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## **An Ethnolinguistic Approach to Language Learning for Minority Group Children, 1969**

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Learning for Minority Group Children

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The Ethnolinguistic Approach is a framework for inclusion of the language of the child's culture in the content of the curriculum. The Approach provides a means of utilizing, as a bridge to academic tasks, the rich background of stimulating experiences from community resources familiar to the child. The child's language transition is made easier through the use of culturally familiar materials with which the child can identify.

The Approach is a doing approach with reinforcing stimuli which:  
(1) Motivates the students to talk to the teacher in the way they talk to each other, expressing concepts acquired in their culture. Those concepts are then practiced with a variety of possible Standard Language structures. (2) Provides for the acquisition of new concepts in the language he has mastered before unfamiliar ways of expressing those concepts in Standard sentence patterns and vocabulary are practiced. The students discuss, apply concepts, and ask questions about familiar objects and relationships using their basic ideas about color, size, shape, and number before the addition of new ideas and language elements. The teacher uses the lesson design, the core of the approach, to design further additional lessons.

The goals of the Approach are:

- (1) Encourage the continuing use of the child's first language.
- (2) To use the familiar language as the launching pad to reach out, gradually grasp, and master unfamiliar patterns and vocabulary through practice, manipulation and expansion.

To accomplish these goals, practice is performed with the visual object supporting the auditory signal.

## Curriculum Areas and Language Correlation

While learning the language of the school the students should simultaneously learn significant subject matter. Irrelevant "word drills" should be studiously avoided, and lessons should be specifically designed to provide continuity of content with the systematic build-up of Standard language elements. Functional usage can be incorporated in the areas of Science, Mathematics, and social studies. The variety of experiences encountered in curriculum areas are thereby merged and made a part of the range of the language choices practiced in the lesson.

### Some Basic Assumptions of the Approach

The self-identity of the child is supported at all times.

The child's language represents the norm of his family and community.

The child has acquired and developed his concepts in the language of his culture. Knowledge of acquired concepts requires knowledge of his language.

Most children have acquired to some degree the ability to organize, classify, relate, order and describe the world around them by the time they enter school.

The teacher can provide as realistic a context for language experiences as possible using materials from the child's culture.

The experiences provided must be believable to the child.

If the child has successfully learned one language and/or dialect, he has the competence to use the same procedures to learn another.

Repetition is the "Spice of Life" for young children.

If a child can express a concept in his first language (primary dialect) he possesses the concept.

If the child speaks a variety of English, not a foreign language, the teacher can pursue with advantage, a wider range of language behavior in the lessons than in second language teaching.

## The Use of Objects in the Language Experiences

### Supply

To ensure self-enhancement and home-community identification, the objects are supplied by the parents and/or the Community Representative.

### Selection

To organize a wide range of data, the teacher selects objects from the supply for use in the lessons according to the following criteria:

The object may be easily handled.

The object may be safely handled.

The object exhibits attributes to serve as criteria for describing, grouping and classifying.

The objects exhibit potential for such multiple concepts as quantifying, comparison, and showing relationships.

The objects exhibit distinctiveness of elements for language expansion practice.

## Lesson Sequence

### Language Elicitation - Communication with Objects

The students express their ideas about the objects using words and sentences of their choice.

The teacher uses no controls except those controls inherent in the language possibilities of the objects themselves.

No "corrections" or inhibitions are used by the teacher. Whatever responses the children give are accepted and encouraged.

### Teacher Preparation

The teacher listens to the tape of the children's elicited language. The teacher records on her worksheet a statement of the differences between the child's language forms and usage and his regional standard forms and usage, an example of the statement of differences between black and standard English in an elicited language sample follows:

BLACK ENGLISH: IT A ROLLER  
STANDARD ENGLISH: IT'S A PAINT TRAY

BLACK ENGLISH: IT A TOP  
STANDARD " : IT'S A TOP

## Language Experience I

### Comments

In order to achieve a realistic appraisal of the conceptual and linguistic competence of the students a wide range of stimulus objects from his home and community are used.

Parents and teacher provide the stimulus items which will encourage identifying the objects by name and classifying the objects by color.

The first experience should be considered a preliminary sampling and exploratory appraisal of the child's grasp of independently developed concepts and language patterns. Collecting the child's language permits the teacher to discover how the child says what he already knows.

The tasks given to pre-school children of minority groups involve language and conceptual processes, but the tasks and the language system may differ from language-related school tasks.

Language and concepts can be elicited in different ways. One way is to give the child an object and let him make free responses about the object. Another, is to give the child an object, specify the basis of classification with a model and have the child classify on the basis of the model with no further verbal direction. Another approach is to give the child an object, specify the basis of classification with verbal directions, and see if he can classify.

Any one approach or a combination of approaches can be used. It is suggested that the teacher concentrate on one approach with children beginning school so that, (1) they will know what they are expected to do, and (2) the teacher may become thoroughly familiar and at ease with one approach before combining approaches.

Whatever the teacher's decision about approaches, the type of basic information secured during language elicitation is essential if the teacher is to provide a means for the child to relate the input of new information to some stable core of knowledge.

### Situation I - Language Elicitation

#### Purpose

The purpose of this experience is to elicit language usage forms, structures, and concepts.

#### Equipment

A tape recorder, blank tape and microphone. Home-community based materials supplied by the parents.

A shopping bag (preferably one from the local supermarket or store).



## Procedure

Enlist parental help by asking for contributions of safe, unbreakable objects or materials used in the home. Especially important are old toys, and empty cartons, such as toothpaste boxes and tubes, plastic cups, etc.

Given a collection of objects in a shopping bag to provide the stimulus for verbal response, plus a verbal specification for response, the child is able to respond, and the teacher tapes the responses.

The teacher shakes the shopping bag of objects and says; "See if you can guess whats in the bag." Encourage responses with a smile or nod of the head or by shaking the bag again.

When the children are finished, take each object from the bag and hold it up for the childrens' reactions and responses, then give the objects to a child. Continue until each child has as object. The pace should be fairly fast, and every child participates.

The teacher chooses a verbal specification to encourage individual response. "Who wants to talk about what you've got in your hand?" "Tell me about what I gave you. Tell me something about the thing I gave you. What've (have) you got in your hand?"

The teacher can move the microphone around to collect as many of the responses as possible.

The teacher will expect that the responses will include classifications and concepts other than the ones the teacher plans to initiate. This is important for the following reasons: (1) A variety of language usage is needed in developing the lessons, and (2) the stock collection will be used to expand and teach a variety of concepts in various situations. All elicited responses are therefore usable.

When children have completed their responses they are asked to return the objects to the shopping bag. An example follows:

Teacher: Drop all the red things in the bag.  
Give me back the green box.

If the child drops a different colored object in the bag the teacher accepts the object without correction.

Say to the children: Thank you. We will talk about the objects some more tomorrow.

Teacher's Worksheet

Differences between children's language and the teacher's language.

Children's Language	Teacher's Language

Sequence of Language & Conceptual Development

Black English	Known Vocabulary	Standard English
Naming Objects		Naming Objects
Describing objects by color	←————→	Describing Objects by color
Using the Singular " " Plural	←————→	

## SUGGESTIONS TO THE TEACHER

### Planning the Lesson

The goal is to get the children to talk as much as possible in the situations presented.

The lesson should evolve from the elicitation samples and must be well planned.

The lessons should have definite linguistic and conceptual purposes.

The Audio-lingual (listen - speak) approach is to be used.

The teacher's speech will be the regional standard speech taught.

The sentence pattern will be taught in situations which relate to the cultural experiences of the child.

A New Sentence pattern is taught with familiar home-community objects and known vocabulary.

New vocabulary is taught in patterns practiced with old or new objects.

Such language items as prepositions, multiple adjectives and relative pronouns are added to the sentence pattern practiced.

Full class response provides more practice than individual response.

## Teaching the Situation Lessons and Related Materials

The sentence pattern is modeled by the teacher, and the students speak at a normal rate of speech.

The objects supplied by the parents and used in the Language Elicitation lesson should be used until boredom indicates a change to different objects.

The words the children used for objects during Language Elicitation are used by the teacher.

Later, the teacher will substitute new and/or unfamiliar words for the objects as the children progress.

New and/or unfamiliar objects are gradually added to the practice situation as the children become proficient in manipulating the sentence pattern with familiar objects.

Structure the activity to get the children to speak without asking questions unless the conceptual pattern practice is so designed.

Provide opportunities for all the children to get a great deal of practice with the objects. The lessons are to be considered pupil-talking time with the teacher-modeling.

## Controlled Sentence Pattern Practice with Objects

The teacher controls the practice lessons using selected concept words and structures supplied by the children during language elicitation.

The teacher holds the object and the children are asked to repeat the sentence she models.

Example:

Teacher: It's a red apple.

Students: It's a red apple.

Teacher: It's a red top.

Students: It's a red top.

Teacher: It's a pink roller.

Students: It's a pink roller.

The teacher continues the lesson with the other objects.

The teacher gives each child an object and hand signals the child to construct his own sentence with the object by saying:

It's a \_\_\_\_\_?

The child completes the sentence with his object.

The teacher continues the lesson omitting the pattern cue.

It's a \_\_\_\_\_?, substituting the hand signal response for the verbal pattern cue.

The purpose of the lesson is to help the child know what is expected of him in the language experiences using the objects and sentence pattern modeled by the teacher.

## Independent Communication with Object

The child is given an object and asked to talk about it. He is expected to use as much of the language previously practiced as possible, but he is not expected to immediately produce the standard pattern. He is expected to demonstrate his knowledge of the objects, their name and color.

## Presentation of New Material with the Same Object

New material is introduced in the controlled sentence pattern. The purpose is to expose the children to wider range, variation and adaptability of language in the functions of school. An example follows:

### Sentence Expansion

- A. Teacher: It's a top.  
St: " " " .  
Teacher: It's red.  
St: " " .  
Teacher: It's a red top.  
St: " " " " .  
Teacher: It's a spinning top.  
St: " " " " " .  
Teacher: It's a red spinning top.  
St: " " " " " " .
- B. Teacher: It's a top.  
St: " " " .  
Teacher: It's a top that you play with.  
St: (Repeat)

### Presentation of the Same Material with New Objects

The child is given one object from the shopping bag of primary culture objects, one commercially produced object, or an object the teacher thinks is unfamiliar to the children. The object must correspond in form, function, composition, color etc. For example, a collection of spinning tops, blocks or beads of various colors can be used. The teacher conducts the practice lesson by modeling the sentence pattern with the entire group responding. Then each child is asked to talk about his two objects. The child is encouraged with a nod of the head or a smile to use as much of the practiced language as possible. An example follows:

The teacher models, students repeat.

It's a top  
bead  
block

It's a wooden top.  
bead  
block

It's a red top.  
It's made of wood.  
It's a red wooden top.

It's a red bead.  
It's made of wood.  
It's a red wooden bead.

It's a red block.  
It's made of wood.  
It's a red wooden block.

When the teacher feels that the children are ready, expansion practice is added to the lessons.

Example:

It's a red top that's made of wood.  
" " " bead " " " "  
" " " block " " " "



Situation 2

I. Linguistic Concentration

It's + a + red + \_\_\_\_\_.  
                  blue + \_\_\_\_\_.  
That's + a + green + \_\_\_\_\_.  
                  etc.  
(Minimal practice exposure)

III. Cultural Concentration

Self-Community-Home-  
School Identification

II. Conceptual Concentration

Identifying objects by name  
and color.

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Pattern Practice

The teacher chooses an object, holds it up and says, "It's a red car." The activity continues in like manner one object at a time.

The teacher repeats the activity signalling all the children to repeat the model.

The teacher gives each child an object saying, "Here's a red top" etc.  
ball

The teacher asks each child to respond:

T: /to child, pointing to object/  
What's that?

S: top

T: Say, "It's a red top" (omit if final response is given)

S: It's a red top.

The teacher asks each child to drop his object into the bag. The teacher demonstrates the activity desired and models the sentence pattern.

T: Drop your red top in the bag.  
Say, "Here's the red top."

Without further specifications, continue actions. Hand signal the child to respond as he completes the action.

Situation 3

I. Linguistic Concentration

This + top + is + red  
car            blue  
cup            green  
etc.            etc.

III. Cultural Concentration

Same as Situation 2

II. Conceptual Concentration

Naming, Identifying Color

- 
1. Review practice Situation 2.
  2. The teacher will hold the object while she conducts the model practice. Students will repeat the model. The teacher proceeds to the next object.

T: This top is red.  
car  
box  
cup  
stick  
checker

T. This top is red.  
You play with it.

T: This car is red.  
You play with it.

T. This box is red.  
You play with it.

The teacher continues in like manner with the rest of the objects.

3. The children hold the objects and practice the pattern.
4. The children drop the objects in the bag saying:

Here's the top  
car  
box  
etc.

Situation 4

I. Linguistic Concentration

You + can + ride + in + it.

etc.

You + can + play + with + it.

You + can + ride + in + it.

You + can + play + with + it.

Here's + the + \_\_\_\_\_.

III. Cultural Concentration

Continued

II. Conceptual Concentration

Functional Usage

- 
1. Review Situations 2 and 3.
  2. The teacher holds the object and conducts the model practice with the additional patterns.

Model 1

(top) You can play with it.

(car) You can play with it.

(stick) " " " " "

(checker) " " " " "

Model 2

(top) You play with it.

(car) You play with it.

(stick) " " " "

(checker) " " " "

(car) You can ride in it.

(box) You can put things in it.

(cup) You can put milk in it.

3. The children drop the objects in the bag saying:

Here's the top.  
car.  
etc.

## The Educational Role of Parents in the Ethnolinguistic Approach

Parents are co-initiators and continuing participants in the implementation of the approach.

### Design

(1) The Parents' Advisory Corps.

Formulation

Presentation and explanation  
of the approach

(2) Role Activity

Contributing culture-based materials and objects

Observing classes

Helping the teacher develop additional realistic  
practice situations

Advisement on the speech habits of the community

Providing information on Ethnic activities which  
may be utilized in the lessons.

(3) Home Reinforcement Programs

Monitoring the students practice sessions using  
tapes, dittoed copies of the lessons, and com-  
mercial T.V.

(4) Evaluation

Participating in continuing evaluation of the effective-  
ness of the Approach

### The Use of Instructional Aides

Instructional aides reinforce the linguistic and conceptual lessons through additional activities chosen to encourage the child to apply the language practiced. The teacher chooses the activities which best implement activities according to need.

Conducts informal talk groups with the emphasis on encouraging the children to talk.

Plays language games with the children.

Uses Language Master cards prepared by the teacher.

Uses Master tapes prepared by the teacher.

Tapes the children's stories with the objects.

Has the children put the objects in sequence and groups.

Plays the children tapes for a listening activity.

Notes and records for the teacher additional language items not previously used by the children.

Helps collect materials and objects from the community.