present the content and materials of the course to the workers'
everyday language, the more effective the literacy programme" (Unesco
1976b, p. 170). This conclusion was not significantly different from

the axiomatic pronouncements of the 1951 conference.

This does not mean that progress on understanding the issue of language choice has not been made. The 1951 conference was held at a time when many present nations were still under colonial domination. The world's experience with mass literacy movements was also very limited. The next few decades can be seen as a time of collapsing colonial empires, nascent nations, and trial-and-error approaches to the problems of illiteracy and mass education. The world is older and wiser and perhaps more able to address the language choice question. This new attitude may be seen in the 1978 literacy recommendations of Unesco's Director General:

> .69 The Language of Literacy: Literacy training in the national language* is more effective and better suited to the reality of national cultures. In certain countries, however, the use of these languages raises problems for which there must be due regard (languages with no written form, differences between the written and spoken languages, the number of linguistic groups, lack of instructors and books, cost, etc.). It is important to make a thorough study of these complex issues so that the most effective solutions may be found and suitable materials produced for each situation (Unesco 1978, p. 10).

The purpose of this book will be to make such a thorough study in an attempt to outline a process for language choice that can be used by decision makers at all levels to find the best and avoid the worst choices for their particular situations. This will be possible because of the long involvement of Unesco and national governments in literacy work and because of the increasing sophistication of man's knowledge

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*In this context, "national language" seems to be used in the sense of indigneous mother tongue or major vernacular.

of language and its context of use. As in the case of technology, our understanding of language has grown exponentially over the last half century. New fields of study such as psycholinguistics, socio-linguistics, language planning, and bilingual education have arisen as scholars have attempted to deal with the complexity of man's most striking quality: language. This growth in language study has paralleled the Unesco-led attack on illiteracy in time, but has not been adequately integrated with literacy doctrine and approaches. It contains a wealth of valuable insights that can be applied to the language choice issue in order to produce a comprehensive, inter-disciplinary approach to the question that combines the knowledge of academic research and observation with the known results of literacy projects.

CHAPTER III

THE WORLD'S EXPERIENCE

Assessing the World's Experience

It is difficult to attempt to summarize the world's experience with
the problem of language choice for literacy for a number of reasons.
The major one is the simple lack of information on the language approach
used in many programs. Many project reports do not even mention the
language used in the program, much less detail the decision-making
process behind the selection. One senses that the majority of the
reports that do not discuss the language question either did not find
it to be a crucial issue (because of their assumption that the official
language(s) would be the natural medium(s) for adult literacy) or con-
sciously avoided addressing a problem that was being willfully neg-
lected. Government reports seem less likely to be candid on the
language issue than reports done by private voluntary groups or indi-
viduals associated with literacy projects. The failure to properly
address the language issue in these reports is a great shame since the
world has lost much of the benefit of the lessons learned from the last
three decades of attempts to deal with illiteracy.

This failure, to some degree at least, may have been a result of
an intentional vagueness regarding language policy in general. In his
examination of the role of mother tongues in education in West Africa,
Bamgbose (1976b) posited the theory that this vagueness may be inten-
tional and necessary. He noted that most language policies in Africa:

(a) are rarely stated explicitly, probably because of a fear of political repercussions; (b) tend to fluctuate over time in response to changes in attitudes or personnel; and (c) often display an inconsistency between policy and practice due to the difficulties in implementing a given policy or due to an intentional gap between rhetoric and reality.

A third problem in trying to categorize the past experience with the role of language choice is the lack of specific research on the language issue. Comments on the efficacy of a certain language policy often come up as observations in studies that were designed to examine some other variable. The researchers were struck by the language problem--or what they believed was a language problem--but they were not able to produce enough empirical evidence to draw totally reliable conclusions since their study was really designed to measure some other aspect of the literacy program. Thus one examination of literacy acquisition patterns in Ethiopia concluded that a majority of Ethiopeans first become literate in a language they do not speak and suggested that this might call into question the axiom that the mother tongue should always be used first (Ferguson 1971). An evaluation of the Ethiopean literacy campaign for the Experimental World Literacy Project, however, thought that the use of an unknown second language was a major reason for a dropout rate of over 87% (Unesco 1976b). Another evaluation of a different literacy campaign thought that there was evidence that Amharic literacy was being attained by one non-native speaking group just as well, if not better, than by the native-speaking group (Sjostrom 1977).

The state-of-the-art theory regarding language choice for literacy is thus akin to the situation found in the field of bilingual education. Several theories exist with some findings for each theory; but there is no definitive answer to the question. Bilingual education, however, has had the dubious benefit of numerous studies supposedly designed to fixate on the specific issue of the language medium. Unfortunately, much of this research has been slipshod. A survey of 150 evaluation reports found that only seven met the minimal criteria for acceptability; another study of 108 evaluations and seventy-six research studies found only three evaluations and twelve studies whose findings were acceptable (Troike 1978). Given this state of affairs in the formal educational sector where interest in the language question was high, it is very understandable to see why very little has been done on the case of adult literacy in the nonformal sector. There appears to have been no direct, intensive study and comparison of different language policies and language teaching approaches. What information does exist has to be treated with some scepticism given the dismal record of the language research on bilingual education.

A final difficulty in assessing the experience of language choice has been the wide variability of adult literacy programs. Literacy efforts are carried out by an array of government and private agencies with different resources, goals, approaches, etc. Thus, just as it is impossible to assess the validity of their findings, it is just as difficult to estimate the degree to which their results are generalizable. There is a wide range of factors that can affect the success of a literacy project, and without in-depth study, it is impossible to

ascertain the degree to which language policy played a role in the success or failure of a given project.

Given all of the aforementioned caveats, it is still necessary to attempt to look at what has happened in the area of language policy for adult literacy. One way to do this is to categorize the types of policies that have been tried and to look at what reports say has happened. For the purpose of this review, we can group the language approaches used into five categories:

a. Programs using only the official language;

b. Programs using the official language as a second language;

c. Programs using the mother tongue as a bridge to literacy in the official/national language;

d. Programs using a selected number of mother tongues;

e. Programs with an expressed policy of using all extant mother tongues.

Official Language Approach

Almost all nations that recognize an illiteracy problem have programs to teach literacy in the official/national language(s). There are some nations, like Korea, that feel that they have attained universal literacy and do not need adult literacy programs. Korea attained a drop of 74% in its illiteracy rate in fourteen years through a simplification of the Korean script and the massification of formal education (Kim 1979). However, there is increasing evidence that even the most advanced, educated society has pockets of illiteracy. Hunter and Harman (1979), for instance, estimated that there may be fifty to sixty

million people in the United States who do not possess the literacy skills necessary to meet all of their needs.

It would seem that nations that consider themselves to be monolingual would be able to easily solve the language choice problem. There are a small number of nations that can claim to be monolingual. In Africa, for example, Botswana, Burundi, Lesotho, Rwanda, and Somalia estimate that over 90% of their people speak a single language. In Asia, Thailand, Korea, Japan, and Bangladesh are in the same position. However, the possession of a dominant language does not automatically signal the presence of a Great Tradition that is based on a standard dialect and orthography. Nations that are predominantly monolingual may find that they have a long way to go before they are able to unite people around one dialect and orthography. Even where there is a Great Tradition, as in Bangladesh, the road to universal literacy may be a difficult one. The literacy rate in Bangladesh has only increased from 21% in 1951 to 22.2% in 1977 (Monwar 1981). The case of Somalia is one that is both unusual but illustrative of the problems that face even those nations that possess a dominant language.

For years after gaining independence, Somalia continued the use of Italian and English as her official languages and languages of literacy despite the fact that the vast majority of its people spoke dialects of Somali. The major obstacle to the use of written Somali was the failure of successive governments to make a decision on the orthography to be used. This was a highly sensitive issue since there was intense disagreement over whether to use the Arabic or Roman script and which dialect to select for standardization. After a revolution in 1969,

however, a new government promised to finally develop a written Somali language. It appointed a national language commission to begin preparing materials but "the selection of a script for the writing of Somali was considered a political issue and left to the government" (Mohamed 1975, p. 9). In 1972 the President announced that a modified Roman alphabet would be adopted for written Somali. A three-month program was conducted for civil servants and then Somali replaced the previous official languages. This was followed by an urban literacy campaign in 1973 and a rural development campaign from 1974-75. Schools were closed for one year and all teachers and students over sixteen were sent out to teach literacy (Mohamed 1975). The campaign was judged a success, however, later studies indicated that perhaps 50% of the new literates relapsed into illiteracy. Some of the estimated causes of this were a lack of reading materials and follow-up activities, an emphasis on reading and writing skills without relating literacy to the daily lives of the clientele, the nomadic lifestyle of much of the population, and the failure of the urban decision maker to really understand the needs of rural people and to draw them into the planning process. There was also a tendency among officials to inflate enrollment figures (Unesco 1977a).

Another problem encountered in introducing a written form of the language was the need to modernize it so that it could be used for all purposes. Andrzejewski (1971) notes that before 1943 Somali had no words in general circulation for general concepts such as socialism, capitalism, and economic development. At that time, radio broadcasters took it upon themselves to coin new words when necessary. The

broadcasting also served to strengthen the position of one dialect of Somali. Presumably the job of standardization was later undertaken on a more formal basis by the language commission or some other institution.

Another interesting case, and one that is unique, is that of China. What makes it unique is its use of ideographs for its script. Because the symbols represent ideas or objects and not sounds, the script is able to serve for many different dialects. Thus there is mutual intelligibility between language groups in the written form but not in the spoken form. The main problem incurred is that over 50,000 symbols need to be learned to reach full competence in the script. Even 5000 are necessary for basic literacy. This is a tremendous learning task that can take many years. The option is to romanize the script and make it easier to learn, but then there would be a loss of the national intelligibility of the present writing system as each dialect used the roman script to represent the divergent sounds of its language.

This problem of dialects has also occurred in nations where the disparity was not so great. For a number of years in the 1960's Madagascar maintained a policy of only using standard Malagasy in its literacy programs. It was later decided that this was causing a certain loss of cultural identity among members of the twenty dialectal variants of Malagasy. In 1965 some literacy programs began to use both the dialect and the official language in order to increase the link with the social and economic condition of the people (Rajaona 1974).

Literacy programs using an official/national language that was spoken by most of the people in the country, therefore, have had only

to face the common difficulties of teaching literacy. Mass campaigns, such as the one in Somalia, have also been mounted in nations like Cuba and Nicaragua which were also coming out of a revolutionary period. In the predominantly monolingual nations, the language problems of an official language literacy effort are mainly related to the choice of the dialect to be used and its standardization and modernization. However, the number of completely monolingual states is miniscule. Even many states that like to think of themselves as monolingual are in fact polylingual. Thus many countries opting for the use of the official language in adult literacy have painfully discovered that this language is not known to all of its citizens.

Official Language as a Second Language

Many newly independent nations looked to a official/national language as a force for unifying the multiple ethnic groups living within their boundaries. This faith was often based on a naivete about the role of languages in a society and the degree to which adult literacy efforts could contribute to the propagation of a national language. Perhaps in an effort to be consistent or to ignore the realities of the language situation, many nations followed the same official language policy they had decreed for administrative and formal education purposes. This led to situations in which the language for adult literacy was a second language, and even an unknown language, for the literacy clientele. Many of these programs were doomed to failure simply because of the program's failure to recognize and deal with this reality.

Perhaps the most outstanding case of this was the Ethiopean literacy campaign conducted as part of the Experimental World Literacy Project. The three-stage program was launched in several different areas where a knowledge of the official language, Amharic, varied greatly. In one industrial area, 97% of the people knew Amharic; in one of the rural areas, over 60% of the clientele were of a different language group. The project, however, treated all the learners alike and used the same materials and methods for both groups. The final evaluation suggested that "this factor probably contributed significantly to the slow progress of many participants and to the high dropout rates" (Unesco 1976b, p. 37). By the end of the final stage of the project, less than 14% of the original learners were in attendance.

The problems of using a second language for literacy have shown up in other projects as well. In Pakistan, Hesser (1978) noted severe problems faced by her program due to the government's insistence on the use of the national language, Urdu, in literacy projects for minority language groups along the Indian border. Similar learning problems have been encountered in Guinea-Bissau with Portuguese (de Oliveira 1979), in Liberia with English (Hoben 1980), in Algeria with French (Bowers 1968), in the Cameroons with French and English (Abega 1974), in The Gambia with English (British Council 1975, 1978), and in Tanzania with Swahili (Gitelson 1975). The learning difficulties have been compounded by a deculturalization process for those learning a Western language such as French and English in the Cameroons (Alexandre 1971; Abega 1974) and English for migrants to Australia (Lippman 1976). These themes will be discussed in more depth in later sections of this book.

The teaching of literacy in a second language has not been a totally negative experience. Some successes have been reported. In contrast to the dismal dropout rate reported for the Ethiopean EWLP program, some other programs have found that adults can indeed learn initial literacy in a second language. Ferguson's examination of literacy acquisition patterns in Ethiopea led him to conclude that a majority of Ethiopean literates first achieved literacy in a language they did not speak, either in a classical/religious language like Geez or Arabic or in the national language, Amharic. He felt that literacy personnel would do well to look more closely at the role of motivation, religious values associated with literacy, and the status of languages rather than simply adhering to a total insistence on initial mother tongue literacy. He also reported that an experiment on this question had resulted in non-Amharic speakers making better progress in literacy acquisition than a native-speaker group (Ferguson 1971). Another study done at a later date had a similar conclusion: the non-native speaker group learned as well, or even better, than the native speaker group (Sjostrom 1977). Neither study, however, indicated the degree of knowledge of Amharic held by the non-native speaker group nor the full context of the program. Without that information it is difficult to draw any unquestionable conclusions.

In one of the few planned experiments designed to look at the issue of mother tongue versus second language literacy, Shrivastava (1981) compared the achievement of adult learners who were using a local dialect with another group that was getting initial literacy in the regional/official language, Hindi. At the end of the program the

dialect group had better scores in writing and numeracy, but there were no significant differences in reading and comprehension. The teachers felt that the dialect group reached basic literacy and numeracy in a shorter time period and perhaps maintained interest better, but there did not appear to be a significant difference in overall functional literacy between the two groups. Unfortunately Shrivastava did not discuss the second language ability of those in the Hindi group. Their initial command over the second language would have been an important factor affecting their achievement in that language.

A major factor favoring OLSL programs is the perception of many learners that literacy in the official language, as opposed to their mother tongue, will provide him with more advantages. In some instances, learners have objected to mother tongue literacy in a language that had few materials, low prestige, and/or did not fully satisfy their literacy needs. Thirty-five percent of the surveyed members of a Canadian Indian tribe considered the tribal language to be useless for literacy purposes and opposed the teaching of it in the schools to their children (Parker 1975). This kind of parental concern also arose in South America where parents were worried that the use of the mother tongue would be at the expense of their children's acquisition of the official language, Spanish (Gudschinsky 1971; Engle 1975). Adults in The Gambia enthusiastically joined a literacy program in Mandinka only after they were assured that they would later study English (British Council 1978). From Nigeria, Okezie (1975) reported the difficulty in attracting people to literacy programs in Igbo because of its low prestige for writing purposes compared to English. OLSL programs seem to do better in

situations where the official language is a prestigious one with a good deal of grassroots support and one which is perceived as offering a certain amount of rewards: political, economic or social. The nation-wide acceptability of Bahasa Indonesia has been cited as the major factor promoting its use as a second language (Danoewidjojo 1973). This acceptability, however, emerged early in the independence movement and made Bahasa a symbol of an independent nation.

Only a few societies have had the good fortune to be able to call upon an indigenous lingua franca to serve as a national/official language. This seems to be working well in Indonesia where there is widespread support for the language. There appear to be more obstacles to the use of Bahasa Malay in Malaysia where the language is the mother tongue of a politically dominant majority that is trying to impose it upon an economically powerful minority (Chinese) that uses a completely different language and one that has a much greater written tradition. In Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia is linguistically related to the mother tongues of most groups. In Malaysia the official language, though relatively easy to learn, represents a culture and language group very different from the Indian and Chinese minorities.

In Tanzania, Swahili seems to have many factors working in its favor. It is a Bantu language, related to the languages of most of the people. It has a tradition as a lingua franca and is related to the Islamic and commercial heritage of the past. It also has no major competitors in terms of rival indigenous languages that are politically, economically, and socially important. However, there have been problems with its diffusion through adult literacy.

An early evaluation report of potential national development studies noted that Swahili speakers accounted for only 35% of the men and 5% of the women and warned that there would be serious problems if adult education programs attempted to teach literacy skills, a second language, and functional content all at the same time. "In short," the report said, "the implications of the language problem are so serious and so diverse that steps to resolve it cannot be too numerous or taken too early" (Hutchinson ca 1969, p. 23). Available documents do not mention what steps, if any, were taken; however, a report on the functional literacy program conveyed the government's hope that literacy classes would help to establish Swahili as the national language despite the fact that it would be a second language for the vast majority of people (Viscusi 1971). Neither that document nor a summary of the results of the national literacy campaign (Mbakile 1976) detailed any steps to lessen the problems involved in teaching literacy in a second language. Problems did occur. The evaluation of a work-oriented adult literacy pilot project hypothesized that the use of Swahili as a medium of instruction was "perhaps the single most important factor interfering with the learning process involved" (Evaluation Unit Mwanza 1973, p. 80). A review of UNDP aid projects in Tanzania noted serious language problems and recommended more training for teachers who had to handle the simultaneous teaching of: (1) reading and writing; (2) functional skills; and (3) a second language (Gitelson 1975). Since these were the same challenges mentioned by Hutchinson years earlier, it can be assumed that the Tanzanian government was not able to solve all of the problems of teaching literacy in a second language as part of a

wider range of skills program.

The world's experience with OLSL programs therefore seems to show that initial literacy in a second language is achievable if there is motivation on the part of the learner and an approach that takes the second language aspect into account. Problems occur when the language is not perceived as one that will provide economic, political, or social rewards; when the program does not tailor its teaching approach to the learners' command of the language; and where the program mixes the teaching of literacy skills, content information, and a second language. Each of these is a difficult task in itself. To mix them in one instructional approach is to invite failure.

Mother Tongue as Bridge to OL/NL

Some nations have tried to adopt a polyvalent strategy that would both address the need for a national language and exploit the pedagogical advantages of teaching literacy in the mother tongue. They have tried to do this by using the mother tongue for initial literacy instruction as a bridge to literacy in the official language or some other major language. This is in keeping with the Unesco recommendation that mother tongue literacy be followed by "full literacy in some language which already has a full literature" (Unesco 1947, p. 139). Such a strategy may view literacy in the mother tongue as a transitional stage or a permanent one: the goal of the program may be to use the mother tongue only as a step towards the main goal of literacy in the official language, or it may be to develop and maintain full literacy in both the mother tongue and the major language.

This transitional versus maintainence dichotomy is a major issue in bilingual education today and is bound to continue since the answer is as much a political and social question as a pedagogical one. In any case, the general strategy of using the mother tongue as a bridge has been found to be successful in a number of programs. Peru, Mexico, and Viet Nam have attempted effective programs for children in the formal sector using a strategy of gradually moving from using the mother tongue as medium and the official language as a subject in the first year of school to the use of the official language as a medium in the fourth or fifth year of school (Gudschinsky 1971). They have found that this gradual approach brings children to the point where they are competitive with students who are native speakers of the major language. Adult literacy programs, however, do not have the luxury of a five-year transitional period. Adults are usually available for instruction for a limited number of hours per week for a limited number of months. The use of two languages generally lengthens the time of a program, but many literacy workers feel that initial literacy in the mother tongue enhances the learning of literacy and provides a sound base for the teaching of literacy in a second language (Gudschinsky 1971, 1973, 1977; Gwyther-Jones 1971). It has not been clearly established, however, that mother tongue literacy is a necessary prerequisite for second language literacy. It is even questionable to assert that mother tongue literacy gives a learner more than a head start over a totally illiterate person. At least one study seems to indicate that this head start is significant but one that can be overcome (Tomori and Okedara 1971). More will be said about this issue in the chapter on the pedagogical perspective.

A number of nations have tried the mother tongue as bridge strategy. Togo has used the vernaculars as a bridge to French (Kombate 1974) while Liberia has used mother tongue primers as an introduction to literacy before the use of English (Amoniyi 1976). This transition is made much easier if both languages use the same orthography. The Vietnamese created Latin orthographies for some of their indigenous languages to facilitate the transfer to the national language, Vietnamese, which was also written in the Latin script (Le Thanh Kohoi 1976). While this worked well in Viet Nam, problems did arise in Niger when the same script was used to represent French, Hausa, and Zerma. An attempt was made to adapt the Latin script, as used for French, for use with indigenous languages. Problems arose because of the very different sound systems of the Western and African languages, and the attempt to use the same alphabet for both language groups ran into problems, especially given the goal of adapting the script so that the transfer to French would be facilitated (Unesco 1964b).

The cultural and personal problems involved in the learning of another language has been a factor in favor of the implementation of mother tongue-national language programs. Madagascar originally followed a policy of only using Malagasy in its literacy programs even though almost twenty dialects of that language were in use in the country. It was later felt that this policy gave "rise to a kind of estrangement or even sometimes a loss of cultural identity among those taught" (Rajaona 1974, p. 2). This gap is even greater when the national language is an exogenous one such as English or French. The alien nature of Portuguese to the life of the people in the villages

was one of the reasons for the abandonment of its teaching in adult literacy programs in Guinea-Bissau (de Oliveira 1979). Its neighbor, Namibia, is planning to ease the transition to a foreign national language by implementing a policy of initial mother tongue literacy enroute to literacy in the national language, English (Kalenga 1978).

The use of the mother tongue as a bridge can run into other problems. A case in point is the Hill Areas Education Project in Thailand where literacy is a key element in an educational program for members of minority hill tribes who generally do not know the official language, Thai. A Ministry of Education document listed the acquisition of Thai literacy skills as a major curriculum objective for the project, but did not specifically address the language problems this policy would create (Ministry of Education 1977). The project staff decided to adopt a bilingual strategy that would use the tribal languages and Thai by first teaching the Thai script using the local languages and then moving on to full literacy in the Thai language. This bilingual approach encountered a number of problems. One obstacle was the limited training of the literacy teachers. Most of them received only two weeks of training which was obviously not enough for them to grasp and implement a bilingual teaching strategy (World Education 1978). Another problem was the desire of many learners to become directly literate in Thai without going through the intermediate stage of literacy in their mother tongue. Apparently they felt that Thai literacy was their most pressing need and that literacy in their own language was not. After this initial attempt, the bilingual approach was dropped in favor of direct instruction in Thai. This decision may also have been encouraged by the government's

wariness over the promotion of mother tongue literacy among minority tribes along the country's borders who were seen as possible security risks. Thus political, personal, and pedagogical problems combined to end an experiment in bilingual literacy.

These bridging programs have shown themselves to be successful where there is commitment among the learners to the use of their mother tongue and a well-trained staff able to produce the necessary materials and utilize sophisticated teaching methods. Problems arise when the learners have a negative view of the value of literacy in their own language, when literacy staff are not well-trained in the pedagogy of bilingual programs, and where the two languages are so dissimilar that there are limitations on the amount of transfer that occurs between mother tongue and second language literacy. This approach holds promise as a strategy for introducing people to the concept of literacy, the relationship of sound and symbol, and the teaching of an orthography and for reducing the cultural and personal dissonance that occurs when an illiterate is introduced to a new form of behavior (literacy) in the context of a new language.

Selected Mother Tongue Approach

Faced with the impossibility of immediately launching literacy programs in all of the extant mother tongues while recognizing the value of using mother tongues for literacy, many nations adopted a policy of using a limited number of mother tongues for adult literacy. Most of these nations were those that had no single Great Tradition; some had a number of Great Traditions that demanded equal treatment. In general,

the policy was to first use the major indigenous languages for literacy
work and to gradually expand the number of languages in use. A language
commission in Togo drew up the following list of criteria for use in
their selection process (Kombate 1974):

    a. Size of the language group
    b. Cultural value of the language
    c. Amount of research carried out in and on the language
    d. Amount of written material in the language
    e. Influence/prestige in neighboring countries
    f. Vitality of the language
    g. Economic and financial implications of its use in
        literacy
    h. Ease of assimilation by each ethnic group
    i. Psychological and economic aspects of teaching lan-
        guage used in neighboring regions
    j. Geographic situation
    k. Distribution of ethnic groups
    l. Historical factors

The final recommendation in Togo was to use the mother tongues which
were spoken by 100,000 or more people for adult literacy purposes enroute
to literacy in French.

Since its independence in 1960, Mali had continued with the policy
of the exclusive use of French in its official adult literacy efforts.
The use of French was felt to be suited to the existing literacy efforts
which helped dropouts from the French medium schools qualify for employ-
ment equal to that of school graduates and aided others in achieving the
French literacy that was essential for many jobs in the modern sector.
When the government decided to expand its literacy efforts into the
rural areas where French was seldom used, they recognized a need to
revise their language policy. The government selected four languages
that were the most widespread and representative of distinct linguistic
families which were also used as lingua franca by other language

groups. Those languages, Mande, Tamashek, Songhai, and Fulani, and their dialectal variants were spoken by 90% of the population. A Unesco-sponsored conference in Bamako in 1966 examined the problem of deciding upon a transcription system that would serve those languages and that could be employed by all the countries that used those languages. A Malian Consultative Commission elaborated the recommendations of the Unesco conference and devised a forty-five symbol script that represented the forty-five sounds found in the four language groups. That system was approved by the Council of Ministers and promulgated in a presidential decree in 1967 (Dumont 1971, 1977; Ly 1974).

The use of multiple mother tongues has been common in multilingual Africa. Senegal has developed at least three languages for use in literacy programs (Bamgbose 1976b). Guinea has selected eight languages for equal development (Awoniyi 1976; Unesco 1980). Niger has used at least five languages (Darkoge 1974); Ghana uses over 10 languages (Ohene 1974); Zambia uses seven mother tongues (Unesco 1980); and Dahomey, The Gambia, Burundi, and Uganda, among others, have also developed some of their mother tongues for utilization in adult literacy work. Nigeria, a land of more than 200 languages, has conducted literacy work in at least forty-four of them (Musa Moda 1982: personal communication); and Sierra Leone uses six vernaculars (Allen 1974).

There seems to have been less interest in this approach in other continents up to this time. In Asia, India has led the way with the development of literacy materials in at least fifteen languages (Directorate of Adult Education 1977). However, most other Asian nations have continued emphasizing their official languages in adult

literacy work. Many Asian nations have been able to utilize major indigenous languages (e.g., Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Malay, Indonesian, Korean, etc.) that stress supraethnic attitudes and to de-emphasize the roles of other vernaculars. Spanish has played a dominant role in Latin America (with Portuguese in Brazil) although there has been some movement towards the use of other languages such as Quechua.

An interesting feature of the increase of the selected mother tongue approach has been its link with revolutionary action. Literacy materials were prepared in five languages in Afghanistan following their 1977 revolution (Unesco 1979). Ethiopea switched from an emphasis on literacy in Amharic, the national language, to the use of other mother tongues after its 1974 revolution. Its 1979 campaign was launched in five languages while ten other languages were being prepared for literacy use (Department of Adult Education 1980). Despite the existence of a majority language, Somali continued with the use of English and Italian in government and literacy work because of a failure of politicians to deal with the decision over a suitable orthography for Somali, the language spoken by over 90% of the people. A revolution in 1969 brought a government to power that finally made the choice and made Somali a true national language for all spheres of work (Mohamed 1975). It appears that popular movements bring with them a mandate for the use of the languages of the populace. The opportunity for change presented in a revolutionary setting plus the recently demonstrated power of the victorious party sometimes leads to a situation where long-ignored language issues are finally dealt with. One can also see where a mother tongue policy following on the heels of an elitist policy favoring a

single language group would be an excellent political move for a newly established government wishing to solidify its national support.

The use of mother tongues in literacy can enhance people's pride in their language, culture, and nation and prevent the cultural dissonance that sometimes occurs when a totally foreign language has to be learned. It creates a less threatening atmosphere for learning in which people can immediately relate literacy skills to the problems and needs of everyday life. It also increases the speed of learning and thus improves the chances of success.

However, there are also problems with this type of approach. Many languages have a very limited amount of written material. A neo-literate may soon find that there is little to read beyond the primers used for his/her literacy classes. This often leads to a relapse into illiteracy as reported in Somalia (Unesco 1977) and Mali (Hoben 1980). This may create resentment towards the state instead of the original thankfulness. Resentment may also be engendered among those language groups whose languages are not chosen. They may feel that other groups have been given an advantage that has not been accorded to them. Dialect groups of a major language group may find that the chosen "mother tongue" is very different from the language they use at home. In the selection process, it is important to choose a variety of the language that is widely used, that is or can be standardized, and one that carries a certain amount of prestige. Various groups using languages within the chosen language family may speak dialects that are different from the selected mother tongue to varying degrees. Sometimes the differences can be very significant. Singapore has followed a policy of

the use of four mother tongues that represent the diversity of her peoples: Mandarin for the Chinese, Tamil for the Indians, Malay for the Malays, and English for international and intergroup communication. In reality, however, most of the Chinese and many of the Indians use mother tongues other than Mandarin and Tamil. Thus they find that they have to learn their mandated "mother tongues" outside the home.

The implementation of a selected mother tongue policy faces other problems such as the recruitment and training of teachers from the selected language groups; the development of orthographies, materials developers, and materials; and the creation of a body of literature that will sustain neo-literates. The effects of such a policy have not yet been analyzed. Some nations proclaim the selected approach as a first step towards the development of literacy in all of the nation's mother tongues. Other nations see the selected languages absorbing the smaller mother tongues and creating a less multilingual situation. The selected languages are also given official roles at the local or regional level and are seen as lingua franca on a regional and national basis. It will take some time to determine if and how such language shift occurs.

Full Mother Tongue Approach

The full mother tongue approach is similar to the idea espoused by Unesco, among others, that all language groups should have the right to be literate in their own mother tongue. While there may be some nations that see this as a natural outcome of an expanded selected mother tongue policy, there is no highly multilingual nation that is presently implementing such a policy (i.e., conducting literacy work in all the

languages of that nation). There are, however, a few interesting examples that have approximated such a policy which will be discussed here in order to demonstrate what such a policy might involve.

The Soviet literacy campaign, discussed in Chapter II, was the first major attempt to promote literacy in multiple languages. During the first thirty years of the campaign, orthographies were developed for over fifty languages, bringing the total number of Russian languages with written forms to over seventy (Desheriyev and Mikhalchenko 1976). In the early years of the campaign under Lenin, there seems to have been a liberal approach with the learners left to decide if they wished to become literate in their mother tongue and/or the Russian language. It appears that Stalin was less interested in the promotion of indigenous languages as he reduced the number of languages used in literacy work and supported a movement to have all mother tongues written in the Cyrillic alphabet (Trudgill 1974). There is also some speculation that the Soviet government's promotion of local languages was a political strategy designed to promote minor dialects at the expense of the development of regional languages that might aid in the creation of regional interest groups, especially in the Muslim areas of the Soviet Union (Spencer 1963).

There is no doubt that this divide and rule philosophy is at the heart of South Africa's language policy. One can say that South Africa is attempting to follow a full mother tongue policy by promoting the creation of ethnolinguistic homelands, supporting the teaching of indigenous languages, and even providing for radio and television broadcasts in local languages. One would imagine that this is something that

a liberal could cheer about in contrast to the suppression of minority
languages that takes place in many other countries. However, the South
Africans have combined their promotion of local languages with the
restriction of access to the real national and international languages:
Afrikaans and English. They are promoting cultural maintenance at the
expense of cultural growth by limiting the tribal groups to their mother
tongues and preventing them from acquiring the languages of political
and economic power. This once again demonstrates the power of language
and its sensitivity as a political and economic issue.

The final example of an attempt at a full mother tongue policy is
that of Papua New Guinea. At first glance, Papua New Guinea would seem
to be a linguistic basket case: 738 vernaculars including 379 with less
than one thousand speakers and only fifty-three with over 10,000 speakers
(Unesco-Asia 1978). In addition, literacy was a concept foreign to the
native inhabitants before the arrival of European colonialists. Despite
the formidable obstacles, however, a dedicated group of literacy workers,
mostly from mission groups, have succeeded in developing orthographies
for 180 languages that reach 78% of the population (Unesco-Asia 1978).
The effect of this effort remains to be seen. On the one hand, the lack
of a sense of nation among the tribes of PNG lessens the motivation to
become literate in order to become a good citizen. On the other hand,
this lack of a national consciousness may make mother tongue literacy
a more attractive option to tribal members. Most of the organizations
working in literacy are hoping that literacy in the mother tongues will
be a stepping-stone to literacy in the national languages, English and
Pidgin. Given its Melanesian structure, Pidgin, which is spoken by 30%

of the population, creates fewer learning problems for neo-literates. The immediate lesson of the PNG experience is that tremendous strides can be made in developing unwritten languages for literacy use. It is a tribute to the dedication of the small band of linguists working in the area that they have been able to develop written forms for over 180 languages. This seems to indicate that it is technically possible to launch full mother tongue programs. The question if such a policy is advisable has still not been answered. This effort may succeed in its goal of preventing the creation of an irreconcilable gulf between the English-speaking power elite, the Pidgin-speaking intermediaries, and the mass of mother tongue speakers by bringing them all into a literate dialogue on change and development (Norombu and Croft 1981). However, it also remains to be seen if the mother tongue approach will aid or hinder the development of a national consciousness, if it will move people to literacy in the national languages, and if it will lead to the development of indigenous literature in the mother tongues that will maintain mother tongue literacy and the mother tongues themselves. Like many other questions related to the language choice issue, these remain to be answered. Only time and careful research will provide those answers.

The Adult Literacy Setting

The world's experience with different language policies has been extensive. Almost all possible variations have been attempted and probably all have been found to be successful in some circumstances and unsuccessful in others. The rest of this study will examine the issue

of language choice for literacy from a multidisciplinary perspective in an attempt to illuminate the issues involved through an analysis of the lessons of the world's experience and contemporary theory from a number of related disciplines. It is unfortunate that the world's experience to date has not conclusively answered many of the questions that form the language choice issue. Each nation, and often each program, has followed its own path, and there has been little valid research to determine the adequacy of the various language policies used. Another enigma has been the adult learner. Despite all of the rhetoric about the need to distinguish between adults and children in the educational setting, little has actually been done to identify what those differences are. Most research, especially on the language issue, has focussed on the child in the formal school environment and ignored the adult in the non-formal setting. Before going on to the main analysis of this book, it is important to briefly look at the environment in which this language choice question is being debated: the adult literacy setting.

A major feature of this setting is that it is based on voluntary participation for the most part. In general, there are no coercive measures like mandatory schooling laws that force adults to attend literacy classes and learn reading and writing. There may be other laws like literacy requirements for voting that strongly promote the acquisition of literacy skills, but most nations are content to view literacy programs as optional activities. This means, of course, that people are free not to exercise that option and that they may even choose to drop out once they have joined a literacy program. A long history of literacy programs with over a 50% dropout rate attests to the fact that people are

more than willing to exercise their right to quit. The common wisdom in adult education, therefore, is that the adult, much more than the child, takes the long perspective. Adults know their long-term interests and will continue with an activity if they know that it meets those interests and is providing them with usable skills that are relevant to their lives. This relevance may be political, social, economic, religious, or related to some other sphere of their lives, but it must be there if they are to continue. Becoming literate is a difficult task for most people. If people are to persevere with such a hard task, they have to have a great deal of motivation. The achievement must be seen as being worth the effort.

Another important factor to consider is that adults have limited time and energy. Unlike many school children, education is far from being their full-time job. They are full-time parents, farmers, workers, etc., who are trying to become literate in their spare time. They are most likely to approach the learning task after a draining eight to twelve hours of work in the factory or field. They commonly have a limited amount of time per week to spend on literacy studies and a limited number of months that they can continue with these studies. Time considerations limit both the intensity of effort in terms of hours per day or per week and the longevity of the effort in terms of months or years. Adults are willing to make an effort if they see a rationale that provides motivation, but they also wish to see immediate results from that effort and to reconfirm their assumption that literacy skills will benefit them in some way. If this confirmation is not forthcoming within a time period established in their minds, they will most probably

drop out. Other factors such as planting seasons may also intervene to pull them out of an educational program. The length and intensity of the time commitment is a problem that literacy planners must take into consideration in the early stages of planning. How much time will people be willing to spend on literacy activities?

Adults also bring a whole range of experience and attitudes to the learning situation that children do not possess. The richer experience base of adults is often cited by adult educators as a great resource that can be developed by bringing learners into the planning of the learning process; by emphasizing experiential, participatory techniques that utilize that experience; and by building learning activities that are related to the expressed needs of the learners. While all of this is very true, there are also some disadvantages that may arise from this great experience. Many illiterate adults were or know participants who experienced failure in learning situations. Many are dropouts from the formal school system. They thus may approach the literacy program with a high degree of apprehension about their ability to survive another encounter with organized learning activities. They may fear failure or the possibility that they will be treated like children once again. They will also bring with them certain established attitudes towards learning, literacy, and languages. Despite the attempts of literacy workers to use participatory, experiential techniques, they may resist since their attitude towards learning may be that the teacher should always be control. Some may have the attitude that literacy is a magical formula that can be given to them and not something that almost anyone can acquire through a period of application and study. Many

learners will also have definite attitudes about which languages are suitable for literacy. In some countries, a person is only considered "literate" if s/he is literate in English or French. People also carry definite attitudes towards languages themselves. The mother tongue may be looked down upon and the status of some other language held very high. It is fine for an educator to preach the merits of mother tongue literacy, but the prospective learners may have long-held and often logical beliefs about the advantages of literacy in a prestigious language and the usefulness of mother tongue literacy.

More will be said about the adult learner in later chapters of this study. It is important to keep the adult literacy setting in mind as the backdrop for all of the analysis to follow, especially since little research has been done on the adult illiterate. Therefore, there is a need to draw upon the findings made in many disciplines and sift them through the filter of the adult literacy setting in order to discover those findings that have relevance for that setting.

CHAPTER IV
THE LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

The Major Linguistic Factors

One of the problems encountered in coming to grips with the language choice question is the accumulation of knowledge about the language environment of the literacy program. It appears that a lack of understanding of the nature and roles of the languages in multilingual settings has been a major contributing factor in poor language decisions. Political forces, in particular, have often played a dominant role in many decisions and led to policies that were not in harmony with the existing language environment. Languages and language use patterns have developed over centuries and are not easily changed, despite the wishes of powerful politicians. Decision makers should try to develop policies that are in accord with the language setting and not in opposition to it. This chapter and the next will primarily focus on the assessment of the language environment of a program. Decision makers should seek the answers to questions such as:

1. What are the basic linguistic facts of the literacy setting in terms of numbers of language varieties and language families and number and distribution of the speakers of those varieties?

2. What differences exist between language varieties and between language families?

3. What is the level of complexity of these language varieties?

4. Which language varieties have orthographies?

5. What are the relationships between the orthographies in use?

6. To what extent have these varieties been standardized?

7. Which language varieties have written materials in terms of metalinguistic tools (e.g., dictionaries, grammars) and general reading matter?

8. What is the degree of difference between the spoken and written forms of the language varieties?

9. To what extent have these language varieties been modernized?

Discussion of the Factors

1. The basic linguistic facts of the setting

It hardly needs saying that any language decision should rest on a base of knowledge about the language situation prevailing in the target area. One needs to know what the choices are before one can make a choice. This means that the decision makers should know what languages are used in the target area, the number of native and non-native speakers of those languages, the geographic distribution of those speakers, and the language distance between families of languages and among dialects of the same language families. Some of this information can be gathered from census data or language surveys; other information might have to come from studies done by linguists or other specialists. Even these sources may not give one a totally accurate picture of the language environment. Census data based on respondents' self-identification of mother tongues may reflect language attitudes and personal preference as much as linguistic reality. People may make claims that are not really true (Khubchandani 1972). Linguistic analyses by experts may

lead to conclusions about mutual intelligiblity of language varieties that are not accepted by the people who speak those language varieties (Wolff 1964). Decision makers will have to deal with perceptions as well as scientific facts.

A knowledge of the languages used in the target area presents the decision maker with the list of possibilities for the language decision. The number of native and non-native speakers of those languages gives a measure by which to determine the relative importance of the languages, although it is certainly not the only measure that should be used. A local mother tongue may have a large number of speakers but be an unwritten language that presently serves no literacy functions. The number of non-native speakers gives some indication of the importance of the language in the local context; it should reveal those languages that have some special functional purpose that encourages people to learn them in addition to their mother tongues. The geographic distribution of speakers of a certain language group may reveal an urban/rural split, the concentration of a language within a certain tribal area, or some other factor which may help or hinder a program's goals. For example, programs designed to help a specific rural or tribal population, an urban audience, or to create a cadre of literates over a wide geographic area may find that different languages suit their purposes.

2. Differences between language varieties

Differences between language varieties and language families can be structural and/or psychological. Structural differences in terms of phonemic, morphemic, lexical, and grammatical elements can be discerned

by linguistic analysis. One would assume that languages that were linguistically similar would also have a significant degree of mutual intelligibility. However, it has been found that psychological factors may be more powerful than linguistic similarities. Wolff (1964) discovered a number of situations in which speakers of linguistically similar dialects claimed that they did not understand one another. He also found cases of non-reciprocal intelligibility between two closely related dialects. Speakers of one dialect claimed to understand the speakers of the second dialect, but speakers of the second dialect denied that they could understand speakers of the first dialect. Wolff estimated that this was likely to occur when the second dialect was used by a culturally dominant group and/or was a language that had a greater functional value for people. Speakers of subordinate dialects were more likely to use the prestige dialect and to claim similarities between their dialect and the dominant variety. Dominant group members were more likely to assert the uniqueness of their language and to disclaim similarities between their language and the dialects of subordinant groups. Such cases led Wolff to conclude that linguistic similarity was not the decisive factor in determining mutual intelligibility and interlingual communication. These, he felt, were more a function of intercultural or interethnic trends and relationships.

Decision makers will have to gather information based on scientific analysis and on the perceptions of people about the similarities of language varieties and language families. This information may be difficult to acquire; however, it is very helpful if one can categorize the list of language possibilities according to the family of languages

to which they belong and the degree of structural and psychological intelligibility between those languages.

In Nepal, for example, the Indo-Aryan languages all have a common Sanskrit base which facilitates the learning of languages within that family. Speakers of languages in that family can understand and learn other languages of the family with varying degrees of ease. The Tibeto-Burmese languages, however, are completely different, and there is little transfer of learning that can take place between the families.

This understanding of the distance between languages is crucial when certain languages have to be selected for literacy purposes. In Mali, for instance, a decision was made to select one language from each of the four main language families: Mande, Fulani, Songhai, and Tamashek. A factor favoring the adoption of Swahili in Tanzania was that many of the local languages were of the same Bantu family as Swahili. This was also a consideration in Indonesia where Bahasa Indonesia was derived from the same family as most of the mother tongues. Thus it seems to have been common policy for literacy efforts to be made in a language or languages that were representative of a given language family. This provides advantages to the speakers of the chosen languages and to speakers of those languages that are closely related to the chosen language.

3. Language complexity

Decision makers should also have some idea of the complexity of the languages under consideration since that will greatly affect the ability

of people to become literate in that language, especially those who are non-native speakers. Some languages present more difficulty to learners than others. A factor favoring the support of Bahasa Indonesia over the majority language, Javanese, as the national language of Indonesia was the high degree of complexity of Javanese compared to Bahasa Indonesia, a lingua franca that utilized a much simpler grammar and lexicon and thus was easier to learn as a second language by the masses.

4. Orthographies

Most of the world's languages are unwritten ones. While there has been great success in the creation of orthographies for many languages, as in Papua New Guinea and the Soviet Union, decision makers should take care not to underestimate the enormity of the undertaking. It may take as long as five years to move through a process of linguistic analysis (phonology, morphology, syntax) to the development of an orthography and the preparation of dictionaries, grammars, and teaching materials before it is possible to launch a literacy program (Armstrong 1963; Unesco 1964b). This process may take much less time if a reliable linguistic analysis has already been made; however, it is very important that the creation of an orthography be carefully based on such an analysis. Numerous problems have occurred where poorly trained missionaries have devised scripts that failed to render a complete sound-symbol correspondence. A rush to create an orthography in a short period of time may lead to many learning problems later on.

Another problem is selecting a script that is culturally and politically acceptable. For years after independence, Somalia continued

the use of English and Italian for official purposes because no government was willing to risk its popularity by choosing between the Roman alphabet and Arabic as the medium for written Somali, the language spoken by 95% of the people (Mohamed 1975). The Roman alphabet offered continuity with the colonial languages and a link to the Western world and modernity. Arabic, of course, carried its powerful ties with Islam, the religion of the nation, and was a link to Somalia's many Arab neighbors in the region. A revolutionary government that sprang to power in 1969 eventually decided on a modified Roman alphabet in 1972.

The People's Republic of China has also experienced difficulties in implementing its script reforms. As early as the 1920's, the Communist Party proposed that the intricate, ideograph system for Chinese be dropped in favor of a Romanized script. While the ideograph system allowed speakers of different Chinese dialects to communicate with one another, Communist leaders felt that it was too complex for the masses to learn. Despite the rise to power of the Communists and their establishment of a totalitarian state, they have so far been unable to carry out their Romanization plan due to the resistance of many people (Alfred Hudson 1982: personal communication).

5. Relationships between orthographies in use

Decision makers should look at the relationship between orthographies used for the same and for different languages. The diversity of missionary groups and colonial powers operating in the Third World during the colonial period sometimes led to the creation of several orthographies for a single language or group of languages. This

happened in a number of areas in Africa and later led to problems for the leaders of newly independent nations who then had to deal with the competing orthographies, each with its own interest group and often divided along religious or tribal lines. A choice has to be made to end the confusion, but the decision may be a difficult one to make from a political perspective. The Gambia's efforts to launch mother tongue efforts were hindered for years by the failure of the government to select one of the competing orthographies--orthographies that were very little different from one another but which had their own constituencies. Agreement was finally reached in 1982, seventeen years after independence. From a linguistic point of view, decision makers should select the orthography that best suits the sound system of the language it represents. That may mean taking the best of each of the competing orthographies and creating a new hybrid. If the hybrid represents a radical change, decision makers will have to weigh the advantages of increased ease of learning against the amount of material in the old orthographies that may become unintelligible to readers trained under the new system.

Another aspect to be considered is the relationship between the orthographies of different languages. Nepali, Hindi, and a number of other Indian languages all use the Devanagari script. The transfer of reading skills from one language to another is made easier, thus giving literacy planners more flexibility in selecting a mother tongue or using one of those languages that may be a second language for many learners. On the other hand, spoken Hindi and Urdu are very similar, but the scripts are totally different. The orthographic transfer would

be nil, so the planner might want to strongly consider the initial use of the second language if that is the language in which the learners wish to become literate.

There have been some attempts to develop orthographies for unwritten languages that were similar to those of a prestige second language. These attempts have run into problems especially when the languages were from completely different language families. Niger tried to develop a script for Hausa that was easy to learn, but that also facilitated the learning of French, the official language. Discrepancies naturally developed because of the different sound systems of the two languages. It was just not possible for Hausa to be represented by a Roman alphabet carrying the same sound-symbol correspondences as it did with the French language (Unesco 1964b). This conflict also became evident during attempts in Sierra Leone to use the English spelling system for local languages (Allen 1974). Orthographies can be modified to represent any language, but it is extremely difficult to make them represent two very different sound systems at the same time. Mali developed a forty-five symbol alphabet to represent the forty-five sounds found in its four major languages, but only sixteen characters were used in all four of the languages (Dumont 1973).

In the 1930's, the Russians switched many of the mother tongue orthographies from Roman script to the Cyrillic alphabet, but modifications were made to make the alphabet match the sound systems of those related languages. Still, the switch to Cyrillic most probably did make the transfer from mother tongue literacy to literacy in Russian much easier. Thus, the relationship among orthographies is an important

factor to consider especially if literacy in a second language is the ultimate goal of the literacy program. The use of a common alphabet undoubtedly aids the learners in making the transition from reading in their mother tongue to reading in a second language.

6. Standardization of languages

In choosing a language for literacy, decision makers must determine if the languages under consideration have a standardized form that is widely accepted. Usually a major dialect that has prestige value and/or a literary tradition will become the norm by which "correct" and "incorrect" language is judged. The orthography for the language should be based on this norm as will grammars and dictionaries. This standard-ized form is essential so that spelling, grammar, and vocabulary be consistent allowing for inter-group communication, precision, clarity, and the development of a literature and written tradition. This process needs a lengthy period of time for the norm to evolve and become accepted as such. It cannot be done overnight. A language that has not undergone standardization has a long, tedious path to follow until it is ready to meet needs greater than simple, initial literacy.

7. Written materials

One of the steps in the process of standardization is the develop-ment of metalinguistic tools such as dictionaries, grammars, and descrip-tions of the language. These are necessary for the development of a language norm and for the training of people who will be qualified to prepare and implement a literacy effort. It is possible to teach literacy in a language that lacks these, but their absence indicates

that this literacy will be of a limited nature due to the lack of a standardized form that promotes the development of a written tradition.

The existence of a literacy tradition that includes a minimal amount of available reading material is essential to the promotion and maintenance of full literacy skills. The existence of primers and other teaching materials is important for the initial learning of literacy, but there must be many kinds of additional materials of various levels of difficulty in the learner's locality if that literacy is to be maintained. A report of the Summer Institute of Linguistics detailed the years of effort that went into creating a script for a tribe of 7000 and then persuading them to learn it (Herbert 1979). Other than the possible achievement of language maintenance by the creation of the script, one cannot help but wonder about the other payoffs that would come to a people who are literate in a language in which all the literature is produced by missionaries. One such literacy worker answered the question in this manner:

> A literature wholly dependent upon translation, however, remains a 'dependent' literature. Only when the number of original works far exceeds those translated from another language can it be said to have become a 'literate tradition' (Norombu and Croft 1981, p. 97).

The existence of such a literate tradition enhances the motivation of learners to become literate and creates a literate environment that promotes the maintenance of literacy skills. A major factor in the relapse from literacy into illiteracy is the lack of cheap, available materials that are of interest to the neo-literate. A lack of a wide variety of materials may be compensated for by the availability of a limited literature that holds a great attraction for the neo-literate.

Religious works, like the Koran and the Bible, are powerful instruments for the maintenance of literacy skills. Throughout Africa many self-confessed "illiterates" demonstrate an ability to write the Arabic script, the result of religious instruction. However, if a neo-literate is to develop his/her literacy skills to a high level and use them to their greatest advantage, it will be necessary to become literate in a language that has a wide range of written materials to meet the varied needs of people from all walks of life.

8. Differences between written and spoken forms

The sole act of placing spoken language on paper changes the form in a number of ways. More detail is needed to compensate for the loss of immediacy of the situation. The reader must be told the things s/he would normally learn from the context of the situation, gestures, and voice intonation. Less detail is needed in terms of repetition since everything is now in print and can be referred to. The reader does not have to rely totally on memory as does the listener. These changes are common to all languages that are put into print. There are other differences, however, that are more common to some languages than to others.

One such difference is the existence of two varieties of what is believed to be the same language: one is a highly stylized, classical variety of the language and the other is a vernacular variety that is much less prestigious. Almost all languages have a formal and informal register that is used for appropriate settings. Most also have an "educated" form that differs from the patois of the common man. A few

have a written form so different from the spoken form so as to consti-
tute a completely different language. This type of language situation
has been termed "diglossia" (Ferguson 1959).

A major example of diglossia is Arabic. Islamic teachings hold
that reading and writing should be done solely in the language of the
Koran or a modernized form that is closely derived from the Arabic of
the Koran (Palmer 1979). The written form, Modern Standard Arabic,
however, is unknown to most people, and the acquisition of literacy in
MSA requires an effort similar to the acquisition of a second language.
This makes it difficult for the masses to become literate. In the case
of Arabic, "mother tongue" literacy involves the learning of a new form
of the Arabic language. This situation also occurs in Cambodian, Tamil,
Telegu, and Sinhalese among other languages.

While these languages may be extreme examples of the difference
between the written and spoken form, all languages are affected by the
phonomenon. Written Nepali is filled with Sanskrit words that are
unknown to the man in the street. The infusion of the classical tradi-
tion thus hinders the spread of literacy among the less educated. This
is also probably a result of the magical aura that man generally
attaches to writing. The word is fixed in print forever, and most cul-
tures seem to prefer that these eternal words represent the "best" that
their language has to offer.

9. Degree of modernization

The 1953 Unesco Meeting of Experts declared that "there is nothing
in the structure of any language which precludes it from becoming a

vehicle of modern civilization" (Unesco 1953, p. 49). This most certainly is true. What is also undisputed is that many languages are not yet ready to be "vehicles of modern civilization." Even after the development of an orthography, the establishment of a standardized norm, and the growth of a written tradition, languages may not be ready to carry the messages of a twentieth-century, industrialized, technological world. Before 1943, for example, the Somali language had no words for phrases such as "capitalism," "diplomatic relations," and "trade union" (Andrzejewski 1971). Many other languages have run into similar problems as the growth of human knowledge increases exponentially in contrast to the post-industrial era and even earlier times. For the first time in the history of man, he is living in a period when major social change occurs within the lifespan of a person. Cultural and technological changes occur at a seemingly bewildering rate, and new products and ideas are added daily to the language of man: "transitors," "microwaves," "computers," "gay rights," and "women's liberation."

Both the people and the languages of the Third World are hard pressed to keep up with this rapid change. Many of the new terms are swallowed whole in their original form thus bringing a plethora of foreign loan words into the vocabulary of another language. Some cultures, especially those with a long and proud written tradition, struggle to translate the new concepts into new words that follow the linguistic pattern of the indigenous language with varying degrees of success. One such suggestion for a translation of "railway ticket" into Sanskrit was "agniratha miramasthana patrika" ["little leaf of paper for a stopping place of the fire wagon"] (Spencer 1963 p. 33).

Although this is an extreme example, it does give some of the flavor of the challenge that is facing all languages today. It has been suggested that one of the reasons for the acceptance of English as the premier international language has been its ability to make rapid change in response to new terms, ideas, and foreign borrowings. It has also been greatly helped by the fact that much of the latest technological development has taken place in English, thereby precluding a need for massive borrowings. Despite the lack of the national terminology committees that many nations have, the English language and its scientific community have shown the resilience to grow with each new discovery.

The degree of modernization of a given language is of concern to literacy planners to the extent that it affects the goals of the program and the aspirations of learners. Goals and aspirations that are related to the modern sector may demand literacy in a language that meets those needs. Literacy in an underdeveloped language may satisfy certain limited literacy needs, but will certainly not satisfy all of them. Every society will have one or more languages that are adjusting to the conditions of modern life. Literacy in those languages will be more likely to help someone operate in the modern sector of the economy.

Characteristics of Appropriate Languages

According to this analysis of the language choice question from a linguistic perspective, therefore, we may determine certain characteristics of a language that would facilitate its use in adult literacy efforts. The ideal candidate would:

a. possess an orthography that correctly represented the sound system of the language and was easy to learn;

b. have a commonly accepted, standardized form;

c. have dictionaries and grammars that codified usage and spelling and aided in the teaching of that language;

d. be continually undergoing a process of growth and modernization;

e. possess a written tradition sufficient to promote the acquisition and maintenance of literacy skills.

The ideal candidate might also be a major language of the area or a dialect of that language family thus ensuring the transfer of some literacy skills to a major language that presented a full range of opportunity for the exercise of literacy skills. However, this would be a political and cultural decision. It would be possible to offer literacy in a language that merely possessed an orthography and none of the other characteristics. However, that would most certainly be a limited literacy primarily useful for personal purposes. It would not permit the neo-literate to utilize his/her literacy skills for a wide range of goals due to the lack of written materials in the language and its limited literate uses within that society. The degree of modernization of the language would be a primary concern for programs that were related to the modern sector of the society and to developmental processes that were utilizing external technology that required new terminology. It would not be a major concern for programs that were geared to basic skills for rural populations in the traditional sector of society.

The numbers of native and non-native speakers, their geographic distribution, and the relationships of languages and language families are pieces of information that come out of a linguistic analysis as input for decisions to be made by others. The value of this information to the formulation of a language decision depends on the goals of the program and the learners. Is the program geared for a specific tribal or regional group or does it wish to aim for a larger population that is geographically dispersed? Does it wish to bring neo-literates to a basic level of literacy that they can use for personal, village-level activities or does it wish to bring them to full literacy in a language that possesses a wealth of written material? These are some of the questions that will come out of other perspectives that will require linguistic input for determining the answers.

C H A P T E R V
THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The Major Socio-Cultural Factors

Language permeates everything that man does. It is one of his most salient characteristics. It is at the heart of his culture and society. Language is not a simple technical code that can be completely understood outside of the cultural context in which it occurs. In order to develop a rational and realistic language policy, a decision maker needs to understand the background and functions of the languages used in the socio-cultural milieu in which s/he is working. The major questions that need to be asked and answered are:

1. What are the general roles of languages in a society?

2. What are the specific roles of languages in this society?

3. What are the literacy roles of languages in this society?

4. What are the language attitudes of the target audience?

5. What is the historical background and present state of inter-group relations?

6. What is the degree of individual multilingualism in society?

7. What attitudes do people have towards literacy?

Discussion of the Factors

1. General roles of languages in society

Before formulating any language policy, it is necessary to gather data on the languages under consideration and their roles in society. In general, any language can serve one or more of five main functions: communicative, expressive, unifying, separatist, and participatory (Okonkwo 1975). In multilingual nations, different languages may fulfill different functions for a given language group.

The _communicative_ function is the most obvious function of any language. A language's adequacy in fulfilling that role may depend upon its degree of modernization. Languages develop according to the needs of a particular speech community. They become the perfect medium for the transfer of messages within that speech group. However, these languages may encounter difficulties when they are used for communicating ideas and information that originate outside that speech community. The language of the Eskimos may possess multiple words for different types of snow, yet not possess the vocabulary for the discussion of nuclear fission and other technological developments made outside of that society. The language will have to undergo further development and expansion if it is to be used for carrying these new messages. Such a process of modernization is very costly and time consuming. The mother tongue is undoubtedly best for intra-group communication based on traditional messages. It may have weaknesses that make it ill-suited for discussions about non-traditional topics. Inter-group communication is carried out in most societies by one or more languages commonly

accepted as lingua franca. It is also possible that different languages will be used as lingua franca at different levels of interaction: local, regional, national, and international. The communicative role, therefore, is a threefold task: in-group communication, out-group communication, and the communication of specialized information (Nida and Wonderly 1971). Different languages may carry out one or more of these functions. In Kenya, the mother tongues are used for in-group communication, Swahili is used for out-group communication, and English serves as the language of specialized information. In the United States, English serves all purposes for most citizens although minority language groups may use their mother tongue for in-group communication.

The _expressive_ function of a language is related to the idea of a language as the embodiment of a culture and its world view. Christophersen (1973, p. 36) summed up this aspect of language in this way:

> A man's native speech is almost like his shadow, inseparable
> from his personality. . . and it is through our vernacular,
> through our folk speech . . . that most of us attain to the
> characteristic expression of our nature and of what our
> nature allows us to be or to discern. . . . Hence in all
> education the primary place should be given to training in
> the exact and free use of the mother tongue.

To lose one's mother tongue, therefore, is a great tragedy and irreparable loss for, according to a Sanskrit verse, "As you speak, so will you reveal not only the culture of your family but of your ancestors and of your race" (Trivedi 1978, p. 97). The bond between a people and its language is very powerful and not to be taken lightly.

The _unifying_ function of language unites people of diverse backgrounds. This can be very strong in instances where language and

ethnicity coincide (e.g., Japan, Korea, Lesotho, etc.). It can also serve to bind together people of different ethnicities allowing for inter-ethnic communication, however, it has its limitations:

> Language cannot serve a unifying function in countries where ethnicity and language do not coincide. However, the possession of the same language by members of different ethnic groups within a community neutralizes the potential use of language for divisive purposes by unscrupulous political entrepreneurs (Okonkwo 1975, p. 40).

This unifying aspect of language was a major consideration in the official language decisions of many newly independent nations. Nations that had a popularly accepted, single Great Tradition had the easiest time utilizing the unifying force of language. Others, like Indonesia and Tanzania, were lucky enough to have indigenous lingua francas which were commonly accepted as valid standard bearers of the new nationalism. Many nations, however, were careful to avoid antagonizing multiple language groups by selecting a neutral language that would not give any single ethnic group an advantage over another (although there would be a definite advantage to the socio-economic groups that already used that language as a second language). Oftentimes, the newly independent nation retained the colonial language as the official language. Today there are fifty-five nations that grant some official status to English (Fishman, Cooper, and Conrad 1977) and another thirty-six that use French (Jernudd and Shaw 1979). As Whitely said of Swahili in Uganda, "What was loved by none could be tolerated by all" (Whitely 1969, p. 12).

The _separatist_ function of language comes into play when language serves as a symbol of ethnicity or nationalism. Inside a

heterolinguistic nation, language may serve to divide people along
linguistic/ethnic lines. At the national and international levels, a
language may be used to emphasize the unity of the nation and its
uniqueness in relation to other nations. The fear of separatist tenden-
cies among ethnic groups was a major reason for many language policies
that stressed the use of the national/official language as a unifying
force. The chapter on the political perspective will analyze that
rationale in greater detail.

The _participatory_ function of language allows its users to gain
access to certain economic and social opportunities. Different lan-
guages may be needed for participation at the local, regional, national,
and international levels. Depending on his goals, an Indian in Orissa
may find that he needs to learn the state language, Oriya, the official
language, Hindi, and an international language like English in addition
to his mother tongue if he wished to participate at all levels of
involvement. These multiple layers of involvement will become much
clearer when we discuss the specific roles of languages in a society.

These five functions of language are always in operation in every
society. An individual, however, may place different orders of priority
on each function depending on his/her goals and the context in which
s/he is operating.

2. Specific roles of languages in society

Within multilingual societies and subsections of those societies,
certain languages may come to dominate certain functions. It is impor-
tant for decision makers to have a grasp of the distribution of roles

among languages so that they are able to make decisions based on the reality of the situation and not some ideal, but false, picture of what the language situation should look like according to official policies. One way of analyzing the language situation of a given locale is to look at domains of use (institutions, spheres of everyday life) and at the languages that are used in these domains at various geographical and contextual levels. Table 1 partially maps out a language environment from the viewpoint of a farmer living near Nepal's southern border who speaks Abadi as his mother tongue. It shows what his language needs are in different contexts and domains.

The closer to home the farmer stays, the more functional his mother tongue, Abadi. If he desires to widen the range of his participation, however, he finds that there are limits to the functionality of Abadi. He may switch to Hindi for some regional and national interactions since Hindi is similar to Abadi and therefore easier for him to learn than Nepali. Most people, especially those in official institutions, would prefer that he use Nepali, but would probably attempt to communicate with him in Hindi, a language that is familiar to many Nepalis. Hindi also serves an international function since it is the official language of Nepal's closest neighbor, India. However, the preferred language for international use and among some of the elite is English. If the farmer, for some reason, finds that he will be having constant interactions with another language group, he may decide that he will have to learn that language also. The point of this analysis is that different individuals and the language groups they represent in multilingual societies will probably find the need for control over a language or

TABLE 1

LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT OF ABADI-SPEAKING FARMER IN NEPAL

Contexts	Domains				
	Economic	Social	Political	Education	Government
Family	Abadi	Abadi	Abadi	Abadi	Nepali/Abadi
Village	Abadi	Abadi	Abadi	Abadi Nepali	Abadi/Hindi Nepali
Regional	Abadi Nepali	Hindi Nepali	Hindi Nepali	Hindi Nepali	Hindi Nepali
National	Nepali Hindi	Nepali Hindi/ English	Nepali	Nepali English	Nepali
International	English Hindi	English Hindi	English	English Hindi	English

languages other than their mother tongue if they are to enter certain contexts and certain domains of life. Once they expand their range of activity beyond the village (and even some villages are multilingual), they will probably find that they need the use of other languages.

The domains and contexts are much more complex than those given in the chart. The economic domain may be broken down into rural and urban sectors or according to farming, manufacturing, marketing, etc. One language may play a primary role in the factories of a certain industry, the tourist trade, or the regional market place. The social domain includes interpersonal interactions and religious duties. A Muslim would find that he would have to have some knowledge of the Arabic in the Koran. The education sector could also be divided into primary, secondary, tertiary, and adult education. The chart has listed both political and governmental domains in an attempt to distinguish between the official policies and informal uses of language by government officials and the permissible languages that can be used by a citizen in political life. Nepali is the official language for all purposes in Nepal, but Nepalese are generally understanding of the need to use other languages, especially at the local levels. In some countries there may even be a difference in actual language policies within the government itself--in the court system, the army, the parliament, etc. It is important for the decision maker to know the de facto language policies as well as the official ones if s/he is to make a choice that meets the program's and the learner's goals.

3. Literacy roles of languages in society

Along with an understanding of the general and specific roles of languages within society, the decision maker should also have a knowledge of which languages have been used for literate purposes. Most educated people would be acquainted with the literacy roles of the nation's major languages, especially those with a long literary tradition. The decision maker should also know about some of the less acknowledged literacy activities in languages. In many nations of Africa, for instance, local Koranic schools train students to read at least some of the Arabic of the Koran. Some students take advantage of this knowledge of a writing system to apply it to their own mother tongues and turn literacy for religion into a personal system for mother tongue literacy. Religious schools in Ethiopia teach literacy in Geez, a liturgical language that uses a very complex script of thirty-three characters each of which has six other related forms. Since Amharic and Tigrinya, two of Ethiopia's vernaculars, use the same orthography, there is an opportunity for students to transfer their Geez reading skills to one of these other languages. This would be particularly possible for making the switch to Amharic since the traditional pronunciation of Geez uses Amharic phonemes (Ferguson 1971).

The literacy program planner should be aware of all of the trends in literacy in his/her area. S/he should pay attention to the traditional forms of literacy as well as the literacy work of the formal school system. This knowledge provides a base upon which to build. It is a historical perspective that allows the planner to see which roles of languages have been partially served by literate, in addition to

oral, tradition. But the planner must also try to project what future role literacy can play for a given language group. The introduction of literacy provides a group with a new mode of expression. It also changes the status quo. One of these changes is the expansion of literacy use into new domains and contexts and perhaps the partial displacement of languages that previously fulfilled all literacy functions. Part of the language choice question is trying to estimate what the future uses of literacy will and should be. The spread of mother tongue (MT) or second language (L2) literacy to illiterates can have important consequences beyond the spread of the three R's. It adds a new dimension of communication to the five general roles of language. Some, but by no means all, of the possible effects of literacy upon neo-literates are outlined in Table 2. Almost every type of decision has its good and bad aspects. This is very true for language for literacy decisions. A poor decision may have the exact opposite effect of what was desired. Dissension and illiteracy instead of harmony and literacy may be the result of a bad decision. That is why it is important that the people who are making the decision have both a theoretical and a practical understanding of how languages function in society.

The literacy planner should also examine the specific roles of language in society and determine where literacy is playing a part and how that part can be expanded. This knowledge will also enable the planner to match the learner's goals and the program's goals with literacy skills in the proper language. A literacy program that seeks to bring dropouts to a level where they can rejoin the school system or

TABLE 2

SOME POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF THE ACQUISITION OF LITERACY UPON THE FIVE GENERAL ROLES
OF LANGUAGE IN SOCIETY

Roles	Language	Possible Positive Effects	Possible Negative Effects
Communicative	MT	-- introduction/extension of written mode into MT group	-- limited MT literacy with no reach beyond MT group
	L2	-- MT speaker brought into wider L2 literate community	-- MT speaker may have no opportunity or desire to use L2 literacy
Expressive	MT	-- literacy aids language maintenance and preservation of traditions	-- impedes assimilation into greater national culture
	L2	-- share culture and traditions with others; increase exchange	-- L2 cannot suffice for expressive purposes; experience cultural anomie
Unifying	MT	-- offering of MT literacy shows state cares for MT group	-- MT literacy may increase ethnic bond and centrifugal trend
	L2	-- provides literacy mode for intergroup communication	-- denial of MT literacy demonstrates state's antipathy toward group

TABLE 2--Continued

Roles	Language	Possible Positive Effects	Possible Negative Effects
Separatist	MT	-- increases pride in ethnic group and faith in multi-lingual ideal	-- bolsters ethnic identity and lessens attachment to the nation
	L2	-- brings people to a national identity instead of local one	-- denial of MT literacy heightens group's feeling of solidarity
Participatory	MT	-- brings illiterates into literate community and development discussion	-- restricts learner to limited opportunities available in MT
	L2	-- opens wider spectrum of opportunities and uses of literacy	-- no opportunities may be available in the local area for L2 literate

pass a certain examination should develop literacy skills in the language of the school system or the exam. A program that seeks to place out-of-school-youth in jobs in the modern sector of the economy should provide them with literacy skills that are needed in that sector in the language used in that sector. A project that seeks to provide basic literacy skills for personal home use should probably focus on developing those skills in the mother tongue.

4. Language attitudes

An important consideration that has to be made by decision makers is that of the attitudes that potential learners possess towards the languages that are candidates for literacy efforts. Languages are far from being neutral mediums. People often hold very strong feelings towards certain languages. These feelings may also extend to the native speakers of those languages and may indicate the prestige and usefulness that is attached to those languages.

The contexts in which a language is used, its history and literature, its officially sanctioned roles, and the opportunities people see linked to it largely determine its prestige level. A language used for official purposes, by the elite class, or for wider communication generally has high prestige value. An unwritten vernacular used mainly by lower economic classes usually has low prestige. People often wish to become literate in the high prestige languages in the belief that the acquisition of such a language will open the door to greater economic and social rewards. While that is true in many cases, it is also true that many people underestimate the advantages that will

accrue to them once they learn that language. They may also find that it is just too difficult and time-consuming an effort to reach the level of fluency they need for achieving the possible rewards. The result is often failure; however, more people are willing to try to learn a prestige language than a non-prestige one if it seems to offer them more opportunities.

The question of prestige can be a troublesome one for literacy planners. While there are strong emotional and pedagogical reasons for offering at least initial literacy in the mother tongue, the literacy worker may encounter staunch resistance from the native speakers of those languages. There have been numerous cases where people have objected to mother tongue literacy in favor of literacy in another, more prestigious language (Unesco 1953; Engle 1975; Parker 1975; British Council 1978). There is the potential for an embarrassing conflict between the "experts" and the learners. The experts, as represented by the Unesco conferences, are generally in favor of mother tongue literacy. Their arguments often call on the abstract rationale of the intrinsic worth of all languages and how the mother tongue really represents the essence of the "people." The "people," on the other hand, may be out in the streets clamoring for literacy in the official language and rejecting mother tongue literacy as a dead end street. The Unesco recommendation was that this request should be ignored until basic literacy was achieved in the mother tongue; then study of a second language could be started. To some, however, this may smack of paternalism. If the learners also make this assumption, it is unlikely that there will be many people around for the first

stage of the program, much less the second.

Motivation is at the heart of any human learning experience. If you smother the motivation in the beginning, you cannot expect to find it there at the end. Planners should take learners' attitudes and aspirations into strong consideration during the planning of a program. Perhaps the language issue should become a negotiated decision in many cases. The problem of negative attitudes towards their own mother tongues may also be a conundrum that defies solution. People object to literacy in their mother tongue because there is not much to read in it. Therefore, it has low prestige and a small number of literates. Those who are interested in developing a literature in that language may refrain from doing so because of the small number of readers. Publishers may hesitate to publish in it for the same reasons. This situation has become evident in Papua New Guinea where great efforts are being made to encourage mother tongue literacy. Norombo and Croft (1981, p. 84) have noted that "the problem operates in a vicious cycle as 'why learn to read Kewa if there are no books in the language' reinforces the prob-lem of 'why write in Kewa if there is no one to read the language.'" Literacy planners in PNG are seeking to break this cycle by promoting writers workshops and by getting neo-literates involved in the produc-tion of new materials in the vernaculars.

Attitudes towards the speakers of languages are also important. The extensive research of Gardner and Lambert (1972) has shown the importance of two types of motivation in second language acquisition: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivation comes from a recognition of the personal rewards available to those who acquire a

second language. This is evidenced by those who wish to become literate in a prestige language that is not their mother tongue. Integrative motivation is present when the learner wishes to acquire the language in order to become a member of that speech community. It is based on an affinity/respect for the speakers of that language. Drawing a parallel between second language acquisition and the acquisition of literacy, it is evident that a positive view of the group one is joining by becoming literate can be of great help in providing the learner with emotional sustenance during his/her journey towards literacy. These attitudes are often a result of historical interactions between speech/ethnic communities and the present state of relations between the groups making up a given society.

5. Background and present state of inter-group relations

The historical background of relationships between language groups plays a large role in the development of language attitudes and the degree of acceptance a given language policy will find. Conflicts over language policy permeate the world. While the choice of a language for adult literacy may not be seen to be an issue as crucial as the choice of a national/official language or the selection of languages to be used in the formal school system, it is still an important one to many. It may be given added sensitivity and import simply because the other decisions have already been made. The losing groups in the earlier battles may see this as one last time to make their stand in favor of their language candidate.

Particular attention should be paid to the history of dominant/ subordinate group interaction. Have there been any conflicts between groups that would make a language anathema to members of a rival group? In Uganda, for example, members of the Baganda tribe aided the British in their rule over the country and in turn received greater access to educational and economic opportunities than did other groups. On the eve of independence, Luganda, the language of the Baganda, seemed to be a good candidate for a special status as national language, indigenous lingua franca, or official language of the Bantu-speaking areas. It had twice as many native speakers as its nearest rival, a large number of second language speakers spread throughout the country, and the greatest amount of published literature. Other groups in the country, however, resented the special position that the Baganda had held under the British, so Swahili was recognized as the official language even though Luganda was the major language of administrative, economic, and political life (Criper and Ladefoged 1971; Kamoga 1974).

In Indonesia, resistance to the naming of Javanese, the language of the nation's most populous and powerful ethnic group, as the official language aided the adoption of Bahasa Indonesia, which was already immensely popular because of its neutral status as a lingua franca not linked to any particular indigenous group. In Malaysia, a great effort is being made to establish Malay as the premier language. Although being the dominant majority in terms of population, the Malays felt that they were losing their country to the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups that the British had encouraged to settle in the country. The Malays were especially fearful of the Chinese who dominated the economic life

of the nation. Perhaps feeling some guilt for the great ethnic change they had caused in the country through their immigration policy, the British helped structure a constitution that gave political power to the Malays. The Malays have used this power to give special advantage to their own people so that they can compete successfully with the more modern-minded Chinese. Part of this policy has also been to strongly encourage literacy in the Malay language for all groups in the society. While the Chinese may accept the need for literacy in the Malay language, it is doubtful that they will be willing to undergo a language shift and forgo their rights to their own ancient language, one with a far greater written tradition than Malay. On their part, the Malays worry about the loyalty of the Chinese to the state of Malaysia. This concern is compounded by China's periodic destabilization efforts in Southeast Asia. The substantial Chinese minority, meanwhile, has generally gone along with the Malaysian government's policies while conducting business as usual.

Within a country or a region of a country, there are patterns of interaction linked to the recent and distant past that can act for or against a given language policy. Members of a traditionally dominant group will wish to become literate in their own language especially if it is the dominant language for important functions. Subordinate groups that feel that their culture is threatened by the dominant group and language may seek to isolate themselves behind their mother tongue in order to resist assimilation. This is more likely to occur with indigenous subordinate groups than with immigrant subordinate groups (Paulston 1978). On the other hand, groups that are very secure

in the knowledge that their language and culture will survive or that hold negative feelings towards their language will more readily accede to literacy in a second language.

There are many sides to the issues involved. Should a language group worry more about assimilation and the possible loss of their language if they agree to become literate in a second language instead of their mother tongue? Or should they worry about the possible isolation and loss of opportunity they will experience if they retreat into themselves by only choosing mother tongue literacy? Will literacy in a heretofore unwritten language really be a force for the maintenance of that language and the culture it represents in a world that faces increasingly rapid change? How can the literacy planner meet both the needs of an ethnic group for mother tongue literacy and the desire of individuals to pursue their fortune through literacy in a second language?

One possible solution is to offer courses in several languages and let people choose. One of the problems with a two language program is the additional time that is needed for instruction. Once mother tongue literacy is achieved, the learners may not be able to devote further time for literacy in a second language; or, given the limits of time, the program may be able to only bring the learners to a limited level of literacy in the two languages. A major factor in the motivation of the learners will be the second language chosen. The debate on language choice for literacy often falls into a discussion of the relative merits of the mother tongue versus the official language. However, there are many candidates for the language of a second language

literacy program other than the official language. There may be other languages which fulfill the literacy needs of the learners in better ways than an official language that may be unknown in the home area of the learner.

In any case, the key idea for the decision maker is to be aware of the feelings of language groups towards other languages and language policies. Too many governments have tried to force citizens into loyalty to the state by imposing a language upon them in the mistaken belief that: (a) they could force learning; and (b) the learning of the official language would automatically create loyalty to the state. It is probably more correct to assume that an externally imposed language program that did not consider the wishes of the participants would: (a) fail to attain instructional goals; and (b) alienate such groups from the ruling elite making the decisions.

6. Individual multilingualism

One simple point that has often gotten lost in the tendency of the language choice issue to become a debate between mother tongue and official language proponents is that multilingual societies often tend to have multilingual people. It is often not a question of teaching literacy in a well-known mother tongue or an unknown official language. There is a significant percentage of the population who have a knowledge of other languages besides their mother tongue. The seemingly Babel-like multilingualism of many countries may not be all that confusing to citizens of those nations. One Unesco Meeting of Experts agreed with this assessment, noting that "the extreme linguistic

diversity which is a feature of many African countries affects only a relatively small number of their inhabitants because certain languages are used as the mother tongue or as a second language by a large proportion of the population" (Unesco 1974b, p. 8).

There are reports from all around the world that attest to the ability of people, even those who have no formal education, to command more than one language. A study by Scotton (1975) in Lagos, Nigeria revealed an impressive degree of multilingualism among the inhabitants of one section of the city. Only five percent of the 187 people she interviewed reported an exclusive use of their mother tongue. Seventeen percent claimed knowledge of one other language, 45% claimed two other languages, 29% mentioned three other languages, and 4% maintained that they knew and used four other languages. Another study done in Medina village in Accra, Ghana found over eighty different languages being spoken as mother tongues and 70% of the respondents claiming competence in three or more languages (Bamgbose 1976b). Murray (1963) reported that students from Southern Sudan coming to the university often commanded four languages. Hoben (1980) estimated that thirty percent of the people of Ethiopia spoke Amharic as a second language. In Zambia, Kashoki (1976) found that inhabitants of the cities averaged 2.21 languages spoken as opposed to an average of 1.6 languages in rural areas. He also found that a considerable number of people used three or more languages.

In the Philippines, Sibayan (1978) noted that twenty-four languages were spoken by the 433 people in his survey in Manila and that everyone claimed to speak at least two languages while some maintained

they knew three or more. In Singapore, 61.7% of the adult population of predominantly Chinese, Malay, and Indian ancestry claimed to understand English (Kuo 1979). In Latin America, Hoben (1980) found evidence of individual bilingualism in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and other nations although not on the same scale as in Africa and Asia. It was generally a bilingualism that had some Spanish speakers speaking an Indian language and some Indian speakers using Spanish as a second language. However, in the Northwest Amazon there is a large multilingual area of many tribal groups where individual polylingualism is the cultural norm. Almost everyone knows three, four or more languages well (Sorensen 1967). The multilingualism of Europeans is well known to most people; what is less well known is that there are over 23,000,000 people in the United States who speak a language other than English at home, and most of them (80%) also know English well (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education 1982). Thus, it is evident that multilingualism is widespread among individuals as well as nations.

There are several features of this individual multilingualism that decision makers should remember. One is that it is much more prevalent in areas of linguistic heterogeneity and in places where the borders of two language groups meet (Whitely 1971). A second feature is that urban areas are more likely to be multilingual than rural areas. Many of the previously mentioned studies took place in large urban areas like Manila and Lagos where people from many different ethnic groups came in search of greater opportunities in the modern sector of the economy. It is in these urban and multilingual environments that decision makers may be able to choose from among several languages that are familiar to most

of the prospective learners. These are also areas where the teaching of second languages essential for living and working may be undertaken with a better chance of success than in a rural area where the language is seldom used. Indeed, given the linguistic heterogeneity of many urban areas, it may be absolutely necessary for planners to choose a second language; the mixture of languages among students may make a mother tongue approach impossible.

A final feature of this individual multilingualism is that it may have a sexist bias to it, especially in cultures where women are "protected" and confined to traditional roles in the home. Hutchinson (1968) reported on estimates that at the time of independence, 35% of the Tanzanian males knew Swahili while only 5% of the women did. Comparable figures for other cultures are not readily available, however, it seems safe to assume that this situation may also prevail in other places where women are restricted to traditional tasks that do not bring them into multilingual contexts as much as men. If this is so, program planners will have to take this into account as they try to meet the needs of the female population which has always borne the brunt of illiteracy anyway.

7. Attitudes towards literacy

The attitudes which members of different language groups hold towards literacy skills should be another source of concern for decision makers. These attitudes will give some indication of the degree of motivation of individuals and the societal support that they will receive while making that effort. They may also reveal strong biases

towards literacy in certain languages of the culture. Strong cultural support for literacy can greatly enhance motivation and persistence in pursuing the acquisition of literacy skills. Are literacy skills valued by local society? Will the achievement of those skills or the failure to do so affect the prestige of individuals? If the answer is yes, there is a good chance that learners will maintain their efforts even though they experience a great deal of difficulty compared to a society that places little premium on literacy skills. The strong culture support for literacy in Japan is given as a factor in their high literacy rates despite the complexity of the Japanese writing system. This system uses three sets of scripts and is often written in several different ways: left to right in a horizontal pattern and right to left in a vertical alignment. Strong societal and parental support for the acquisition of literacy, however, greatly helps learners persist in the hard task of mastering this system (Goodman, Goodman, and Flores 1979).

Some language groups also reveal a definite bias towards literacy in a specific language. Speakers of a language with a long and proud literary tradition will naturally favor literacy in that language. One of the problems that India has faced in trying to establish Hindi as the premier official language has been the existence of a number of other languages with a written history of well over a thousand years. People from these language groups are justly proud of their heritage and not eager to acknowledge the primacy of Hindi for official purposes. Speakers of unwritten, non-prestigious languages may have different attitudes. They may feel ashamed of their own languages and resist the idea of becoming literate in them in favor of learning literacy in

a more prestigious language. Part of the problem may be that they have always associated literacy skills with languages other than their own; to them, literacy actually meant literacy in a certain language. Census takers occasionally encounter this when collecting information on literacy. A respondent may be able to read and write in a vernacular but declare himself to be an illiterate because he cannot read and write in English, French, or some other official language. Even people who have learned some degree of literacy in the Arabic script in Koranic schools may have a tendency to dismiss that ability because they do not have literacy skills in one of the nation's prestige languages. Khubchandani's (1972) examination of Indian census data has also shown that attitudes towards languages can even affect how a person chooses to identify his/her mother tongue. The self-identification may change to reflect a new allegiance or shift in self-identity. Thus, a Muslim who at one time claimed to be a Hindi speaker (perhaps on the basis of allegiance to the nation) might later report that he was an Urdu speaker (on the basis of religious affiliation).

Characteristics of Appropriate Languages

From this socio-cultural perspective, we may deduce certain characteristics of languages that would be good candidates for adult literacy programs. The ideal candidate, according to this analysis, would be a language that:

a. met a range of literacy needs at various levels of interaction in several domains

b. played a role in the learner's environment that matched that learner's literacy needs

c. was a prestigious variety that offered social and economic opportunity

d. possessed a strong literacy heritage

e. was used by the learners as a mother tongue or second language

f. was viewed favorably by prospective learners

g. would provide social support for literacy learning from members of the learner's society

All of these characteristics would be displayed by only a few languages, if any, in most societies. These languages would be the Great Traditions mentioned in Fishman's typology of Type B and Type C language situations. In many countries, even choosing a compromise candidate according to these desirable traits would probably be a difficult task. One of the major problems might be a conflict between learners' attitudes and desires and the realities of the language situation. In many countries, the prestigious variety might be the official language, especially if that language was an international one such as French, Spanish, or English. Learners might wish to become literate in that language since it seemed to be the one that offered the greatest rewards. They would readily see that the people who commanded those languages received great social and economic benefits. They might not readily recognize the intensity of effort that would be needed to achieve a command of the language sufficient enough to provide them with an access to those benefits. They might also fail to realize that such literacy skills were not a guarantee of winning such benefits; that there might be keen competition for a limited number of jobs.

It is easy to see how a conflict might arise between choosing a language that was held in esteem and choosing a language that would meet the literacy needs of the learner in the domains and levels in which s/he normally operated. Since many people view literacy as a set of skills for the modern world, it would be natural for many to want to become literate in the language(s) of that modern sector. However, the reality might be that most of these neo-literates would never find a place in the modern sector and would probably have more use for literacy in a language used for their traditional pattern of interactions.

The tendency for some people to want to attain literacy in the most prestigious languages might be strengthened by the low prestige often associated with literacy in the mother tongue, especially one that had no great literacy tradition. The low esteem in which many unwritten mother tongues are held in terms of their suitability for literacy purposes is a major hindrance to the development of mother tongue literacy programs. Overcoming this barrier and building self-esteem and language pride could be a justification for mother tongue literacy programs in addition to the teaching of literacy skills. However, planners may find it necessary to promise to offer instruction in a prestige language following the completion of initial literacy in the mother tongue. Such strategies will be discussed in the next chapter.

The issues that arise out of the socio-cultural perspective are complex ones that have to be worked out at a program level. There is no single solution at a national level except for those countries that are essentially monolingual for literacy purposes. It is essential

that planning be based on the needs of the learners and that the learn-
ers be aided in assessing the possible roles that literacy can play in
their environment, the level of literacy skills that they will need,
and the language that will best allow them to apply those literacy
skills in immediate, productive use.

C H A P T E R VI

THE PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Major Pedagogical Factors

The heart of any educational program is the teaching and learning
that takes place. Effective programs have relevant content, adequate
teaching resources, motivated learners, and a sound pedagogical approach.
Before selecting a language for adult literacy programs, decision makers
should assess how those elements affect and are affected by different
language choices. They should seek the answers to the following ques-
tions in order to understand the pedagogical aspect of the language
issue:

1. What are the implications of reading theory and
    research for the choice of a language for adult
    literacy?

2. In which language(s) would literacy be the easiest
    to learn?

3. Are people motivated to become literate in this lan-
    guage?

4. What is the pedagogical status of the language under
    consideration?

5. Are there enough human resources available to teach
    literacy in this language?

6. Are there sufficient materials available in the lan-
    guage for literacy instruction and post-literacy
    maintenance?

Discussion of the Factors

1. Implications of reading theory and research

There are two major drawbacks to the application of knowledge gained in reading theory and research to the adult literacy language issue. The first is that the years of thought and research on the issue have not brought educators to a single, commonly accepted theory or definitive answer regarding which language is best for initial literacy. The second is that much of the knowledge that does exist has come out of an examination of the child in the formal school setting. Very little has been done to examine the case of the illiterate adult in the non-formal setting. However, while no specific answers have been provided by this work, there are some general findings that offer insight into the pedagogical aspect of the language choice issue.

There are a number of theories about the nature of the reading process and even more models that have been developed to show how these processes might actually function. For present purposes it is not necessary to go into detail on these processes or models. There are, however, some general features of many of these theories about reading that are germane to the present discussion. Four of these features are a major aspect of the psycholinguistic model of the reading process that has been outlined by Frank Smith (1971, 1973, 1975) and Kenneth Goodman (1972, 1973). The fifth, decoding, has been a major point of contention between different schools of thought on the reading process. Most people in the field of reading would acknowledge the legitimacy of all of these features as components of the reading process even though they

might intensely disagree over the relative importance of each feature. These features are: (1) the use of decoding; (2) the importance of linguistic knowledge; (3) the use of prediction; (4) the role of sampling; and (5) the extraction of meaning.

Decoding. Disagreement over the role of decoding (matching sound with printed symbol) in the reading process is at the heart of much of the debate over the nature of the reading process. There are those who maintain that decoding is the essence of reading (Gattegno 1970) and others like Goodman, Smith, and Gibson and Levin (1975) who believe that it is far from being that important. All, however, would agree that it does play a role, especially in beginning reading, and that the process of decoding to speech works best when the reader is familiar with the language which is being decoded.

Linguistic knowledge. Everyone has a tremendous knowledge, conscious and unconscious, of the linguistic aspects of his/her mother tongue or of any other language in which they are fluent. This greatly facilitates the reading process since the learner already has an intuitive understanding of the language system s/he is trying to use for reading and writing. The closer the literacy language is to the language of the learner, the easier it will be for the learner. Linguistic knowledge provides the foundation for the reader to utilize the strategies of sampling and prediction.

Prediction. The linguistic knowledge each learner has of the literary language enables him/her to guess at the meaning of words, groupings of letters, etc. Certain words, categories of words, and letters follow one another more frequently than others. Given his/her

knowledge of the sound system of the literary language, the learner can estimate likely and unlikely letter combinations that represent those sounds. This also aids the learner in guessing at words, phrases, and letters that s/he is not certain of. This ability to make reasoned guesses based on a knowledge of the written language makes it possible for a person to read and understand a paragraph that ___ a number of missing _____, since the reader is able to predict what would naturally fall, or not ____, in those blanks.

Sampling. At the later stages of the reading process, the emphasis on decoding each letter or word declines. The reader does not need to notice every feature of every letter, every word in every sentence, or even every sentence in a paragraph. The eye moves and selectively picks out the features that it needs for letter/word recognition and meaning extraction. A knowledge of the language and its structure helps the reader to focus on the position and type of words that carry much of the meaning of the sentence or paragraph.

Meaning. This is seen as the ultimate goal of the reading process. Decoding letter by letter, word by word, fails to explain how full meaning is derived from a passage. The meaning of a sentence is more than the sum of its constituent parts. The visual input of the printed language is only part of the input that goes into the derivation of meaning from that print. The reader also adds his/her linguistic knowledge and previous knowledge of the topic to obtain full meaning of the passage.

All five of these features seem to indicate that reading is best taught in the language best known by the learner. Thus the learner will

have the linguistic knowledge to allow him/her to utilize sampling and prediction as well as to decode from print to sound when necessary. It would also make the extraction of meaning much easier if the learner already had a degree of oral fluency in the language, provided the written and spoken forms of the language were not radically different as in some diglossic situations. The less acquainted the learner is with the language of literacy, the more difficulty s/he will encounter in becoming literate in that language.

Research into the language choice question has most often examined the efficiency of using pupils' first language or a second language as the main medium of instruction in formal school settings. This research is voluminous and often shoddy, but luckily there have been several periodic reviews of that body of research, most of which deals with bilingual education for children. Many of the researchers were looking at the acquisition of subject matter as well as language skills. Despite the drawbacks involved in extrapolating the findings of this research to the case of the adult in the nonformal setting, it is necessary to briefly look at its findings to see if there are some insights of value.

In 1970, Venezky (1970) reviewed the findings of research and concluded that neither the mother tongue approach nor the standard language approach had been proven to be scholastically superior. Five years later, Engle (1975) surveyed 24 projects in order to determine the possible advantages of teaching initial reading and subject matter in a child's mother tongue before reading instruction in a second language. Like Venezky, she was forced to conclude that there was "no

substantial evidence as to which approach is better" (Engle 1975, p. 26). Seeking to bolster the cause of bilingual education, Troike (1978) looked at 12 bilingual programs and concluded that "quality bilingual programs" can be successful in providing equal educational opportunities for students from non-dominant language groups. However, the fact that "quality" programs can succeed does little to illuminate the question of whether to use first or second languages in reading instruction. In a comprehensive overview of educational programs for language minority children, Paulston (1978b) found studies that supported virtually every possible opinion.

It appears that the failure to find an answer to the language question for the formal school system is caused by the lack of a single solution. A World Bank review of international case studies found that "there is not one answer to the question of what language to use for primary school, but several answers, depending on the characteristics of the child, of the parents and the local community, and of the wider community" (quoted in Rotberg 1982, p. 156). The feeling now seems to be that there are an entire range of factors that affect the outcome of bilingual programs other than the matter of language choice. They include: values with respect to assimilation and cultural diversity, language of the local community, status of the minority language groups, socioeconomic status, general language skills, leadership, well-defined program objectives and well-trained teachers. It is safe to assume that similar factors will play a role in the success of adult literacy programs; but these are also factors that have to be considered when selecting a language for such programs in order to enhance the chance

of success and decrease the chance of failure.

The results of the small amount of research done in the adult literacy setting are just as confusing as the bilingual education research. there seems to be evidence for and against each type of decision. Much of this research was discussed in Chapter III. In one of the few reviews done specifically on literacy in the mother tongue, T.P. Gorman, like Engle, Venezky, and Paulston, could come to no single conclusion from the available data. He did feel, however, that there were "sufficient examples of cases in which participants in literacy programmes have learned to read effectively in a second language to indicate that the axiom of the 1951 report (by Unesco) cannot be accepted without qualification" (Gorman 1977b, p. 274). He therefore suggested that current research "would appear to support the principle that literacy should be carried out in a language that the learner readily understands" (Gorman 1977, p. 275).

There is also uncertainty about some of the sub-issues that underlie the first language/second language debate. One is the question of the transferability of reading skills from one language to another. The mother tongue is often promoted for initial literacy with the argument that there will be an easy transfer to literacy in a second language. There is evidence to indicate that transfer does occur (Tomori and Okedara 1971; Engle 1975; Troike 1978) but Engle does call this "one of the least well-understood aspects of the debate" (Engle 1975, p. 19). Gudschinsky (1973) points out that this transfer can also take place from initial second language literacy to literacy in the mother tongue as a second stage, although she believes that the reverse order is best

for the learners.

There is also some question about the advantage of using literacy in one language as a bridge to another. In a study designed to test if mother tongue literacy was a prerequisite for literacy in a second language, Tomori and Okedara (1971) compared the achievement in English of eleven classes of literates with ten classes of illiterates. The results of pre- and post-testing led them to conclude that vernacular literacy appeared to be a positive influence on the ability of adults to become literate in a second language. The literate group registered a significant higher proportion of passes in both sets of tests. "However," they cautioned, "it appears that with the passage of time, the initial impact of literacy in the vernacular on literacy acquisition in the second language tends to disappear" (Tomori and Okedara 1971, p. 28). Although the literate group had started with a big advantage in the pre-test, the illiterates had made a great improvement over the time of the course. Another cautionary note is that the literate group had a lower attendance rate and a higher dropout rate than the illiterate group. The fact that they had already completed a 20 month literacy program in Yoruba may have lowered their interest in the English literacy program. This may indicate that a bridge program that uses two languages, and thus probably lengthens the duration of the literacy process, may increase its chances of having more dropouts.

Another subquestion whose answer is still somewhat unclear is that of the ordering of language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in a second language literacy program. Conventional wisdom in second language teaching is that oral skills should precede reading

skills. One of the generalizations that Engle (1975) felt could be made from her examination of bilingual projects was that teaching second language literacy without oral training was not likely to succeed. This was also the position of Gudschinsky (1973) who felt that a command of the phonetics of the second language was an essential step towards literacy in that language. Believing that "language learning is motivated by functional need," however, Goodman (1971, p. 21) noted that many non-native English speakers need English reading skills more than speaking skills and that reading skills seem to develop faster than oral ability. This led him to conclude that reading instruction could begin simultaneously with oral language instruction in many cases. Unfortunately, the importance of oral instruction is something that is often forgotten in many second language literacy programs.

2. The easiest language for learning literacy

The key aspect to look at from a pedagogical point of view is the old educational maxim of moving from the known to the unknown, building new knowledge and skills upon previous knowledge and skills. This means starting at the point where the learners are in terms of language ability. Based on decades of work in adult and child literacy, Gudschinsky (1973, p. 6) concluded:

> Our definition of a literate person includes a deeply important principle: that a person can only learn to read in a language he understands. The only alternative to teaching him in the language and dialect he already knows well is to give him language lessons BEFORE his reading instruction begins. This is not impossible, but it is less efficient.

If an intimate knowledge of the language is used as a yardstick to measure the ease of literacy acquisition, the language candidates can

be categorized in the following manner in order of increasing difficulty:

Languages known to the learner --

1. Mother tongue

2. Standard written language of mother tongue language group

3. Second language known to learner

Languages unknown to the learner --

4. Second language of same language family as mother tongue

5. Indigenous language of different language family

6. Exogenous language

The mother tongue would be the easiest language in which to teach literacy assuming that it was the language best known to the learner. However, the mother tongue may be a dialect of a language group that used another dialect as the standard language for written purposes.

The standard written language of the mother tongue language group might be a dialect identical to the language of the learner, or it may represent a dialect that is very different. In a classic diglossic situation, such as exists in Arabic, Telegu, Tamil, and Sinhalese, the written form may be very much different from the common spoken forms. With any language, there will be differences between the written and spoken form simply because of the nature of the writing process and the natural changes that occur in discourse when it is transferred from the immediate, intimate, oral context into the permanent, distant, written context. Anyone learning to read will have to adjust to a new language form. The written form will not be exactly equivalent to the spoken

word. This fact will apply to all subsequent language types as
well.

Learners may have varying degrees of fluency in <u>known second
languages</u>. This knowledge may differ from context to context according
to topic or speech act. However, given the extent of individual multi-
lingualism in plurilingual societies, there is a great probability that
literacy classes can be formed for learners who speak the target lan-
guage as a second language. In situations where the clientele speak a
wide number of mother tongues, it may be absolutely necessary to choose
a second language that is known to most of them.

If it becomes necessary to offer literacy in a language that is
unknown to the learners, the language that will perhaps present the
least amount of difficulty will be a <u>second language of the same
language family as the mother tongue</u>. If a language related to the
mother tongue were used, there would be a greater chance that there
would be similarities in the lexicon, grammar, and/or phonology. This
has been found to be true in the use of Swahili with speakers of other
languages within the Bantu family, with Bahasa Indonesian which is
linked to most of the other Indonesian languages, with Pidgin in Papua
New Guinea, and in language learning situations in general. The use of
a related language provides the possibility of the transfer of knowl-
edge and skills from one language to another.

The use of an <u>indigenous language of a different language family</u>
will most probably reduce the occurrence of any transfer of knowledge
of a specific nature. However, it has been proposed that a different
grammar or lexicon is not the primary cause of a failure of

communication between ethnic groups. The failure may lie in the way ideas are put together to construct an argument, the way some ideas are emphasized over others, or the way emotional information about ideas is conveyed. In short, it may be that "the greatest problem of interethnic communication lies in the area of understanding not _what_ someones says, but _why_ he is saying it" (Scollon and Scollon 1979, p. 1). If this is true, it means that the learner will have a formidable learning task in acquiring the discourse patterns and cultural norms of the language in addition to its grammar, lexicon, and phonology.

This would also seem to indicate that an exogenous language would be the most difficult language for an illiterate to master. He would face all of the problems enumerated above plus the problem of over-coming social and cultural differences between his local language and this foreign one. The British linguist, M.A.K. Halliday (1978, p. 111), termed this the "socio-semantic distance" between languages and felt that:

> Other things being equal, it will usually be easier to learn another language from within one's culture than one that is culturally remote, because there is the same reality laying behind it. Greater distance means more discrepant realities, and different realities create different semantic systems, between which translation may be extremely difficult.

Halliday surmised that it would be easier for a Tamil speaker from South India to learn Hindi than for him to learn English. Although both Tamil and English were of different language families from Hindi, he felt that the cultural ties that Tamil and Hindi had in common would lessen the learning difficulty. This undoubtedly provided some explanation for the failure of many programs in the Third World that sought to teach

literacy in a Western language such as English, French, or Portuguese. The use of a foreign language greatly increases the learning task of the student.

The language alternatives facing the decision maker are more varied than the simple dichotomies of mother tongue or national language, first or second language, or known or unknown language. Unfortunately, even this six-category typology of language candidates does not completely answer the question of which language will be the easiest to learn for literacy purposes. This list merely shows how languages can fall along a continuum in terms of cultural and linguistic affinity to the mother tongue of the learner. All things being equal, this list would indicate the degree of difficulty a learner would experience in trying to acquire literacy in another language. However, all things are never equal, and all of the other factors already mentioned in this study would also come into play. For example, the complexity of one language or the existence of a diglossic situation might make that language much more difficult to learn than a language ranked farther down the list in terms of linguistic distance.

Another factor that might alter the ease with which literacy is learned in a given language is the orthography that is used for that language. A good orthography, according to Bowers (1968, p. 394), is one that faithfully represents the spoken language, is easy to learn, and possesses the following characteristics:

a. <u>Accuracy</u>: no significant sound should remain without representation in writing

b. <u>Economy</u>: only the phonemically significant sounds should be written

c. <u>Consistency</u>: every letter or letter combination should stand for the same sound or sounds throughout the system

d. <u>Similarity to other orthographies</u>: where the languages have the same/similar phonemic structure

Orthographies that do not meet these criteria will certainly increase the burden placed upon the learner.

There are also very complex systems that present a formidable challenge to the learner. It is estimated that one needs to know thousands of characters in Chinese to achieve basic literacy and the ability to recognize perhaps 50,000 if one is to be a fluent reader. This is undoubtedly a task that would take years. The use of three sets of orthographies for the writing of Japanese (hiragana, katakana and kanji) and the use of over 270 characters for Amharic are other instances of complex systems that hinder the acquisition of literacy. Obviously, many people do learn these scripts as a matter of course, but the time and energy consumed must be greater than with a simpler system like that used for Vietnamese that can be mastered in three or four months of part-time study. An orthography that meets the characteristics cited by Bowers would be a tremendous asset to the spread of literacy.

3. Motivation of learners

The relative difficulty of a given language or orthography for a certain group of learners can be anticipated with a fair degree of accuracy. It is not, however, the final word on the pedagogical difficulty of teaching literacy in that language. An equally important factor is the subjective one of the motivation of the learners to become literate and to become literate in that specific language. This

motivation is often shaped by the socio-cultural factors that affect language attitudes and language status. While strong motivation can enable a learner to master even the most intricate language and orthography, little or no motivation can result in a failure to achieve literacy in even the simplest language/orthography. In reality, one can expect to find a range of levels of motivation among any group of learners. Their success or failure will largely depend on the balance that is reached between the difficulty of the learning task and their desire to accomplish that task. The fact that an average of 50% of the learners drop out of literacy programs is an indication that the natural state of the balance is tipped against achievement and that literacy planners will have to take measures to enhance motivation and/or lower the difficulty of the task.

The motivation to learn is not heightened very much by official proclamations citing the national need for literacy for development purposes. This mass public relations effort can play a role in a literacy campaign, but it will not generate the deep motivation that is necessary for actual achievement. In seventeenth century England, for example, the clergy were instructed to "comfort, exhort, and admonish every man to read the Bible in Latin or English, as the very word of God and the spiritual food of man's soul" (Cressy 1980, p. 3). The value of literacy was widely touted by religious and secular leaders as a key to salvation, godliness, knowledge, and business and political success. Despite the rhetoric, however, two thirds of the men and 90% of the women remained illiterate. They were either not convinced of its usefulness, unable to take the time to learn, or able to use other means

to satisfy the literacy demands of their lives (Cressy 1980). A Unesco review of literacy efforts (Unesco 1980, pp. 52-53) offered this piece of advice on motivating people to become literate:

> If literacy work is to overcome the lassitude, resistance, indifference, hostility and apathy shown towards it, the first essential is to establish a natural link between, on the one hand, the adults' interests, their way of life and what focuses their attention and, on the other, the educational effort they are asked to undertake.

The value of literacy to an individual cannot be calculated independent of the language in which literacy is learned. The language chosen will largely govern how and where the learner uses his new literacy skills. The societal role of literacy in that language, as well as the language attitudes of the learners, will greatly determine the eagerness and determination with which the learners will approach the learning task.

On the other side of the motivation-difficulty equation, decision makers can be sensitive to both the needs of the learners and the pedagogical difficulty of literacy instruction. Programs can be designed to bridge the gap between the learners' oral language and the written standard by the use of intermediate materials and oral instruction in the standard language. Decision makers must take care to weigh the possible advantages of literacy in a given language as perceived by the learners against the estimated difficulty for learners of achieving literacy in that language. Another way to decrease difficulty is to limit the pedagogical load that is carried by the program. Some programs have attempted to use an unknown second language as the medium for literacy instruction and the teaching of job-related or other

functional skills. This kind of program triples the load placed upon both learners and staff by trying to teach: (a) literacy; (b) a second language; and (c) content information at the same time. This approach is foolhardy and doomed to failure in most cases. It is just attempting too much at one time.

4. Pedagogical status of languages

A key assessment that has to be made before any decision is possible is whether or not the languages under consideration are ready to be taught. Languages may be at many different stages of development in terms of their readiness to be used as mediums for literacy instruction. The main stages are:

1. Oral but not written
2. Phonetically transcribed
3. Phonemic, grammatical, and lexical analysis completed
4. Orthography completed for standard dialect at least
5. Grammars, dictionaries produced
6. Teaching aids produced
7. Body of literature available

This ordering of the stages is not necessarily chronologically correct for the development of all languages, especially after step 3. The processes of standardization and modernization will be occurring throughout all the stages, first informally and then through formal mechanisms like language committees or linguistic societies. The mere selection of a language for use for literacy does not, in itself, enable programs to be begun in that language. It can take five years

to develop a language from its oral stage to a point where it can be fully used as a medium for literacy instruction (Armstrong 1963; Unesco 1964b; Bowers 1968). It can take much less time if the language is at a later stage. Bowers (1968) estimated that an emergency provisional orthography could be developed in only three months if the language had already been intensively studied. However, we have already seen in the instances of Somalia and The Gambia that official approval of an orthography can take years if there is political and/or religious over-tones to the decision. Even then, the choice of an orthography only enables one to write the language. In order to teach it to others, one needs both human and material resources.

5. Human resources

There are a whole range of human resources that are needed to launch a literacy program. These include linguists to describe, codify, and standardize the language so that it can be taught and language personnel to constantly modernize the language so that it can be used for non-traditional spheres of life. Curriculum and materials developers are essential for the preparation of teaching aids for literacy courses, and writers have to be cultivated, especially if the language has no pre-vious literature.

Perhaps the most crucial personnel in a program are the teachers. These are often volunteers or formal school teachers who receive some extra payment for their participation in adult literacy programs. Some are college graduates; some are neo-literates who have just completed the literacy course themselves. In any case, most need training in the

literacy method of the project and in approaches to adult education. They may also need instruction in the basics of linguistics and the structure of the target language. Armstrong (1963, p. 71) warns that it is "brutally hard work to get the ordinary adult literate to achieve a conscious understanding of the phonology and grammar of his own language" and suggests a one year intensive training program provided the recruits are already qualified teachers. This is far longer than the few weeks or months of training given in most programs.

It is important that the training period be commensurate with the background of the teachers and the complexity of the teaching task. In the Hill Areas Education Project of Thailand, an attempt to implement a bilingual teaching strategy utilizing the mother tongue and the official language encountered several problems related to the teachers. The first was the difficulty in recruiting people who had the requisite language skills in the two languages of the program, Meo and Thai. This caused a delay in the start of the program. Then the program experienced problems with the implementation of the bilingual teaching strategy. The several weeks of teacher training given to the facilitators was clearly not enough to enable them to carry out such a methodology (World Education 1978). A sophisticated teaching strategy requires well-trained teachers who have the background necessary to carry out their teaching duties. The required degree of professionalism will increase with the difficulty of the teaching task. This progression will roughly follow the list of language options given earlier in this chapter. It would seem that newly literate teachers would have a much better chance of succeeding in a mother tongue program than in

a program that utilized a more sophisticated second language or bilingual strategy that required specialized teaching skills. This would also hold true for curriculum and materials developers. The more complex the teaching strategy, the more sophisticated the personnel that are required for the program. It is also likely that there will also be more difficulty in finding and hiring such people.

6. Materials

What is true for human resources is also true for materials: more sophisticated strategies require more sophisticated materials. If a program is carried out in the vernacular of the learners, simple primers may suffice for initial literacy instruction. Since the learners already understand the language, there is the possibility that they can also participate in the materials development process and help develop relevant and interesting literature. The greater the distance between the learner's spoken language and the language for literacy instruction, the greater is the need for specialized transitional materials. Gudschinsky (1973) advised beginning with materials based on the oral language which then lead the learner into reading in the standardized language. Another set of materials might be used to move a learner from literacy in the standard vernacular to literacy in a second language. Some programs seek to avoid all of these transitional steps by teaching directly in the second language using the same materials that are used for native speakers. This is obviously a pedagogically unsound approach which lessens the chance of success of the program. It is likely that a program that seeks to teach a second language, especially

one like English or French, will be able to find materials that have been developed by other countries. These materials will have to be adapted for the level of the illiterate and for the new culture in which they are being used.

Decision makers should have a grasp of the state of materials development in the languages that they are considering. They should look at the availability of teaching aids, dictionaries, grammars, etc., for the teaching of initial literacy in that language and at the general range of literature that is available throughout the project area. A major cause of relapse into illiteracy is the lack of reading material in the environment of the neo-literate. If there is nothing to read in that language, it is highly unlikely that the neo-literate will be able to practice and retain his newly won skills. It would be a great advantage if the language possessed a readily available supply of inexpensive reading material of various degrees of difficulty covering a wide range of topics of interest to neo-literates.

Characteristics of Appropriate Languages

From our analysis of the language choice question from a pedagogical perspective, we can identify the following characteristics of the ideal language. It would:

a. be the language best known to the learner

b. have an accurate, economical, and consistent orthography that was easy to learn and that was similar to the orthographies of other important languages

c. be a language in which literacy was highly valued by prospective learners

  d. be a language that was developed to the point where it could be used as a medium of instruction for adult literacy (e.g., had an orthography, dictionaries, grammar, teaching aids, etc.)

  e. be a language in which there were a cadre of trained teachers, curriculum and materials developers, and writers skilled in the target language and the language of the learners

  f. possess teaching and reading materials in a wide range of levels of difficulty and topics.

This list of characteristics highlights the essence of the quandry over the question of which language to teach. In most multilingual nations, the last five characteristics will probably be found in the major languages of the country. The first characteristic, however, will vary from language group to language group since it will generally be the mother tongue of those groups. Thus one part of the pedagogical argument will fall on the side of a strategy that uses the language best known to the learners while the other part will be in favor of a language that possesses the tools for its teaching. A key factor in determining which side wins out should be the motivational levels of the prospective learners. What do they have to say about which language is used? It would seem essential for decision makers to establish a dialogue with representatives of the prospective learner groups so that each side could present their own concerns. The planners could discuss the pedagogical options and the advantages and disadvantages they see attached to each choice. The learners could share their reasons for desiring literacy and express their objective and subjective feelings about the language choices facing them. Each side needs this sort of information from the other if they are to make a rationale choice. The

final choice could come out of a process of collaboration and negotiation.

As with previous chapters, all of these "ideal" characteristics may not be found in the real language candidates. However, they are all important to the success of a literacy program. Literacy instruction can proceed as soon as an orthography is developed, but that instruction and the learning that follows will be much more efficient if the orthography is a good one and if there are trained personnel and solid materials based around a coherent pedagogy. The achievement of literacy under any conditions can only be deemed a success if the learner maintains and improves the literacy skills s/he acquired during the program. That means that there must be a range of available reading material that the neo-literate can use for the practice of his new skills and the acquisition of new knowledge.

C H A P T E R   VII

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Major Psychological Factors

Perhaps the most important development in the field of language teaching and learning that has occurred in this century has been the shift in focus from the centrality of materials and methods to the recognition of the learner as the crucial element in the language learning process. Like any other educational program, literacy projects seek to facilitate cognitive changes in individuals. The human brain is the most important center of activity. The success of a language policy will largely depend on how it is viewed and judged by the learners. Decision makers, therefore, must strive to understand the psychology of their clientele by asking such questions as the following:

1. What are the psychological implications of learning literacy in the mother tongue and in a second language?

2. Are learners more motivated to become literate in one language rather than another?

3. What are the goals of the learners in becoming literate?

Discussion of the Factors

1. Psychological implications of mother tongue vs. second language literacy

A crucial element in the attainment of literacy is the psychological mind set of the learner. External factors like methods, materials,

and teachers are important, but the acquisition of literacy is primarily an individual process. It succeeds or fails in the learner's mind. Everything else may be perfect, but the process will never develop if the learner does not will it.

Most of the information that exists on the psychology of the language learner focusses on the process of second language acquisition or on the case of the child in a formal school setting. Since there is very little pertaining to the specific instance of the adult illiterate in the nonformal setting, it is necessary to make extrapolations from the above available material.

Literature on the use of the mother tongue in education and bilingual education points up a number of advantages for children using the mother tongue for basic education and as a bridge to literacy in a second language. Based on the limited research done so far on adult literacy learners, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which these factors will affect adults. However, given the paucity of research on adults and the fact that many of the recommendations on the language choice issue made by Unesco and others are based on work with children, it is important to look at these arguments and to consider their applicability to the adult context. The most frequently cited reasons for using the mother tongue in a bilingual teaching strategy are as follows:

a. <u>It lessens the shock of the break between home and school</u>.

This would certainly be true for a young child who is taken out of the familiar surroundings of the home and placed in an alien school environment that may be using a language other

than that of the home. Adults who enter into an adult literacy class may also approach the experience with some fear and misgivings; however, their greater maturity and life experiences should ensure that the break is not a traumatic one. Unlike many children, most adults will enter the literacy class of their own volition. There is a likelihood that the literacy environment will not be a strange one for them. They may have been in other learning situations before. The class may also be physically held in a familiar environment like a friend's house. Thus, while this may be a factor that literacy workers should consider while planning a program, it is not an important factor for the language choice issue.

b. <u>It creates better home-school understanding and parent participation in education</u>. This would obviously not apply to the adult literacy situation.

c. <u>It would lessen the linguistic problems of learning to read</u>. This would certainly apply to adults as well as children. Linguistic problems would be minimized if instruction were given in the language best known to the learner. However, other factors might make this less applicable to adults. Unlike five-year-old children, adults have completed the language process and are more aware of the nature and use of language. They will have a better conscious and unconscious knowledge of their language which will enable them to approach the literacy task in the mother tongue or a second

language. Given the widespread nature of individual multi-lingualism in polylingual settings, there is also a greater chance that the adult will have some knowledge of a second language that is being used.

d. <u>It enables the learner to make full use of his language competence</u>. This would also be true for adults although there would be a greater possibility that they would have some knowledge of other languages, thus enabling them to undertake literacy work in a second language. According to Weber (1977), adults possess other advantages over children in terms of language competence. These include: (a) richer linguistic experience; (b) abstract and complex knowledge of spoken language; (c) probable command over a formal variety of language that more resembles the written variety; and (d) conscious ability to analyze language and make judgements about its correctness. It probably can be assumed that some of this greater linguistic competence could be transferred to the learning of literacy in an known or unknown second language (Engle 1975; Troike 1978).

e. <u>It avoids cultural problems inherent in learning language of another culture</u>. The pedagogical analysis of Chapter VI presented the view that it would be easier to learn a second language that was from the same culture even if it was from a different language family and that it would probably be more difficult to learn a language that represented a culture that was far different from your own (e.g., an exogenous language

like English or French). Illiterate adults, however, may be
interested in learning the language of an indigenous or
exogenous group precisely because they wish to interact with
that group. Whether or not there will be major learning prob-
lems because of cultural differences will largely depend on the
attitudes of the learners towards the other culture and its
language. Adults may have ingrained attitudes that will
greatly affect their approach to learning about a new culture.
They will also have clearer goals for literacy that will stimu-
late them to learn a new culture and its language if they see
those goals as being met by such study.

f. <u>It lessens the danger of the child losing his/her facility in
the mother tongue</u>. This would not be a problem for adults who
have already internalized their mother tongue. A study among
Finnish children who had immigrated to Sweden showed that the
development of the mother tongue was hindered if they were
immersed in another language before age ten, but that children
over ten who had five years or more of Finnish schooling were
able to maintain their own language and also reach Swedish
norms (Skutnabb-Kangas 1979). The fluency of adults in their
mother tongue and the relative shortness of literacy programs
would prevent any loss in mother tongue facility among
adults.

g. <u>It awakens pride for traditions, language, and ethnicity</u>.
This would be a possible effect on adults who underwent
literacy training in their mother tongue. Unwritten mother

tongues, especially, have been subject to derision by those
from prestige language groups. This has created an attitude,
even among some native speakers, that their language is a
second class one. Making people literate in their mother
tongue may stimulate pride in their language and their ethnic
culture. However, this may be an effect that is not desired
by national leaders who wish to promote the use of a national
language. They may see mother tongue literacy efforts as
threats to the development of a national cohesiveness. Adults
who have a strong self-concept that is based on a positive
view of their language and culture will not face the cultural
identity problems that children may experience. Given their
greater awareness of the socio-political environment, adults
may willingly wish to adopt a new supraethnic identity through
the acquisition of literacy in a second language, especially
in the official or some other prestige language. They may
even feel that competence in a second language will not
necessarily affect their ethnic identity.

h. <u>It avoids the possibility of cognitive confusion and harm to
the development of the child</u>. This would not be a problem for
mature adults.

i. <u>It supports a positive self-image of learner, family and
culture</u>. This would be true for both adults and children
although it would be more important for children who are still
in the process of development. Literacy in the mother tongue
could improve a person's self-image and his/her view of family

and culture. However, literacy in any language could also achieve this to some extent. Much of the effect of literacy attainment in this regard would depend on the learner's attitude towards literacy in that language. Learners with a low opinion of the usefulness of literacy in their mother tongue might not experience a positive increase in self-image.

j. <u>It prevents development of feelings of inferiority and alienation</u>. This would be true for young children who are just beginning to gain an understanding of the larger world and their role in it. Its applicability to adults would depend on their attitudes towards the processes of ethnic maintenance and assimilation. Forcing literacy in a second language upon adults who are strongly concerned about ethnic identity and mother tongue maintenance could certainly lead to alienation. It could also reinforce feelings that the mother tongue (and hence, its speakers) was inferior to the second language and its native speakers. However, it can also be said that literacy in the mother tongue only may also lead to a kind of inferiority and alienation. Literacy in a language with a restricted literature will not offer the same opportunities that literacy in a major language will. The retreat of a language group into literacy in its mother tongue may cut itself off from the mainstream of life in the region or nation. The Muslim community in Uganda, for instance, found itself isolated and cut off from economic, social, and political life when it committed itself to literacy in Arabic instead of

English (Criper and Ladefoged 1971). For adults who wish to gain access to a wide range of opportunities and move from an ethnic identity to one that is broader, the learning of literacy in a second language may be one of the keys to reaching those goals. Literacy in a second language need not be a negative alternative for many people and indeed could be a very positive one. It is altogether possible that some groups would rather learn literacy in a second language than in their mother tongue (Unesco 1953; Gudschinsky 1971; Engle 1975; Parker 1975).

k. **It develops a habit of academic success and an enjoyment of reading.** This reason could also be pertinent to adults as well as children. Adults are often eager to attain literacy in a prestige language that they feel offers them more opportunities. They may see the good jobs held by English speakers and hope to attain such jobs through the acquisition of literacy skills in English. They may find, however, that they have greatly underestimated the effort and time that is necessary for a person to achieve basic literacy in the English language much less the advanced level of literacy that would enable them to find a well-paying job. Their chance of gaining immediate success in literacy study is probably greater if it is initially done in their mother tongue. This initial success may increase their motivation to continue with their studies and to eventually move on to learn literacy in a second language. On the other hand, the use of two languages in a literacy program may also

increase the time needed and thus discourage people from enrolling in the course.

In summary, an analysis of the arguments often given in favor of bilingual education and the use of the mother tongue in initial literacy for children--arguments also applied to the adult context in the absence of other research--show that they are not all relevant to the same degree that they are in the context of the child in the formal setting. With adults there is little concern about lessening the shock of leaving the home for the school, maintaining home-school understanding through the use of the mother tongue, avoiding cognitive confusion and developmental harm, and losing facility in the other mother tongue because of the use of a second language for literacy. There is some relevance to adults of the stand that use of the mother tongue will reduce cultural problems that might occur with the study of another language; awaken pride for traditions, language and ethnicity; support the growth of a positive self-image of the learner and his culture; and prevent the development of feelings of inferiority and alienation. These are problems that any adult learner might encounter. The severity of the latter three will greatly depend on the learner's attitudes towards the mother tongue and the second language, towards the speakers of those languages, and on a host of other factors that make up the motivational force that drives the learner towards literacy. If the learner has a fear of assimilation and loss of identity and has hostile feelings towards the second language and/or its speakers, some of these problems will be likely to occur with some intensity; the use of the mother tongue for at least part of the program would be recommended. If, however, the learner does

not have these fears and even feels positively about achieving literacy in a second language, planners will have the freedom to limit the use of the mother tongue or even go into direct instruction in the second language provided the second language meets the minimal criteria of some of the other perspectives of this paper.

It must be remembered that the results of studies on children cannot be readily applied to adults, which is what has happened given the lack of research on adults. Children are removed from the home at an early age when they are still in the process of emotional, intellectual, and linguistic development and are placed into a completely alien setting for a significant part of the day. They have little control over the decision to send them to school, and they face the prospect of spending years in this environment. Adults generally enter into literacy classes on a voluntary basis for a few hours a week for a limited number of months. Unlike the children, they have goals for their literacy, and know that they can drop out of the process if they do not feel that their goals are being met. The greater maturity of adults and the fact that they have completed most of the developmental processes make them less susceptible to "damage" from the setting.

This is not to say that adults are invulnerable. They may be returning to the educational setting with mixed feelings. They, or their friends, may have had a negative experience with the formal schools. The memory of this previous experience may be one of pain, humiliation, and failure. They may approach the learning situation with apprehension and even fear. They also probably approach the literacy class with a number of goals in mind. They have some idea of

what they want to learn and why. This nervousness, wariness, and clarity of purpose can be greatly affected by the language policy of the program. As child research shows, the use of the mother tongue can reduce the tensions and enhance learning effectiveness. That may also be accomplished by using a second language that is well known to the learners. The use of an unknown second language may increase apprehension and the fear of failure as well as the difficulty of the learning task. However, the learner may be able to conquer his/her fears and master the challenge of learning literacy in a second language if his/her motivation is strong enough. If the learner feels that the acquisition of literacy in that language will meet his/her purposes, s/he will be more likely to persevere. There is both the precedent of the dropout who leaves because the second language is irrelevant or because s/he feels that literacy in the mother tongue will not satisfy his/her goals.

2. Motivation to learn literacy in a specific language

The factor of motivation was discussed in Chapter VI in terms of its importance as a counterbalance to the discouragement that comes when a person attempts a difficult task like the acquisition of literacy. The gist of that discussion was that higher levels of motivation would be needed to accomplish pedagogically more difficult learning tasks (e.g., A Sesotho speaker would need a stronger motivational drive to become literate in English than s/he would need to become literate in Sesotho.). This section seeks to look more closely at the nature of motivation and how it affects the language choice question.

The motivation to want to become literate may arise out of any number of situations. The illiterate may wish to spare himself the embarrassment of using his thumbprint in lieu of a signature, may wish to be able to read stories to his children, or may be seeking some economic or social opportunity through the acquisition of literacy skills. A constellation of factors may make up the motivational force inspiring the illiterate and a good many of these may be influenced by the choice of the language for literacy instruction. Some of these factors are:

a. Attitude towards mother tongue

b. Attitude towards second language

c. Attitude towards second language group

d. Attitude towards literacy

e. Relative status of mother tongue and second language

f. Historic and present relations between mother tongue group and second language group

g. Perceived usefulness of literacy in mother tongue or second language

h. Perceived difficulty of acquiring literacy in the mother tongue or second language.

Most of these factors were discussed in earlier sections of this paper and need no elaboration here. Different factors will have an impact upon different learners, but it is likely that at least some of these factors will influence almost all illiterates. A Palestinian may find the learning of Hebrew repugnant to him because of the historical enmity between his group and the Hebrew-speaking language group. An appreciation of French language and culture may influence a Senegalese

to desire literacy in French. A view of literacy as a means to find spiritual enlightenment through the Koran could lead a Gambian Muslim to seek literacy skills in Arabic rather than in his native tongue. The relative strength of these factors in any one individual can greatly affect that individual's perception of the right language for literacy. This was summed up by a Unesco conference that argued that "an adult's motivation, and consequently his efforts to learn, and to some degree his performance, in becoming literate in a given language is correlated to a large extent to the amount of usefulness the learner attributes--consciously or unconsciously--to that language" (Unesco 1964b, p. 7).

Motivation is particularly important in the learning of a second language. The pioneering work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) in this area identified two categories of motivations: instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivations were those related to the degree of usefulness of the language in helping the learner achieve his/her goals in terms of obtaining rewards such as a better job, more money, a certificate, etc. Integrative motivation was classified as the desire of the learner to join the second language group and to become like them. This categorization of motivations is probably as applicable to literacy acquisition as it is to second language learning. The acquisition of literacy is actually the acquisition of a second language: a written one. The neo-literate may have many instrumental reasons for becoming literate; he may also possess integrative motivation as well. This may be in terms of a desire to join literate society or that portion of society that is literate in his/her language. It may include a desire to join that international community of literates who may share their

experiences and news through the medium of print or a local village group of literates (Singh 1970). Although Gardner and Lambert felt that integrative motivation might be more effective in the second language acquisition process, especially in the learning of the phonology of the second language, there is no such bias that can be discerned in the literacy process. It may even be that instrumental motivations are stronger for adults entering education programs (Hiemstra 1978). This is probably due to the fact that they have fixed ideas about their goals and are concerned about the use of their time for activities that have no payoff for them.

What is certain is that motivation is one of the keys to a successful literacy effort. This motivational force may be increased by a number of factors in addition to the ones already mentioned. A Unesco conference on the use of the mother tongue for literacy identified five factors which they felt could affect the motivation of would-be literates (Unesco 1964b, p. 7). In order of increasing importance, these factors were:

1. Use of a language with a fairly homogeneous spoken form and a generally accepted, standardized written form;

2. Use of a language that was officially recognized by the government in some manner if only rhetorically;

3. Use of a language that was unequivocably established by consistent policies in a role in public life and the educational system;

4. A language which had abundant and attractive reading material of all sorts--one of the main incentives for becoming literate in that medium;

5. A language useful to the individual wishing to promote his position, either in trade or the government. In the final analysis, this is the most important factor in transforming society.

The "usefulness" of literacy in a language is generally directly related to the degree to which it satisfies the learner's original goals for becoming literate. In the next section, we will discuss what some of those goals are and their importance to the choice of a language for adult literacy.

3. Literacy goals of the learner

The goals of the learners may fall across a wide spectrum. A list of some of the goals of individuals from a number of countries is given below. The examples are from India (Singh 1970), Mali (Dumont 1977), Ghana (Berry 1971), Australia (Nelson 1976), and the U.S.A. (Colvin and Root 1972).

<u>India</u> (from survey of two villages)

write name
read signboards and labels
recite religious books
copy down songs
increase economic opportunities outside of village

<u>Mali</u> (uses of literacy in rural areas)

mark chickens' laying dates and numbers of eggs
record rainfall patterns
write own letters thus saving money for letter writer
  and also keeping news within the family
keep records of official ceremonies

<u>Ghana</u> (community survey of reasons for learning a second language)

for economic and social advancement
for use in business
for purposes of travel
for religious reasons
for more effective communication

<u>Australia</u> (individuals in adult education program)

    read dress patterns
    help children with homework
    fill in forms
    do community service work
    obtain necessary job after injury forced retirement
      from manual labor

<u>U.S.A.</u> (common goals of people enrolling in adult literacy program)

    fill out job applications
    read newspapers and magazines
    read want ads
    read grocery ads and labels of food packages
    read religious materials
    gain respect of others
    read to their children
    read instruction manuals
    read for fun
    find a better job

Although these goals may differ somewhat and reflect the differences in the socio-economic systems of each country, they are all very similar in that they mainly focus on the instrumental-type reasons. This was also reflected in a study done in Nigeria where people were asked, "Why do you want to be literate?" (Unesco 1964b) In descending order of importance, their answers were:

1. Practical necessity
2. Economic advantage
3. Status
4. Religious motives
5. Civic responsibility

As mentioned earlier, adults generally have some specific ideas about what they want out of an educational experience like literacy programs. They usually have little time to spare on educational activities that will not provide them with some tangible advantage whether it is the simple ability to write one's name or literacy skills sufficient to earn a job in the modern sector of the economy. In many cases, these

goals can give planners an important insight into the motivation of the learners and the language in which literacy can or should be offered. This is crucial to the success of a literacy effort for in the words of John Ryan, former director of the International Institute for Adult Literacy Methods: "In the final analysis, efforts to promote literacy depend upon the learner's motivation to learn and this inclination is strongly conditioned by his social, political, and economic circumstances, perceptions and aspirations" (Ryan 1978, p. 1).

Literacy planners must try to see that the goals of the learners are satisfied by literacy in a language that will meet their needs. This would mean that they would have to call upon their knowledge of the roles of languages in society--especially in the socio-cultural milieu in which the neo-literate will want to use his/her new literacy skills. It will not be sufficient to teach someone to read and write in a mother tongue or a second language if that language does not meet their literacy needs. For instance, the goals of rural people in Mali as expressed by Dumont are those that could be well achieved by literacy in the mother tongue: keeping egg records, writing personal letters to family members, etc. If the goals of literacy are personal ones in the sense that the neo-literate will be writing for himself and not for an outside audience, the only restriction on language will be that it is understandable to him. It could even be in a secret code known only to the writer. However, if the literacy goals involve interaction with other people or institutions, mother tongue or personal literacy may not be sufficient. The Australian who wishes to read dress patterns will have to be able to read the language of those

patterns. The American who wants to read want ads will have to be able
to read those ads in the languages used in the local newspapers. The
seemingly universal desire to use literacy as a springboard to better
employment and economic opportunities will only be satisfied if the neo-
literate is skilled in the language of the factory, the office, the
marketplace, or wherever else this opportunity is to be found. The
choice of the right language for such programs will not only meet the
ultimate goals of the learners but will be a continual source of motiva-
tion for them.

Characteristics of Appropriate Languages

Looking at the language choice issue from the psychological perspec-
tive, we can say that the ideal candidate for literacy instruction would
be a language that:

    a. did not threaten the learner's pride in his/her cul-
       ture, traditions, and language

    b. did not threaten the self-image of the learner, his/
       her family, and culture

    c. dispelled feelings of inferiority and alienation in
       the learner

    d. promoted success in learning and led to an enjoyment
       of reading

    e. was officially recognized by the government so that
       it had some added status

    f. had a plentiful supply of reading material of inte-
       rest to the learner

    g. was highly valued by the learner for its role in
       literacy

    h. met the learner's literacy needs to the greatest
       extent possible.

The first two characteristics are presented in their negative forms since it is not certain that a positive emphasis on them would be essential to the success of a given language policy. Instilling pride in the learner's language and culture would be an important goal of a literacy program that sought to maintain that language and culture. A program that sought to reach assimilationist goals might not wish to place an emphasis on the expressive and separatist roles of the mother tongue. It would be concerned with the promotion of the unifying language in a manner that would not injure the learner's pride in his/her own culture but would enhance pride in a larger regional or national identity. The enhancement of the self-image of the learner should be a key goal of any education program. The extent to which that enhancement will extend to the culture of the learner will again depend on the program's emphasis on maintenance or assimilationist goals. The best strategy would seem to be to adopt a positive orientation with respect to these two characteristics in keeping with the goals of the literacy program and to strictly avoid doing anything that would directly threaten the learner's pride or self-image in himself or his culture.

Ridding the learner of feelings of inferiority and alienation should also be goals of any education effort. At the very least, this would mean that the program staff would have to show respect for the learners, their language, and their culture. The language and cultural attitudes of teachers and other staff can have a great effect upon the learning climate of the program. If they carry feelings of superiority into the program, those feelings will quickly be detected by the

learners and ruin the learning atmosphere. Adult learning must be based on mutual respect between learner and educator. In many cases, the use of the mother tongue for literacy work may improve the status of the language and its speakers. The acquisition of literacy in a popular second language may also heighten the self-concept of the learner and decrease alienation by giving him/her access to the literate community of that language.

Ensuring success in literacy learning can best be done by beginning instruction in the mother tongue of the learners or another language that they know very well, provided, of course, that the orthography is an accurate one that is relatively easy to learn. By making the learning task as easy as possible, the chance of initial success is enhanced. Early success is important in relieving the anxiety of the adult over his/her ability to learn and maintaining the learner's level of motivation.

The accordance of some official recognition to the language of instruction is valuable in that it gives added status to the language and serves to increase the motivation of those who are learning literacy in that language. Given the low prestige of many mother tongues, especially those with no written tradition, many learners, even those who claim the language as their mother tongue, are reluctant to become literate in that language. They may feel that it is a second class language for literacy purposes because of its lack of written materials, and they may rightly protest that they will be gaining a limited kind of literacy. Some countries like Guinea and Mali have tried to improve the images of the mother tongues by calling all of them "national languages"

(Unesco 1964b). Some highly multilingual states like India and Nigeria have developed literacy programs in a number of languages and accorded them some official status for local affairs. Only a few languages can be used for the most important roles like official language of the central government or medium of instruction of the formal schools, but it should be possible to increase the official stature of other languages if only through rhetorical means.

A plentiful supply of reading material in the language of instruction increases the likelihood that the neo-literate will retain his/her literacy skills after the end of formal instruction. Relapse into illiteracy is a major problem in all literacy efforts, and a lack of materials for the neo-literate is a major cause of that relapse. Unfortunately, most languages do not have a plentiful supply of written materials which is why Unesco has recommended from its inception that mother tongue literacy be followed by induction of the learners "as rapidly as possible into full literacy in some language which already has a full literature" (Unesco 1947, p. 139).

The possession of a "full literature" is one factor in the value placed on literacy in a given language by prospective learners. Certain languages will have a great deal of prestige in a society. This prestige will come from its historical importance in the culture; its role as a key to economic, social, and/or political opportunity; its traditional use for literacy functions; and/or its linkage to some socio-cultural aspect such as religion. In most cultures, prospective learners will come to the literacy program with certain beliefs about the value of literacy in the languages of their environment. They may

tend to want literacy skills in the prestige languages, especially if they envision obtaining solid rewards for achieving those skills.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of a language from the psychological perspective is that it be perceived by the learner as satisfying his/her literacy goals. This may present a dual problem for the decision maker who discerns a difference between the real needs of the learners as seen from the planner's perspective and the set of needs perceived by the learners themselves. The imposition of the planner's perceptions without first carrying out a dialogue with the learners may irreparably damage the literacy effort so that neither group achieves its goals. Learners often aspire to literacy in a prestige language that they may not even know, greatly underestimating the difficulty of the learning task. Planners often adopt a language policy that will meet their assessment of the national or programmatic needs. What is needed is a dialogue between both parties with each sharing its thoughts and feelings on the matter. J.C. Cairns (1969, p. 13), Director of Unesco's Experimental World Literacy Programme, identified the right strategy to be used in such cases when he wrote:

> In each case, the particular situation of the group must be considered, and such questions as the following asked: Which language will give the learner more chances for a full life and more opportunity to continue his education later? What do members of the group want--to preserve their language or to learn the dominant language? These questions cannot be answered without careful--and continual--reference to the people in question.

C H A P T E R VIII
THE ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The Major Economic Factors

Economic issues enter into literacy programs in several ways. Such programs cost money to operate. They also entail some opportunity cost to the learners. The economic rewards of a successful literacy effort can be both individual and societal. Literate citizens can often enhance their own productivity and, thus, the nation's as well. Decision makers should have an understanding of how language policy can affect program costs, the economic incentives motivating prospective learners, and the economic development of societies and individuals. They need to consider these questions:

1. To what extent will program costs vary because of language choice?

2. In which language(s) will the economic motivation of the learners be greater?

3. Which language(s) will best promote economic development?

Discussion of the Factors

1. Program costs and language choice

Efforts to calculate the per person costs of literacy programs have been frustrated by such factors as the difficulty of prorating capital expenses of items that will last beyond a specific program (e.g., jeeps, blackboards, etc.) and of estimating the success rate of the project

when "success" is measured by abstract objectives like control over the environment or a higher level of consciousness. Many projects also enjoy certain subsidies, such as volunteer labor or the assistance of other departments, that affect the calculation of the final costs. Making cross-national comparisons of literacy costs are even more difficult if not impossible. Unesco's Experimental World Literacy Project, for example, reported a wide variation in the per person costs of programs among participating countries. Tanzania estimated that $6.62 were spent on each enrollee in its literacy program and that the per person cost for each of the people finishing the course was $10.46. In the Sudan the same costs were $86.90 and $271.62 respectively. The differences between countries is due to such factors as different standards of living, variations in the levels of literacy sought and the length of the programs, the use of volunteer teachers versus paid instructors, and the dropout rate of the programs.

There are no available figures that would allow one to compare the costs of programs that varied only in the language policy followed, so it is not possible to determine if one language policy is more expensive than another. Given the great variation in the goals, duration, dropout rates, etc., of actual programs, this is probably an impossibility under non-experimental conditions. Even an empirical, experimental study would not supply all the answers if it did not examine the value of literacy in that language to the learners and calculate the effect upon their income, daily life, self-concept, and other factors that are extremely difficult to measure.

It is probably safe to assume that the costs of a program will be influenced by the difficulty of the learning task and the complexity of the language strategy used in the program. The difficulty of the learning task will largely depend upon the familiarity of the language to the learner and the ease of learning of the orthography. In Chapter VI we categorized the possible language candidates according to a scale of increasing difficulty as follows:

Languages known to the learner --

1. Mother tongue

2. Standard dialect of mother tongue group

3. Second language known to the learner

Languages unknown to the learner --

4. Second language of same language family as mother tongue

5. Indigenous language of different language family

6. Exogenous language

Since the difficulty of the learning task will most probably affect the length of the program, the sophistication of the staff and materials, and the dropout rate, this language scale may also represent a scale of increasing costs according to language chosen. In real life, other factors might intervene to affect costs, but this scale does give a rough idea of the difficulty, and hence the costs, of implementing a literacy program in a certain language.

The language strategy adopted for a given program will also affect its costs if we adhere to the theory that increased complexity leads to increased costs. A mother tongue program or official language program

for native speakers and others who are fluent in the language will be pedagogically less complex than a program that uses an unknown second language or one that seeks to use the mother tongue as a bridge to the official language. For the latter programs, teachers will require special training in second language pedagogy, and transitional materials will be needed to move the learner from his mother tongue to the standard dialect and then to the second language. In addition to more sophisticated teachers and materials, such programs will probably also require more time to bring the learner to the desired level of literacy. On the other hand, mother tongue programs may also be expensive if the target language is an unwritten one which requires a great deal of research and materials production before it is ready to be used in literacy work. The smaller the language group, the more costly the materials will be since economies of scale will not be in its favor.

Given the number of factors that may influence the costs of a literacy program, it is impossible to make a definitive statement on the relative costs of using a certain language. Each literacy program will be different. It may not even be that important to worry about costs in relation to language as long as the program is meeting real needs and producing neo-literates who are satisfied with the results of their efforts. However, in the real world, money is always a continual problem. It is also a particularly scarce commodity in adult education programs. So, while a definitive estimate of the costs of different language policies may be an elusive objective, it is important that the decision maker have an idea of how language may affect the costs of a program. One way to do this is to examine the effect of language upon

the average literacy program costs. Unesco (1976b) has identified eight categories of cost items that are incurred in most programs. Those items are listed below along with Unesco's estimate of the percentage of overall expenditures required by each item.

a. Pay of instructor   30.0%
b. Preparatory and research studies   23.5%
c. Training of instructors   6.5%
d. Teaching materials   5.0%
e. Audio-visual material   1.5%
f. Administration expenses   21.0%
g. Transport   8.0%
h. Classroom equipment   4.5%

The first four of these items are the ones most likely to be heavily influenced by the language policy of the program.

a. Pay of instructors. Many literacy programs rely on volunteer teachers or teachers from the formal schools who are paid an additional sum for their participation in adult education projects. In some cases, the instructors are neo-literates who have just emerged from illiteracy themselves. The famed Laubach method was partly designed with such neo-literate instructors in mind. The approach was kept simple so that training in the method could be done quickly, and the "each one, teach one" process carried on without much delay. Once a second language or bilingual approach is adopted, there is much less chance that volunteers or others with minimal training will be able to do the job well; even formal school teachers will need additional training in order to handle the sophisticated methodology that is required. In addition, a bilingual approach will require bilingual teachers or at least two sets of instructors. In all likelihood, people with high qualifications and specialized teaching skills will be

less likely to volunteer and will probably demand higher pay than the average literacy instructor.

b. Preparatory and research studies. Generally a four to five-year period is needed to make an unwritten, unstudied language ready for use in literacy programs. The major cost in this case may not be the linguistic work, but the lost opportunities if no literacy is carried out for the full time period.

Second language programs could utilize contrastive studies of the first languages of the learners and the target language, but these have not been found to be essential to the launching of second language programs. They would be more useful for bridging programs that were using both languages. A shortcoming of many second language programs is the failure to adopt second language teaching strategies; many programs use the same approach and materials they use with native speakers of the language.

c. Training of instructors. The more sophisticated the methodology, the more sophisticated the teacher must be. Programs that utilize a second language or bilingual strategy require instructors with a higher degree of teaching skills than mother tongue programs do. A lack of teacher training was a major reason for the failure of Thailand's attempt to employ a bilingual approach using the mother tongue as a bridge to literacy in Thai (World Education 1978). Bilingual or second language programs would also probably require teachers with a higher degree of education than mother tongue programs as well as a more extensive training period.

d. Teaching materials. The cost of teaching materials for a literacy program would greatly depend on the general availability of materials in the specific language. There might already be a range of materials available in the major languages of the country. These materials might be reasonably priced if they had been produced on a large scale, thus decreasing per unit cost. The development of materials in a previously unwritten language might be a long, laborious, and expensive process. Mother tongue proponents grant that the price may be high, but they argue that it will be more than repaid in the form of shorter, more effective programs.

> The comparatively high cost of initial investment in the preparation and production of teaching and learning aids, particularly when the national language or languages have not previously been used in written form, is counterbalanced by the possibility of using such equipment throughout the system, both for children and adolescents at school and for adult literacy work. . . . No specialized training would be required of the literacy worker, so that the literacy programme could then be organized on a large scale and completed within a fairly short time. . . . This would shed a completely new light on the problem of financing a country-wide literacy campaign and, more important, of ensuring its effectiveness at a practical level (Moumouni 1975, p. 66).

These sentiments were echoed by a French development worker whose experiences in Mali led him to "reject the argument that it is an expensive process, for even in strictly economic terms, it would not be hard to demonstrate the very high profitability of the investment" (Belloncle 1980, p. 115).

Bilingual or second language programs may also require a considerable investment in materials development. Gudschinsky (1973) strongly favored using several levels of materials that gradually moved the illiterate from literacy in his/her mother tongue to literacy in the

written standard of that language and then on to literacy in a second language. Like Moumouni and Belloncle, she thought that the expense would be repaid by better results. Gudschinsky (1973, p. 140) cautioned literacy planners to:

> Be careful you do not pay too high a price for "economy." Some of the most dismal failures in the world took place because someone was counting the literacy cost in dollars and cents, neglecting the invaluable factors of human energy and aspiration. Such economy has been paid for in hundreds, maybe thousands, of disillusioned people who eagerly hoped they would learn to read but found they couldn't. To put it another way, money that is saved "buying failure" is money "down the drain." In my opinion, publication costs are the cheapest part of the whole literacy effort.

In addition to the costs of launching a literacy program, planners must also consider the costs to the learners. There may be a direct cost to them in terms of fees or the purchase of materials. Even heavily subsidized materials costing very little may be a major expense to a person who is at or below subsistence level. Another expense is the opportunity cost to the learner: the time and effort spent on literacy work that could have been utilized on some other activity. If learners do not readily see that this time, effort, and money will result in the achievement of an equal or greater amount of benefits, they will not continue pursing their studies. A high dropout rate further inflates the per person cost of literacy. It is important for planners to be aware of the economic goals of the learners so that they can better organize a program that will meet those goals.

2. Economic motivation for literacy

Literacy in itself has no value in an economic sense, although it may be desired for reasons such as status or self-image or religious function. A starting point for analysis should be the specification of the economic aspirations of the learners or potential learners (Method 1980b, p. 59).

In earlier chapters we saw how instrumental motivation (the desire to achieve direct benefits) could play an important role in language learning situations. We also noted that adults are more likely than children to want to obtain immediate and tangible benefits from a learning experience that they enter into. One of the strongest forces that compels adults into the adult literacy program is a desire to improve themselves economically. A study financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (Method 1980b, p. 55) looked in-depth at the relationship between economic incentives and literacy motivation and identified six main ways in which literacy had economic value to individuals.

1. As a condition for employment, either as entry requirement or as an essential skill for job performance, leading directly to monetary gain;

2. As a skill which has economic utility for the self-employed, leading to qualitative changes, time savings, or cost savings;

3. As a means of obtaining information and assessing risks for economic decision making, leading to improved allocation and efficiency for the semi-subsistence producer/consumer;

4. As a factor increasing the self reliance and economic independence of the individual, leading to greater mobility, more objective risk assessment and more confidence in perceptions of opportunity;

5. As a precondition to participation in skill-training or other activity leading to additional economic opportunity;

6. As a condition for membership or leadership in economically important activities such as cooperatives, unions, credit societies.

It is important that literacy planners gain an understanding of the sources of economic motivation that are pushing their clientele towards literacy. Combined with a knowledge of the roles of languages in society, particularly the economic roles, this understanding will give them some insight on how language policy can encourage or hinder that economic motivation. Program planners must try to give learners literacy in the language that will best meet their economic goals if they are to take full advantage of that type of powerful motivation. People looking for jobs in the modern sector of the economy should be made literate in the languages used in that sector. The self-employed may be best served by mother tongue literacy if their literacy is to be used for personal purposes only. It may mean literacy in another language if their need is to be able to read catalogues or government forms or correspond with other language groups. Literacy in some languages will be more useful than others for different goals like access to information, economic and social mobility, participation in skill training, and membership in economically important activities.

Literacy planners will have to consider the economic context of the prospective learners. The degree to which they are integrated into production activities in the market economy will greatly affect the strength of their economic motivation.

As soon as the individual begins to participate in an economic market, whether working part-time or selling some production and handicrafts or purchasing some fertilizer and consumption goods, other factors of the economic

context (employers, purchasers of goods and services, sup-
pliers of needed commodities or inputs) begin to influence
economic values (Method 1980b, p. 78).

As a person gets away from home-based and subsistence level activities
and into the broader economic milieu, the chances increase that s/he
will find a greater economic need for literacy. There is also a greater
probability that s/he will find a need for literacy in a second language.
If the prospective learner is to assign an economic value to literacy,
s/he must discern that the economic context provides realistic oppor-
tunities for economic improvement, that there are economic rewards for
literacy skills, and that there is room for him/her to change the status
quo and seek those new opportunities (Method 1980b).

Planners must be able to not only assess the realities of the
economic context but also the perceptions of that context that are held
by the target audience. Prospective learners may perceive the situa-
tion in a different way, and this will greatly affect their outlook.
The economic value of literacy

. . . exists when the association exists, even when a mis-
taken association exists. . . . The motivation exists when,
and only when, the learner values the result and believes
that a reasonable linkage exists. The analyst may be able
to suggest overlooked possibilities, values of linkages,
but unless these can be made realistic and attractive within
the analytical framework of the individual learner or poten-
tial learner, they can have little influence on motivation
(Method 1980b, p. 60).

This perception of the value of literacy may also be linked to a
specific language. Learners may be very desirous of literacy in a
prestige language like English or the official language of the country.
They may rightly perceive that people who are literate in those lan-
guages are receiving great economic rewards. They may not as readily

perceive that those people have other valuable skills, that the level of
literacy needed for such success is very high and beyond the scope of an
adult literacy program nor truly understand the difficulty of moving
from illiteracy to literacy in a foreign language. Just as often, how-
ever, people can be very insightful about such things. A program in
Sierra Leone that taught English literacy to rural migrants to the
capital city found that the students were "remarkably realistic in their
approach to the future. They want to become drivers, mechanics and
carpenters, not doctors and lawyers" (Samuels 1970, p. 36).

Accurate or not, the perceptions of the learners of the economic
value of literacy in certain languages are a valuable source of informa-
tion for the decision maker. Those perceptions will greatly influence
the public response to a literacy program's language policy and the
learners' willingness to join and continue in a literacy program.
Literacy staff members should engage in dialogue with prospective
learners so that each group can share their perceptions of the value of
literacy in a specific language. In the final stage, they "should be
more concerned with the personal calculus of the individual than with
the public or social calculus of what the newly literate citizen and
workers should value or strive to accomplish" (Method 1980b, p. 60).

3. Language(s) of literacy for economic development

In the minds of most people, literacy has a strong link with
economic development. Given a world situation in which illiteracy and
underdevelopment went hand in hand, many people have made the assump-
tion that literacy and development were interconnected. This

assumption was at the heart of what Graff (1979) called the "literacy myth."

> Value to the community, self- and socioeconomic worth, mobility, access to information and knowledge, rationality, morality, and orderliness are among the many qualities linked to literacy for individuals. Literacy, in other words, was one critical component of the individual's road to progress. . . . From productivity to participation, schooled workers and citizens were required if the best path to the future and its fulfillment were to be followed (Graff 1979, p. xv).

Some research has found a correlation between literacy and different indices of economic development, but research has not been able to definitely establish that literacy is a precondition for economic development (Harman 1974). This lack of certainty among the academic community, however, was not always recognized by national leaders and the man in the street. Many of them saw enough personal proof of the "literacy myth" to make them feel that literacy was, indeed, a key to personal and national economic development. Other research that hypothesized that a literacy level of 30-40% was necessary as a precondition for economic development encouraged national leaders in the belief that an advance in literacy rates would lead to an advance in the country's economic level (Harman 1974).

Continued research into the linkage question has not only failed to uncover the necessary proof, but has greatly increased the doubt about the validity of that linkage (Harman 1974; Graff 1979, 1981). Systematic evidence cannot be presented for the case that there is a direct correlation between literacy, industrialization, and economic progress. There may be some connection, but it is not the powerful one that constitutes the "literacy myth." A review of research on the

matter led Harman (1974, p. 10) to conclude that "while literacy and economic development may have some connection, to argue that the former is in any way, independently of other factors, a precondition for the latter, would be grossly misleading and insubstantial."

This debate over the extent of the relationship between literacy and economic development has relevance for the language choice question in that the "literacy myth" has affected the language decisions of some policy makers. Along with the "literacy myth" there has existed a "language myth" that has linked linguistic homogeneity with economic development. The validity of this "language myth" may in fact be greater than that of the "literacy myth," but it has also led policy makers into making false assumptions. In their recognition of the need for a national language to unite the country and of the importance of a limited number of languages for commerce, industry, and the modern sector of the economy, it seems that some decision makers have combined the two myths in formulating a policy of literacy in the national/ official language as a means to unite the nation and stimulate development. This mixture has often been one of oil and water that has failed to satisfy the literacy needs of participants or the national language needs of the government. Several noted program failures in the Experimental World Literacy Programme can attest to this supposition (Unesco 1976b).

From an economic development perspective, governments do have a legitimate concern over the training of people in literacy in the languages that will have the greatest impact on economic development in the modern sector, especially in the urban context. However, they

should not use this concern as a rationale for the promotion of literacy programs in a limited number of languages that are used for economic activities on a national scale. Prospective learners will have literacy needs that range across the six categories cited by Method. As noted earlier, the language in which literacy has economic value for the individual may vary from person to person. While there is a need for planners to consider the national context and the literate manpower demand of the modern and modernizing sectors of the economy, they should also remember that economic development occurs on an individual basis and that the aggregate effect of meeting the individual literacy needs of people may be a powerful force for economic development. Farmers who want agricultural information will become more productive when they get access to that information, not necessarily when they get access to literacy in the official language. Mother tongue literacy for small businessmen, including farmers, may help them improve their efficiency. Planners must consider what is important for these people for their personal economic development: mother tongue literacy skills that will enable them to apply their literacy in a useful fashion or literacy in a second language either because the language itself has to be learned or because it is the best medium for the satisfaction of the learner's literacy needs. In summing up his attack upon the "literacy myth," Graff (1974, pp. 323-324) concluded:

> If we are to understand the meanings of literacy and its dif-
> ferent values, past and present, these assumptions must be
> criticized, the needs determined, the demands re-evaluated.
> The variable and differential contributions of literacy to
> different levels of society and different individuals must be
> confronted. Demands, abilities, and uses must be matched in
> more flexible ways, and the uses of literacy seen for their

worth, historically and at present. Literacy, finally, can no longer be seen as a universalistic quantity or quality to be possessed however unequally by all in theory. Needs, aspirations, and expectations must be best met for all members of society.

Characteristics of Appropriate Languages

From an economic perspective, the ideal candidate for use in an adult literacy program would be a language that:

a. could be taught effectively with the available funds;

b. met the economic goals of the learners and was perceived by them as worth the opportunity and monetary costs;

c. met the literacy needs of the economy (local or national).

A strict economic view of the language choice question might hold that a major characteristic of the language be that it can be taught in a minimal amount of time with a minimal expense; however, it is impossible to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of a literacy project that is purely monetary. The "cheapest" language for a program in terms of monetary outlay may not produce all the benefits that might come from literacy in another language. There are a number of language-related factors that will affect the financial cost of launching a literacy project in a specific language. These include:

a. Ease of learning

b. Availability of teachers and materials

c. Complexity of the learning task and need for specialized training of teachers and staff

d. Pedagogical stage of the language

e. Size of the language group

A language that can be taught quickly, that already has a reservoir of literacy personnel and materials, and that is at a highly developed pedagogical stage in terms of its ability to be used as a literacy medium is one that can probably be used with a minimal amount of expense compared to a language which requires a longer time to teach and which needs a great deal of development. Expenses, however, are also related to other factors such as level of literacy sought. The level of skill a person will need may vary from language to language since different languages will be used in different contexts in society. An embassy watchman may need to read and speak a little English, while one who aspires to be a driver or clerk will need correspondingly higher levels of literacy. A village bicycle mechanic may need low level literacy skills in his mother tongue in order to keep accounts and inventory. He may need literacy in another language if he is constantly ordering parts from a catalogue that is printed in a second language.

The size of the potential learning group is another factor that will influence costs. The larger the clientele, the less the per person costs of the program. Research and development costs will be about the same for languages at the same pedagogical stage of development. With a larger client group, the costs can be prorated across that larger number of learners. However, this may also be influenced by dropout rates determined by the number of people who finally finish the program. A bad language choice may lead to a high dropout rate that will push up those per person costs.

The complexity of factors involved demonstrates the difficulty of calculating the costs of a certain language option. It is impossible

to calculate the benefits' side of a good language choice in terms of improved mobility, enhanced employment opportunities, increased self-esteem, and other factors. These are just not calculable in monetary terms. Probably the essential return on any literacy effort is that the skills are acquired, used, and appreciated by the learners. The satisfaction of the needs of the clientele is an essential part of any program. There is not much use in launching a program in a language simply because it is theoretically the cheapest alternative. If it does not meet the literacy needs of the learners, they will not readily learn it, will probably not use their skills, and will eventually relapse into illiteracy. From an economic perspective, therefore, the major concern should be on meeting the economic needs of people for literacy within the budgetary constraints of the program rather than making costs the main criteria for language selection.

An important part in utilizing the economic motivations of learners is the identification of those motivations. This should be done in concert with the prospective learners so that planners are certain that these needs are coming from the learners and not from external assessments. It is crucial that the learners perceive that their needs are being met. They will be more willing to learn and to bear the economic and opportunity costs of the program.

Those who are concerned with the use of literacy as a means to enhance the economic development of the nation should remember that economic activity exists at all levels of society, not just at the national level. Any program that enhances the productivity of people thereby enhances the productivity of the nation. A village farmer or

merchant who gains in efficiency through the acquisition of literacy skills contributes to the growth of the national economy. The economy may have special need for workers who are literate in the language(s) of the modern sector; however, planners must be careful not to attempt to produce those workers through programs that will have a high degree of wastage in the form of dropouts. The needs of the metropolis should not have total precedence over the needs of the rest of the country. There is a need for literacy skills in the bazaars of the villages just as there is in the boardrooms of the national banks.

CHAPTER IX

THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Major Political Factors

In many nations, political considerations have been a major influence upon the choice of a language for adult literacy. Political forces have a legitimate role to play, but they should not dominate the decision-making process. Decision makers need to understand the political environment in which they are working. They can assess the legitimate role of political factors by answering the following questions:

1. Which language(s) best aids achievement of the general goals of the program?

2. What is the best language for the geo-political level at which the program will operate?

3. What are the political factors for and against the possible language choices?

Discussion of the Factors

1. General goals of the program

For the purposes of this analysis from the political perspective, we shall consider the goals of the program to be the general literacy approach which the originators of the program seek to employ. An examination of the language question in relation to these goals is one way of touching upon the crucial issues that underlie the political perspective. The program goals of most literacy efforts seem to include one or more of the following:

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a. Litearcy for national unity

b. Basic literacy skills

c. Religious literacy

d. Functional literacy

e. Work-oriented literacy

f. Psycho-social literacy

Literacy for national unity. Unlike the other goals on the above list, this one is not commonly discussed as a literacy approach per se. However, it is such a powerful agenda in many programs, and is entwined with so many important issues, that it has to be examined as a separate goal. In almost all programs, there is the hope that the expansion of literacy skills throughout the populace will increase public participation in the economic and political life of the nation and will lead to economic and social development. In many cases, the cause of development will be linked to the development of a national language, particularly in multilingual societies where the high number of languages and consequent lack of communication between citizens is seen as a hindrance to national development.

The need for a national language is a real one. A strong national language can enhance administrative efficiency in all areas of national life such as politics, commerce, and education. If it has the support of the people, it can serve as a bond between different speech communities and as a symbol of nationalism. An examination of differences between linguistically homogeneous and heterogeneous nations led Fishman (1968c, p. 60) to suggest that "linguistically homogeneous policies are usually economically more developed, educationally more

advanced, politically more modernized and ideologically-politically more tranquil and stable." Fishman also noted that this linguistic and cultural homogeneity was largely a result of industrialization, urbanization, modernization, Westernization, Christianization, and general homogenization, and he wondered how many planners in developing nations would assume that a causal effect might also go in the other direction and try to force linguistic homogeneity. Like the linkage between literacy and development, the linkage between linguistic homogeneity and development is not altogether clear, however, the latter linkage is probably much more real than the former. The outlines of the relationship between a national language and national growth has been sketched as follows:

> A country can have any degree of language uniformity or fragmentation and still be underdeveloped; and a country whose entire population, more or less, speaks the same language can be anywhere from very rich to very poor. But a country that is linguistically highly heterogeneous is always underdeveloped, and a country that is developed always has considerable language uniformity. . . . Language uniformity is a necessary but not sufficient condition of economic development and economic development is a sufficient but not necessary condition of language uniformity. Economic growth might not occur without (or even with) linguistic assimilation, but, if it does occur, then language unification (first by language learning and then also by language shift) will follow rapidly (Pool 1972, p. 213).

Seeing linguistic homogeneity through the propagation of their national language as an important goal, some countries tried to make use of their literacy efforts as a way to help achieve that goal. One of the five objectives of a tribal education project in Iran was "to teach the rudiments of literacy and forge strong bonds of a national unity by wide infusion of the Persian language spoken by very few of

the tribesmen" (Government of Iran 1965, p. 7). The Hill Areas
Education Project in Thailand listed loyalty and an understanding of the
importance of the nation as curriculum objectives in a program to teach
literacy in Thai to minority tribes (Ministry of Education, Thailand
1977). Malaysia conducted "National Solidarity Classes" which were
aimed primarily at eradicating illiteracy in Malay among non-Malay
speakers (bin Junid 1972). The evaluation of Unesco's Experimental
World Literacy Programme found that "a characteristic of certain EWLP
countries was the more or less explicit aim to use EWLP educative
action to implant more firmly the national, predominant or administra-
tive language" (Unesco 1976, p. 118).

It appears that some planners, at least, have discerned or
envisioned a continuous link between literacy, national language, and
national development. They have willingly enlisted literacy programs
in the cause of the propagation of a national language. Unfortunately,
there are a number of problems with forging this linkage. The propaga-
tion of a national language may not always create unity; and adult
literacy may not be a very appropriate tool for the imposition of a
language policy.

Based on his research on individual and subgroup involvement in
national systems, Kelman (1968) hypothesized that deliberate efforts to
create a national identity might be seen as a threat by ethnic sub-
groups and lead them to cling even more strongly to their own group and
language. He thus saw language as both an aid and barrier to involve-
ment in a national system. It was a powerful tool for unifying a
diverse population, but it also had the potential to be a major source

of internal conflict. Kelman identified two sources of legitimacy of a national system: (1) the extent to which it reflected the ethnic-cultural identity of the population; and (2) the extent to which it met the needs and interests of that population. The first source would enhance the <u>sentimental</u> attachment of citizens to the nation. They would see the nation as an extension of themselves and personally identify with it. The second source would develop <u>instrumental</u> attachments: the recognition that the system was helping people achieve their own goals. In the short run, Kelman felt that a strong sentimental attachment by large segments of the population would maintain a system's legitimacy even if it was facing serious problems in effectively meeting the needs of the populace. Over the long term, however, he believed that a system could only continue if a significant proportion of the population perceived the system was meeting their needs and interests. While a common language made it easier to develop political, economic, and social institutions that could serve a large population, Kelman felt that the imposition of a language upon sub-groups with strong sentimental attachments to their mother tongues could lead to disintegration rather than unity.

Kelman's wariness over a policy of language imposition was not uncommon. A 1947 Unesco conference observed that:

> . . . language in itself is neither a cohesive nor a dis-
> solving agent, that a common language follows rather than
> precedes common interests. The barriers to unity are to
> be found in attitudes and outlooks arising from a different
> historical development and from conflicting economic inter-
> ests and in modern times from different ideologies (Unesco
> 1947, p. 116).

A later meeting of Unesco language experts warned that "the absolute insistence on the use of the national language by people of another mother tongue may have a negative effect, leading the local groups to withdraw in some measure from national life" (Unesco 1953, p. 50). A decade later another meeting of Unesco experts expressed its view that the fear of harm to national unity by a multiplicity of mother tongues had not been justified and that:

> On the contrary, there is evidence that a judiciously permissive language policy may actually strengthen national unity. The choice of a language for national development necessarily imposes a handicap on those citizens whose mother tongue is not chosen and at the same time confers a privilege on those whose language is chosen. Unless it is very wisely administered, a selective policy may be a divisive rather than a unifying force (Unesco 1964b, p. 15).

Others have also expressed their feelings that mother tongues do not necessarily diversify in a negative way. Moumouni (1975) contended that the systematic use of mother tongues in civic and administrative affairs would encourage people to take a more effective part in political and administrative life and in the management of their own affairs. Reviewing the language situation in Zambia, Kashoki (1976) decided that local languages were not fully appreciated for the roles that they played in society and that the great unifying language, English, was actually giving opportunity to an elite and not to the masses.

The blind use of adult literacy programs to propagate a national language, and hence, a national identity, is a mistake. Literacy planners would best serve their clientele if they properly assessed the sentimental and instrumental attachments of prospective learners and adopted a language policy that would take advantage of those

attachments. A language group that is feeling threatened by assimilation may increase its sentimental attachment to its mother tongue. Rather than risk permanently alienating the group by forcing the national language upon them, the government might instead seek to assuage their fears by offering them mother tongue literacy programs or taking some other step to protect their identity. By meeting their felt needs, this policy would increase their instrumental attachment to the political system. Instrumental needs could be directly addressed by programs in languages that provided people with the literacy skills to meet those needs.

There is no doubt of the value to a society of a degree of linguistic homogeneity and of a national language. There is also no doubt that adult literacy can be an important tool in helping people gain access to participation in mainstream life through the teaching of literacy in a national language. While national unity is an important goal, it is not one that can or should be achieved through the propagation of a national language through adult literacy programs. People should be given the option of assimilating through the acquisition of the national language or literacy in another language that serves immediate needs. Since most literacy programs are voluntary, learners do not have to be guinea pigs in an effort to impose a national language. The 87% dropout rate recorded in Ethiopia's Amharic campaign attests to that fact (Unesco 1976b). Where the question of assimilation versus cultural maintenance is an emotional issue, planners would do well to consider the learner's point of view and worry less about the dangers of disintegration through mother tongue literacy. Going in

the face of a strong sentimental attachment is bound to cause friction and disharmony. Meeting the expressed needs of that language group is more likely to make them feel that the government really cares.

A secondary reason for not using adult literacy for national language propagation is that it is not a very powerful instrument for that purpose. There are other means that are much more powerful. The sanctioning of the use of a language for official purposes by the government, courts, military, etc., gives that language enormous prestige and leverage. The use of a language in certain industries and other economic areas also enhances its status. One of the most powerful tools for implementing a language policy is the educational system. Just as it can do more to lower illiteracy rates than adult education efforts, it can also establish a language in society over a few generations. The use of Hebrew as the sole medium of instruction in Israeli schools has been cited as the key factor in the revival of Hebrew--the only attested case where a "dead" language that had not been spoken for years was brought back into everyday usage (Fellman 1979).

Noting that languages are rarely established by "diktat," one language expert did observe a change in the degree to which language habits could be changed:

> It is only in the modern period of univeral state-
> provided education that linguistic manipulation of popula-
> tions becomes really possible; with modern methods of mass
> communications placing, in the mid-twentieth century--a
> further powerful tool in the hands of the would-be linguis-
> tic planner and manipulator (Spencer 1963b, p. 27).

Given the pervasiveness of schooling and governmental influence in modern societies and the tremendous growth in communication technology,

language habits are increasingly subject to change. However, adult literacy is not one of the tools that can or should be used to effect such changes. Compared to the formal sector of education, it gets very little money. India's third five-year plan, for instance, allotted only .5% of the education budget to adult education activities (National Literacy Coordination Committee 1975). The budget of the National Literacy Centre of Algeria was only 3% of the budget of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Unesco 1976b). Outside of the truly mass campaigns where entire populations are mobilized, most literacy programs reach only a small proportion of the population. In addition, these programs are hard-pressed to even pass on literacy skills to their clientele much less instruct them in a second language. Given the limited contact hours that are available for instruction in an average literacy program, it would be very difficult to teach a language to any useful degree of fluency. There should be a role for adult education programs that seek to teach oral or literacy skills in the dominant languages of a culture, but these should be offered to the people who truly desire them and who are motivated enough to study. Adult literacy programs are not an effective instrument for implementing a policy designed to impose a language upon a population. People will learn a language only when they see that it meets some need in their lives. They will become literate in that language when they perceive a use for such literacy skills. Literacy planners should concentrate on meeting such needs and resist having their programs become instruments of an assimilationist policy handed down from above. Forcing a language upon a people who do not want it will simply result

in the worst of all worlds. Divisiveness rather than national unity
will be achieved. The prospective learners will probably not learn the
language or become literate. Everyone loses.

Before ending this section, it is necessary to make a comment on
one strategy that attempts to use adult literacy for national unity--
that is the case of a mass campaign that is launched with the underlying
objective of giving the people a symbolic demonstration of the govern-
ment's desire to help them. It is conceivable that the planners would
have no high hopes for a great deal of success in the imparting of
literacy skills, but would initiate the program as a relatively inex-
pensive way to display an interest in the plight of the uneducated.
The program could be carried out using the national language only, thus
reducing costs, while promising that future efforts would be done in
the local language, thus reducing the resentment of minority language
groups. Although it might be a sham in terms of actual achievement in
literacy, such a program might serve a valuable public relations func-
tion for the incumbent government and give them time to prepare a
genuine plan to meet the educational needs of the people. Planners who
genuinely want to meet these needs can best do so by providing effec-
tive programs using the languages that match the literacy needs of
their clientele. If this is done, learners will appreciate that fact
and will increase both their sentimental and instrumental attachment to
the agency providing the service.

Basic literacy skills. The major focus of this type of program
would be on the teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing, and
numeracy as an end in itself. This would be a strictly pedagogical

approach that would not greatly concern itself with political and economic factors in the learner's environment. Although it originally came out of the missionary movement, the Laubach method might be considered to be a basic skills approach. In recent years more of an attempt has been made to utilize materials that are of interest and practical use to the learner, but the main emphasis lies on teaching the essentials of literacy independent of the context of use. Learners are given the coding and decoding skills, and it is assumed that they will use them to meet their personal needs. As we discussed earlier in the pedagogical perspective, it is easiest to teach literacy in the mother tongue of the learner or in some language that the learner knows well. The most difficult pedagogical task is to teach literacy in an unknown language of a different language family than the mother tongue. Of course, learner motivation would play a large role in determining the efficacy of any language choice.

Religious literacy. Religion has always been linked to literacy efforts. The beliefs of most religions have been written down in books sacred to their followers, and an ability to read at least some of those books has been highly prized. In the West, the Protestant Reformation led to the idea that all the followers, and not just the religious leaders, should be able to read the Bible. This initial step towards the concept of the massification of literacy hastened the production of Bibles in the vernaculars of Europe instead of the Latin of the Catholic church. When Christian missionaries began their outreach efforts in the less developed world, they often promoted literacy in the mother tongues as a means to reach the hearts of their clientele, although

language policies varied among the colonial powers. Just as Christianity was linked to Latin for centuries, other religions have also been linked to specific languages. The Arabic of the Koran has been the written standard for Arabic speakers even though most people are not able to converse in that formal, ancient dialect. However, Muslims all over the world study the classical Arabic of the Koran. In some places, the literacy learned in the Koranic school may be all the literacy that a person knows. Some people have even been able to use that knowledge of the Arabic script to adapt it to the writing of their own language (O'Halloran 1979).

In addition to Koranic schools that teach Arabic, Ethiopia also has church schools that teach Geez, the classicial liturgical language of Ethiopia's Coptic Church. Despite the fact that the young learners in these schools do not know the language and that the orthography is made up of 33 characters with 7 different forms plus another 40 characters, the children seem to succeed in mastering the language well enough to fulfill their religious duties. Fortunately the script is also used for two other major languages, Amharic and Tigrinya, so the acquisition of the orthography can serve purposes other than the limited functions of the church (Ferguson 1971).

In the above instances, the role of religion has been a positive one in promoting the growth of literacy. The linkage of language and religion, however, can also cause problems and slow the spread of literacy. The fact that the classical Arabic of the Koran is very different from the vernacular Arabic spoken by the vast majority of the people in Arab nations undoubtedly hinders the acquisition of literacy

skills by the majority of the people (Ferguson 1959). In Somalia, the adoption of a script for the national language Somali was held up for years because of an intense conflict between those who favored the use of the Latin script for modernizing purposes and those who favored the use of the Arabic script as a link to Somalia's Islamic heritage (Mohamed 1975). Literacy efforts in the northwest of Pakistan were made more difficult by the government's 1947 decision to ban the use of Gurmukhi, the language of the Sikhs, a tribe that had been divided by the partition of India. The new Muslim government in Pakistan did not want a language used in the sensitive border area that was directly linked to the Sikh or Hindu religion on India's side of the border. As late as 1978, it was still government policy to require all literacy work in the area to be done in Urdu, the national language (Hesser 1978).

Programs which seek to achieve religious goals or which wish to utilize the strong religious motivation that propels some people towards literacy will have to recognize the religious roles of certain languages in that society. Even in cases where planners are intent upon a purely secular approach, they must contend with the possible relationship between religion and certain languages. Religious motives have been a powerful force for the spread of literacy in many countries. When this force is linked with a specific language, decision makers will have to take care to ensure that their language decision takes advantage of religious motivations and, at least, does not create opposition by a total disregard of religious considerations.

Functional literacy. Unlike the basic skills approach, the functional literacy approach looks at the role of literacy in the environment of the learner and at how literacy can be a tool for improving the learner's quality of life. William Gray's famous definition of functional literacy centered around the role of literacy in the learner's culture.

> . . . a person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group (Gray 1956, p. 24).

Northcutt (1974) also concluded that literacy was a construct that only had meaning in a specific cultural context. The World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy that met in Tehran in 1965 went beyond Gray's culture-bound definition to emphasize the developmental aspects of literacy.

> Rather than an end in itself, (functional) literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes far beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training consisting merely in the teaching of reading and writing. . . . reading and writing should lead not only to elementary general knowledge but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civil life and a better understanding of the surrounding world, and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture (Unesco 1976b, p. 10).

This extremely broad range of goals for literacy considerably widens the range of languages that may meet these goals in a multilingual society. While "literacy as an end in itself" or basic skills literacy could in its simplest form be met by mother tongue literacy, the goal of "preparing man for a social, civic and economic role" leads to a language choice that is dependent upon many other factors such as

the language environment of the learner and the way in which s/he wants to assume these roles. The imparting of "elementary general knowledge" would be best done in a language well known to the learner. The work and productivity goals could be addressed in at least two ways. One, by providing the learner with the information s/he needs to obtain work and improve performance. This would best be done in a familiar language. The second way would be to give the learner the language skills s/he would need in order to function in his/her work environment (e.g., the language of the factory or the marketplace). The language for "participation in civil life" would depend on the geo-political level at which the learner wanted to participate. In a multilingual context, the language of participation might not be the same for all domains of activity and all levels from village to national and international. A functional literacy program must take care to choose a functional language.

Work-oriented literacy. This type of approach is really a subset of the functional strategy. It is primarily concerned with the use of literacy in the workplace as a means to enhance productivity. As implemented in Iran, this strategy was designed to go beyond basic skills and to "provide to the adults of both sexes general and technical knowledge necessary for individual, professional, social and cultural training, and thus hasten the transformation of society by way of development" (Unesco-Asia 1971, p. 57). The EWLP program in Iran sought to integrate literacy skills with technical and vocational training through the development of curriculum for twenty-eight occupations in a variety of economic sectors including agriculture, mining,

industry, home economics and civics (Unesco 1976b). Presumably, this was all done in Persian.

The major language problem that arises in these types of programs in multilingual settings is that there are two pedagogical objectives being sought at the same time: the teaching of content information and the teaching of literacy skills. Content information will be best transferred in the language best known to the learners. However, that language may not be the one in which they wish to become literate nor the one which is used in their work environment. Some programs therefore find themselves in the position of trying to achieve three objectives at once: teaching literacy, teaching content, and teaching a second language. This was found to be the case in Tanzania where Swahili was being promoted as the unifying language (Hutchinson ca 1968-69; Evaluation Unit Mwanza 1973; Gitelson 1975). It also occurred in some of the EWLP countries and led to poor results.

> In more than one country the programme was used to spread
> (or impose) a dominant language among minorities who, in
> addition to being illiterate, did not speak that language.
> . . . This teaching of a language largely for its own sake,
> however, clearly undermined the transmission of new knowl-
> edge and skills. In one subproject, there was no statis-
> tically significant improvement in knowledge of the
> national language among minority illiterates between tests
> taken before and after the eighteen-month course. Since
> the national language was also the medium of instruction,
> this failure probably explains the great proportion of
> negative results revealed by tests in other (vocational)
> aspects of the subproject (Unesco 1976b, p. 170).

These findings led the evaluators to conclude that the effectiveness of such programs largely depended on the degree of similarity between the language used to present the content and materials and the everyday language of the workers (Unesco 1976b).

It would behoove literacy planners to differentiate between the goals of teaching content, teaching literacy skills, and teaching a second language. Content cannot be taught in a language that is unknown to the learners. Literacy cannot be effectively taught in a second language unless the learners know that language and/or the program utilizes second language teaching strategies. Even then it can be a very difficult job even under the most favorable circumstances. Bowers (1968) described the difficulties encountered in teaching literacy in French to highly motivated Algerian oil field workers even with the advantage of small classes and a wide range of materials. Decision makers may find that they have to adopt to a multilingual strategy that will cover content and language teaching and to segregate the components to some degree if the language of the workplace and the learner are not identical. The failure to recognize and deal with the multiple objectives of a program can only lead to more failure.

Psycho-social literacy. The epitome of the psycho-social approach to literacy is found in the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. His aim was to go beyond the transfer of literacy skills from a teacher to his pupils and to help the learners try to gain an understanding of the social, economic, and political forces around them and to move towards changing those realities. He therefore placed a great emphasis on the use of dialogue between learners and facilitators that would lead them to a higher level of consciousness about the realities of their lives and a willingness to take action to change those realities for the better. Literacy was to be a cultural action for freedom:

a way for the have-nots to assert more control over the world and, in that process, to increase their pride and self-esteem.

Language has an impact on such a consciousness-raising approach in two ways: upon the pedagogical process and upon the goals. The process enumerated by Freire relied greatly upon the careful selection of social themes which were of great meaning to the learners. These themes were symbolized by certain key words such as favela (shanty town) that were presented to learning groups as the basis for discussion about their lives and environment. These key words were also chosen for their linguistic value. They were the means by which the learners were intro- duced to the syllables and written symbols of their language. It would seem that a Freirean approach that was based on the use of dialogues or discussions in an attempt for people to analyze the conditions of their lives would be best conducted in the mother tongue--the language that was easiest for discussion and which most permeated their lives. It would be possible to conduct those discussions in a second language that was well known to all the participants; however, it might lack the same sense of immediacy and emotion. It would obviously be impossible to utilize such a teaching strategy in a language that was not well known to the learners. It might be possible to adopt a bilingual approach that utilized the mother tongue for discussion purposes while introducing literacy in a second language.

The goal of helping the learners gain more control over their lives is also linked to the language issue. While discussions in the mother tongue serve to illuminate the realities of their situation, the control over certain languages might also give them a means to deal with

the larger world and protect their self-interests. Languages can be used to liberate or domesticate. While many people tout the value of mother tongue literacy and language maintenance as a means to maintain group solidarity and self-esteem, the South Africans use it to divide blacks into smaller groups and deprive them of access to the political and economic mainstream of the nation where English and Afrikaans predominate. An educator in the small nation of Lesotho, which sends many of its young men to work in South African mines, shocked his colleagues when he suggested that perhaps those men should be taught English or Afrikaans so that they could better deal with life in South Africa (Margaret Maxwell 1982: personal communication). Learning the language of one's oppressors can be seen as an act of survival and subjection or as the first step on the way to asserting oneself against that oppressor. In Thailand, one of the reasons for the shift of language policy from mother tongue as bridge to direct instruction in Thai was the eagerness of hill tribesmen to learn Thai so that they could deal on an equal footing with lowland Thais and avoid being cheated in the market. In the United States, a set of recommendations for a language policy for American Indian education urged that Indians continue to learn English so that they would not have to deal with the larger American society from a position of disadvantage. A command of English, the report stated, would enhance the job opportunities of individuals and enable the tribal community to handle interactions with the external world (Modiano 1973).

While the use of the mother tongue can be important for its expressive and separatist functions as a means to rediscover the world, a

language group may also find that they need control over a second language that has certain communicative, unifying, and participative functions that enables that group to effectively deal with the outside world. Language can be a means to analyze the cultural context and to identify the contradictions that lessen the quality of life. Language can also be a means to act upon those contradictions and change them. Control over important languages can lead to more control over one's life. Individual and group self-esteem and pride may be achieved by literacy in the mother tongue. It may also be achieved by acquiring literacy in a language that increases social and economic mobility and enables a person to participate in the social, political, and economic life of the context that is important to him. The language of liberation and domestication are in the eye of the beholder.

2. Geo-political level of program

Decision makers should have a clear understanding of the context in which their program is going to operate. As one moves along the continuum of levels from village to district to regional, national, and international, changes take place in the distribution of the languages under consideration and the relationships between those languages. In looking at linguistic complexity in Uganda, Criper and Ladefoged (1971) noted differences in the language composition of counties and districts. The dominant language of the county, the smaller unit, was not always the dominant language of the larger unit, the district. This might lead planners to make different decisions depending on whether they were looking at the county or district level. They observed that "the

problems that arise in formulating and carrying out a vernacular language policy depend upon the degree of complexity, in linguistic terms, of the administrative units with which the Government Ministries most directly deal" (Criper and Ladefoged 1971, p. 152). This, of course, would be a problem for non-governmental programs also. At these different levels, the relationships existing between different languages (e.g., home language, regional language, school language, national language, official language) might also change (Unesco 1977b). A seemingly strong appropriate choice at one level of operation might be a poor choice at another level.

There is also the question of the level at which such language decisions should be made. While this issue will be discussed in more depth in the concluding chapter, it can be mentioned here that there are voices raised in defense of both centralized and decentralized decisions by the government. Of course, a great deal of adult literacy work is done by local agencies and by private groups who already work at the local level. The record of nonformal education programs in the world over the last few decades seems to show a greater degree of success among those programs that involve the participation of the target audience in the decision-making process. Some educators increasingly feel that there is a need for society to be more decentralized, to be more capable of diversity at the local level, and to allow people to handle their own affairs locally (Galtung 1981). Decentralization of decision making would also be one strategy for reducing the magnitude of potential language conflict (Kelman 1971).

3. Political forces for and against languages

Decision makers will have to be aware of the political forces that are at work in support of and in opposition to the languages that they are considering. They should have the basic information on the politically assigned roles of languages in society and in the subculture that they are dealing with. The official status of languages in the government, schools, courts, military, etc., will probably be common knowledge for most people. This knowledge is not only baseline data for use in any decision, but also indicates the groups who have a stake in certain languages. The assignment of functions to languages usually leads to the development of a group of people who come to benefit from that language choice. If the use of English is mandated for the higher courts, for instance, there will probably be a group of English-speaking lawyers who would not like to see that rule changed.

It is more difficult for decision makers to understand the unofficial positions of languages. The feelings towards languages are often a result of historical events that have caused certain attitudes to develop. Attitudes may also evolve in reaction to present political maneuvering between groups. In Uganda at the time of independence, there was a groundswell of public opinion against an official role for the dominant language, Luganda, because it was the mother tongue of the Baganda, the largest ethnic group in the country and one that had engendered hostility from other groups because of their close and profitable links with the British during the colonial period. There was also opposition to the adoption of Swahili as the national language because of a fear of domination by Kenya, a more powerful neighbor that

was also considering the use of Swahili (Criper and Ladefoged 1971).
In Kenya, there was also political maneuvering going on between the two
major parties. KANU, the party ostensibly committed to centralism,
originally supported Swahili as its candidate for national language.
However, it later switched its support to a policy of emphasizing three
main local languages--languages that represented important parts of the
party's constituency. KADU, the party favoring regionalism, came out
for Swahili as a counter against the adoption of a policy emphasizing
the three major vernaculars. KADU's membership came from the smaller
tribes of the country (Whitely 1969). An understanding of the politi-
cal forces at work around the issue of language choice can help the
planner to avoid unnecessary conflict and find an appropriate choice
for the target audience. In the past, some literacy programs were more
aware of the political pressures from the national level than of the
political environment at the level of program operation. While many
planners will find it impossible to ignore pressures from above, they
should try to more fully deal with the political forces that will more
directly affect the program.

Characteristics of Appropriate Languages

Looking at the problem of language choice for adult literacy, it
would appear that the ideal language candidates would be languages
that:

    a.   inspired instrumental and/or sentimenal feelings
          among the target population;

    b.   were well-suited to facilitate the goals of the
          program;

c. were functional in terms of the literacy needs of the
    learner;

d. were functional in the geo-political context in which
    the learner wishes to use his/her literacy;

e. enhanced social harmony.

The instrumental/sentimental dichotomy used by Kelman (1971) to
categorize the types of attachments people may have to a given political
system is very similar to the categories of instrumental and integrative
motivation used by Gardner and Lambert (1972) to differentiate the
motivational forces facilitating the learning of second languages.
Both seem similar to the paradigm of nationism and nationalism which
Fishman (1968b) uses to distinguish between a state's search for opera-
tional efficiency or cultural authenticity. All three of these dichoto-
mies contrast a hard-headed, pragmatic, objective position (instrumental,
nationism) with a more subjective and emotional perspective (sentimental,
integrative, and nationalism). This is entirely appropriate for a
topic such as language that often combines pragmatism and emotionalism
in bewildering compositions. The Irish may cry out for a revival of
their language, and yet fail to learn it when it is offered to them,
largely because English has become far more profitable in terms of
rewards and opportunities (Macnamara 1971). The Arabs may proclaim
their desire to use their oil wealth to leap into the twentieth century,
yet find themselves hardpressed to promote literacy in a classical lan-
guage that no one feels they can abandon. Decision makers must struggle
to understand these contradictions in their society and to select lan-
guages that will mesh with these feelings more than they will conflict
with them. Decision makers must be politicians and gauge the feelings

of their constituency.

The language(s) chosen must also mesh with the goals of the project. Certain languages will be more appropriate for certain goals than others. The clarity of a program's goals has been identified as one of the key factors in successful literacy efforts (Unesco-Asia 1980). Since the impetus for most literacy programs comes from outside the illiterate community, the goals of many programs are established by an elite group of decision makers. Part of the planning process must be a consideration of the language(s) that would best facilitate the achievement of those goals. In some cases, a poor choice will doom the program to failure from the very beginning.

While literacy experts have made much of the term "functional literacy," little has been written about the need for literacy in a "functional language." Literacy programs should give learners literacy skills in the language in which they will utilize those skills. A mechanic who needs to be able to read repair manuals must become literate in the language of those manuals. Planners must also consider the geo-political context in which the learners will employ their literacy skills. A shopkeeper who wants literacy so that he may keep store accounts may be satisfied with literacy in his mother tongue. Another shopkeeper who wishes to expand his trade with other language communities may need to learn another language. The context of literacy use will have a great deal to say about which language is appropriate or not.

This chapter has attempted to show that the oft-cited goal of national unity through adult literacy is best achieved through a

sincere attempt to meet the real needs of the program participants rather than through the propagation of a national language. Imposition often breeds conflict. An attempt at forced assimilation can lead to hostility and alienation. There have been successes with the use of the mailed fist; there have been many more with the use of the gentle hand. Perhaps decision makers would do better if they thought less of promoting "national unity" and more about creating social harmony. "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

C H A P T E R   X
MAKING THE DECISION

Using the Factors and Characteristics as a Guide

There is no single answer to the language choice question in a multilingual context. The best choice for a specific situation and group of learners will depend upon the nature of that situation. We cannot state, either, that a certain category of languages, such as mother tongues, national languages, or languages of wider communication, will always constitute the best choice in all or most contexts. This study has attempted to demonstrate these facts and to provide a process whereby decision makers can analyze their situations and find the best choice(s) and avoid the worst ones.

The list of factors given for each of the six perspectives provides a format that decision makers can use for analyzing the environment in which their programs will operate. Just as some perspectives will seem more relevant to some programs than other perspectives, some factors will also play a more important role in the decision-making process. However, it is important that decision makers take a comprehensive view of their environment so that they are able to compose a balanced picture of the milieu in which their programs will be launched. One cannot depend, for instance, on the economic perspective to provide all the guidance that a person needs for a program that seeks to promote economic development through work-oriented literacy. The lines dividing perspectives are arbitrarily drawn. Is multilingualism a topic that

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should be covered in the linguistic, socio-cultural, or pedagogical perspectives? In truth, it touches upon all three. Rather than be repetitive, it has been fully addressed in only one of the perspectives. Regardless of their goals, therefore, literacy planners should look at the whole range of factors that may affect their programs. A review of these factors in relation to a specific context should give decision makers an understanding of the pros and cons of the choices that are available to them.

All of the factors seek to bring out information that can be of major significance to the decision. Some focus more on the possibility of using a certain language. For instance, does it have an orthography? Are there enough funds, teachers, and materials available to ensure that a viable program could be launched? Some factors are more relevant to the question of the advisability of using a particular language. Will national unity really be enhanced by a program that teaches literacy directly in a national language that is unknown to the learners without recognizing and planning for that fact? These are all considerations in a decision-making process, and this multidisciplinary analysis of the problem seeks to bring out the ones that have been noted as most important.

The "characteristics" section of each of the perspectives' chapters represents an attempt to break out of the mother tongue versus national language dichotomy that has permeated the language choice debate and obscured some of the key issues. The concept of mother tongue is valuable in terms of the psychological and socio-cultural perspectives while the idea of a national language is most useful in a discusion of

the political contexts. To view the entire issue of language choice within the framework of the emotion-laden mother tongue/national language dyad hinders an objective assessment of the full complexity of the problem. It is also important to see the problem as a question of unknown language versus a language known to the learner, of prestige versus non-prestige language, of traditional sector language versus modern sector language, and other such dyads. Many of these dyads represent opposite ends of a continuum. In a real situation, languages would fall at different points along these continuums. Polylingual individuals will have varying degrees of command over the languages in their repertoire. Some may even be more fluent in a language other than their designated mother tongue. From a pedagogical standpoint, therefore, it is important to determine the level of fluency that people possess in the languages under consideration. A widespread degree of fluency in a second language would increase the possibility of using that second language for literacy purposes. The mother tongue/national language debate often implies that the choice is known (mother tongue) versus unknown language with no options in between.

The enumeration of the characteristics is designed to help decision makers know what they should be looking for in a language candidate. The qualities represented by these characteristics are those that are suggested by the factors arising from that perspective. They have been carefully labeled as "ideal" features of language candidates since it is unlikely that a single language will possess all of these features to a significant degree. Like the factors, the characteristics are capable of canceling one another. Thus, a language that has an

extensive literary tradition, a standardized and modernized form, a wide range of reading materials, and a cadre of teachers might also be a language that was unknown to the target audience and perhaps even detested by those prospective learners. In many cases, neither the factors nor the characteristics will point the decision maker in the direction of a single language. They may serve to eliminate the poorest choices but not necessarily to identify a "best" choice. The final choice may be a compromise candidate that possesses some good features and few bad ones and generally meets the needs of the program and learners.

One factor that has not been mentioned earlier but that requires consideration is the attitude of the decision maker. In most cases, the people who make these types of decisions are from an urban, educated elite that is far removed from the life of the average illiterate. They will undoubtedly have an outlook that is quite different from the illiterate's. Thus, they will interpret the information they receive through a filter of their own beliefs. Despite their desire to be objective and to meet the needs of the learners, decision makers may come to very different conclusions over what those needs are and what constitutes a satisfactory response to those needs. Over three decades ago, a Unesco conference recognized that this situation had indeed developed and was adversely affecting the attempts of the technologically advanced countries to help the less developed countries with their literacy problems. The conference caustically noted that "by assuming a motivation on the part of their pupils similar to their own, they have been able to appeal only to the deviant, the unplaced, the

untypical, the quislings among them" (Unesco 1947, p. 140). While the average situation may not be this extreme, it is important to recognize differences between the helpers and the helped and to reflect on how those differences lead to varied perceptions of problems and solutions. The incorporation of the clientele into the decision-making process is the best way of ensuring a balanced view of the literacy setting.

The Crucial Factors

It is difficult to single out some factors as being more important than others since the relevance of each factor will greatly depend on the context that is being considered. A baseline factor would be the existence of an orthography, for without one there could be no instruction. The degree and nature of individual polylingualism would also be a key factor in any situation since it would tell what languages are known by what groups. The motivational factors are particularly powerful ones since they greatly affect the willingness of people to learn. Without motivation, the average adult will most probably drop out of the program without learning much at all. The availability of reading materials that are of interest to neo-literates would be important for the promotion of motivation and the maintenance of literacy skills following the end of formal instruction. The meaning and importance of these factors and all of the others have been discussed in earlier parts of this paper in sufficient depth to allow the reader to determine how relevant they are to his/her immediate situation. In looking at the language choice issue, however, there appear to be three constellations of factors that should be at the heart of every language choice decision.

Ignoring these factors may lead to the program's failure. Addressing these factors will undoubtedly enhance the program's chances of success. These constellations of factors are:

a. The roles of languages in the target context;

b. The goals of the programs;

c. The goals of the learners.

The roles of languages in the program's context encompasses those roles discussed under the socio-cultural perspective: the general, specific, and literacy functions of languages in the learners' society. This is a given; it is the field upon which the decision maker must play. It cannot be changed by literacy personnel to suit their needs. They must try to make a choice which is reinforced by the language environment and not subverted by it. To do this they must have an in-depth knowledge of the languages that have expressive, communicative, separatist, participatory, and imaginative functions for the prospective learners. They must know which languages are important in different domains such as the political, economic, and religious spheres of life. They should also be knowledgeable about the literacy functions of the language candidates. They must possess this understanding in relation to the learners' environment and to the environments in which the learners might wish to exercise their newly-gained literacy skills. They must be careful not to depend solely on their own assessment of the language environment, but to discover how the prospective learners view that environment.

Most literacy programs do not spontaneously arise out of the desire of a group of illiterates to become literate. There are usually

individuals, groups, or agencies that provide the impetus for the establishment of a literacy program. These initiators generally have an agenda that underlies their desire to foster adult literacy. It may be a wish to use literacy for critical thinking, for economic development, for revolutionary or domestication purposes, or purely for the transfer of the basic skills of reading, writing, and numeracy. These constitute the real goals of the program from their viewpoint. Literacy is the means that they are using to achieve those goals. To a great extent, these goals are also a given. The program initiators are not likely to wish to support and continue their literacy efforts if they do not see their goals being fulfilled. However, there is some room for flexibility. Goals may be modified and even changed. A program designed for domestication may be terminated if the program initiators find that it is having the opposite effect, but a work-oriented literacy project may alter its approach if it finds that it is not attracting learners who are very interested in those particular kinds of vocational skills. The goals may be open to modification, but they are an element of every program that has to be dealt with in terms of the language question.

The goals of the learners are even more varied than program goals. A single program may attract thousands of individuals who represent dozens of different goals. Some may simply wish to learn to write their names. Others may be primarily interested in learning to write personal letters. A significant number of learners will be hoping to improve their economic and social status through the acquisition of literacy skills. For some, literacy may be seen as a key to mobility

opening the door to the modern sector of the economy and a good job in the city. Given the fair degree of consistent effort that literacy acquisition requires, the voluntary status of adult learners in most programs, and the general need of adults for seeing immediate benefits from their efforts, it is extremely important that learners sense that their goals are being met by the program in which they are enrolled. These goals represent the motivating forces that drive the individual. They may also reflect his/her attitudes towards certain languages and his/her desire to become literate in a specific language. A high degree of motivation on the part of a large proportion of the enrollees is crucial to the success of a literacy program. That motivation is inextricably linked with the success of the program in helping the learners achieve their goals.

The success of any program is influenced by a variety of factors. Poor teaching and a lack of reading materials, for instance, can damage the results of any program. An analysis of the ingredients of successful literacy projects (Unesco-Asia 1980) identified seven crucial elements:

    a. Clarity of goals
    b. Identification of client needs
    c. Motivation/participation/coordination
    d. Harmonization with the socio-cultural identity and
       values of the clientele
    e. Post literacy/complementary education
    f. Mass mobilization
    g. Inter-sectoral/regional planning

The first four of these elements seem especially relevant to, and affected by, the language choice question. A program with clear goals is best situated to select the language best suited to facilitate the

achievement of those goals. The goals of the individuals interested in acquiring literacy skills probably reflect their needs, motivations, and values. These two forces come together against the backdrop of the language environment. Programs will have a higher chance of success if there is a good fit between these three constellations of factors; if the goals of the program and of the learners are similar or mutually reinforcing and both can be achieved by literacy in the same language. A program that was primarily interested in providing learners with basic skills in literacy might attract those who wished to use literacy for personal and private goals like letter writing or bookkeeping. This combination of goals might be best met by literacy in the mother tongue, which would be the easiest to teach and to learn. The mother tongue would be most appropriate for those who wished to use their literacy skills in the context of their home and/or language community. Learners who wished to become literate in order to move into new jobs in the modern sector of the economy would be best served by a program that pro- vided literacy in the language(s) of that sector.

Making the Choice

There is no secret formula for selecting the proper language for use in adult literacy programs. Like most difficult and complex deci- sions, it requires a lot of effort in gathering the proper information and analyzing the alternatives. This study has attempted to render its complexity a little more understandable by presenting a comprehensive survey of the major considerations that need to be made before a decision can be finalized. An essential part of that decision-making

process should be an examination of the interaction of the three crucial factors: roles of languages in society, goals of the program, and goals of the learners. When each of these factors indicates a need for the same language or languages, the selection of that language(s) will probably prove to be the right one. When there is no agreement, the decision will have to be a compromise.

Since it would be impossible for literacy planners to instantly change the roles of languages in society, the compromise would most likely have to be worked out between the goals of the program and the goals of the learners. Ideally the program should be adapted to meet the needs of its clientele, but in the real world, people are often more flexible than programs. People will join a program if they see that they will be getting something out of it. Some people may join a work-oriented literacy program primarily to gain the technical training; some may also join it only for the literacy training. In each case part of the attraction may be the language that is being used. Those who want the technical skills would most probably wish to be instructed in the language they knew best. Those who were primarily interested in the literacy skills would want literacy in a language they perceived as useful, even if it was a second language.

Since literacy programs should be geared towards attracting and holding learners, they must show flexibility in adapting to the needs of their clientele. On a national scale, this will probably mean a variety of programs using a variety of languages. No single approach or single language policy is likely to be effective for all illiterates. A nationwide program in the national language can be offered, but it

should be acknowledged that it will attract and hold mainly those who
are interested in that language's integrative and participatory func-
tions and who see it as legitimately meeting their literacy needs.
An attempt to impose the language on all illiterates may alienate as
many people as it integrates.

Given the need to reconcile the goals of the program and learners
with the functional roles of the languages in a specific context, it
would appear that there is also a need for a process of negotiation
between literacy planners and clientele. Only then will planners be
able to determine how well their assessment of the situation matches
the perceptions of the learners. Going through the entire analytical
process outlined in this study may be an exercise in futility if the
planners come to a conclusion that does not reflect the views of their
clientele. Certain factors in the process explicitly ask for informa-
tion on the attitudes and objectives of the learners. However, all
types of development programs have encountered serious problems because
the initiators made assumptions about the needs and opinions of the
target populace instead of directly soliciting their views. Given the
complexity of the issues involved and the real need for a meeting of
the minds over the choice of a language, it is advisable that repre-
sentatives of the prospective clientele be brought into the decision-
making process as partners rather than as subjects of a survey. Each
side will have to share its insights into the question as well as its
goals. Each side will have to try to cure the other of its ignorance.
Villagers may need to hear a realistic appraisal of what literacy can
offer them. They need to know how much time and effort they must put

into the program to reach various levels of ability. They need to be
presented with the range of educational messages that the planners are
able to offer in the program. All of these may vary depending on the
language chosen.

Among other things, planners need to hear firsthand about the
illiterate's view of the value of literacy and how s/he sees it fitting
into his/her life. Planners need to understand how their clientele feel
about such issues as assimilation, ethnic and language maintenance, and
development. They need to assess how people actually feel about
literacy in certain languages and to identify the spheres of life in
which learners would utilize such skills. All of this indicates that
the decision on a language should involve the participation of both
staff and clientele. If there are differences of opinion, it should
involve a process of negotiation as well.

The participation of the learners is often recommended in educa-
tional programs, but is rarely implemented. Part of the problem lies in
the fact that decisions are often made at high bureaucratic levels far
away from the clientele. Since literacy efforts are attempting to
induce cognitive changes in individuals, it is essential that those
individuals have a sense of involvement in the directing of those
efforts. Since the specific mixtures of languages will vary depending
on the geo-political area that is the basis for analysis, it is essen-
tial that the language decision be made at lower levels where the assess-
ment will be more accurate. A country may have a majority language when
viewed from a national perspective; at the regional level, the mixture
may change; at the district and village levels, a totally different

picture of the language situation might be presented. Small projects may find it feasible to make the language choice at a village level. Larger projects may find it more appropriate to make it at a district or regional level.

This does not mean that all programmatic concerns can be best handled at the local level. Every government in a highly multilingual nation may find it necessary to offer literacy programs in the national/ official language. This may be done on a national scale with local input as to the exact flavor of the local program in terms of programmatic goals and materials. What it does mean is that there should be a division of labor and decision-making power between the national level organization (governmental or private) and the local branches. Mass mobilization in support of literacy efforts, the mass production of some types of learning aids and teacher training materials, and other aspects of literacy programs might be best handled at higher levels in order to take advantage of specialized and rare skills and the cost effectiveness of economies of scale. Participation, needs assessment, and choice of a language are best done by local people and institutions.

The Evaluation Team that assessed the Experimental World Literacy Programme also strongly recommended that planning be as decentralized as possible "so as to reflect clearly the problems of each region and thus arouse the interest and participation of the population in all ways possible" (Unesco 1976b, p. 192). This call for participation is certainly not new. Those evaluators are certainly not alone in arguing for more participation of the clientele of programs. Unfortunately, the people in positions of power have largely ignored the call. In

their survey and analysis of the research on literacy, the International Council for Adult Education (1979, p. 5) came to make the following conclusion:

> Regardless of what development planners, educational researchers, or assorted academics say or find through study and analysis, the political leaders in socialist and non-socialist, industrialized and nonindustrialized, developing and developed nations alike view literacy as a political right, governed in the political arena.

It is certainly true that political considerations have played a larger role in language decisions than other factors. Control over the language of a program can give one a degree of control over who gets into the program, which group succeeds in becoming literate, and which group gains access to certain opportunities linked with literacy skills. The language choice can favor a policy of liberation or one of domestication. Unfortunately, political factors often do not necessarily favor the widespread acquisition of literacy. The political influences have too often been in terms of power politics and the manipulation of people. There is a role for politics in the language choice decision, but it should be the politics of reconciling different points of view and different sets of goals. It should be aimed at devising compromises that meet the needs of the greatest number of people and not the politics that seeks to reward only friends and allies and to buttress one's position of power.

The tragedy of the politicizing of the language issue is that it has the power to stop the spread of literacy but not to cause it. Governments have powerful tools at their disposal to foster language shift. They can use the formal education system to bring about a major

change in language behavior over a period of time. For children, school is a major part of their lives. They are reconciled to the idea that they will spend years in study before they are able to put that knowledge to use. Their parents may encourage them in their studies in the belief that they will be rewarded later in life for their achievement and even for their attendance. Certification may open the door to certain opportunities that otherwise would not be available.

For adults in a literacy setting, the above is not true. They are present on a voluntary basis. A certificate of attendance may not necessarily open doors for them. What is important is that they actually achieve a measure of literacy that is useful to them in terms of their aspirations. Many will have definite ideas about the language in which literacy is desired. It is highly unlikely that they can be forced to learn if they do not recognize rewards for the effort. Manipulation of the language policy for adult literacy for political purposes will be more likely to lead to more dropouts than language converts. How do you force a person to learn something for which s/he has no use?

This analysis of the language choice issue also leads one to ask if there is a need for a broader concept of language needs that goes beyond literacy skills. Are there situations in which people could have more of a need for oral skills in a second language or the standard dialect of their own language group? Would speaking and comprehension skills in another language be more useful to some people than the skills of reading and writing?

This chapter began with the statement that there is no single answer to the language choice question. That still remains true.

However, those who are truly interested in fostering the growth of adult literacy may be willing to agree that there can be a single general answer to the question. The best language for adult literacy is a <u>functional language</u>--the language that fulfills the literacy needs of the learner, whatever they may be.

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