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The Teaching of Communications Skills in Relation to the Cultural Background of Mexican Migrants

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THE TEACHING OF COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS IN RELATION
TO THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF MEXICAN MIGRANTS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Irene Hlousek
May, 1969

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of Purpose

The overcoming of problems of communication in the lives of adult Mexican migrants necessitates the use of specific educational methods and materials. Methods and materials used in teaching children are not suitable for adults (65:67-76). Adult education literature designed for middle-class people has values which conflict with Mexican migrant values (39:55-56,61). Linguistic difficulties require special attention (57:206). Educational goals must be suitable for culturally deprived adults (11:3).

The nature of the Mexican-migrant culture requires innovative teaching to resolve communication problems. As Mexican migrants value their language and race, adult Mexican migrants strongly tend to retain their cultural characteristics (36:110). The lack of opportunity for educational experiences has caused formation of attitudes which differ from those of middle-class English-speaking people (51:3-8).

The purpose of this study was to objectively describe a method of teaching English communication skills to Spanish-speaking Mexican-migrant adults. A program of

experiences was developed to teach communication skills to Mexican-migrant adults. An attempt was made to overcome the difficulties these adults face in learning a second language and to bring about the changes in attitude necessary for ready adaptation to the culture in which they now find themselves. The important factor in teaching communication skills is the building of an adequate English vocabulary.

Research has apparently not provided studies in an adequate system of Mexican-migrant education. The jobs upon which Mexican migrants depend for a livelihood are becoming fewer. New skills and more education would seem necessary if adult Mexican migrants are to qualify for other employment (16:9).

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Mexican Migrant

The term "Mexican migrant" as used in this study refers to a person of Mexican descent who earns his livelihood through farm labor. The Mexican migrant's work is transient and he has more than one employer.

Language Experience

"Language experience" is a term used by Dr. R. V. Allan to describe a method of teaching in which oral and

written communication skills are taught from verbalizations of the student.

Culture

The meaning of culture as used in this study is that given by Dr. Nona Malbin, "Culture includes all of the things that people learn as a result of living in a particular social group and which are passed on to the new members of the group by learning" (38:1).

III. ASSUMPTIONS AND PROCEDURES

Assumptions to be Tested

Four assumptions are basic to the study:

1. Knowledge of the culture of the Mexican migrants will help the instructor to gain a greater understanding of the educational needs. The instructional program will be more relevant to the needs of the Mexican migrant, stimulating better attendance and a continued interest in learning on the part of the Mexican-migrant student.

2. The student will be better able to converse in English at the close of the school term than at the beginning. The teaching will be done in small-group and individual situations, making it possible for the student to discuss his educational and daily living problems with the instructor and with other students.

3. Familiar content will keep the student interested in learning. New language patterns will be less difficult to master. Educational material presented to the Mexican-migrant students will be derived from their home life, work, and experience.

4. Mexican-migrant students will show greater comprehension of the life situations presented in this period than when they first enrolled in class. The life situations presented are: reading and interpreting signs, completing applications for work, shopping for groceries, obtaining a driver's license, and becoming acquainted with community industries.

Procedures Used in the Study

Each student enrolled in class was asked to complete an application in order to enter adult education classes. The information on the application established whether or not the student was eligible for the class. This eligibility was based upon age, race, and means of earning a livelihood.

The teacher discussed the goals of the class with the students in small-group and individual situations utilizing the assistance of the Spanish-speaking aide. These goals became the objectives of the class.

The Diagnostic Test of Communications Skills devised by the instructor was used to rate each student before and

after the instructional period. Rating was done by the instructor, a fellow teacher, and the students' caseworkers from the Department of Public Assistance. (See Appendix.)

Other testing devices were used also. The students were asked to copy a sentence from the blackboard, write their names and addresses, and write at least one sentence about themselves. Using a tape recorder, each student conversed with the instructor, read signs, newspaper headlines, grocery ads, a label on a bottle of medicine, and words on the Dolch Basic Sight Word list. Testing was done before and after instruction.

During the term of four months, students were taught in small-group and individual situations with the assistance of a Spanish-speaking aide. Subject matter consisted of the teaching of single concepts, categorizing, sentence completion, pairing, for forming of opinions from a stated or pictured situation, description of the differences in objects, role-playing, discussion of past experiences, social graces, and news events.

Instructional materials were teacher-made charts, magazine pictures, a simple application form, common signs, guides on how to become a citizen, films, driver's license training manual, the calendar, current newspapers and magazines, dittoed practice papers, and books from the local library.

At the end of the term, the results obtained through the tape recordings, writing, and the Diagnostic Test of Communication Skills were examined. The teacher developed future instructional recommendations on the basis of the teaching experience and test results.

IV. SUMMARY

This study focused on the teaching of communication skills to Mexican migrant adults. The purpose of the study was to describe the instruction of Mexican migrants using the language experience approach as a teaching method.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researchers, educators, and lecturers have reported the following problems relevant to adult education:

1. Fitting a program to low-income adults and finding the proper curricular materials.
2. Bridging the cultural gap particularly concerning language.
3. Striving for educational goals suitable for culturally deprived people.
4. Overcoming cultural value conflicts.
5. Fitting the educational program to adult needs.
6. Finding a method other than lecture for instruction.
7. Keeping the student challenged.

The language experience approach, as explained by Dr. R. V. Allan, Sylvia Aston Warner, and Velma Clark, was cited as a possible solution to these problems.

I. RELATED STUDY

Jon C. Marshall and Patrick O. Conley brought out the major needs in adult basic education as centered around fitting the programs to low-income adults and finding appropriate curricular materials to be developed. Appropriate

education involves two facets: fitting the curriculum and teaching technique to the needs of the adults, and reorienting the adult basic education teacher toward working with adults. Major problems, as identified through a questionnaire, were: fitting educational needs to adult needs, finding suitable curriculum, fitting instruction to the background of the student, finding time to work in curriculum development, diagnosis and prescriptions of needs, helping the slow learner, diagnosing and prescribing effectively, and actively involving every learner in the learning process (39:55-56,61).

The cultural gap, which includes language, between the middle-class values and those of lower-class children has been pointed out by Abraham Shumsky. Since the child models his behavior on patterns observed in other members of the family, it is reasonable to believe that this fact is also true of adults (25:182). Linguistic difficulties are an integral part of the inability to function intellectually. The language of the lower class is concrete, lacking in differentiation and accuracy, while that of the middle class emphasizes preciseness, differentiation, and expression of variety of thought, according to Bernstein (57:206).

Educational goals of the adult basic education student are concrete and immediate. If one's life is restricted

to the present with no hope of future change, bound by immediate problems and needs with little hope of improvement, his outlook will be passive and goals immediate. In order to participate in higher learning, one must react and create rather than passively repeat and accept information. The focus should be on the quality of the teaching experience (57:217).

In relation to the problems of Mexican migrants and their education, Armando Rodriguez, Chief of Mexican American Affairs Unit, United States Office of Education, stated, "The constant thread that runs through the demands and requests of the Mexican American throughout the country is one of changing the entire approach to teaching bilingual-bicultural students in such a way that their language and their culture are bridges for better education not walls for poor education" (54:2). Value conflicts, caused by the cultural differences in home and school, create negative feelings resulting in school drop-outs (51:8).

Bloom, Davis, and Hess in Compensatory Education for Cultural Deprivation emphasized the following goals for education that are relevant to the problem:

1. There must be emphasis on the higher mental processes rather than the present stress on information learning.
2. The basic ideas, structure, and methods of inquiry of each subject field rather than on the minutiae of the subject matter should receive stress.
3. Since learning is continuous, 'learning to learn'

must receive more attention.

4. An individual's attitudes, interests, and personality facets which will promote further growth, enable him to adapt to change, to find meaning, fulfillment, and satisfaction in the things he does, must be incorporated in the instruction (11:3).

Methods successful in teaching the young cannot be transferred without change to teaching adults according to Jane C. Zahn. Adults are less easily changed than children. Interests, attitudes, concepts, and values become fixed with age. Adults may bring a negative attitude toward schooling. They will fear sarcasm, failure, frustration, insecurity, and lack confidence in ability to learn. Adults' personal past experience should be used to relate new or abstract language concepts. Using the adults' past experiences as curriculum will give them a sense of familiarity with the curriculum content leading to successful comprehension. Learning is faster when satisfaction and reward occur during the process (65:67-76).

Studies involving changing attitudes favor the discussion method. Verner and Dickinson indicated that changes in behavior and attitudes constitute learning. Gallup was quoted in the same source as saying, "The more that visual aids are integrated with oral teaching, the more likely they are to be effective". Also lectures should not be used with average or below average educationally experienced learners, with abstract material, to impart skills, for lasting

retention, or when learner participation is crucial to the achievement of objectives (18:85-95).

In order to hold the interest of the adult education student, material and method must be continually challenging. This statement is supported by this quotation from Robert E. Palmer and Dr. Coolie Verner:

It is not a simple matter to select appropriate techniques and in doing so the adult educator must consider more than efficiency of techniques or the nature of the subject matter, . . . he must have a perception of the nature of previous educational experiences so that the choice of techniques will be acceptable to the student and develop his security in the learning process . . . it must be continuously challenging (50:237).

II. LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

The language experience method was used in this study as a way to overcome the problems of adult education reported in the preceding section. According to Dr. R. V. Allen, it has the following advantages:

1. It does not require standard English as a basis for success in the beginning.
2. It does not require ability grouping or a graded system.
3. Teacher-made materials or others available can be used.
4. What is already known can be incorporated.
5. It allows for the effective use of aides.
6. The direct language teaching is done with student-produced material at his own level and proceeds at his own rate which helps avoid frustration.
7. Highest frequency spelling words are learned at the same time.
8. Phonics is an integral part of each process.
9. Independence is developed (2:5-6).

The language experience method of teaching has been shown effective in overcoming cultural gaps among Maori children. Creative or organic teaching as described by Sylvia Aston Warner is a plank in a bridge from one culture to another, from the known to the unknown (8:12).

The use of language experience deals with the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language has a productive property in that experiences may be taken apart and put back together again in new ways. According to Allen, words in themselves have no inherent meaning but arouse meaningful responses based on the individual experiences of the learner (6:1,2). Spoken words are sound symbols for meanings in the mind while written words are visual symbols associated with the known sound symbols. Individual thoughts, ideas, and skills are implemented into the speaking, writing, reading sequence. "Reading is the developing of meaning from patterns of symbols which one recognizes and knows with meaning" (6:2).

The language experience approach to teach communication skills to adult Mexican migrants was used by Velma B. Clark, Instructor for Language Development, Merced County, California. Clark gave the following reasons for using this approach:

Oral language related to the student's interests and experiences always maintains a vocabulary and comprehension level commensurate with his ability; therefore, he

does not become frustrated and perplexed with trying to understand, because the vocabulary being used is familiar to him.

Because of the need for materials to meet the many ability levels of the students, the Language Experience Approach to Reading was used.

This approach to reading is an interrelated language arts program using all of the skills of communication. It develops awareness and a sensitivity, on the part of the student, first to his own environment; secondly, and perhaps of greater importance, his self-concept is enhanced because he experiences a greater degree of success (14:1).

There seems to be a lack of research in the use of the language experience approach in teaching adults. According to comments made by Dr. R. V. Allen in correspondence, no adaptations for adults have been made of the Language Experiences in Reading text (Allen:Hlousek, 10/14/68).

III. SUMMARY

The review of literature in this chapter has pointed out some of the problems found in adult education. The language experience approach was considered as one possible solution to problems inherent in the teaching of communication skills to adults.

The following chapter describes the instruction of adult Mexican migrants using the language experience approach.

CHAPTER III

TESTING AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

The general objectives for the instructional program are:

1. To enable the student better to cope with the demands of everyday living through the improvement of communication skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
2. To build self-confidence and raise self-expectations, helping students to set up broader and more difficult goals based on powers of reasoning and judgment.
3. To assist the student in developing the ability to learn by himself.
4. To develop a sense of security, the courage to meet the challenge of a new experience, growth of self-esteem, and the sense of belonging to society.
5. To help the student achieve a higher competency in work through the better understanding and speaking of English.

These objectives served as a guide in the instruction of adult Mexican migrants.

I. PRELIMINARY WORK

Student and Aide Description

The study was conducted with fifteen enrollees in

the adult basic education classes held in Granger, Washington. Ages of the students ranged from twenty-nine to sixty-one years. The birthplace of the students was either Mexico or southern Texas. Formal education before enrolling in the adult basic education class might include school in Mexico, a few weeks' attendance at adult education classes the previous year, an interrupted period of school in Texas, or no school experience. The class was composed of both male and female students. Some students were citizens of the United States and some were not. (See Table I in the Appendix.)

The teacher aide was also a Mexican-migrant who had dropped out of high school during the tenth year. The aide was chosen for her ability to speak both English and Spanish. Because her education and background were similar to those of the students, the aide was able to serve as a liaison person between the instructor and the students.

Place and Time of Classes

Classes were conducted in an old machine shop and later in the Lions' Club building located in Granger, Washington. The locations both pleased the students because they were familiar with the locations, the shopping area was nearby, and the school to which they often provided transportation for their children was close.

Instruction began on November 5, 1968, and concluded March 14, 1969. The students attended classes six hours daily, five days each week. The hours, set by the students, were from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. each day with a half hour lunch period.

Preparation of Material and Equipment

The teacher and aide constructed much of the teaching material. This material included charts, dittoed practice papers, picture cards, label cards, manuscript letter cards, and dittoed application forms.

Classroom supplies consisted of writing paper, pencils, glue, scissors, tagboard, construction paper, and erasers.

The room was equipped with home-made blackboards, folding chairs, and three by twelve foot plywood boards placed on small tables to form long tables for group work. A tape recorder, films, movie projector, and screen were available.

The instructor collected various materials for classroom use. Small objects representing animals, fruit, transportation vehicles, furniture, and household articles were gathered over a six month period. Old catalogs and magazines were obtained as a source of pictures. Cartons and cans of many kinds of food and store products were used

in the conducting of an imitation store. Current newspapers were brought to class.

Books were gathered. The State Highway Patrol Office provided driver's training manuals. The United States Government Printing Office supplied texts and work-books necessary for citizenship study. The local library furnished reading books.

II. TESTING

Writing

As an assessment of writing skill and a way to determine what instruction was needed, a writing test was given. A sentence, "I live in Granger, Washington, in the United States of America," was placed on the blackboard in both manuscript and cursive writing. Each student was given a pencil and paper and asked to copy the sentence in both forms. The students were then asked to write their names and addresses, and at least one sentence about anything they wished. The ability to form letters helped in determining penmanship to be taught.

The completion by the student of an application form to enter class and conversation with him helped the instructor to ascertain how well the student spoke English and what he hoped to learn in the class.

Tape Recordings

On the second day of instruction, and the following days until the project was completed, tape recordings were made of the speech of Mexican migrants in order to form a basis for the evaluation of their progress. Students were taken individually into an adjoining room. The student was asked to make the following responses in English: to give his name, to answer a question which would require forming a sentence in English, to read from the "Basic Word List" by Dolch, to read newspaper headlines, to read grocery ads, to read three common signs, to listen to a story of approximately eight sentences placed at grade level 1.5 by the Weekly Reader Association and to answer four questions dealing with details of the story. Defective pronunciations were detected by listening to the reading of the Dolch "Basic Word List" on the tape recorder. Errors in pronunciation were checked again in the middle of the term and at the end to ascertain the degree of improvement by each student. Cooperation was good. The students enjoyed hearing their voices played back to them.

Diagnostic Test

After the first week, during which the instructor came to know the students, the Diagnostic Test of Communications Skills was completed for each student in the class. (See Appendix.) The writer, assisted by another instructor

who also worked in the room, each marked the test. During the first month, the writer had several contacts with the students' caseworkers from the Office of Public Assistance. These caseworkers consented to scoring the students they knew.

III. INSTRUCTION

Objectives of Language Experience

According to Dr. R. V. Allan, the language experience approach to learning involves these sequential steps:

1. The ability to tell something on a personal basis.
2. The ability to interact with what other people say or write.
3. The ability to hear what others have to say and relate it to one's own experience.
4. The ability to organize one's thinking so that it can be shared orally or through dictation.
5. The ability to choose an important part for someone else to write and read.
6. The ability to conceptualize reading as speech that has been written.
7. The ability to recognize that our language contains many common words and patterns of expression.
8. The ability to expand one's vocabulary through listening and speaking followed by writing and reading.
9. The ability to write one's own ideas and present them in a form for others to read.
10. The ability to read books for information, recreation, and improvement of reading skills.
11. The ability to profit from listening and reading well written materials.
12. The ability to recognize and use many resources in expanding vocabulary.
13. The ability to improve oral and written expression and sharing experiences.
14. The ability to read symbols in their total environment such as the clock and calendar.

15. The ability to find the correct pronunciation and meaning of words and to spell the words in writing activities (6:33-35).

For the purpose of teaching adult Mexican migrants, these sequential steps were incorporated into these student objectives:

1. Compose a story of one or more sentences concerning a subject of interest to oneself and the group.
2. Enlarge both spoken and written English vocabulary through listening to other students and writing their own stories.
3. Learn how to print all the alphabet and later practice cursive writing.
4. Learn to spell words arising from stories composed.
5. Recognize words used previously in a new situation.
6. Associate sounds of letters with their particular form.
7. Develop comprehension of spoken and written English to understand other people and to express oneself clearly.
8. Experience satisfaction with themselves and what they are doing.
9. Experience freedom of expression which allows for individual attributes to be fostered.

10. Become aware of the rules of courtesy governing any conversation: strive to speak so they can be understood, be courteous by tone of voice and not interrupting, listen carefully to what others are saying, be cognizant of everyone's need to participate.

11. Broaden reading interests.

12. Develop study habits.

Class Organization

In order to facilitate teaching, the fifteen students were divided into two groups. The writer worked with one group of students while the aide was with the other group. After a thirty-five minute period, the writer and the aide exchanged places. The students were divided according to performance as determined by testing. The aide assisted by giving Spanish interpretation and supervising practice of previously taught skills, while the writer initiated lessons.

The students were seated around a U-shaped table, with the writer seated on the inside. This arrangement promoted interchange with the students during conversation, writing, and other instruction.

Use of Language Experiences

The class period was composed of discussion and writing. The subjects for discussion were initiated either by the students or by the writer. Some of the topics were:

work the Mexican migrants did or did not like to do, the types of cars the students owned or would like to own, their families, the students' opinions of subjects seen on television or read to them from the newspaper. Discussion was kept informal and was conducted so that students might feel free to express themselves. In some cases, topics were deliberately chosen by the writer to stimulate emotional responses. For example, topics were selected with a view to promoting the better use of money, to emphasize the necessity of children receiving an advanced education, and to direct Mexican migrants' thoughts toward improving their health or their status in life.

As each student made a statement, the expression was written by the writer in manuscript printing using a felt-tip pen and wide-line paper. Students were allowed to express themselves in either Spanish or English. If the student spoke in Spanish, an interpretation was given by the aide or by another student. The student's thought was written in English and each word pointed out to him as it was written. The student's thought was repeated in English several times by him, and the paper on which it was written was left before him. In order to avoid confusion, only one expression was recorded each class period until, with increased ability to understand and speak English, the student could remember several statements. The statement may

or may not have been a complete sentence; but it was written just as the student made the statement so that the memory of the words would be easier. After the student had demonstrated several times that he could make the statement in English, he was given paper and pencil with which to copy the statement several times.

In the afternoon the groups were again formed as in the morning period and the students were given more practice in reading the printed statements they had made in the morning. After each student had read his printed statement, the statements were cut into separate words and placed in the center of the table. Each student found the words he had used and placed them in the same order as the original statement. If a word was not recognized, it was discarded. The known words were kept by the student in his folder for later reference in writing stories. Each student's story was dittoed by the instructor. The stories were made into a class book and a copy given to each student. The books were read at home and in class for additional practice. In this way the students learned their own vocabulary and the vocabulary of other students.

Further practice was given by displaying words which the students had known. Manuscript alphabet letters were mounted on the walls of the room. Each word was printed by the instructor on four by six cards and placed under the

letter of the alphabet with which the word began. Students used the words displayed for reference in spelling and recognition when writing their own stories later in the term.

As the students showed an ability to speak, read, and write the statements they had spoken, the written expressions selected by the instructor from the students' comments during discussion were increased. The statements or stories, as they were called, grew to five expressions in length.

If the student had mastered enough English vocabulary, he was encouraged to write his own thoughts. The words in the students' folders and the word cards under the alphabet letters on the wall were used as a reference for spelling. Initially, improper grammar was accepted by the instructor in order to build the students' self-confidence in verbal expression. Sentence construction, punctuation, and use of words were not criticized. Students asked for help or learned sentence construction from other sources such as library books or listening to English spoken by the instructor and aide.

A list of misspelled words from the students' stories was kept for later practice. Only three words were taken from a lesson at the beginning of the term. The number was increased as the students showed an ability to remember correct spelling. Practice was given in speaking and writing the words.

In order to increase the students' knowledge of phonics, attention was called to words beginning with the same sound. Charts of pictures beginning with single consonants had been made. The charts were used for practice in forming a particular sound. Appropriate pictures and articles from the object box were selected for each beginning sound.

Rhyming words were taught as an aid in hearing sounds. A chart of pictured articles with the same ending sounds and dittoed practice sheets of rhyming words were used to provide practice in the hearing of ending sounds.

Manuscript printing was practiced in conjunction with the writing of stories. Cursive writing was introduced six weeks after the term began. Letters of similar shape such as "a" and "o" were introduced together. Practice of letter formation in the air before writing the letter on paper familiarized the student with the proper muscular movement.

Library books were kept on the table as the students' recognition of English words increased. Trips were taken to the local and regional libraries to acquaint students with the services available from these sources. Although the books which the students read were of first and second grade level, the students' interest in them did not seem to lessen.

Correlated Activities

The sequential steps of the language experience approach entail the use of many resources to increase vocabulary, to improve oral and written expression, to insure correct pronunciation, and to improve comprehension of word meanings. Several activities were provided to help in achieving these aims.

Instruction in correct English pronunciation was given through auditory and visual means. Mispronounced words were chosen from the students' vocabularies. The correct pronunciations of these words were given by the writer slowly and distinctly in order that each sound might be heard clearly. The students repeated the correct pronunciation in unison and individually. The formation of the lips and the placement of the tongue and teeth were demonstrated. In difficult cases a mirror was used to make the movements clear. The word being studied was then used in a sentence and the sentence repeated individually and in unison. Writing the word on the blackboard helped the student to relate letters with sounds. The tape recorder was used to enable students to hear the sounds as they had produced them.

Single concepts were taught in all areas. During each lesson attention was focused on one learning problem. For example, during a phonics lesson only the sound of the

particular letter was taught or during the writing of a story only the expression of thought was emphasized. The purpose of teaching single concepts was to avoid confusing the students.

Pictures and objects were placed in categories such as clothes, foods, animals, plants, and machines. The English word for each picture or object was spoken and written by the teacher. Label cards were placed on the picture or object to aid in its identification.

STUDENTS
FIND
PICTURES
IN
MAGAZINES



Sentence completion exercises were used to build vocabulary. Partial sentences were placed on the blackboard for the student to complete. The completion required a small

number of words but a great variety would fit. Some of the partial sentences used were: "at the beach I saw, in the woods was a, I rode in a."

Pictures cut from magazines and objects were used for pairing or association exercises. Pictured articles or objects were placed together which are commonly associated. Some of these associations were a hamburger with catsup, a battery with a car, and a toothbrush with teeth. Dittoed practice papers were given to the students on which they drew lines connecting associated articles.

Students were encouraged to give their opinions of a stated or pictured situation. A situation was chosen for which several solutions were possible. Leading questions were asked to stimulate thinking. Description of the differences in objects added words of size, color, and texture to the students' vocabularies. Similar pictures or objects were used to show variations. Students also described each other.

Role-playing was used to make situations real to the students. The proper use of courteous words, introducing people to each other, and the performance of oral directions utilized role-playing.

The discussion of past experiences often took place during story writing. Relating well-known experiences was used to build the students' self-confidence.

News events were discussed each day. The instructor brought a newspaper and headlines were read and discussed. The students also brought newspapers as their interest grew. Topics of discussion were often provided by television news broadcasts.

Stories and poems were read by the instructor to the students. Events of the stories were retold by the students. The story sequence was written on the blackboard for the students to copy. Questions were asked about story details to stimulate student response in English.

Field trips were taken to community industries to increase the Mexican migrants' knowledge of the community and their awareness of job opportunities. Places chosen to visit were the U and I Sugar factory, a bakery, a dairy, a newspaper office, a local cement blockmaking factory, and the telephone company. Vocabulary was taught before the trips were taken and reviewed when the students returned. In most cases thank-you letters were written by the students.

STUDENTS
VISIT
THE
BAKERY



Life Situations

Because of the Mexican migrants' foreign background, they often experience difficulty in solving some of the problems they meet while living in the United States. The solutions to these problems often are found as the individual progresses in his knowledge of English. The students expressed the desire to learn how to solve these problems.

The reading and interpreting of signs found in public places was intended to aid the students. Replicas of commonly encountered signs were mounted on the walls. The uses of the signs were explained. Repetition was provided by the students' finding a particular sign to fit a given situation.

Shopping for groceries provided an opportunity to learn brand names, sizes, and weights. A make-believe store of empty cartons and cans was set up in the classroom. Each student was given a list of three items to find. The students brought their articles and lists to the writer or aide for verification. Discussion concerned the advantages of certain items and how to more effectively spend the grocery allowance.

SHOPPING
FOR
GROCERIES



Students were taught how to complete a simple application form which would aid them in school enrollment, employment and medical applications. Words found on the form were printed on cards which students learned to recognize at sight.

Driver Education was taught a half-hour each school day for those students seeking a driver's license. The Washington State Driver's Manual, provided by the State Highway Patrol, was used as a text. Spanish was used in explaining the text. Driving rules, signals, signs, and terms were given in English.

Films pertaining to life situations and resource speakers were also utilized. Interpretation was given in Spanish during the presentation to assure understanding by the students. Discussions concerning the concepts taught followed each film or lecture. Films shown included: how to prevent injuries while working, safe driving, the prevention of fire, the wise use of money, child-training, and the application of artificial respiration. Lectures were given by people from the Office of Public Assistance, Employment Security, the police department, the highway patrol, and the Department of Social Security.

Final Testing

Due to the students' pending field work and the end of the financial appropriation, the classes were terminated on March 14, 1969. During the last week of February and the first week of March, the tests given at the beginning of the term were repeated.

IV. SUMMARY

The use of the language experience approach in a class of Mexican-migrant students was described. The objectives of the instruction and administration of testing devices to measure degree of achievement were explained. An examination of the results attained by teaching language experiences as shown by the tests will be given in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM RESULTS

At the conclusion of the teaching term comparisons were made of the students' performances in terms of the objectives. Observations of students in class, the students' oral and written responses, and tests were used.

I. EXAMINATION OF OBJECTIVES

The General Objectives

That the objective of meeting the demands of everyday living through improved communication skills was accomplished is shown by the tests which indicated that each student was better able to express himself in English at the end of the term. (See Table III, Appendix). The written stories and class discussions showed improvement in each student's communication.

The building of self-confidence and the changing of self-expectations so that students would be able to set up broader and more difficult goals was the second objective. Expressions of desire to return to school would seem to indicate that the students' confidence in their ability to learn had grown. Self-expectations rose as students were able to handle communication problems better than they were at the beginning of the term.

The students were to receive assistance in learning to learn by themselves. The growth in vocabulary, as evidenced by written stories and the Dolch Basic Sight Word test, and the increased interest in library and newspaper reading indicate that students could continue to read and learn by themselves.

To develop a sense of security, the courage to meet the challenge of a new experience, growth of self-esteem, and the sense of belonging to society was another objective. Formal meetings presided over by class officers in addition to the regular class discussions gave students opportunities to express their thoughts and beliefs in an atmosphere of respectful attention. How well this assurance carried over to the community is not known.

To help the student achieve a higher competency in work through the better understanding and speaking of English was another objective. The actual degree of competency in work to which the students had attained was not obtained. None of the students had advanced to the point of being able to change from field work to other employment.

Objectives of Language Experience

Students were to compose stories concerning a subject of interest to themselves and the group. The quality of the stories organized and written by the students indicated

success. The number of known words increased, more ease of expression was displayed, and the instances of voluntary writing increased. At the close of the term five students still needed help in placing simple thoughts on paper while ten students had advanced to the point of writing stories several sentences in length.

Students were to enlarge both spoken and written English vocabulary. At the end of the term only one person remained who could not enter freely into discussion conducted in English. Students did not use correct English in many instances but their statements were understandable.

Students were to learn how to print all the alphabet and practice cursive writing. That all the students could print well and write legibly at the end of the term was demonstrated by the results of the writing test and daily class work.

Learning to spell words arising from the stories was another objective. Spelling by students showed considerable improvement. A list of words was dictated to the students each week.

Students were to recognize learned words in a new situation. Words in new reading situations were easily recognized by the students. Charts, dittoed stories, library books, and the newspaper provided practice in this skill.

The students were to develop their comprehension of spoken and written English to understand other people and to express themselves clearly. The general comprehension of English was limited to the primary level. Students became aware of errors in English usage by themselves and classmates as their ability to speak English increased. Much improvement was still needed at the end of the term.

Students were to associate sounds of letters with their particular form. Most of the students could recognize single consonant sounds and write the letter when the sound was heard.

The objective of the students' expressing satisfaction with themselves and what they were doing was achieved. The students' written and spoken attitude toward learning reflected much interest.

The objectives of freedom of expression and the observing of the rules of courtesy were attained through the class discussions. All the students took an active part. The students were polite with each other and the writer.

Students were to broaden their interest in reading. All students checked out library books. Some students indicated their children were assisting them in reading at home.

That study habits improved as the students progressed was shown by their desire to take books home and their

efficient use of time during the school hours.

The growing ability of students to understand and cope with life situations was evaluated as each student completed his class assignments. At the end of the term, six people needed help in completing particular parts of the application form while nine people could complete the form without assistance.

II. TEST RESULTS

Writing

A comparison was made of the student-writing assignment completed on the first day of school with that completed during the last week of school. Nine students showed marked improvement in letter formation, composition of sentences, and punctuation. The other six students showed some improvement in general but especially in sentence composition. At the end of the term all students could correctly write their names and addresses.

Tape Recordings

The tape recorder test began with a question which the student was asked to answer from his personal knowledge. At the beginning of the term, ten of the students answered only the specific questions asked, while five students expanded on the question by volunteering relevant information.

At the end of the term the number of students volunteering extra information had increased to six. Improvement of spoken English was not evident from the results of the tape recorder test.

The reading of common signs was completed by eight people at the first taping. There was no increase in the number of people who could read the three common signs at the end of the term.

In reading newspaper headlines, seven people could read the words indicated at the first taping. In the last test, eleven people could read the indicated words.

At the opening of the term, six students could read the grocery ads indicated while eleven students could read the indicated ads at the close of the term.

The number of words recognized from the Dolch list of Basic Sight Words showed an increase span ranging from three to sixty-eight words. The average student was able to recognize twenty more words at the end of the term than at the beginning. Three people made a gain of more than fifty-seven words.

The notation of speech errors was made by the writer in conjunction with the recognition of the Dolch Basic Word List. Improvement in pronunciation was minimal.

In responding to a comprehension test which was read to the students, six students could not answer any questions

at the beginning of the term. Two students were unable to answer any questions at the end of the term. The greatest increase in questions answered was five while the average increase was one.

Diagnostic Test

Irregularities in scoring the students on this test should be considered when perusing the scores. The caseworkers from the Office of Public Assistance were not available to mark the tests for two students. In the scoring of three students, the caseworker was changed during the term so that their scores were not considered valid.

There were five areas in the test. Each area had a rating scale of 0 to 10 points. (See Appendix). In order to determine the rate of progress, scores in each area were totaled on test one--given at the beginning of the term--and test two--given at the end of the term for each student. This procedure was repeated for tests scored by the instructor, the fellow-instructor, and the caseworkers. The average gain was then found in each area. The results showed the average gain from test one to test two in all areas to be 8.28 points. The average gain in attitude was 6.37, speech 12.71, reading 6.84, conversation 8.62, writing 6.80, and on the total test, 36.56. These scores indicated that appreciable gain had been made, especially in speech and conversation areas.

III. SUMMARY

Comments have been made upon the success in reaching stated objectives, comparison of tape recordings and writing skills, and scores on the diagnostic tests. The significance of these results is discussed in the last chapter.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

A Review of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe a method of teaching English communication skills to Spanish-speaking Mexican-migrant adults. The language experience approach was used.

Examinations of Assumptions

One assumption made was: that knowledge of the Mexican-migrant culture would lead to the creation of a rapport which would result in better attendance and a continued interest in learning. This assumption was supported by the good attendance during the period in question (see Table II, Appendix), by statements of the students indicating a desire to return to school for the coming term, and by the spontaneous use of the library and newspaper facilities on the part of the students.

Another assumption tested was: Mexican-migrant students would be able to converse in English better at the close of the school term than at the beginning. This assumption was justified by the increasing length and quality of class discussions, by the variety of problems brought to

the instructor, and by the favorable results of the diagnostic test, all English-oriented.

The third assumption was: familiar and single-concept subject content would keep the student interested in learning and that the new language patterns would then be less difficult to master. This was at least partially confirmed by the fact that students found the writing of stories enjoyable. That language patterns arising from the students' experiences were less difficult to master was demonstrated by their increased ability to organize and express their thoughts in English both orally and in writing.

The last assumption was: the Mexican-migrant student would show greater comprehension of the life situations presented, at the end of the term than when he enrolled in class. This assumption was supported by the favorable results of the diagnostic test (see Table III, Appendix), observation and classroom evaluations.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Adequacy of the Language Experience Approach

The use of the language experience method of teaching Mexican migrants stimulated improvement in the areas tested, especially in English conversation and speech. This program aided the Mexican-migrant student to begin to bridge the cultural gap and introduced new concepts in a way that

was acceptable to him. That the program met with the approval of the students was evidenced by their good attendance and expressed desires to return to school.

Recommendations

Better health care should be provided for the students is a recommendation arising from students' comments in this study. Vision and hearing tests should be given at the beginning of a term. A means of financing physical examinations, glasses, and hearing aids needs to be found. The high incidence of visits to the hospital and doctors' offices indicates a need for more training in the purchase and cooking of food.

Specially trained teachers should be provided. Instructors should receive training in the areas of adult education, Mexican culture, and the teaching of Mexican migrants. Spanish should be spoken by the instructor or at least an understanding should be acquired to eliminate errors between the aide, the instructor, and the students.

That a counselor be provided is also recommended. Each school should be provided with a counselor to help the student comprehend community-centered problems. Time does not permit the instructor to counsel the students with problems arising in the home, from legal difficulties, or from the school conflicts of his children.

An adequate testing program should be devised for use in Mexican-migrant education. The diagnostic test used in this study is not adequate. It is of value to the instructor in that it shows general trends within a group and indicates progress or regression on the part of an individual student over a period of time; however, the test is based strongly upon human relationship factors and requires the making of frequent subjective judgments on the part of the examiner when scoring the students. It cannot indicate improvement or shortcomings to a Mexican-migrant student in terms which he can understand. There is an obvious need for a satisfactory testing program in the area of Mexican migrant education.

Some method of using a tape recorder as a test instrument should be devised. The improvement to be inferred from the analysis of the recordings was minimal while the other data used show a gain.

That a study be made of the psychological barriers to adult learning is also recommended. Such a study might reveal ways of overcoming difficulties in acquiring knowledge and adjusting to study. The ill effects stemming from negative attitudes of the family of the Mexican migrant toward his school work might be offset if the positive results of his efforts were quicker in coming. The possible fear of change might be curtailed if the students knew the

consequence of change and adaptation to new employment.

Classes should be held in a building which has adequate heat, light, and freedom from interruption. The structures used in this study had none of these features.

Provisions should be made for the students to continue their study. An evaluation of the language experience approach requires a longer period of time than four months if it is to be valid.

A comparison study of the language experience approach with other methods should be conducted. Such a study might indicate the value of this approach with relationship to that of other methods.

According to Jerome S. Bruner in Toward a Theory of Instruction, evaluation of a curriculum must contribute to the theory of instruction in that it centers on "the problem of assisting the development of human beings so that they can use their potential powers to achieve a good life and make an effective contribution to their society" (12:167). This study is an attempt to reach that goal.

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APPENDIX

TABLE I
STUDENT DESCRIPTION

Name	Age	Birthplace	No. of Children	Earned Income	Grade Comp.	Length of Residence in Granger, Wash.
Casas, Julian	59	Mexico	5	\$1300	0	10 yrs.
Elizondo, Jose	37	Texas	9	4000	3-Tex.	9 mos.
Flores, Armando	45	Mexico	11	4500	0	17 yrs.
Gomez, Amador	38	Texas	0	2069.70	1-Tex.	9 yrs.
Gomez, Isabel	46	Texas	7	4100	3-Tex.	4 yrs.
Hinojosa, Florence	45	Texas	10	4800	4-Tex.	22 yrs.
Hinojosa, Horracion	51	Mexico	10	4800	3-Mex.	22 yrs.
LeGarde, Emma	41	Wash. (Indian)	3	2000	0	41 yrs.
Lopez, Ernesto	29	Mexico	4	2500	6-Mex.	6 yrs.
Medina, Santos	32	Mexico	6	2800	0	9 yrs.
Polina, Jose	38	Mexico	7	1800	3-Mex.	9 mos.
Salazar, Rafael	61	Mexico	1	1275	0	22 yrs.
Sanchez, Jose	39	Mexico	6	3000	3-Mex.	12 yrs.
Sarmiento, Pablo	40	Texas	6	700	4-Tex.	5 yrs.
Vargas, Jesus	46	Mexico	8	2000	7-Mex.	9 yrs.

TABLE II

ATTENDANCE RECORD OF MEXICAN MIGRANT STUDENTS
NOVEMBER 5, 1968 TO MARCH 14, 1969

Student	Date Enrolled	Date Withdrew	Days Present	Days Absent	Comment
Casas, Julian	Nov. 5	Feb. 19	58	12	Could no longer buy gasoline
Elizondo, Jose	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	81	5	
Flores, Armando	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	71	15	
Gomez, Amador	Dec. 4	Feb. 24	39	13	Could no longer buy gasoline
Gomez, Isabel	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	62	24	Ill
Hinojosa, Florence	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	65	21	Dental work
Hinojosa, Horracio	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	38	5	Attended $\frac{1}{2}$ days
LeGarde, Emma	Nov. 20	Mar. 14	73	2	
Lopez, Ernesto	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	Attended $\frac{1}{2}$ days
Medina, Santos	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	26	14	Attended $\frac{1}{2}$ days
Polina, Jose	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	56	30	Auto accident
Salazar, Rafael	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	64	22	Trip to Texas
Sanchez, Jose	Nov. 20	Mar. 14	68	7	
Sarmiento, Pablo	Nov. 22	Mar. 14	65	16	
Vargas, Jesus	Nov. 5	Mar. 14	66 $\frac{1}{2}$	19 $\frac{1}{2}$	

NOTE: Only seven absences occurred prior to December 20, 1968, with the exclusion of Rafael Salazar in Texas twelve days. Absences from December 26 through January may be explained by unusually cold temperatures over a long period of time causing illness and transportation problems.

TABLE III

COMPILATION OF SCORES RECEIVED BY FIFTEEN ADULT EDUCATION
STUDENTS ON DIAGNOSTIC TEST OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Test Area	Test I Inst. Sc.*	Test II Sc.*	Test I Co-inst. Sc.	Test II Sc.	Test I Casewk. Sc.	Test II Sc.	Ave. Gain
Attitude	22.73	27.8	18	25.03	17.67	24.67	6.37
Speech	13	23.87	16.5	26.88	13.89	30.78	12.71
Reading	18.53	24.2	12.75	23.38	9.23	13.44	6.84
Conversation	9.6	22.67	12	17.25	15.67	23.22	8.62
Writing	9.66	17.47	10.63	19.13	9.23	13.33	6.80
Total	73.4	106.53	69.88	110.75	67.89	103.56	36.56

*This abbreviation is used for Instructor Scored.

NOTE: In each area the numbers circled on the Diagnostic Test of Communication Skills by the respective evaluator on the test were added for each individual. These numbers were then totaled for the fifteen participants and the average found to arrive at the figure shown.

The average gain was determined by subtracting the number shown under Test I from that under Test II, totaling the differences, and finding the average difference or gain.

DIAGNOSTIC TEST OF COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

In order to assist in the evaluation of teaching material presented to the student, you are requested to mark the following rating scale by circling the number of the point on the scale which you feel signifies his present degree of achievement. You are asked to judge him according to the average adult with whom you come in contact during the course of your occupation or position.

Attitude

The student is respectful and cooperative

0	5	10	15	20
hostile	easily irritated	temperate	polite pleasing	congenial

The student is self-confident and at ease.

0	5	10	15	20
nervous	shy, timid	average	reserved	complete confidence

Speech

The student's variety of words (English).

0	5	10	15	20
very few words	some variety	average	more words than usual	a large variation

The student's ability to pronounce and enunciate English.

0	5	10	15	20
none	some difficulty	average	few mis- takes	very good

The student's ability to form sentences while speaking.

0	5	10	15	20
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Reading

The student's interest in reading as demonstrated by observing displays, magazines, or newspapers.

0	'	'	'	5	'	'	'	10	'	'	'	15	'	'	'	20
none at				little				average				desires				eager
all												to read				

The student's ability to read an application form for area being examined.

0	'	'	'	5	'	'	'	10	'	'	'	15	'	'	'	20
none				a few				average				little				very able
				words								difficulty				

Conversation

The student understands and is able to carry out two and three step instructions.

0	'	'	'	5	'	'	'	10	'	'	'	15	'	'	'	20
not at				very				average				usually				very well
all				little												

The student has an answer for problem presented and defends it.

0	'	'	'	5	'	'	'	10	'	'	'	15	'	'	'	20
not at				seldom				average				usually				always
all																

Writing

The student's cursive writing is legible with correct formation of letters.

0	'	'	'	5	'	'	'	10	'	'	'	15	'	'	'	20
not at				poor				average				good				very good
all																

The student's spelling of words used by laymen.

0	'	'	'	5	'	'	'	10	'	'	'	15	'	'	'	20
very poor				poor				average				good				very good

NOTE: This test was marked by the instructor, a co-instructor, and a caseworker for each individual at the beginning of the term and again at the end of the term. Scores were then compared as shown in Table III.