

# BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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This is a report on student attitudes following a seven week experimental programme in Vernacular Literacy conducted at the Port Moresby Teachers' College in 1st Semester 1975.

Government and Ministry policy in Papua New Guinea in the past few years has placed much greater emphasis on the community orientation of education at all levels, but particularly at the level of primary education. One proposed policy change which will help to bring about this orientation concerns language policy, and establishes as a long term goal a situation in which the language of education in the early years of school should be the functional language of the community which the school serves. If this policy is adopted by the government, the Ministry of Education will face many problems in implementing it. Amongst these are crucial issues such as the attitudes of teachers and the possibility of adapting the teacher training system to cater for the new policy. It is hoped therefore that this research will be of interest and value to those involved in policy planning and policy implementation, since no such person will be unaffected by the language issue. Some background details concerning the seven week course conducted at the Port Moresby Teachers' College are important, and are outlined below.

The two year teacher training programme at Port Moresby Teachers' College has in the past few years been increasingly orientated towards a community approach. A number of lecturers within the college have become increasingly convinced that community orientation, or community service is only possible in terms of the culture of a community as expressed through its language. As a step in this direction, last year approximately twenty students from the college attended a Pidgin Literacy workshop organized by the Language Department, University of Papua New Guinea, in conjunction with the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This two week course resulted in a considerable demand from students for further opportunities of this kind. Taoripi students from the college had also begun a community service programme with the Taoripi community in Port Moresby, a programme which is continuing. Nevertheless, the lecturers concerned felt that such ad hoc measures were inadequate in view of what they saw as the fundamental importance of the issue. They therefore worked to have a vernacular literacy programme included in the core programme of the college: that is, the skills of teaching reading and writing in the pupils' mother tongue, or in Pidgin or Hiri Motu where these languages are spoken, and a basic introduction to the concepts of bilingual education in general were to be included in a basic skills programme to be taken compulsory by all students at the college.

This proposal was accepted by the college, though reservations were expressed by some members of staff, and there was some opposition.

The course content was organized by two members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, specialists in vernacular literacy work, who were seconded to the college for this purpose. The bulk of the teaching however,

was done by college lecturers. The course was conducted in the early weeks as a basic lecture programme, with a greater emphasis on practical work in the latter part of the seven week programme. Each week there were three one hour lectures for students at the college and three one hour seminars for staff members teaching the course. For each one hour Unit, a Summer Institute of Linguistics member would teach one group of students, and this session was attended by college staff involved in the course. This session would be followed by a seminar in which the lecturers would discuss the unit with the Summer Institute of Linguistics members. Lecturers would then teach the unit to other students. Under the circumstances, i.e. lecturers already were carrying a full teaching load, this was all the preparation that was possible, but it will be recognized that such a lack of adequate preparation is undesirable, and might have been expected to have an adverse effect on the teaching situation.

The unfavourable circumstances under which the course was conducted should be emphasised: it was an experimental programme being conducted for the first time by staff who were enthusiastic, but in other respects ill-prepared for their task. The Summer Institute of Linguistics members, though experts in their field, had no experience of teacher training, or educational qualifications as such. The Teachers College lecturers, though experts in various aspects of teacher education had no experience or expertise in bilingual education or vernacular literacy. It is certain then that future courses will benefit greatly from the experience gained in this one, and that many aspects of such courses will be modified in the light of this experience.

Experimental programmes often benefit from the motivation generated by new content and staff enthusiasm: the Hawthorne effect. However, owing to timetabling difficulties, the vernacular literacy programme had to be taught during an afternoon period which had been free time for students in previous years. Second year students showed some resentment towards the course for this reason. This resentment seemed to be dispelled later, and attendance at lectures was generally good, but there was no evidence to suggest a Hawthorne effect operating in this case.

The adverse circumstances under which the course was conducted are emphasised for two reasons: firstly because these difficulties were very real and produced some doubts in the college and elsewhere as to the value of the programme, and secondly because it is unlikely that ideal conditions for such a programme will exist in teachers colleges in Papua New Guinea for some years to come, and it is important to appreciate that what was done at Port Moresby Teachers' College was achieved under conditions very far from ideal, and which could be replicated, with improvements based on experience, by any other teachers college if Ministry of Education policy favours such a development.

### THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Out of 203 1st year and 149 2nd year students at the College, all of whom took the vernacular literacy course, 173 1st year students and 100 2nd year students completed the questionnaire. Overall there was no marked difference between the responses of 1st and 2nd year students, though the latter had fewer internal contradictions in their responses (see next paragraph) and showed themselves to be somewhat more aware of the pedagogical advantages of mother tongue education than 1st year students.

Not all students responded to each question, and in some questions more than one response was permitted; thus the total number of responses varies from question to question. Some questions were designed to test the

consistency of students' responses, e.g. where 'yes' for question (Y) precludes an answer of 'Yes' for question (Z). Overall there was a high level of consistency in the responses, but where inconsistencies arose, they are noted below. One other general feature is worth mentioning: students obviously preferred to make a positive response: that is approximately 10% more respondents would mark 'Yes' or 'True' for item (Y) than would mark 'No' or 'False' for item (Z), when the meanings of Y and Z were opposite.

The items in the questionnaire are set out below with the numbers of responses showing 1st year, 2nd year and overall totals. Comments are added on points raised which may be of interest.

1. Do you think Papua New Guinea should introduce some form of bilingual education?

1st year		137		4		20
2nd year	Yes	88	No	3	Uncertain	8
Total		225		7		28

Informal discussions with Port Moresby Teachers College students in second semester 1974 suggested to me that opinion for and against English as the sole medium of instruction was fairly evenly divided, with the more articulate students favouring English. This strong response in favour of some form of bilingual education is surprising and suggests that the course had an effect in changing student attitudes to language policy. (See items 8, 9, 10 and 11 for some evidence of the influence of the course on student attitudes).

2. What language or languages should be used during the first two or three years of primary education? (You may tick more than one box)

	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>Total</u>
(a) only English	35	18	53
(b) mother tongue and English	102	60	162
(c) mother tongue and Hiri Motu or Pidgin (where Hiri Motu or Pidgin are known)	55	39	94
(d) only mother tongue	12	10	22
(e) English and Pidgin or Hiri Motu (where the students speak different mother tongues)	95	57	152

I. The responses to item 2a showed some internal inconsistency in that approximately 1/3 of the total of 53 who showed that they favoured a policy of English only, also placed a tick elsewhere indicating other languages should be used either as well as or in place of English.

II. The favoured policy is that of mother tongue and English, or, where the mother tongue is impracticable, English and the appropriate lingua franca (i.e. the lingua franca commonly spoken in that area).

III. The very small number of students marking option (d) is of considerable significance. The advantages of beginning education in the mother tongue, and introducing other languages later, was a major point in the teaching programme. This response therefore indicates that the students were not

'brainwashed' or simply replying as they believed their lecturers wanted them to reply. If either of these had been the case, option (d) would have received far more support. This response suggests the rejection by the students of any monolingual approach, a suggestion which is strengthened by the response to item 3.

3. (a) In areas where children do not speak Pidgin or Hiri Motu, should children learn one of these languages?

1st year		141		17		9
2nd year	Yes	<u>75</u>	No	<u>18</u>	Uncertain	<u>5</u>
Total		216		35		14

- (b) If your answer was 'Yes', when should the language be taught? (You may tick more than one box)

	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>Total</u>
(a) from the beginning of primary school	117	62	179
(b) before leaving primary school	42	27	69
(c) at secondary level	41	21	62
(d) at tertiary level	24	10	34

The overall response to items 1, 2 and 3 suggests a language policy by which the mother tongue, a lingua franca and English would all be taught or used from the beginning of Class 1. Such a policy would not be practicable or educationally sound, but the important point which is confirmed here is the multi-lingual orientation of the students, and their rejection of a monolingual approach whether in relation to English or a vernacular language.

4. Do you think you would enjoy using your mother tongue in your teaching?

- (a) if materials were available in your mother tongue.

1st year		168		10		8
2nd year	Yes	<u>83</u>	No	<u>3</u>	Uncertain	<u>11</u>
Total		251		13		19

- (b) if your information had to come from materials written in English.

1st year		94		28		23
2nd year	Yes	<u>50</u>	No	<u>22</u>	Uncertain	<u>14</u>
Total		144		50		37

5. Do you think you would enjoy teaching in your home village or community?

1st year		133		16		15
2nd year	Yes	<u>84</u>	No	<u>6</u>	Uncertain	<u>7</u>
Total		217		22		22

The responses to Items 4 (a) and (b) and 5 are of considerable

significance for policy planners concerned to introduce a bilingual education programme and concerned to make education in Papua New Guinea more community orientated. The responses show:

I. That the idea of teaching through the medium of their mother tongue appeals to the great majority of students, and that more than half of the students believe that the mother tongue could be the medium of education even when there is no teaching programme for that language. (Given the large number of languages in Papua New Guinea, and the limited resources, it is almost certain that teachers would have to rely on materials written in English for planning their mother tongue education programme.) Even more significant perhaps is the very high proportion of students who regard favourably the prospect of teaching in their home village or community. This is not the case in many developing countries where teachers and public servants often prefer to work in areas where they can escape what they see as the intolerable demands of an extended family. This evidence is therefore welcome and heartening in that such attitudes would facilitate implementation of the kinds of policy decision now under consideration.

Items 6 and 7 are concerned with responses to a set of statements. The responses to 6 and 7 are therefore presented together.

6. Consider the following statements about bilingual education, and decide whether you think each one is true or untrue.
7. Choose the three statements from question 6, a-m, which you agree with most strongly.
  - (a) Write down the letters of these statements.
  - (b) Choose the statement you think is most important.

(a) Bilingual education will improve communication between teacher and pupil.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	133	12	18	67	18
2nd year	89	4	7	52	18
Total	222	16	25	119	36

(b) Bilingual education will improve communication between the school and the local community.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	151	7	15	73	26
2nd year	<u>87</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>11</u>
Total	238	12	23	108	37

(c) Bilingual education makes it harder for the child to learn English.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	13	134	18	9	2
2nd year	<u>14</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	27	204	34	12	$\frac{2}{2}$

(d) Bilingual education makes it easier to bring local cultural activities into the school.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	127	18	20	43	11
2nd year	<u>87</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>7</u>
Total	214	27	24	74	18

(e) The child is happier in a classroom where his mother tongue is used.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	130	6	27	29	2
2nd year	<u>82</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	212	13	38	49	7

- (f) The child will contribute more to the lessons by speaking, asking questions discussion etc. in a bilingual classroom.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	132	13	21	54	22
2nd year	<u>82</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>13</u>
Total	214	19	27	88	35

- (g) Young children in the village will understand subject matter better in the mother tongue.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	137	13	9	33	11
2nd year	<u>89</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	226	15	18	66	15

- (h) Young children in the village will understand subject matter better through English than through the mother tongue.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	11	91	39	6	2
2nd year	<u>16</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	27	157	57	10	2

- (i) The child will learn to read and write more quickly and more effectively in the mother tongue.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	107	24	32	43	12
2nd year	<u>66</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>8</u>
Total	173	36	53	68	20

- (j) Learning to read and write the mother tongue makes it harder to learn to read and write English later.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	33	98	31	9	1
2nd year	<u>21</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	<u>54</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>

- (k) Learning to read and write the mother tongue makes it easier to learn to read and write English later.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	114	21	24	49	34
2nd year	<u>61</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>13</u>
Total	<u>175</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>47</u>

- (l) Beginning education in the mother tongue will help the pupil to learn English.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	120	25	16	25	13
2nd year	<u>75</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>6</u>
Total	<u>195</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>19</u>

- (m) Bilingual education would be bad for Papua New Guinea.

	I T E M 6			I T E M 7	
	True	False	Uncertain	a	b
1st year	12	137	24	3	1
2nd year	<u>7</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	<u>19</u>	<u>211</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>



The responses to item 6 show some inconsistency: e.g. 6(m) showed more students to be uncertain or against bilingual education than there were in the responses to item l. (There was also a difference - 273 to 260 - in the number of responses recorded). Items (g) and (h), and (j) and (k) show a similar inconsistency when contrasted. In each case the tendency seems to have been for students who marked 'True' in one instance to be reluctant to make the opposed statement 'False', and therefore mark themselves 'Uncertain'.

The importance students attach to the learning of English is clearly shown in the numbers who chose (K) and (L) as the 'most important' statement. (47 and 19 respectively). The number choosing (K) was the highest for any single statement. The main consideration of students however seems to have been the classroom itself: communication within the classroom and the learning situation in general. Items (a), (g), (f) and (i) can be identified under this heading, and these received a total of 106 responses indicating the most important statement (7b).

A third category might be described as social and cultural benefits, and includes (b) and (d). These received a total of 55 responses.

Overall, nine statements could be supported by those who favoured a bilingual approach. Of these nine, statement (e) 'The child is happier in a classroom where his mother tongue is used' was ranked ninth both in responses to (7a) and (7b).

There were also a few inconsistencies between the responses to (7a) and (b) and responses to (6), where students had identified as statements that they agreed with strongly or as important, statements which they had marked as false. It may be that they wished to emphasise the falseness of this statement. The total number of such responses was 15, distributed as follows: c - 4; e - 1; g - 1; i - 3 (7a) 2(7b); j - 1; m - 3. With the exception of (i) all such inconsistencies related to (7a).

Items 8 - 11 attempted to establish the influence on student attitudes that the course had had. A pre-test and post-test would have been more valuable, but unfortunately no pre-test was conducted. However, the results gained from these items give some indications.

8. As a result of this course do you have more confidence, less confidence, or the same opinion regarding the importance of Papua New Guinea vernacular languages for PNG's future development?

1st year	More	$\frac{97}{71}$	Less	$\frac{15}{3}$	Same	$\frac{47}{19}$
2nd year	Confidence		Confidence		Opinion	
Total		$\frac{168}{168}$		$\frac{18}{18}$		$\frac{66}{66}$

9. As a result of this course do you have more confidence, less confidence or the same opinion regarding the use of the mother tongue in the classroom?

1st year	More	$\frac{99}{72}$	Less	$\frac{37}{11}$	Same	$\frac{28}{11}$
2nd year	Confidence		Confidence		Opinion	
Total		$\frac{171}{171}$		$\frac{48}{48}$		$\frac{39}{39}$

10. Do you have more confidence, less confidence or the same opinion regarding the use of the mother tongue as the language for learning?

1st year	More	77	Less	49	Same	31
2nd year	Confidence	$\frac{57}{134}$	Confidence	$\frac{19}{68}$	Opinion	$\frac{17}{48}$
Total						

11. Do you have more confidence, less confidence or the same opinion regarding the value of reading and writing for your own language community outside the school?

1st year	More	102	Less	31	Same	19
2nd year	Confidence	$\frac{62}{164}$	Confidence	$\frac{17}{48}$	Opinion	$\frac{15}{34}$
Total						

In general, the attitudes of the majority have been affected by the course (approximately 5/6) and the majority of these now feel more confidence in the role of vernacular languages in Papua New Guinean life in general and education in particular. A significant minority however express themselves as less confident in this role as a result of the course; an interesting result, since most of those respondents are in favour of bilingual education. It is only possible to speculate on the reasons, but a possibility is that the course showed some students, who had previously favoured bilingual education, that there are many problems to be overcome in establishing such a system: problems which previously had not occurred to them

The main practical purpose of the course was to train the students how to use prepared materials to teach literacy in their mother tongue and/or a lingua franca. Items 12, 13 and 14 show how far students felt this objective was achieved.

12. Do you feel confident that you could use prepared materials to teach reading in your own language?

1st year	Very	108	Fairly	41	Not	13
2nd year	Confident	$\frac{53}{161}$	Confident	$\frac{34}{75}$	Confident	$\frac{6}{19}$
Total						

13. Do you feel confident that you could use prepared materials to teach reading in Pidgin or Hiri Motu?  
(Tick only if you speak Pidgin or Hiri Motu fairly fluently).

1st year	Very	67	Fairly	46	Not	22
2nd year	Confident	$\frac{44}{111}$	Confident	$\frac{31}{77}$	Confident	$\frac{16}{38}$
Total						

14. Do you have confidence in your ability to teach adults to read and write, using prepared materials?

1st year	Very	82	Fairly	55	Not	17
2nd year	Confident	$\frac{57}{139}$	Confident	$\frac{26}{81}$	Confident	$\frac{9}{26}$
Total						

Most students have not yet had an opportunity to teach a literacy class, and the caution of the response of those students who were 'fairly confident' is therefore understandable.

The responses to item 15 could not be analysed owing to a mistake in the questionnaire.

Items 16 and 17 attempted to find out whether students' interest in bilingual education was sufficiently strong for them to want to do more study in this area, and whether students would be interested in teaching adult literacy in the communities they are eventually posted to as teachers. The responses to item 17 should be of particular interest to Adult Education Division.

15. Do you have confidence in your ability to prepare materials for teaching literacy?

16. Would you be interested in a further course to help you to make reading materials and books in your own language?

1st year	Very	97	Fairly	42	Not	18
2nd year	Interested	<u>72</u>	Interested	<u>20</u>	Interested	<u>2</u>
Total		169		62		20

17. Are you interested in starting adult literacy classes when you are posted as a teacher?

1st year	Very	83	Fairly	60	Not	14
2nd year	Interested	<u>54</u>	Interested	<u>31</u>	Interested	<u>4</u>
Total		137		91		18

The aim of item 15 was to test how realistic students' self assessment was: i.e. the course had not prepared them for such a task, and could not have attempted to do so in the time available. However, since this responses were under the headings 'Very Interested', 'Fairly Interested' and 'Not Interested' it is not possible to determine what the students had in mind for this item.

Items 18 (a) and (b) attempt to assess students' attitudes to the transfer of information and skills from one language medium to another.

18. Do you have confidence in your ability to express in your own language ideas you first learned in English?

(a)

1st year	Very	89	Fairly	50	Not	18
2nd year	Confident	<u>54</u>	Confident	<u>35</u>	Confident	<u>5</u>
Total		143		85		23

(b) Do you think you could express

1st year	All	19	Most Ideas	135	No Ideas	3
2nd year	Ideas	<u>21</u>		<u>48</u>		<u>4</u>
Total		40		183		7

Only a comparatively small number of students felt that all ideas could be transferred from English to the mother tongue. This seems a realistic assessment and adds to the impression given throughout that students were not simply sold the idea of bilingual education, but thought out their responses to the questionnaire carefully.

Items 19 - 21 consider the students' response to the course in terms of its value to them, and the potential value of such courses in other teachers colleges.

19. Do you think that a course like the one you have taken is helpful to teachers in training?

1st year		145		3		14
2nd year	Yes	<u>93</u>	No	<u>2</u>	Uncertain	<u>6</u>
Total		<u>238</u>		<u>5</u>		<u>20</u>

20. (a) Do you think all teachers colleges should have courses on bilingual education?

1st year		137		5		20
2nd year	Yes	<u>94</u>	No	<u>2</u>	Uncertain	<u>6</u>
Total		<u>231</u>		<u>7</u>		<u>26</u>

(b) If you answered 'Yes' to question 20, do you think the course should be:

Exactly like this one	1st year	2nd year	Total
	90	59	149
A little bit different from this one	1st year	2nd year	Total
	46	30	76
Altogether different from this one	1st year	2nd year	Total
	5	6	11

(A space is available at the end of the questionnaire for comments)

21. If bilingual education is introduced into the PNG education system, what changes, if any, would be needed in teacher-training colleges?

No changes	1st year	11
	2nd year	<u>7</u>
	Total	18

Special courses on bilingual education should be added to present course.

1st year	106
2nd year	<u>73</u>
Total	179

Big changes would be necessary for Primary Teacher-Training courses

1st year	42
2nd year	<u>15</u>
Total	57

The responses to these items amount to an overwhelming vote of confidence from the students for the idea of courses in bilingual education in teacher colleges and in the value to themselves of the particular course that they had taken.

The final item, 22, invited further comment on bilingual education in general or on this course. Most students wrote comments. The majority simply re-emphasised the points already made by their responses to the questionnaire, but among the responses which went somewhat further were the following:

- Special courses should be established for speakers of languages which have no orthography - (so that an orthography will be produced).
- Special scholarships should be granted for students to work on their own languages.
- A number of students felt that future courses should be longer to allow more time to be spent on teaching techniques and practical work. Other students asked for more time, or a separate course, on phonetics.
- Several students had noted the difficulties under which their lecturers were operating and suggested that specialist staff should be employed.

### CONCLUSIONS

The following points emerged from the questionnaire.

1. Students are overwhelmingly in favour of a bilingual approach to education for Papua New Guinea.
2. The students expressed considerable interest in teaching through the medium of their mother tongue and the great majority are willing to teach in their home areas.
3. The students responses showed consistency and a reasoned response to the issues presented to them.
4. The great majority of students considered the course to have been of value to them, that similar courses should be offered in all Teachers Colleges, and that further courses and opportunities to specialise in vernacular education should be available.
5. Strong support was given for the teaching of Pidgin and Hiri Motu, as a medium of instruction in areas where a lingua franca is the functional language of the community, and as a second language in other areas.

Author's Note: Teacher Training If  
Bilingual Education is Introduced

The conclusions reached in this paper support the views of those who favour a bilingual education policy for Papua New Guinea, and suggest that the problems associated with teacher-training and posting are not so great as they might have been. However, if such policies are to be implemented successfully it will be necessary for the Ministry to appoint specialists in bilingual education to teachers colleges. Summer Institute of Linguistics staff members have shown their willingness to assist and hopefully will continue to do so, but in the long term there must be specialists appointed on a full-time basis who can help in re-orientating college programmes. (Unlike most of the students, I believe that radical changes will be necessary

in teacher training colleges if the new policies are put into operation). There must also be a training programme for Papua New Guinean officers who will assist the specialists in bilingual education and eventually take over from them. The basis for such a programme already exists in the Diploma in Language and Education, a one year full-time programme offered by the Department of Education (University of Papua New Guinea) in conjunction with the Department of Language and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Diplomates of this programme could go into teachers colleges as assistant lecturers, and after two or three years could go abroad on UNESCO fellowships for further study. They should be capable of taking over the specialist posts in bilingual education by the early 1980's.