

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE  
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PUERTO RICO

by

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## PREFACE

The author of this report taught English in the high school of Mayaguez, Puerto Rico from 1924 to 1948. She was field assistant in English for one year in the schools of the same town. She then served two years as coordinator of English in the schools of the twelve districts of the Mayaguez Zone. She is at present a member of the Faculty of Education at the University of Puerto Rico serving as supervisor of English for the candidate teachers of the Normal School Course.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Spanish-speaking Puerto Rico, after 50 years of more or less constant effort to make Puerto Rican children bilingual by considering English as the medium of instruction in the public school system, the attempt was considered unsuccessful. Many objections had been raised and the language problem had become so involved in factious politics of the Island that among the first acts of the Puerto Rican Legislature under the administration of its first popular-elected native governor was that of making Spanish the legal language of the Island and the medium of instruction in its public school system.

A subsequent change was brought about in the methods of teaching English which was placed in the curriculum as a foreign or second language. This then required a complete new set of techniques which had to be introduced into the methodology of the teaching personnel. These techniques have been based on the methods of teaching and learning English as a foreign language as set forth by Dr. C. C. Fries, investigator of modern linguistic science at the University of Michigan.

This report is an informative, descriptive analysis of the unsuccessful attempt of Puerto Rico, an American dependency with an inherited Spanish cultural background, to cope with the problem of teaching English as a medium of instruction to its Spanish-speaking children. This report also

treats of the inauguration in the educational program in its public school system of an entirely new language policy, that of teaching English as a second language with Spanish as the instructional language.

## THE INHERITANCE OF PUERTO RICO

In writing on education in Puerto Rico, it is well, first, to turn to its origin and look at its heritage from Spain. For over four hundred years Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony, Spanish in blood, in religion, in language, in customs and in tradition.

### The Golden Age in Spain

The reign of Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain (1469-1504) is noted for a general interest in cultural studies. The taste for letters and for arts in the peninsula, the spirit of the Italian Renaissance which spread throughout the sister kingdom, and the impulse given to scientific study by the discovery of America gave impetus to all branches of learning and ushered in the golden age of Spanish culture.

Queen Isabella sought the most famous European teachers for her sons.<sup>1</sup> This affected all the nobility. Princes and

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<sup>1</sup> J. J. Osuna, "A History of Education in Puerto Rico", p. 6.

courtiers endowed chairs, maintained lectures and erected imposing buildings as universities. Many colleges were founded in which the nobility secured the best education available at that time. Spanish scholars sought the universities of Italy and France in which they perfected their studies begun at home. However, in the meantime the masses were neglected.

Puerto Rico, lying east of Santo Domingo and Cuba in the Caribbean area, was discovered by Christopher Columbus, November 19, 1493 during his second voyage to America. He landed in Aguada in the northwestern part and took possession of the Island in the name of the reigning sovereigns of Spain. Reports said that the mountain streams abounded with gold. So Juan Ponce de León was sent from Santo Domingo to explore the Island. He was made its first governor in 1509.

#### Early Educational Efforts in Puerto Rico

The first efforts to establish educational institutions in Puerto Rico were made by the Catholic Church. The Spanish colonists coming to America were accompanied by priests who looked after the spiritual welfare of the settlers, befriended the Indians, and were charged by the King and Queen to protect them from the colonists.<sup>2</sup>

As early as 1503 one finds spiritual and educational concern in their welfare manifested in an order to the effect

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



that the children in each village should get together twice a day in a house next to the church in order that the chaplain might teach them to read and write, to make the sign of the cross and to learn the prayers of the church.<sup>3</sup> As early as 1511, King Ferdinand ordered the establishment of a monastery in charge of the Franciscan monks<sup>4</sup> to care for the material and spiritual welfare of the Indians and to instruct their children in the faith. The monastery was not established but it is mentioned since it was the first attempt to establish an educational institution in the Island.<sup>5</sup>

The Island was settled soon after its discovery. The Indians that inhabited the Island were soon outnumbered by the settlers and they were subjugated and put to work in the mines and fields. Before the end of the century they were practically exterminated. Traces of the Indian culture are found in names of towns, mountains and rivers, and in numerous stone weapons, and domestic implements. The Spanish settlers who came during the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, African Negroes sold as slaves at various periods, a few Frenchmen from the Island of Corsica and emigrants from other Latin American countries made up the racial stock from which the present population of Puerto Rico has developed.

As in the mother country, places of worship were used for school purposes and the teaching was primarily religious.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 8.



Priests were instructed to teach children the Christian faith so that they might go out and teach others. In 1512, early in the history of Puerto Rico, such a school was established in San Juan. In 1513 specific orders<sup>6</sup> were given to land owners to build a house for church purposes on their farms and to bring the Indians there for worship morning and evening. Every fortnight the Indians were to be examined in their knowledge of catechism. Every owner of forty or more Indians was to teach one of them reading, writing and the catechism. All the children of the Indian chiefs were to be brought at the age of thirteen to the Franciscan monks to be instructed in reading, writing and catechism. In each village two visitors were appointed to see that these orders were obeyed.

### Spain Irresponsible for Progress in Colonies

Ferdinand and Isabella were the rulers of a vast territory which was by no means unified. Instead of uniting its parts together by means of internal development and the spread of a common culture, the rulers of Spain were drawn into many wars with the rise of the House of Hapsburg. This was a drain upon Spain's treasury and manpower. The Spanish rulers also took upon themselves the responsibility of stamping out heresy and attempting to check the progress of the Protestant Reformation.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

The greatest educational event in Spain during the sixteenth century was the organization of the Society of Jesus in 1540 by Ignatius de Loyola.<sup>7</sup> This takes its place in history as the contribution of Spain to the forces which have shaped education throughout the Christian world. The Jesuit colleges as well as the universities were for the nobility, for the wealthy and for the boys of promise. They were not for the common people.

The education of the people was carried on by the church and by private teachers. The progress of Puerto Rico during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was very slow. Efforts were put forth to develop the country by importing animals and tropical products but the political situation in the mother country and her wars with other European powers, favored by the strategic position of the Island, made Puerto Rico a center of attack by the enemies of Spain. During the reign of the Hapsburgs, Puerto Rico was attacked twelve times by the English, the Dutch, and the French.

It was not a self-supporting colony and treasures were brought from Mexico to defray her expenses. Besides this, settlers often had encounters with the Indians. Then, too, during the two centuries eight major hurricanes swept through the Island, destroying life and property. This retarded the progress of the Island.

As settlements became well established, the parish church

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

served as the educational center for the children. They were taught the catechism, the prayers, and how to read and write.

The girls, like the boys, were educated by the church. With the exception of the report of Bishop Francisco de Padilla who took possession of the diocese of San Juan in 1684, there follows many years of silence regarding the establishment of schools.<sup>8</sup> It is supposed the work of the convents and monasteries continued, and these institutions together with the existing church schools plus private educational activities were the means of instruction for those who desired an education. There is very little documentary evidence of the state of education in the Island. Education was in the hands of religious leaders and comprised what is generally called the three R's with religious education in addition. Whatever education facilities were provided were generally for the privileged classes. The poor were furnished education as charity. Those wishing a higher or professional education had to pursue their studies abroad.

The reactionary policies of the King in the early part of the nineteenth century widened the breach between Spain and her colonies. When they saw no hope of securing any liberties under the monarchy they declared themselves in open revolt and set out to win their independence. One by one they won, and in 1826 the Spanish flag came down forever on the mainland of the American continent.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 32.



Puerto Rico benefited by the disturbances in the other colonies since many Spaniards having to emigrate from the continent found refuge in the Island where they established themselves and contributed to her material welfare. For the first half of the nineteenth century elementary education had been left to the private schoolmaster, the private tutor, and the church. Generally the pupils receiving an elementary education were those whose parents could pay the fees. Nevertheless, after 1838, when the responsibility for education was thrown upon the Island, there was an increased interest in public instruction. This is seen in the archives of many of the municipalities of the Island.<sup>10</sup>

The first half of the century had closed with an attempt to establish schools in every municipality, giving some attention to qualifications of teachers and examinations and placing the responsibility for education on the Island. Nothing was done to provide the school with buildings and the teachers generally conducted classes in the largest room of their homes. All schools were ungraded. Nevertheless progress was made and interest in popular education increased.

#### Puerto Rico as an American Dependency

At the close of the Spanish-American war in 1898, Puerto Rico became an American dependency. Her culture was very dif-

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 44.



ferent from that of the United States. The work of the private school teachers and the church schools must not be forgotten in a study of education in Puerto Rico during the nineteenth century. Poor as the training of teachers was, it was as good as the training received by teachers in Spain. Educational conditions in 1898 were as good as could be expected in a Spanish colony.

Available statistics state that on June 30, 1898, there were in existence in Puerto Rico 380 public schools for boys, 148 for girls, 1 for adults and 26 private schools, together having an enrollment of 44,861 pupils.<sup>11</sup> The total annual amount spent on these schools, including the subsidy granted by the insular government to private schools, was \$185,886.45.<sup>12</sup> Side by side of the public school effort were private and church schools making their contribution to public enlightenment.

Spain granted her colony an autonomous government November 25, 1897, but it proved to be of short duration, for a few months after the elections, April 21, 1898, the governor general of Spain suspended the constitutional guarantees and declared the Island in a state of war. On May 12, the city of San Juan was bombarded by Admiral Simpson. A few buildings were damaged. On July 25, the American forces occupied Guánica and

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<sup>11</sup> "The Teaching of English in Puerto Rico", Fife and Manuel, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> "History of Education in Puerto Rico", J. J. Osuna, p. 99.

three days later Ponce. After a few skirmishes on the western part of the Island, the protocol was signed providing for the cession of the Island to the United States. On October 18 the last of the Spanish troops embarked for Spain. The forces of the United States occupied San Juan and raised the American flag on the Fortaleza, the Governor's palace, proclaiming United States sovereignty and the end of the Spanish rule. Major General John R. Brooke became the first Military Governor.

Puerto Rico was a community of nearly a million people, entirely homogeneous in language, customs, and traditions, and as typically Spanish in all its culture as any province in Spain itself. The Puerto Ricans gave a very cordial reception to the American occupation forces. They had been dissatisfied for a long time with Spanish rule, and the American flag was to them a promise of the political liberty for which it stood on the Continent.

The nineteen months of military government preceding the establishment of a civil government in Puerto Rico was a period of readjustment, of becoming acquainted, with a great desire on the part of the people of the Island to know and understand their new rulers and with as great a desire on the part of Americans to be understood. But the two civilizations being so different and with their coming together so suddenly, there were to appear misunderstandings on both sides.

The aim of American educators should have been to establish

a system of public schools based on local psychology and adapted to local needs, a system of public schools embracing American ideals of education and yet adapted to a Latin American civilization and capable of being put into operation in such a civilization. However, the representatives of the United States transplanted the American school system to Puerto Rico irrespective of conditions differing from those of the States.

### English Emphasized in Schools

The emphasis in the schools was placed on the study of English and on patriotic exercises. The great desire of all was to learn English. Everyone who knew a little English became a teacher of the language, gave private lessons, and was very much in demand as an interpreter. The first utterance of an American official on education was in reference to teachers "who can teach the American or English language, commencing with young children".<sup>13</sup>

Next to English, patriotic exercises received the attention of the American educators. The children of Puerto Rico are musical. As soon as the American songs were sung in school they became popular with the children and were heard in the streets, in the country and in the tobacco factories.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 134.



Another favorite exercise was to salute the American flag every morning on entering school. All the children would salute the flag and swear allegiance to the great republic which it represented. Latin people are inherently patriotic. They love the very soil of the country they are born in, so these songs and exercises took a passionate hold of the children who expressed staunch allegiance to the United States.

Dr. M. G. Brumbaugh, the first Commissioner of Education, made the following statement in 1900.

In almost every city of the Island and in many rural schools, the children meet and salute the flag as it is flung to the breeze. The raising of the flag is the signal that school has commenced and the flag floats during the entire session. The pupils sing "America", "Hail Columbia", "Star Spangled Banner" and other patriotic songs. The marvel is that they sing these in English. The first English many of them know is the English of our national songs.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Brumbaugh went so far as to say that at least 25,000 children participated in these exercises which did more to Americanize the Island than any other single agency. He also said that in 1900 the average Puerto Rican child knew more about Washington, Lincoln, Betsy Ross and the American flag than the average child in the United States.

Because local or municipal boards failed to perform their duties and because they were influenced by politics, the administration of public instruction was being more and more centralized. It was mostly the result of complete failure on the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 135.



part of the local boards to do their duties.

After two years of military occupation, the Organic Act establishing government in Puerto Rico went into effect May 1, 1900. It provided for six executive departments, one of which was the Department of Education with a Commissioner at its head. He proceeded to lay the foundation for the Puerto Rican school system following the American pattern.

At the end of the first term of the scholastic school year, 1899-1900, there were enrolled in the municipal schools of the Island 24,393 pupils of whom 15,440 were boys and 8,952 were girls. The average daily attendance was high since in most schools there was a waiting list and the child failing to attend lost his seat. About 3,000 children were receiving all their instruction under American teachers and about one-third of the total number received English instruction from the English speaking teachers. Over 15,000 children were just entering schools and did not know how to read or write, while 96 percent of the total enrollment was in the three lowest grades.<sup>16</sup>

#### ENGLISH IN PUERTO RICO FROM 1900 TO 1948

##### The Problem of Teaching English Introduced

The situation in education in Puerto Rico was a challenge to the democratic ideal held by Americans who believed in uni-

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

versal education. Dr. Victor S. Clark, who had been Commissioner of Education in Washington, laid the foundation for the Puerto Rican school system. With the introduction of a civilian governor in 1900, the Department of Education was organized under a Commissioner appointed by the President of the United States and the language instruction began a development that has been marked by many changes and experiments.

There have been nine Commissioners during the half-century, the first five being American educators with varying degrees of teaching and administrative ability while the last four have been Puerto Ricans. The first Commissioner, Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh, defined the aim of language instruction as "the conservation of Spanish and the acquisition of English".<sup>1</sup> At first the high degree of illiteracy led the newcomers to overlook the firm footing of the popular culture in the language of Spain and they began their task believing they could make Puerto Rico bilingual. Puerto Ricans were eager to learn English.

It was almost universally recognized that the future of Puerto Rico, its political, economic, and cultural interests would always be bound up with those of the United States. All parties have agreed that every child should have the opportunity to learn some English. The problem has involved the length and intensity of the instruction, and the advisability of using

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<sup>1</sup> Fife and Manuel, "The Teaching of English in Puerto Rico," p. 4.

English as a medium of instruction in teaching the non-language curriculum subjects. This resulted in several changes in practice and policy in teaching English in the public schools, especially the elementary urban schools and has been the thorniest of the problems in the educational field.

#### A Chronological Table of These Periods<sup>2</sup>

1. 1900-1905 - Brumbaugh . . . Spanish as a medium of instruction  
English as a preferred subject
2. 1905-1916 - Falkner . . . . English as a medium of instruction  
Spanish as a special subject
3. 1916-1930 - Miller . . . . English and Spanish both as media  
of instruction
4. 1931-1937 - Padin . . . . Spanish as a medium of instruction  
English as preferred subject
5. 1937-1945 - Gallardo . . . English and Spanish as media of  
instruction
6. 1945-1948 - Transition . . Toward Spanish as a medium of  
(Definitely adopted instruction, with English taught  
in 1948) as a second language

#### The Brumbaugh Policy

Dr. Brumbaugh in 1900 found Puerto Rican teachers equipped for teaching only Spanish so he recruited continentals to teach English, such as American Normal School graduates from the States or young men who had come to the Island with the American army and were ex-soldiers, ex-teamsters, etc., none of whom

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 25.



knew Spanish, some of whom knew little English. Salaries were too low to attract well-prepared American teachers and living conditions were found so unsatisfactory to those who came that few remained longer than a year. However, Brumbaugh did organize a basis for the training of Puerto Rican teachers for English instruction. He also established a supervisory system within the Department.

In 1902 a new Commissioner succeeded, Samuel McCune Lindsay. He reported the English situation as satisfactory and that English was being taught in all the urban elementary schools. Nevertheless, within a year critics reported that a system which treated English only as a curriculum subject was not producing the expected results and more practice was needed.

So it was proposed that all subjects be taught in English. According to this theory Spanish did not require so much attention since students would learn it on the streets and in their homes anyway. The situation in the secondary schools caused concern because it was felt necessary that Puerto Rican students be prepared to enter American colleges and so integration with the American system should be provided for. In his second annual report, Commissioner Lindsay stated that since pupils and teachers could be trained sufficiently in the use of the language, and since textbooks in Spanish were inadequate, it was the intention of the Department of Education to place the schools on an entirely English basis. He retired from office at the end of his second year, leaving this program to



to be carried out by his successor.

### The Falkner Policy

The new Commissioner, Roland F. Falkner, and his immediate followers, Dexter and Bainter, were convinced that the success of the English program required that the language be used for all instruction in the schools. The innovation went into effect in the urban schools without delay. The Commissioner's reports read enthusiastically. Some advance experimentation with English as a medium of instruction had been made in a few towns and the results were interpreted as a possibility of success with the plan in the elementary grades of the urban schools. There is no way of testing the validity of these conclusions.

In 1909, Mr. Dexter succeeded Mr. Falkner and continued the program of English as the language of instruction. He found native teachers accredited in English increasing and, except for the first grade, all town schools were being taught in English. In 1909, then, reading was introduced into the first grade and reading in Spanish was postponed until the second, since it was to the pupil's advantage to become familiar with the written and printed English during the first year of schooling.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Commissioner says that a visitor to one of the schoolrooms in any of the larger municipalities

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Commissioner for 1909, p. 247.

would note scarcely any difference in the work being done from that in a similar grade in the United States. English instruction was also expanding in the rural schools. By 1910 only four were without any English instruction and more than 12 percent were taught entirely in English. In 1911 the Commissioner reported as the opinion of the supervisory staff that the native teachers of English were far more efficient in the lower grades than Americans. No objective data are available for measuring the success of instruction.

However, by 1914 the system of English instruction based on its use as the medium of instruction had reached its peak of development. Many school patrons and teachers had misgivings and in August, 1913, the criticisms reached the floor of the Legislature. The spokesman of the protest was José de Diego, a well-known poet and early champion of the maintenance of traditions of Spanish culture in Puerto Rico.

A debate took place over a bill creating 600 new schools, to which opponents attached a rider directing that all subjects should be taught in Spanish throughout the schools. A substitute eliminating the proposal was defended by Juan B. Huyke who claimed that the use of English as the medium of instruction was necessary for progress in the language and led to an effective balance between the two languages. He emphasized the importance of competence in the language for the future of the Island which he felt was securely united with the American people. This competence, he said, would be the best weapon against those

who would oppress them.

The criticism against English as the medium of instruction was brought forward by Cebollero who said that (1) undue attention to the mastering of English stood in the way of a well-rounded education; (2) the curriculum was overloaded with linguistic study; (3) forcing pupils to use a medium of instruction insufficiently mastered might impair their mental and physical development, and (4) children were not acquiring enough Spanish.<sup>4</sup>

The Teachers Association of Puerto Rico, organized in 1911 and from the beginning a very influential unit of pressure, passed a resolution in 1912 including recommendations that in the urban grade schools instruction in the first grade be in Spanish, while instruction in the other grades be divided, some in English and some in Spanish; that in the rural schools the medium of instruction be Spanish, and in high school, English. Every year the Teachers Association at its annual meeting came forward with proposals for reducing the use of English for instruction.

### The Miller Policy

Under pressure from within and without the schools, the Falkner policy slowly gave way. By 1915 the language question had become a political football. The new Commissioner, Paul G.

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<sup>4</sup> "Suggestions for a Language Policy", Pedro A. Cebollero, p. 19.



Miller, had been a teacher, supervisor of schools, and in charge of the normal training school. Associated with him was José Padín who was a Puerto Rican and a graduate of the schools. Up to this time opinions on English teaching had been largely subjective but Padín began to apply objective techniques in search for evidence of achievement. From his research his conclusion was that the chief difficulty was that English was being taught as if it were the mother tongue without taking into consideration that the child was living in a non-English atmosphere.<sup>5</sup>

This conclusion brought about a compromise by Miller in the policies followed so far in the teaching of English: that of Drumbaugh using Spanish for instruction and that of Falkner using English. The new Miller policy now prescribed Spanish as the teaching medium in the four lower grades of the elementary school, English and Spanish in the fifth grade and English in the three upper grades and secondary school. The duty of teachers remained the same: to make the child bilingual.<sup>6</sup> Mr. Miller defended his innovations saying that attempting to teach the children to read both Spanish and English in the first grade with pupils, 65 percent of whom were retarded, had made many leave school without learning either language. He eliminated English reading from the first and second grades.

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<sup>5</sup> "Problems of Teaching English to the People of Puerto Rico," Dept. of Education Bulletin, 1916, No. 1, p. 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Commissioner for 1917, p. 464.



During the decade after the First World War, the importance of experiment for reorientation in educational methods became more widely recognized in the United States and this was consequently reflected in Puerto Rico. A number of investigations were undertaken by the Department of Education in the teaching of English on an oral basis in the first three grades, and the use of the Morin phonetic method of teaching pupils to read. That Commissioner Miller and his assistants devoted themselves to their tasks is reflected in many reports and circulars which set forth the ideals back of their efforts. Miller, the last of the continental commissioners, was well aware that the ultimate status of Puerto Rico and its language problems were ultimately related but was sure the Island would remain an intellectual, spiritual and economic dependency of the United States. He realized that the insular life was not self-sufficient and that the stimulus and inspiration for continuous growth must come from the United States.

In 1921, his last year of office, Miller conceded that the schools had not made the expected progress in English but he felt convinced that the quantity and quality of English possessed by a graduate of the elementary school in Puerto Rico exceeded that of the American high school graduate in the use of any modern foreign language.<sup>7</sup>

One great obstacle encountered by the Department of Education in this bilingual program continued to be the difficulty

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<sup>7</sup> Report of the Commissioner for 1922, p. 376.

of enlisting good English teachers. Low salaries continued to stand in the way of getting better qualified teachers from outside the Island. Criticism rising from some contended that little progress was made in learning to speak English while still others insisted that Spanish was not being given its rightful consideration in the curriculum.

In 1917 the Puerto Ricans had been granted the status of citizenship by the Organic Act passed by Congress, and Commissioner Miller in his report for 1919 repeated his conviction that bilingualism was necessary for Puerto Rico. He retired in 1921 and was succeeded by Juan B. Huyke, an unwavering supporter of English instruction. He was the first native of Puerto Rico to hold this position. He had, like his predecessor, come up through the ranks from teacher to inspector general.

Huyke petitioned the International Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University, for a survey. This was carried out in 1926 and concerned itself with the English question as one of the most important educational problems of Puerto Rico. Evidently the findings of this survey did not affect the policy of the Department of Education as no direct reference to its report by the Commissioner is found.

Much later Huyke was known to make one objection to recommendations of the survey in that it suggested that the study of English be postponed until the fourth grade.<sup>8</sup> Huyke's opposition was that the majority of the children of Puerto Rico are

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<sup>8</sup> Rife and Manuel, op. cit., p. 15.

poor and cannot remain in school for eight years of preliminary instruction. To have followed the suggestion of the investigators would deprive the majority of the children of the teaching of English.

Neither the public circles nor the Teachers Association expressed themselves on the recommendations of the survey. The compromise policy between the English and Spanish as languages of instruction in the urban elementary schools does not appear to be attacked in the 1920's. The Commissioner increased emphasis on oral English. It was now extended throughout all the grades, practice in silent as well as oral reading was introduced, and English clubs were organized in schools with impressive lists of activities. The number of continental teachers rose to 250. The Legislature was generous.

The use of English as a medium of instruction, sharing equally with Spanish, in the fifth grade and continuing as the sole language of instruction in all subjects, except Spanish, from the sixth grade on, seems to have been regarded as a fixed practice. However, repeated emphasis on this requirement in the Commissioner's circular letters to his teachers indicated that these rules were being neglected in both the elementary and high schools.



## The Padín Policy

A new era began in 1930 when Dr. Jose Padín was made Commissioner of Education. He, too, was a son of the Island and had come up through the several stages of experience in the Department of Education and had obtained his Doctor's degree at an eastern American university. The decade 1930-1940 was an active period in foreign language pedagogy. This development must have been well known to Dr. Padín since forward-looking modern ideas were expressed and reflected in his procedure and addresses declaring that the language problem demanded a solution based on scientific procedure rather than political or sentimental feeling.

The first step taken by Dr. Padín in facing the vital question of English was to survey the results of the use of English as a medium of instruction. The Teachers Association after a long dormant period was quickened. An investigation showed that the opinion of the body of teachers favored Spanish as the language of instruction with English as a preferred subject. After a period of discussion a new policy was inaugurated in September, 1934. Spanish became the medium of instruction in all the elementary grades and English a preferred subject in the curriculum with a longer allotment of time in the upper grades. All English instruction was to be placed in the hands of special teachers of English. In secondary education the use of English as the medium of instruction was to be continued.

The high school program had been revised two years earlier. The result was a program similar to a typical high school in the United States. In his annual report for 1934-35, Dr. Padín defended this new program of English, admitting that English was of inestimable value for Puerto Ricans and declaring that it could be taught without displacing the mother tongue or without retarding mental development.

Dr. Padín came to regard the reading objective as primary. He recognized the handicap in lack of materials and devoted himself to ways and devices by which pupils might have access to discarded books, magazines, newspapers and commercial material distributed gratis.

He invited to Puerto Rico two leading authorities in the field of reading instruction: William S. Gray, Professor of Education in the University of Chicago, and Michael West, former head of the Normal College at Dacca in Bengal, India. Dr. Gray reported that the reform of Dr. Padín was a step in the right direction and he recommended continued study of emphasis to be given to Spanish and English, and increasing emphasis on oral language in the first three grades as preparation for reading, the use of the vernacular at times to clarify meaning in English, and an increase in the number of continental teachers. He even recommended the organization of special classes in English for those intending to migrate to the United States.

Michael West, the English expert in the field of bilingual-

ism, was widely known in the British Empire from Egypt to Malaya for both his theories and his textbooks used for native instruction in English. West gave support to the English policy of Padín. However, he made a final confidential conclusion that the situation in Puerto Rico was not bilingual, since Puerto Ricans are a one-language people with a certain need of English, but that an impartial approach had been prevented by politics. He offered as recommendations the postponement of English reading to grade three after the child had a sound foundation in the vernacular, development of reading texts adapted to the Puerto Rican environment, improved training in methods of teaching to read and textbooks in Spanish for learning curriculum subjects.

West's definition of the situation was one in which English should be taught as a foreign language. This found ready acceptance by a group of teachers and officials among whom the program of political independence was beginning to attract support. To those who supported Dr. Padín in this policy of using Spanish for instruction, the teaching of English seemed to have gotten off to a new start. They saw an awakening of mental freedom in the student through the approach to curriculum subjects in his mother tongue, a notable independence of the textbook, and an expression of security that the student has through expressing himself in his own language, thus increasing his interest in the subject.



In 1935 the Governor, Blanton Winship, supported the addition of 100 American teachers to the continental staff. He also called attention to the problem of overpopulation and the knowledge of English as an important asset in opening the way for migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States. Nevertheless, the Governor expressed dissatisfaction with the Padín policy.<sup>9</sup>

Opposition came strongly forward and Dr. Padín resigned in December, 1936 to enter an educational career in the States. He had promised better English but his opponents declared that this had not been seen anywhere. They also said that he had been very eager to take away from Puerto Rican children the opportunity of learning English.

### The Gallardo Regime

President Roosevelt in 1937 appointed Dr. Jose M. Gallardo to the vacant position. He, too, was a son of Puerto Rico, having served as teacher and principal. He had pursued higher studies in the States, receiving his Doctor of Philosophy at Pennsylvania State. He later was Professor of Romance Languages at The Citadel, Charleston, South Carolina.

Dr. Gallardo reached San Juan at a time when public opinion was still sensitive over Dr. Padín's English policy. The

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

press flared in a violent demonstration unconnected with Gallardo and formed an unfortunate prelude to his administration. A letter to him from President Roosevelt set forth the policy of the President on the English question in Puerto Rico. He pointed out that after thirty-eight years of American citizenship there continued to be a lamentable lack of knowledge of English among great numbers of inhabitants and very unsatisfactory achievement in English by the public schools. He added that it was an indispensable part of the American policy that the coming generation of American citizens should grow up with complete facility to use English. He disavowed any desire to diminish the enjoyment or usefulness of the rich Spanish culture of the people but he did emphasize that as American citizens it was necessary to profit from the opportunity of becoming bilingual.<sup>10</sup>

When the letter of President Roosevelt was published, warm discussions took place in the newspapers and the Legislature. Concern was expressed that the new Commissioner, influenced by the letter, might reverse the policy of Padín on the medium of instruction.

In addition to other embarrassments, Gallardo was faced by a textbook famine, a situation which had become acute through the gradual reduction of appropriations during the long economic depression. However, in the first year of his tenure the new Commissioner succeeded in raising the appropri-

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

ation for school equipment and in increasing the number of teachers of English by 200.

Dr. Gallardo felt himself under strong pressure to improve achievement in English and a swing away from the Padín policy seemed necessary. The growth of school population with overcrowding and the necessity for double enrollment which required that elementary grades be restricted to half-day sessions all combined to cut the time for English and the one period a day could not bring significant results.

So at the end of his first year the Commissioner decided to return to the policy of using both languages as media of instruction. He hoped to achieve a bilingual program in education. More English books were purchased. The number of special teachers of English increased. Changes in the high school courses were to be carried out and provisions were to be made for professional improvement of English teachers.

The new plan thus outlined brought a lively discussion in the press. The Teachers Association again affirmed its belief that elementary school instruction should be taught in Spanish and it even passed a resolution to that effect. The swing toward English met lively criticism. The change was ascribed to interference from Washington.

Gallardo stressed the change from the 3-4 plan of organization of the school system to the more flexible 6-3-3 plan and this expansion to include junior high schools opened the way for further readjustments between the use of English and



the vernacular as languages of instruction.

While the surveys and experiments under the Padín regime placed emphasis on oral reading, Gallardo stressed a fourfold aim, the ability to understand, speak, read and write English. He also recommended the Direct method of teaching for the elementary grades. In addition to the regular class in English, an additional period for English projects was set aside in grades three to eight. All of this called for increased competence in the oral use of English by the teachers. An effort was made to give this additional training by a system of field assistants and English institutes. The Island was divided into twenty zones each under a field assistant who went from school to school and assisted the teachers with the English program.

Dr. Gallardo's complicated program for a gradual stepping up of English usage encountered persistent criticism from teachers. The call for Spanish as the teaching language became a spearhead of the rising demand for insular independence in educational matters. With the setting up of the junior high school, grades seven to nine, the Department adopted a more liberal attitude toward the use of the vernacular in the intermediate grades. It also gave way to the use of Spanish for teaching all non-language subjects through grades one to six. The senior high school required English as the medium of instruction in all non-linguistic courses. So the Gallardo policy covered a period of transition.

The movement for autonomy in education grew stronger in the war years, giving more force to the demand for Spanish in all academic and scholastic exercises. The University of Puerto Rico led the way, with the requirement that lectures should be given in Spanish unless special circumstances call for another language. Finally, under pressure of the Teachers Association and considerable popular opinion, the Legislature in 1945 passed a bill instructing the Commissioner of Education to require the use of Spanish for instruction throughout the schools except in classes in English.

This measure was vetoed by Governor Tugwell, but the bill was passed a second time by the Legislature and then submitted to President Truman for approval. Further embitterment was engendered by the President's refusal to sanction the law. This was later explained by the fact that in Washington the Organic Act, making Puerto Ricans American citizens, was under active discussion.

Dr. Gallardo completed his term of office and for more than a year no successor was designated by Washington. All suggestions for one were ignored. In November, 1946, President Truman appointed Jesús T. Piniero as Governor, the first Puerto Rican to hold the office. Shortly after this Piniero designated Professor Mariano Villaronga as Commissioner of Education. Villaronga was a graduate of the University of Puerto Rico and of Harvard. He had a record of twenty years' service in the schools of the Island and on the faculty of the

University. His appointment by the Governor, though strongly supported in Puerto Rico, was not confirmed by the United States Senate. The failure of the Senate to approve this appointment added to the feeling of resentment, even frustration, among the teachers of the Island, since they were inclined to think that the inaction of the Senate was due to dissatisfaction with the English program in Puerto Rico.

### The Organic Law Revised

A change in the Organic Law of 1917 established autonomy in education and so the teaching of English ceased to be a Federal responsibility in the Island, and a new chapter in the teaching of English began in 1949.

The task of making the people of Puerto Rico bilingual had not been achieved in spite of the commendable efforts of men and women, continental and insular, who struggled through the period of growing difficulties. Mistakes in policy may appear on record but the success of their efforts is seen in the competence of huge numbers of individuals who use English for their profession and business. Many of these had no opportunity to learn English by association with the English-speaking people, but learned it in the public schools.



## THE TEACHING SITUATION JUST PRIOR TO 1948

### The Supremacy of the Commissioner of Education

It is easy to see that the teaching of English in Puerto Rico has been influenced by the political climate of changes in the policy of the different Commissioners appointed by the President in Washington. The Organic Act of 1917 made Puerto Ricans citizens of the United States but without vote for the President and without a voting representative in Congress.

Under this Act four leading officials, the Governor, Commissioner of Education, Auditor, and Attorney General, and the Judges of the Supreme Court were appointed by the President of the United States and approved by the Senate. The insular Legislature exercised no authority over educational affairs, but it did control the budget. So the entire system of public education was under the direction of an official without responsibility to any board, committee, or any representation of the Puerto Rican people. However, the Legislature controlled the purse and so was able to disapprove an unpopular policy by launching attacks in the assembly to arouse public opinion that would accomplish its purpose. This could become quite powerful when it carried the support of the Teachers Association.

Teachers have seen this but also have been quick to stand against action that might hold up any financial support of the

schools and affect their salaries. Collisions between the Legislature and the Commissioner have centered mostly around the question of English instruction.

It would appear that the wish to Americanize the Puerto Ricans through emphasis on English teaching was one of the reasons for Congress making the Commissioner independent of insular control. Washington interfered when Dr. Gallardo took office, as was seen by the receipt of the forceful letter of President Roosevelt regarding the teaching of English in the elementary grades. Again, when the Legislature, supported by the Teachers Association, enacted a law to make the vernacular obligatory for teaching all subjects except English, it was vetoed by the Governor and held up by the President. A third instance is that when the Governor named a popular native educator to the post of Commissioner the Senate failed to confirm him. This inaction was ascribed to the disapproval of the English language policy of the candidate appointed.

There was a growing sensitiveness of Puerto Ricans to Federal interference in education matters. Six years after President Roosevelt's letter to Dr. Gallardo, came one from the United States Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Ickes, under whose jurisdiction responsibilities for the welfare of the Territories fell. In this letter Mr. Ickes in acid language rebuked Dr. Gallardo for failing to carry out instructions in regard to the teaching of English in the schools of Puerto Rico. The flame of deep resentment soared. Puerto Ricans

said that Secretary Ickes had addressed himself to "American Citizens of Puerto Rico" but was interfering in affairs of self-government. All of this showed, more clearly, that the language problem was interwoven with the educational problem.<sup>1</sup>

The amendment of the Organic Law was made in July, 1947. The Eightieth Congress had turned over responsibility for the government of Puerto Rico to its people. This does not mean that English in the schools will not have any political importance. On the contrary, political leaders are divided as to the future status of the Island. Some favor independence, others statehood. Whatever its political future, it seems very likely that the place of English in Education will continue to play an important part in party politics.

When the amendment to the Organic Act goes into full effect, responsibility of the Commissioner of Education to the elective representatives of the Puerto Rican people will no doubt curb some of his powers and prestige. These have been very great. He was second only to the Governor, and during the Governor's temporary absence, and this was frequent, the Commissioner of Education was usually made "Gobernador Interino".

In the educational field he is almost supreme. His authority over the schools is absolute. He is "ex officio" President

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<sup>1</sup> Fife and Manuel, op. cit., p. 37-38.



of the Superior Council on Education, which controls the University, President and Executive Officer of the Board of Vocational Education. His power has been complete over employment, dismissal, promotion, and transfer of the administrative staff and teachers. He prepares the budget and represents financial aspects of public education before legislative committees. He prescribes and regulates the curriculum and supervises the teacher's work down to the last detail. The only one able to curtail his administrative procedure has been the Secretary of the Interior, under whom he exercised his duties and under whom falls the administration of territorial affairs.

Under these circumstances the school system has become strongly centralized. The Commissioner has been aided by Assistant Commissioners. His office is organized in two main divisions, one for administration and the other a technical division which supervises instruction, research and experiment. Through this complex organization the Commissioner imparts his policies through written instruction to superintendents, principals, teachers and other employees. There is a flowing stream of bulletins, circular letters, form letters, syllabi and advice on methods and materials of instruction. The number is impressive. Their percentage of effectiveness is somewhat questionable since successive changes in direction and re-direction occur, particularly in regard to the teaching of English and projects for new experiments in this field. The

teachers have adapted themselves again and again to a new policy only to see it thrown out after a brief trial.

To see that regulations are followed by the teaching staff is the duty of the general supervisor. English, however, has always had its departmental supervisors of both elementary and secondary levels. They are expected to observe and criticize the work of the teachers, to advise them and help work out any difficulties and to make detailed reports to the Commissioner in San Juan.

This centralization of authority, with frequent changes in office, has been a cause for instability in objectives and methods that have interfered with the progress in English teaching. Such concentration results in lack of initiative and unwillingness to take responsibility on the part of the teachers of the lower levels. It undermines the self-reliance and confidence of teachers in respect to the work done by the schools.

This tight control of education may bring about homogeneity but it tends to destroy the initiative of local effort in the solution of problems. A considerable part of the population in many towns of Puerto Rico is miserably poor, undernourished and very crudely housed, so a high degree of concentration is necessary to give attention to their education. A plan of better balance between central authority and local responsibility and needs might be worked out.

## The English Problem Involved in Political Status

During and just after the war period, public education in Puerto Rico was beset with economic shortages of war, strains and readjustments related to its exposed military situation, and agitation by discussions of its political future, complicated and embittered by political rivalries at home and misunderstandings in Washington. Like their colleagues on the Continent, many experienced teachers withdrew from service leaving educational officials facing an acute shortage. In spite of efforts to the contrary, the position of English in the schools had become involved with the question of political status and was made more intense by wartime emotions.

History has shown, as in the examples of Wales, Switzerland, Alsace Lorraine, South Africa, etc., that wherever the objective of bilingualism is sought, waves of political resentment rise to make themselves felt. Every area has its own set of racial, religious, social and economic factors which combine to make its own individual problem unique. This is especially true of Puerto Rico. It is small and naturally very provincial. Every item of news that floats has its repercussion in the feelings of the people regarding sovereignty and government, statehood and independence. The over-present question of the teaching and use of English causes, probably, the greatest vibrations. Puerto Ricans are politicians. They love discussions. Often, after what seems hours of insults



and almost pugnacious argumentation, provocative contenders dismiss themselves with "Adios, amigos. Hasta luego". And it's all over. This is true of the people in general from the most educated to the most illiterate, from the oldest to the youngest. All hold most sacred their privilege of discussion and of voting.

So far the future status of the Island has not been determined. The Philippine Islands were slated for independence from the beginning in 1898. For Puerto Rico, however, nothing was defined. From the first the learning and use of English has been tied up in the public mind with the question of the political future of the Island and its permanent relation to the Union. An early decision of the Supreme Court of the United States declared Puerto Rico "a territory appurtenant to, but not a part of, the United States". Congress did not occupy itself with the problem until 1942, when the Tydings Bill providing for independence was introduced into the Senate.

In the absence of any expressed commitments on the part of Congress, the Puerto Ricans have derived their ideas regarding their future from the face of the policies turned toward them. The early Commissioners of Education assumed that the people of the Island were to be prepared for statehood as quickly as possible. Evidence drawn from the letters of President Roosevelt and Secretary Ickes imply a future permanent relationship with the States. As the war with Spain became past history and the relation between Puerto Rico and

the bureaucrats in Washington adjusted itself to the Foraker Act, the tendency on the part of the American officials and the American public was to believe that all was going well in the Island, that instruction by American teachers and the force of democracy would prepare the people of Puerto Rico for full American citizenship.

Some Puerto Ricans, however, did not share these expectations but clung to their Spanish culture and fought the danger that threatened the language of their forefathers. These ideas began to come up in the Legislature. Among the first, if not the first, was that of José de Diego in 1913, who sponsored a bill in the Legislature providing for all subjects to be taught in Spanish. This shows that at even this early date a group existed defending Spanish as a patriotic duty and making the language problem a cause for opposing anything American and for recruiting followers supporting Puerto Rican independence. They make frequent reference to the "humiliating colonial status" of Puerto Ricans whose culture was already 400 years old when the Americans took them over.

The concessions to Spanish of the Miller regime removed the language problem from politics for awhile. Then came the First World War, the inflations of the 1920's, and the depression which followed. The reforms of Dr. Padín brought the language back to the foreground. His effort to take the language question out of politics was futile.

Young Puerto Rican nationalists found a slogan in Spanish as the medium for instruction. The Students' Federation meeting at Caguas in 1935 flew the Puerto Rican flag and voted to conduct a campaign against the teaching of high school subjects in English. This action was followed in several parts of the Island and the demand for Spanish as the sole medium for instruction headed the lists of demands connected with the students' strikes of 1935-36.

The last year of Padin's administration saw the continuous development of the nationalistic feeling culminate in various disorders, and finally, in the killing of the Insular Chief of Police and the sentencing of a leader after two stormy trials for trying to overthrow the government of Puerto Rico by armed force.

Less than a year later Dr. Gallardo was appointed Commissioner and entered on his duties amid the deep resentment which had been aroused by the Roosevelt letter urging renewed energy in the teaching of English. Ten years earlier it would have encouraged progress toward Americanization. However, in 1937 it was considered by most, except the press which was practically pro-American, as unjustifiable intervention in Puerto Rican affairs.

However, the amendment by Congress of the Organic Law in 1947 opened the way for administration of education in Puerto Rico free from continental interference. The demand for Spanish, although motivated on pedagogical grounds, had become a



part of the drive for self-government. This autonomy brings with it direct exposure to political interference at home. In the light of the history of several Latin American countries, this, too, can be dangerous.

It was recognized from the first that the teaching of English in Puerto Rico needs the service of English-speaking teachers from the Continent. Criticisms were directed against them from time to time for immaturity or professional unfitness. The difficulties of the Department of Education in dealing with this problem have been largely budgetary, since the salaries offered were low. By the 1930's an increasing opposition to bringing continentals developed among native Puerto Rican teachers who argued that candidates produced on the Island were capable of better work than young persons imported from the States, many of whom were quite immature and not professionally trained. Records show that a large number of American college graduates who came to the Island remained to play an important role in the history of its schools, while on the other hand there have been many who looked on the Puerto Rican experience as merely an opportunity to travel and a brief residence in exotic surroundings.

Commissioners have recognized the importance of the continental teacher. Records<sup>2</sup> show a steady increase in numbers until 1941 when war interfered. Thereafter the number of continental teachers has steadily declined. This is in line with

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

the general trend toward self-reliance in Puerto Rico's thought and planning. The tendency to eliminate the continentals has been accompanied by a program of liberal expenditure for fellowships and scholarships in order to facilitate the training of native teachers in continental institutions.

### Economic Hardships of the Island

For most Americans, Puerto Rico appears as a dependency disturbed by Federal and insular political interference and economically in a bad way. Any inquiry concerned with education should take the economic background into account. The present generation of Puerto Ricans is living in a period of change from agrarian economy to one of industry and commerce. The sugar cane era in which extensive acres of the most arable land belonged to wealthy landowners is dying. The acreages are being dissolved and distributed in small lots to workers, a transformation which is slow in nature.

Puerto Rico is a land of little or no natural resources. Under the present industrial development, Operations Bootstrap, industries from the States are being encouraged to move to Puerto Rico to take advantage of its ten-year moratorium on income tax, cheaper labor, and the rise of the use of power machines operated by the power generated at the several recently constructed dam sites on its mountain streams. The change is from agrarian economy to one based on industry and commerce.

Island labor is seasonal in a large part and general productivity low. In competition with Continental markets they lose to mass production on the mainland except when the tariff wall protects. Boat transportation is inadequate. The two hurricanes of 1928 and 1932 drained the slender reserves of the Islanders. The world-wide depression and collapse of the sugar market took their toll. The needle-work industry was hampered by the Labor Standards Acts of 1939 and 1940. These conditions found reflection in unemployment.

The economic position of the great body of Puerto Ricans is weak and the problem of day-to-day existence becomes all-absorbing, but the masses of Puerto Rico desire an education for their children. The proletarian family who lives in town has the advantage over the share-cropping "jibaro" only through access to schooling. Parents in rural areas find no way to solve the problem of transportation so as to send their children, often 8 kilometers away, to a school that offers an elementary program.

The chief problem of Puerto Rican economy is overpopulation. In 1940 the density of population was 546 per square mile. According to a forecast of the Census Bureau, Puerto Rico by 1960 will have 3 million inhabitants. Such density is only exceeded by areas which are highly industrialized, centers of commerce and finance, exceptionally fertile areas, such as the Nile Valley, or areas of sub-western standards of living, such as sections of India or China. The only solutions seem



to be birth control or planned parenthood, higher industrialization, and outside migration, all of which are being dealt with to a limited degree. The total population of Puerto Rico has more than doubled since 1900. Infant mortality has been greatly reduced.

This throws an added burden on the schools. The census of 1940 shows that 28.6 percent of the population falls in the elementary school years, 5 to 14. The demands of this large percentage at an unproductive or partially productive time of life work an economic hardship through a large number of dependents to be provided for and a smaller number of workers to provide for them. A baby is born every six minutes. In Puerto Rico a large percentage of the population both rural and urban belongs to the very low-income group. In 1945 a little less than two-thirds of the age group six to twelve were attending school and a little more than half of those were in grades one to three.<sup>3</sup> The question of the proper curriculum for this brief period of schooling offers an acute problem. The possibility of giving these children any training that will be of use in future life calls for limitation of subject-matter. Mass withdrawal has been found serious in the elementary grades. The school life of the rural child is much shorter than that of the urban.

In 1944 the junior high school was recognized and the 8-4

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

grouping was changed to the more elastic 6-3-3 grouping. This was welcomed with the expectation that the completion of "a high school course" with certification might provide a motive which would hold a larger number of pupils through grade 9. In urban municipalities the junior high school has been successful in promoting retention of pupils beyond the sixth grade.

A serious obstacle interfering with teaching is the lack of books. This problem is acute both in English and in Spanish. It is apparent to any visitor to most schoolrooms and a constant anxiety to most superintendents, principals and teachers. It excludes all the possibility of home study of a large percentage of children in the lower grades. The Department of Education estimated that an expenditure of over two million dollars is necessary to put in each child's hands the books he needs. The Government of Puerto Rico furnishes all books to students below the high school level. This is quite beyond the resources of the Island.

If the children who succeed in achieving a place in the elementary grades and overcoming the handicap of crowded classrooms, inadequate furniture and textbooks, two-thirds are limited to part-time instruction. Because of the need for room space it has been necessary to reduce the length of the school session so as to make admission possible for larger numbers.

By a system of "double enrollment" two sessions are held in the same classroom morning and afternoon, the same teacher

repeating the same instruction for a different group of pupils. In other schools a system of "interlocking enrollment" prevails in which one session or group of students and teachers work in the morning, starting early and staying late, only to leave in time to permit another group of teachers or students to work all afternoon. Thus two complete schools under separate principals use the same building and equipment daily. There is still another plan being employed advantageously, the staggering plan, in which the schedule is lengthened to include all classes of all students, while teachers and students come only when their classes are scheduled.

These part-time arrangements are the only immediate answers which the Department has been able to devise in order to provide educational opportunity for the increasing thousands of children. The Department of Education is making an extreme effort to build and equip enough schoolrooms and provide teachers in order to meet the demands and get every child into school. It is estimated that 50,000 children are still to be provided for.

The schools at all levels are also faced with the large number of over-age pupils. Most schools admit pupils to Grade I at the age of 6 or 7, but where the space is so limited the problem is how to get admission at all. If a child isn't admitted this year he will try again next year, and even the next.

In spite of handicaps, illiteracy in Puerto Rico has steadily declined since 1899 with the expansion of schools under a



system of democratic education. There is a lack of public libraries and reading rooms over the entire Island. For many families the purchase of a newspaper would be a luxury but there is always that of one's neighbor. Then, too, the neighbor has a radio which he generously shares. The child of poor parents becomes involved in early adolescence in the struggle for existence. If he leaves school with three years, it means under the present double session arrangement that he has had only one and one-half years of actual school room contact. Even with concentration of the best efforts of teachers and leaders it is hard to see how the goal of literacy will be attained by a large percentage of the masses without generous Federal aid to help build and equip the many needed school rooms.

#### A Centralized Department of Education

The Department of Education has, from the beginning, supplied its teachers with detailed programs for instruction and with directives for carrying these out. In the early years it was assumed that the teachers should not enter their school-rooms without a detailed plan of his work to be carried out.

Much of this attitude still remains as shown by the stream of instructions, amended instructions, and suggestions covering curriculum material, time schedules and teacher problems that flow from the Commissioner's office to superintendents, principals and teachers. Puerto Rican teachers now are an

experienced group who know the limitations of their pupils and so are inclined to feel a disregard for many of these directives and suggestions, especially on the lower level. So much prescription of procedures is in danger of leading to indifference, lack of initiative, and a disregard for suggestions. It leaves little or nothing for the investigator.

In Dr. Padín's term of office curriculum committees became active under the influence of the Modern Language Investigation in the States and in cooperating with Dr. Padín's reading objective they reflected a keen interest in selection of material for early reading. Visits of both Dr. Gray and Dr. West accelerated reorganization of syllabus material.

### English Courses Revised

Then when Gallardo's administration brought a return to the English medium in the higher elementary grades and official reaction against teaching English as a foreign language, the revision of courses lost some headway. Commissioner Gallardo now speedily revived the efforts of the committees and pushed their work forward. Tentative outlines were prepared for the English work in Grades 1-6, for teaching English in the junior high school and in the senior high school. The syllabus for Grades 1-6 was somewhat brief, but those for the junior and senior high schools were strikingly extensive, with suggestions for training in all four language skills, with word lists,

quotations, selections for memorizing, analysis of reading material and careful definition of the objectives to be attained step by step. The senior high school outline turned out to be a complete teacher's handbook for advanced instruction. It is still being used but only until their new book is ready. The words "tentative" and "experimental" characterized the procedures and materials of these outlines as evidence that the committees were aware of the pioneer nature of their effort to teach English to students of a different vernacular. Reading texts for English instruction were numerous and showed a very wide variety in organization and content. There was a wealth of material for early reading. A number of publications, however, had been designed for teaching English as a foreign language, but very few were written specifically for Spanish-speaking children and these few were based on experience in the Far East and Middle East intended for use in the Philippines and Hawaii.

Texts, specially prepared for early reading for the situation in Puerto Rico were needed. Children in the elementary grades were in reading from one to two grades behind continental children of the same age. In the Commissioner's report of 1944-45, the median age of pupils in the first grade was 8.22; in grade 3 it was 10.43. This was no reflection on their ability. The children were alert and made progress in the face of great difficulties. The spread of age-groups who learned to read in the States and in Puerto Rico was increased



by the fact that in Puerto Rico a child did not begin to read in English until the last half of the second grade or the beginning of the third grade. Then, too, there were many students who did not gain admittance at 6, or even at 7, because of crowded schoolroom conditions. It is quite evident that the reading content of an early reading text for a continental boy or girl of 6 must have seemed immature and "silly" to a Puerto Rican youngster of 9 or 10, who had already advanced to a more realistic stage.

The texts used in the elementary grades were those edited for English-speaking children. Even the most careful control of vocabulary in a text for a continental beginner could not meet the needs of one who had to build on his own reality. However, even occasional glimpses of the world beyond had stronger appeal to most children than a constant hashing of their own daily experiences, so critics in the Island possibly placed undue emphasis on the book treatment of outside matters. Most of the stories concerned incidents common to childhood everywhere - life on the farm, pets, a birthday party, etc. A series of readers for use in the schools of the Island should certainly contain material drawn from Puerto Rican history and customs.

Introduction to reading before 1948 was based on six series of readers widely used in the continental schools. These included the Buckingham Series ("The Children's Bookshelf") 1934, Laidlaw Basic Readers of 1941, the Elson-Gray

Series. For help in the Oral and Silent Reading the teacher was referred to the teacher's manual which accompanied each series but which directs the instruction toward children whose language is English. The work of the first and second grade was entirely conversational. The course presented material for this in units and supplements with sentences and verse for learning and practicing. The vocabulary list of 1,000 words for Grades 1-6 showed 266 for first-grade use.

The following was the age-grade distribution in the junior high schools in 1944-45.<sup>4</sup>

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Urban	13.88 years	14.79 years	15.90 years
Rural	14.22 years	15.11 years	16.23 years

The reorganization on the 6-3-6 basis resulted in rapid growth in the number of schools. The integration of Grades 7 and 8 with Grade 9 was somewhat difficult. Time allotments were specified for two activities: (1) reading, assigned to two-thirds of class-time in Grades 7 and 8 and to three-fifths in Grade 9; (2) written and oral expression and language, including dictionary work.

The syllabus included objectives, sources of material and mechanical aids for reading, directions for distribution of reading divided into seven and eight units each containing stories, biographical sketches grouped around a central theme.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

The oral and written expression and language instruction contained directions and suggestions to aid the teacher in plotting the course and stimulating student activities in speech and writing in order to attain the minimum essentials in language.

Grade 2 showed an abrupt transition to a higher level. It began with a section intended as a basis for correct use in written and oral expression and for understanding English, but was devoted to phonetic material. The program was then organized for "A groups" and "B groups". "A group" took care of pupils from earlier grades who had not mastered the minimum essentials in English. The program for the "A group" led through practice in the simple sentence, to noun, pronoun, spelling, etc., to acquire the linguistic essentials. For the "B group" the language material was of greater maturity. The reading centers on stories from advanced readers with words for mastery and for comprehension, and with questions to promote student discussion. The same procedure was followed for the "B group." More elasticity was implied for teacher procedure and the reading material seemed more mature. The program in the ninth grade had a wealth of material for written and oral work. It emphasized the improvement of reading techniques and enlarging the vocabulary. The texts suggested for training in English usage were well established in use in the States at junior high school levels but the question arises as to whether they were adapted to the Puerto Rican pupil at this stage or whether some simpler book might not have been more appropriate



to his needs. The same problem arose regarding the contents of the stories recommended for the seventh and eighth grades.

The English courses for Grades 10, 11 and 12, the senior high school, fell into two main groups: (1) courses required of all students and (2) elective courses. The program for the senior high school was divided into units each with a specified time allotment into weeks. In the first group exception was made of those in commercial and other vocational fields.

In the outlines of courses, each grade began with a unit devoted to minimum essentials. Throughout the required courses there was an effort to interweave linguistic practice with reading experience. Aims for the high school grades were defined carefully and at length, analysis of the reading texts were given in detail, points requiring special attention were listed. Background to strengthen the teacher's equipment for interpretation was furnished in abundance. History, helpful bibliographies and other aids were presented in much the same way an instructor might need for a typical freshman class in literature in an American college. In fact, some of the questions would have been difficult enough for a continental undergraduate in his own vernacular: e.g., How does Scott make use of onomatopoeia (in "The Lady of the Lake")? The influence of the period in England when Milton wrote "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" on present-day thought. Surely the Puerto Rican pupil in Grade 11 or 12 struggling for a command of English needed practice on the more simple material. In general the character of the required

texts, the range of interpretation implied in analysis, and the question topics show that the procedures were more appropriate for college rather than high school.

Students of Commercial English used the Reader's Digest for required reading. This was a good selection for general information on questions of contemporary import. The curriculum included a "Speech" section which introduced techniques of business correspondence and formulas for contact with employers and associates. The material seems well adapted for initiating young persons into a clerical career.

A Remedial English course was required of those who failed or were deficient in any aspect of their work in English. It was to be carried on with the other English program and included an intensive review of the basic forms in the language, for practice in oral English and reading for comprehension, and with many suggestions to help the teacher discover and correct individual weaknesses.

There were four elective courses in high school English: Magazine Reading, Speech, World Literature, and Motion Picture Appreciation. Magazine Reading was open to all high school students with an ultimate objective of building up habits of wholesome reading apart from formal education. The course in Speech, open to students of Grades 11 and 12 with an average of B in English, began with fundamentals underlying oral expression of ideas and followed up with implementation of these in training for debate, reading of plays and such.

Motion Picture Appreciation was open to all seniors. It gave an introduction into the technique of the cinema and assuming that pupils had access to movie theaters out of class hours, gave instructions for formal discussion of what they had seen. It was meant to develop power of discrimination and preparation of scripts.

The fourth elective, World Literature, was left for seniors with a B grade in English. This was ambitious even for Grade 12. It included a study of modern prose forms and other analysis of the literary types. It is open to doubt whether such a course belongs even in a high school for native speakers of English.

The "Outline" for the senior high school was a full and stimulating presentation of what might be expected from a well-trained English-speaking boy or girl in a good public high school on the Continent. For most of the pupils in the Puerto Rican situation theirs was a late beginning, with progress hampered by overcrowding, part-time instruction and a shortage of texts. It began to be questioned whether levels of achievement in the "Outline" were possible under the conditions or whether for a sounder basis for college admission or for practical life the high school course should be simplified. While the high schools on the Continent were reading works in the language of modern writers, Puerto Rican students were trying to improve their English with the unusual, archaic wording of Scott's "Talisman", Milton's Minor Poems, and Tennyson's



"Idylls of The King".

Junior and senior high school classes, in general, were taught by what might be called a typical high school English method, such as is used in the States with little or no recognition of the fact that English was not the vernacular of the students. In some cases there was more emphasis on the meanings of words than in the States. There was little or no reference to language difficulties.

In the elementary grades various methods and combinations of primary methods were used: reading aloud, silent reading, questions in English grammar, English projects, pre-primer charts, and repetition for memorization.

The senior high school in Puerto Rico, like that in the States, had two functions: To prepare for college those who would continue study and to make ready a group who would not go on to college but would enter a technical or a business career. For these ends many, many students of Puerto Rico were deprived of the opportunity for any but the most meager schooling. This placed a heavy responsibility on the Department of Education for providing the high schools with programs realistic in content and economical in administration.

#### Handicaps in Using English for Instruction

The experience of fifty years resulted in widespread recognition among the educators of Puerto Rico of the impossibility

of educating Puerto Rican children through the use of English as the language of instruction. Teachers in Puerto Rico were increasingly Puerto Ricans many of whom lacked sufficient command of English to teach arithmetic, geography and other subjects in that language. Even when teachers were able to teach subjects in English, many of the pupils, coming from Spanish-speaking homes, could not understand the instruction. As a consequence many teachers were forced to depart from the official policy and to use Spanish in class, more or less surreptitiously, creating an unhealthy situation for school morale. Where teachers conformed to the official policy, the faulty English habits of many teachers were indelibly impressed into the language of their pupils.

Having spent years in classes which they only partially understood, many pupils emerged from schools knowing adequately neither English nor the subjects taught in it. Even literacy in the vernacular was affected. Since the whole school was a kind of laboratory for English, the efforts of the teachers were possibly directed toward carrying the English forward while content might possibly have been neglected and so the school would have been prevented from filling its function of equipping pupils with basis skills and attitudes essential to everyday living.

The large number of pupils who dropped school after the third grade soon lost the English acquired and had little to retain since other subjects had not been adequately learned in

the medium of English

When English was the language of instruction in all classes, even the English classes could not achieve satisfactory results since many students resisted the instruction because they had acquired a bad taste for English through its enforced use in classes where English made learning more difficult.

Many English teachers had constantly to "unteach" errors learned through pupils' exposure to the faulty English of teachers of other subjects as well as of English.

There developed an attitude toward English as a kind of "other vernacular" implying that English could be taught as Spanish was taught or as English was on the Continent. Thus there was failure to make use of the special techniques needed for teaching what was essentially a foreign language.

#### Interest in English Sustained

With the amendment of the Organic Act, now known as the Jones Act, Mariano Villaronga was again appointed Commissioner of Education, but this time by Luis Muñoz Marín, the first Governor ever to be elected by the Puerto Rican people. The Legislature passed an act making Spanish the official language of Puerto Rico and medium of instruction, with English to be taught as a second language.

However, Puerto Rican educators were quick to affirm that mastery of English continued to be an important educational



objective. On March 12, 1948 the Commissioner issued a circular letter requesting administrators to send in lists of elementary teachers whose English mastery, education and experience might qualify them for positions as teachers of English. The time devoted to English in the junior high schools was to be doubled and additional teachers would be needed.

In-service education of English teachers was intensified through a series of demonstrations of the newer techniques throughout the Island. In the summers of 1948 and 1949 work conferences were held at the University of Puerto Rico for the English teaching personnel.

#### ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Puerto Rico has now embarked on a new course dedicated to facilitating and improving the program of English as a second language within the policy of Spanish as the medium of instruction. It is a conscientious enlightened effort of Puerto Rican educators to solve the Island's half-century-old "language problem".

#### Supervisory Staff Organized

The new Commissioner of Education, Mariano Villaronga, set up in 1948 as part of the supervisory staff within the Department of Education an English Section under the direction of Dr.

Pauline M. Rojas assisted by seven coordinators, some of whom were speakers of English, the others, of Spanish, but all of whom had been successful teachers of English and were familiar with the English situation in the schools of the Island. Dr. Rojas, a native American from Minnesota, also possessed a long record of successful experience but she had gone much farther in that she had followed the trend of the Modern Language Investigation, noted in the decade of Dr. Padín's regime, and had done much study investigating methods of teaching English to the Spanish in the Southwest and in New York. She accepted the directorship with conviction.

Since the staff were acquainted with the research carried on by Dr. C. C. Fries in the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan in teaching English to adults of foreign speech, especially to Latin-Americans, they decided to adapt the same approach to the teaching of English in Puerto Rico with Dr. C. C. Fries as consultant.

### Type of English to be Taught

They chose as the particular type of English to be taught the "General American" or Western since it consisted of the forms and structures used in common conversational situations by socially accepted speakers in college and university communities of the midwestern United States. It is that used by the United States Government in carrying on its affairs, and

by groups that include business men, electricians, foremen of large shops, heads of police departments, undertakers, Red Cross workers, nurses, and those in general who have had a formal education ranging from a year of high school to a year in a technical school or college.<sup>1</sup> Some go so far as to call this "shirt sleeve" English or the English of the "streets". Call it as one will, it is estimated that at least ninety million Americans speak General American, while eleven million Americans speak Eastern dialect and twenty-six million speak Southern.<sup>2</sup> In learning English as a foreign language it was necessary to decide upon the particular type to be mastered for there is no single kind that is used throughout the English speaking world. The Western or General American Type of English did not assume its form in one locality but it belongs to the nation as a whole.

The task of teaching a foreign language is essentially different from teaching the vernacular. At five the Puerto Rican child has mastered the basic elements of Spanish. He has learned to attach meaning to the stream of speech, to hear the distinct sound features and to approximate their production. He has mastered arrangements which make up communication. He has been surrounded by parents and those who have drilled him in Spanish structure over and over again in meaningful situations. The task of the teacher is to expand this mastery of

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<sup>1</sup> Fries, C. C. "Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language", (University of Michigan Press, 1947) p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 4.



Spanish which the child brings with him to school, and to make him literate in his native language.

The task of the English teacher is to do for him in English what he has already done for himself in the speaking of Spanish. There is little in the average Puerto Rican pupil's out-of-school English experience to parallel his experience on the Spanish side. Children in most Puerto Rican communities are exposed to certain fragments of English but not nearly enough to make English his second language.

Many discussions have entered into the learning of a foreign language. Some claim that unless one begins a second language as a very young child he can never completely master it. Even after living twenty years or more in a foreign country, some do not master its language unless they have a special gift for languages. Then, again, we hear of grown-ups who have learned to speak perfectly eight or ten languages. Certain Army courses claim mastery of Chinese is possible on the voyage from San Francisco to India and that officers during the war were equipped in Italian by studying it fifteen hours a week for two months. In our own schools English is taught to native English-speaking Americans twelve or thirteen years, and still one often hears commentation on the few college graduates that can use English correctly and the strong evidences of the poor quality of the English of the secondary school pupils. Then what is language learning?

The situation of English as a school subject in Puerto Rico differs from that of the foreign languages in the States where only a small fraction of pupils can ever expect to come into contact with a non-English-speaking foreigner. If the Puerto Rican pupil is to profit from English instruction, his practical need for the language will demand oral use as well as ability to read it, and it is most likely that the need for speaking English will increase rapidly as transportation to the States improves and commercial and industrial development goes forward, providing more contact with Americans. This is already seen in the large numbers of laborers now daily being transported by planes to different industrial centers, mostly in the eastern United States, in answer to calls for workers needed in factories. Just last March, to meet the language emergency, classes were organized in different centers over the Island for adults who were willing to go to the States to work. Most of these had had little or no schooling but wanted an opportunity to learn some basic English before going.

So admitting that English is a foreign language for Puerto Ricans does not put it on the same pedagogical basis as French, German, or Spanish in the States. There is recognition of the need of emphasis on oral English. There is danger, too, that the second language may fall a victim to scholastic methods of instruction unless the teacher has full command of the spoken language and believes in the oral objective. Under such leadership pupils respond to the vital

appeal of speech in the foreign tongue and to the feeling of power that comes with even a little acquired facility.

### The Oral Approach Defined

Modern linguistic science says that the most economical and most effective way to learn a foreign language is to begin with the oral approach to grasp the sound system and to manipulate the structural forms just as a child does in learning to talk in the vernacular.<sup>3</sup>

The direct method is teaching a foreign language, especially a modern language, through conversation, discussion, and reading through that language itself without use of the pupil's language, without translation and without the study of formal grammar. The first words are taught by pointing to objects or pictures or by performing actions.<sup>4</sup>

The "oral approach" is what it implies. It presents much oral practice in hearing and in speaking the foreign language. It is an end to be attained in the first stage of language learning. It builds up a set of habits for the oral production of the language and for the receptive understanding of the language when it is spoken.

The "oral approach" is not the "direct method" of language learning as that method is usually understood, but they do have a few points in common. In both, the emphasis is upon the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



actual use of the foreign language rather than upon memorizing vocabulary and forms out of context. In both, translation is eliminated. In the "direct method" reading in the foreign language may form an important part of the early work, while in the "oral approach" it is postponed until the structure of the new language is firmly grasped and it may never become an important part of the study. In the "oral approach", although the language of the pupil is avoided as much as possible, it is used for securing comprehension when necessary, to make sure that explanations are thoroughly understood. Generalizations regarding structure or grammar are constantly related to oral practice of the language in the "oral approach". In this the materials are developed orally first and the statements that are given concerning structure or use are always summaries or generalizations drawn from the sentences practiced and understood by the students.

The practice which the student contributes must be oral practice. Even if the final result desired is to read the foreign language, the mastery of the fundamentals of the language, its structure and its sound system with a limited vocabulary, should be through speech, according to the Fries method.<sup>5</sup> The repeated repetition or practice of the patterns in meaningful situations are used to establish useful habits of pronunciation and to teach meaning. Moreover, this practice of repeated patterns produced by a native speaker of the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

foreign language is the most economical way of thoroughly learning the structural methods of a language. When one can produce automatically, or almost so, utterances in accord with the usual patterns of that language, he is ready to proceed to reading the language. One never seems to gain satisfactory control of language material by silent study and memorizing. The struggle with new words through a two-language dictionary is laborious and ineffective. Never do two words in different languages cover the same meaning. In addition to the struggle with new vocabulary one has to puzzle out the structural devices in which the new words are used. So for beginners before trying to read, the oral approach should be continued throughout the first stage of language learning until the learner can with a limited vocabulary manipulate the structural devices of the language and grasp the sound system.

So then learning words of a language does not mean mastery of that language. In our own native language we know the words for those areas with which we have had some experience. So the mastery of words or vocabulary of a foreign language is also bound by our actual experience and takes time. There are no short cuts in learning vocabulary.

Important as words with their lexical meanings are, the student of a language should never make the mistake of identifying it only with its dictionary meaning. In learning English there are four important kinds of meaning which the student should take into consideration: the lexical, syntactical, mor-

phological, and that of pitch contour. It is words with their dictionary meanings (lexical) that receive attention in popular discussions of language.

The syntactical type of meaning grows out of the position of the word in relation to the others of the sentence. Talking about "sugar cane" is one thing, while "cane sugar" is quite another. Whether "The man killed the bear" or "The bear killed the man" is important. Word order satisfying the "who" did "what" to "whom" is necessary to meaning in English.

The morphological meaning has to do with whether "men" or "man" is meant. In English changing a vowel can alter the meaning entirely. This becomes troublesome for the Spanish-speaking. His language does not have the "i" that is found in "ship" or "live". In his language "i" is "ee". Consequently meaning is confused if he says "sheep" for "ship". The same is true of "kills" and "killed". They each portray one meaning while "kill" is still another. So meaning is conveyed by the form of words.

Meaning is conveyed also by a fourth type, the pitch contour with which words are spoken. Even single words constitute different utterances when uttered with different intonation. The commander orders "Fire" and by the very tone his soldiers know it to be an order to take action and shoot. Uttered with rising inflection "Fire?" becomes an interrogation asking whether there is a blaze needing attention. However, "Fire!!!" uttered with sudden pitch voice indicates a blaze



and all must take care.

In the mastery of one's own native English the learning of these last three is more an unconscious process but the growing control of the lexical meanings is more conscious. It is therefore the words with their dictionary meanings that receive the attention in the popular interpreting of a language. Language, however, is much more than words and communication demands the use of the several types of meaning in addition to that expressed by the dictionary definition.

It is important to recognize that one's mastery of a language, even his own, is always on two levels, the productive and recognition. These two levels are never equal. The range or the receptive of words that we can recognize and understand exceeds that of the words we use in speech or even in writing. As one advances in ability to produce or use the language he increases the range and depth of his understanding, and an increase in understanding shows itself in greater ability to produce. The ability to produce never equals the ability to understand.

The fundamental matters of the language must be mastered on a productive level and should, as soon as possible, be made automatic unconscious habits. For this purpose many whole sentences, questions and answers, demand repetition and more repetition so that they will become automatic reactions early. There are many "patterns" which must eventually become "customary molds into which the productive expression must fit

without conscious thought".<sup>6</sup>

Practice of these must not be mere parroting but they must be used in situations which have meaning for pupils and facilitate the ease and naturalness of speaking by freeing the mind of the necessity for constant attention to the mechanics of the language. The keystone of the oral approach is the principle of systematic practice or repetition using these same patterns in a variety of experiences which are a part of the daily life of the pupils. They grasp meaning and learn vocabulary by experiencing the situations in which the words are used.

The language experience is thus first oral. Since language-learning means language-using, pupils talk more than the teacher does. Explanations by the teacher are cut to a minimum and the pupil participation is expanded to a maximum.

Reading and writing exercises reinforce the learning which has occurred through listening and speaking. The sound of English is very different from its appearance in writing as can be seen by comparing the sound and spelling of "rough", "through", "though", or "we", "key", "need", "read", "receive", "believe", "machine", "people". When pupils learn the spelled form before the pronounced, they acquire a "spelling pronunciation" and have difficulty in understanding the words as pronounced by a native speaker or as heard in the cinema or on the radio. So English is very badly spelled. It becomes necessary

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

to use a special alphabet in which each symbol is assigned to one of the distinctive sound segments of English and let it consistently represent that sound segment. In General American English there are 24 sound units of consonants, 11 of vowels, and 3 of diphthongs. This special alphabet is a convenient, consistent way of spelling English words. This determining the distinctive sounds is one of the first steps for the Spanish speaker in hearing English and producing it when he speaks. This means he must learn about a dozen sounds not in his pattern for Spanish has only 19. This does not include sound clusters.

There are, too, certain features of English that can never be learned visually as they are not symbolized in the written form. From written English pupils cannot learn the rhythm and intonation of English which are vital to intelligibility on both the productive and receptive levels.

So, then, the first problem in learning a new language is the mastery of its sound system. To understand the stream of speech is to hear the distinctive sound segments and features of intonation or patterns of speech melody, the rhythm characteristic of the language, and to approximate their production.

The second big problem in learning a new language is the mastery of the features of arrangement that constitute the structure of that language. This means making automatic the



use of the devices of arrangement and form. The natural way in which a child first learns his own language nearly always means "no grammar". From the point of view of modern linguistic science "grammar means something different from learning rules, diagramming sentences or analyzing the parts of speech." Even the assertion that a child simply imitates that which he hears seems to be a mistake. Children often say, "I knowed it," or "I doed it," or "three mans", or "two tooths". It is reasonably certain that children have never heard these forms before, but it is quite certain that the child at a very early stage has grasped unconsciously the "pattern" form which English uses regularly in expression of past time and has applied it to the words that are exceptions to the pattern. In a similar way he has applied the pattern which English uses in plural expressions. So anyone in learning a language does not simply repeat what he has heard, but, like the child, he soon learns the patterns of form and arrangement by which the "words" are put together. So one is learning grammar, since these forms and arrangements are the grammar of the language and although a child or a learner is not conscious of them, they are there. To learn a new language without learning the grammar of that language is impossible.

If one wishes to say anything meaningful about "man," "bear", and "kill", the three words, known as content words, are not enough. There must be some method of pointing out the performer of the act and distinguishing him from the one upon

whom the act was performed, or arrangement. Then, too, the forms indicate "one man" and "one bear" are involved. "Killed" would show that it occurred some time in the past. Position or arrangement also offers clues to meaning. To say "The man killed the bear" is not the same as "The bear killed the man". The English of today has developed also a large number of function words which show certain fundamental relationships. However, the treatment of word order constitutes the basis of the framework because English structure is largely a matter of position and order.

#### Implementing the Oral Approach in Puerto Rican System

In implementing the method of the oral approach in the teaching of English as a second language into the public school system, the materials of instruction used are those based upon the scientific analysis of General American English as it is actually used by standard speakers. This analysis was made by Dr. Charles Fries through the efforts of the Modern Language Association of America with the support of the Linguistic Society. Some two thousand letters and excerpts from about one thousand more were used and all were from native Americans for at least three generations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Fries, C. C., "American English Grammar" (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1940) p. 16.

The new English program started with the beginning of the school term in August, 1948. There was no parallel organization anywhere that could be used as model. The English section composed of the director and seven coordinators, one for each of the zones into which they had broken up the school areas of the Island, set up a staff of field assistants, approximately one for each school district. Two or more field assistants were assigned to districts with more teachers while, in many cases, one only took over two smaller districts.

The coordinator of a zone trained and oriented the field assistant in the principles of instruction procedures and in the essential features of the new English program. The field assistants, in turn, were to train and orient the teachers of the various levels and conduct in-service training education of English teachers. All, in general, were to sell the new program to the school and lay groups, and interpret Departmental English policies to the public.

The orientation included the demonstration classes in the various phases of the work: steps in teaching a pattern, the importance of meaningful repetition, cumulative practices or situations calling forth the patterns taught, controlled composition work, and reading from the perspective of English as a second language.

English is now being taught as a subject in all grades. The following is the portion of a school day, devoted to English during the school year. This was prescribed by Circular Letter



No. 1, July 1, 1948, sent out by the Commission of Education.

Elementary School Double Enrollment							
Morning Session - Grades 1 and 2	.	.	.	.	.	.	35 minutes
Elementary School Double Enrollment							
Afternoon Session - Grades 1 and 2	.	.	.	.	.	.	30 minutes
Elementary School Single Enrollment							
(Full day) - Grades 3-6	.	.	.	.	.	.	80 minutes
Elementary School "Interlocking"							
Grades 3-6	.	.	.	.	.	.	60 minutes
Second Unit Rural Schools							
Grades 7, 8, and 9	.	.	.	.	.	.	90 minutes
Junior High School							
Grades 7, 8, and 9	.	.	.	.	.	.	80 minutes
High School							
Grades 10, 11, and 12	.	.	.	.	.	.	50 minutes

In-service training of teachers took the name of a "professional class" for teacher improvement. Since the teaching personnel was mostly Spanish-speaking, the immediate objective became the improvement of the English used by the teachers in general, and, ultimately, that of the students. Thus the office of the field assistant promises in time to become a key position upon which the success of the program may rest.

### Steps of Teaching a Pattern

In an actual classroom situation above the second grade, practice in the steps of listening, speaking, reading and writing are closely interwoven. It is recommended that structural as well as vocabulary items be controlled systematically. The

pattern is presented orally first by a native speaker or by one whose English approximates as closely as possible that of a native speaker. In order to learn a language one must use it, so the pattern is given much varied practice. If there are forty pupils in a class, each of the forty must have abundant opportunity to listen to it and repeat it. This provides ear training. Every repetition of that pattern strengthens that pattern in his mind. Every variation from it delays the pupil's mastery of it. So meaningful repetition makes for automatic mastery.

After language items are heard and spoken, they are put in written form and read. This is visual training while the writing exercise takes care of the motor training. With these four steps the oral approach in language learning is both linguistically and pedagogically sound. Language learning is reinforced from all four directions. None of the language skills is neglected. Visual, ear, and motor training and speaking are taken care of.

To "approach" English through speaking and listening to it is not to confine English use to these two skills, but research shows that individuals learn to speak and listen before they learn to read and write. There are many individuals speaking and listening without ever having learned to read and write. This leads to the fact that the spoken form of the language is the language and that the written form is a record of the language. Language was spoken hundreds of years before it

was ever written down.

Reading and writing become essential to language learning in civilized society. Reading is vitally affected by the oral speech. To master a language it is not necessary to read it but it is doubtful if one can really read the language without first mastering it orally. In the oral approach to learning a language it is believed a child should not read what he cannot speak.

The work of the first and second grades provides for abundant oral training meant to sharpen the student's ability to understand English on the receptive level and to develop ability to give appropriate short answers to simple questions on the productive level. This prepares the way for reading and writing on most third grade levels.

#### Orientation of Teachers

Teachers have gone through a period of orientation and training in taking up the new and giving up the old. As a general rule the younger the teacher the easier this break. Some of the most excellent older teachers of the previous programs have refused to have anything to do with the new. This, however, generally resolved itself into problems of orientation. Even continental teachers, native speakers of English, in some cases were slow in seeing the relation of the new to the old. Those who were to teach English were recommended to take intensive courses in linguistics and in methods of teaching



English as a second language. It was recommended, too, that continental teachers be used in team work with Puerto Rican teachers capitalizing on the continental's command of English and the Puerto Rican's familiarity with pupil problems and needs.

It has become the policy of the English Section of the Department of Education during the first semester of the school year to intensify the English program by directing its efforts to work in the field, demonstrating and interpreting the oral approach to the teaching of English. The second semester is dedicated to the production of materials.

Since there was no material of any kind for use in this work, the English section laid plans for a systematic revision of the curriculum in English and set for its goal the second semester of the school year of 1948-49 the writing of "A Manual for the Teaching of English to Spanish-speaking Children in Puerto Rico". This was published in three parts and consisted of 75 units, each including a "minimum" and a "major" unit. The "minimum" was meant to be mastered by all students at all levels. It had to be broken down and made easier for the third grade and be built up for the next higher grade, etc. From the seventh grade through high school the "major" units consisting of extensions of the patterns of the "minimum" units were to be taught after the patterns of the minimum units had been mastered to a fair degree. The lesson units are not coordinated with the grades. To begin with,

all students from the third grade on started from the first of the book. Then the following year the teacher began at the place where diagnosis showed they had little or no control over the pattern at hand. So teachers begin with students where they find them.

The dominant element in the "Manual" is the "idiom-pattern", which is emphasized and repeated by an impressive wealth of material and devices for promoting repetition by the students in a variety of situations. It is probably more elastic in its adaptability to the various levels of pupil experience in oral English than any of the preceding courses of study. This "Manual" was prepared in haste in order to fill in a gap where the teacher need for materials was very desperate. In the three years of use it has served a purpose but its materials were often hard for teachers to adapt and use. It is a great "storehouse" for possibilities of what may be done on particular levels. However, the teacher with limited training in English finds it confusing.

As a consequence, books for the elementary level have been written for the teacher and pupil. These attempt to remedy the defects of the "Manual". They are now being published by D. C. Heath and Co., and will be used in schools this coming year. The revision, called "Dr. Fries General American English Readers", is in two parts, each having a pupil's book and a teacher's book with suggestions, devices and aids for proceeding with the pupil's book.

During the second semester of the current year the English Section has brought out the second part of this series, two volumes each consisting of a book for the pupil and one for the teacher, to be used in the junior high school or intermediate level. The plans for the ensuing year are to produce the third part of the series to be used on the senior high school level.

The English Section also has produced two other Manuals, the one, "The Teaching of English in the First Grade", the other, "The Teaching of English in the Second Grade", each of which is rich in suggestive material for initiating the beginner in oral English. Each has an Appendix containing appropriate music, songs, games and devices for stimulating interest and pupil participation. The aim of the English Section is to revise, eventually, this material in a primary course for Grades 1, 2, and 3. Grade 3 is a transition grade in which students begin reading in English after first having learned to read in Spanish in Grades 1 and 2. Here students learn to write in English. They change also from printing to longhand in writing.

In addition the English Section has issued pamphlets of orientation and help to teachers on the teaching of reading in English when English is a second language, or controlled composition, on the principles of the linguistic oral approach, on introducing children to book reading, and on teaching children to read in English.

Requests for copies of the "Manuals" on the teaching of



English as a second language have come from educators in many outside places: Cuba, Santo Domingo, The Philippines, Japan, Java, Venezuela, Panama. This indicates that the need for effective materials in the teaching of English as a second language exists and that the experiment in Puerto Rico is being followed with outside interest.

#### Dr. Pries as Consultant

As consultant for this endeavor in Puerto Rico, Dr. Pries has been to the Island at different times to work in cooperation with the English staff. He has helped work out for the new texts the sequence of English patterns to be followed, vocabulary and procedures for different levels and other valuable suggestions in regard to language materials. They have included in the reading exercises of the books contextual orientation, or such information as will enlighten students on the culture, customs and traditions of the people whose language they are learning.

#### TENTATIVE EVALUATION OF THE NEW METHOD TO DATE

##### Too Soon for Scientific Evaluation

The method of teaching of English as a second language in the public schools of Puerto Rico is in its initial stage. It

was thought this might be looked upon as a five-year plan at first but that has turned out to be too little time to show continuity and consistency of policy. It is still quite necessary to do much reorienting in different aspects of the program and adapting procedures to changing needs and conditions.

First, the courses for the first, second, and third grades now call for revision since the third grade material now being used has not grown out of the work done in the first and second grades. Instead, most third grade teachers are having difficulty in adapting the work in the "Manual", generally introduced in the fourth grade, to meet the needs of the third grade level. Since the third grade is beginning reading and writing in English many teachers make the work too hard for the grade level. The courses for the first and second grades provide a good preparatory base in oral English experience upon which to build a course for the third grade.

The fourth, fifth and sixth grades will use in 1952-53 the new texts that are now being published. These will meet needs both of pupils and teachers for materials and will aid in making the work more standardized.

The book for the junior high school grades 6, 7, and 8 has been completed and is now being edited. It will then go to the publishers but its use in the schools cannot be anticipated before the next year, 1953-54. So this means there can be no stabilizing of instruction in these grades until after the textbooks come out.

On the senior high school level little or nothing has been done in regard to reorganizing the work along the lines of teaching English as a second language. Since the reorganization began on the lower levels first, the high school teachers have been left to follow along with such general orientation as was given out, allowing them on their own to adapt materials and procedures as far as possible to the levels of the tenth, eleventh or twelfth grades, whether in the general, commercial or vocational course. Teachers of seniors have had to work also to prepare their students to meet college entrance requirements. High school teachers have done much to improve the oral English of the students and their reading ability by providing them practice in pattern extension and in controlled composition as suggested by the "Manual".

The plan for 1952-53, however, is to work out for the senior high school a program in English growing out of the work of the junior high school and meeting the needs of the students. There is reason to believe that the standard of English on the senior high school level will rise above what it has ever been so far in regard to reading, writing, speaking and understanding of spoken English. Students are already beginning to arrive at the senior high school from the junior high school with a better base in English. Under the former methods of the bilingual policy students mastered mostly the vocabulary of the textbooks, the language of the schoolroom, but incidental expressions and the language as spoken, they never got,



nor had any opportunity to learn. They rarely had opportunity to talk with native speakers of English. Under the present setup a student comes to the senior high school level with automatic control over a stock of basic language patterns that afford him manipulation of the English language and he finds ample opportunity to grow in the use of it.

The English Section of the Department of Education plans to write textbooks for the senior high school during the second semester of 1952-53. This will complete the series they have set out to write for those who are learning and teaching English as a second language, the first of this kind ever to be written. They were written for, and will be used primarily in, teaching English to the Spanish-speaking students of the Puerto Rican situation. However, care has been taken in writing these to use as little Spanish as possible and to use such situations as may apply, in general, anywhere so that the books may be of further sales value to the book company in supplying a need for such material in parallel situations elsewhere. This also reduces the cost price of the book in Puerto Rico.

#### Appraisal of Progress so Far in Use of English

The English classes of Puerto Rico have made outstanding progress since the schools have been working with the oral approach. Teachers and pupils both find the classes enjoyable. Pupils submit themselves to an amazing amount of repetition in

pattern practice. They beam when an opportunity to talk with an American presents itself and they can respond with what they already use on the productive level. Students of the afternoon school session have been known to gather outside the classrooms of the morning session and participate with pupils practicing inside. They feel they are building automatic language habits on which they can rely when they want to express themselves. There is less of the anxious hesitation which comes from pausing to select an ending or a form, or a construction. They answer in English with more assurance and self-confidence. When asked, they say they like their English class the best. Their enthusiasm runs high.

The English heard in the classes sounds like "English". The practice of the controlled fundamentals of English communication is improving the English of the teacher as well as that of the pupils. It is bringing about an in-service training of the teacher without her leaving the classroom.

In reading from the blackboard the constructions which they have first mastered orally, the pupils read in sentence units rather than in word units. This carries over into their general reading and improves their reading speed as well as their comprehension. Formerly, the vocabulary method of teaching brought about a kind of translating which slowed down reading considerably and since structure was not clear meaning still was uncertain.

In writing the work in their notebooks students write the patterns they have been practicing orally. They write with a

high degree of accuracy and neatness and a satisfaction that comes from mastery.

The systematic practice of patterns is encouraged to come from situations which have meaning for the pupils. The practice promotes ease and naturalness in speaking, reading and writing by freeing attention from the mechanics of the language. Teachers need much guidance in relating the practice to experience so that pupils get automatic control over patterns and use the language and vocabulary naturally as a means of expression and communication.

#### Importance of Real Situations

Situations are related to the home and community. This is an opportunity to reinforce the educational objectives, such as health, citizenship, etc., by using them as content for the English practice. The pictures used are related to situations and situation continuity rather than unrelated pictures with no relation to each other. Whatever the procedure used, and there may be a variety, the situation involving English practice is encouraged to be an experience which has real meaning for the pupils. Vocabulary is also extended in this way.

In real life, few people need to make speeches, but most use more than one sentence to express their ideas. So it becomes the business of the language teacher to furnish situations in which pupils will need to use connected discourse



spontaneously. The talks should be brief and about subjects of concern to both teacher and pupil. The pupil talks uninterrupted by the teacher. If she finds he has not yet mastered a form such as "he has", that is her clue for further meaningful practice on this form as soon as possible. In this way mastery will come.

In the pronunciation of a foreign language, the aim is to pronounce each significant sound in a way that distinguishes it from every other significant sound in the foreign language. For example, when the words "hill" and "heel" are pronounced, the aim of the speaker is to pronounce the vowel in each so as to distinguish them. The Spanish ear finds this distinction hard to make. The English spelling provides no reliable guide to English pronunciation. So there seems to be a growing need, in teaching pupils to distinguish significant sounds, of a reliable way of transcribing pronunciation, a guide more reliable than English spelling. How confusing to a foreigner to encounter such as these: "write", "right", "height", "weight", and "rough", "cough", "though", and "thought"!

#### Appraisal of Personnel

The teachers of Puerto Rico are devoted to their task. They are as a whole eager to receive suggestions and are genuinely interested in their pupils. The need is improvement in the quality of their English as well as orientation in the

linguistic methods of teaching English as a second language. It is a problem of magnitude to interpret the program to local teachers throughout the Island. This places the field assistants, of whom there are about 60, in key positions. The teachers, supposedly, can improve only as the field assistants demonstrate efficiently the various procedures, work out improved methods, and carry forward energetically the program of in-service training for their teachers. The turnover in field assistants who leave this service is deplorable. It takes time, study and experience to train a new assistant to do his work to a fair degree of efficiency. Next year many new ones need to be trained. This slows down the progress of teachers in getting off to a good start for the coming year.

The history has shown that continental teachers too often have come on short-term contracts, have been motivated more by a desire for adventure than by desire to excel in their work. At present there is no plan to facilitate bringing any but it might work well in the present picture while the program is undergoing organization and reorientation. However, continental teachers now would need training in linguistics and experience with teaching English as a second language.

#### Problems of Reading

There is great dearth of material. All students at present, from the third grade on, are subjected to reading in

books formerly used by the school system and which were written for young native speakers of English. One can easily see what this does to the reading part of the program. Special preparation has to be given in structure, vocabulary, and forms so as to be able to use these readers even after the skills have been developed first in the native Spanish. It results in pushing the books down out of their normal grade level and a fifth grade student is found reading a third grade book. The Puerto Rican government has invested heavily in these books and they cannot be tossed aside. Even if that were possible, there is another difficulty in that there are no readers available that follow up the new work presenting appropriate vocabulary and content, interesting and valuable from the viewpoint of levels of maturity of the learners and the learners' linguistic efficiency.

Reading in English is being taught to pupils, generally in the third grade after they have learned the fundamentals of the reading process in Spanish and have developed some reading skill in their own language. Reading in Spanish is easy since Spanish is a language in which spelling and pronunciation are closely related, while English is most unphonetic and is not written the way it sounds. So there is need for a graphic representation of English so that when it is taught to pupils it carries over into reading.

Structural patterns and vocabulary items are presented orally first and become a part of the learner's spoken language



before he has the experience of reading them. The ideal then is that the item will appear and reappear in the reading and in the spoken English with some degree of regularity. In this way the process of mastery goes on.

An example may be found in the "-s" ending of the third person habitual action form which is especially difficult for Puerto Rican pupils. In their own language they drop the final "s" and they have no consonant clusters as "sk", "ct", etc. So pupils early are led to master these in English. In the third grade the forms practiced orally should appear in the reading. However, no readers especially adapted to meet the needs of this program have yet been planned. So after they have a fair degree of mastery over certain structural patterns and vocabulary, students have little opportunity to reinforce the oral presentation by reading about any situation using the structural forms and vocabulary which they know. Teachers must use readers for native speakers and which were written to meet a completely different set of needs. Puerto Rican teachers are ingenious and many rewrite stories adapting them to the reading ability of their particular group. In this way pupils see on the printed page the patterns they have learned orally. This facilitates mastery of fundamental patterns. The effort of adapting stories is commendable but caution in having them reviewed by a native speaker becomes necessary. Now pupils must fall back for their recreational reading on books that were not written either to meet his needs or to

appeal to his interests.

Many pictures, mostly illustrations from American magazines, are used to give meanings to pupils without verbal explanation. The most useful pictures are those which focus attention upon the items which the pupils need most to learn to identify in English. Abstractions which show only the essential features of an object are more useful than pictures with many details. Film strips are effective since they show action and situations which flat pictures cannot suggest.

Automatic control or mastery of communication fundamentals are acquired only through an abundance of practice in meaningful situations related to pupil experiences. As the materials are to be used by many teachers who may be beginning or are not yet familiar with the use of the exercises, detailed instructions are needed for using the exercises. In the new books that are being printed this need is met and very complete instructions are included in the teacher's supplement.

### Grammar Through Generalization

Generalizations are built upon an abundance of examples. Before a statement about language usage is made, several related examples are given to illustrate the point. Then there is provision for practice of the point in situations which have real meaning for the learners. In this way students are learning grammar, but inductively. They make their generali-

zations as they go.

### Program Suggested but not Limited

The Department designates its present courses of study in English as tentative. Practical goals are not yet established and very little can be defined as to pupil achievement and teacher experience. The program is suggestive in character. It has no blueprint of requirements or calendar of its goals. Initiative on the part of the teachers is encouraged in leading groups and individuals to actual achievement and many go far, indeed.

The tendency to isolate subjects from each other in the school curriculum is still very strong and this is harmful to progress in a language which must be vitalized by contact with other fields of knowledge. This is especially true of a second language and every effort should be made to keep English, now that it is a special subject, in relation with other fields or areas of instruction. Experimentation should go forward on ways to overcome the isolation from which it may suffer. This was not so true formerly when an endeavor was being made to keep English as the medium of instruction on the bilingual basis. Then, too, there are some students who have sufficient ability in English to use it effectively as a medium of learning. If this is true, some procedure might be decided upon that would provide for such students to study in that medium.



At present there is no such provision.

Any limiting factor in Puerto Rico on the study of English will not be the lack of desire by its people for English. The wish to learn English and to have their children learn it is widespread at all levels. Those who can afford it, and many who can't, send their children to the Continent for better opportunities. To the poor, a knowledge of English seems to be a way of escaping from a life of drudgery and so it has for not a few. In fact, they impress one as wanting more English than they should have, compared to their other needs. So the mastery of English is an objective to be attained only so far as the practical situation permits. The social and economic handicap of so many Puerto Rican children, the short school life of so many, and the part-time school day program are very severe limiting factors. Mastery of English at an advanced level can be a practical objective for those who have high ability and a long school life, or those who have opportunity for acquiring it in a natural situation.

So far most of the study of the language problem of Puerto Rico has, in general, dealt with the problem of improving English instruction. Other questions one might ask are these:

Should all Puerto Rican children study English?

At what level should it be introduced?

How much time at each level should be given to English?

How much time should be given to speaking, to listening, to reading and to writing?

It would seem that Puerto Ricans themselves hold the answers to these questions in determining the role which English is to play in their lives.

Some say that learning English is a luxury and a loss of time for school children in poor areas and for the 50 percent of the children who leave school before the fourth grade and that it is better to use the time for instruction in health, citizenship, and literacy in the mother tongue since they will have no opportunity to use English after they leave school. Yet all should have a chance to learn English if they want it.

Others say that even though English has little or no use in many localities parents generally have a strong desire to have their children learn English. It somehow signifies a hope that their economic condition may improve. The children may not always be on the farm. They live in a democracy and should have opportunities to develop according to their interests and capacities.

Many workers from the poor ranks are taking advantage of the opportunities offered at present by industrialists of the United States in importing laborers from the Island. They go north with the English they know and earn good money. Cane-cutters, servant boys, hotel waiters, taxi drivers, high school graduates and students who are not, workers from the needle craft factories, carpenters, dressmakers, all are taking the chance offered as a promise for advancement.

Then, too, there are those who believe that whatever the

future of Puerto Rico, it is probable that, more and more, its people will have a chance to use English and to include it in the public schools provides for that future need.

If English were deferred until the fourth grade the large percentage of children who drop out of school early would lose the opportunity to begin learning it. So some educators feel that to withhold the privilege of learning English from the 50 percent who drop out and reserve it for the 50 percent who stay beyond the third grade is not democratic, since all should share and share alike.

Then the question arises as to whether a pupil learns enough English in this first three grades to carry over usefully into adult life. Under the present very favorable conditions for instruction in Puerto Rico, taking into consideration the child's motivation, his capacity and quality of instruction, it seems that a valuable amount of English can be learned during the first three grades and that those who leave school at the end of that time will have a foundation on which to build if need and opportunity present themselves.

Again, the role English is to play in the lives of Puerto Ricans will no doubt tend to determine the time to be allotted to the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to English.

Plans for the teaching of English in Puerto Rico as a second language are well developed and are being introduced into the schools. Evaluation of results based upon objective



evidence gathered by scientific procedures will not be possible until adequate materials including the new textbooks and with their manuals are placed in the hands of pupils and teachers. Standards of attainment for the various grade levels are in process of development. Another five years may be necessary before an objective measurement of the results is possible. But there is already much evidence through observation that desirable progress is under way.

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