

English as a Second Language for Native Canadians

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In many northern communities in Canada, children begin their schooling speaking mainly or only a Native language. In many of these communities, English or French is rarely used in community contexts and the school is sometimes one of the few places where one of Canada's official languages is spoken. The study reported here concerns an isolated northern Ontario community where a population speaking Swampy Cree is served by an English-medium school. The paper reports results from the administration of an oral English proficiency test to students in Grades 2, 4, and 6 in the Cree-speaking community and in a northern English-speaking community. The Cree-speaking students exhibit much lower English proficiency than a group of northern Ontario anglophone peers. Factors involved in this apparent failure in second-language learning are explored, and recommendations are made for improving this situation.

Dans de nombreuses communautés au nord du Canada les enfants parlent seulement ou surtout une langue autochtone lorsqu'ils vont pour la première fois à l'école. Dans la plupart de ces communautés, l'anglais ou le français ne sont que rarement utilisés et l'école est peut-être l'un des rares endroits où l'une des langues officielles du Canada se parle. L'étude dont on parle ici a pour sujet une communauté isolée du nord de l'Ontario où la population de langue cri est desservie par une école de langue anglaise. Les résultats rapportés dans l'étude proviennent d'un test anglais d'aptitude orale administré aux élèves de 2ème, 4ème, et 6ème années dans la communauté de langue cri et dans une communauté de langue anglaise du nord. Les étudiants cri montrent une aptitude beaucoup moindre en anglais que leurs pairs anglophones du nord de l'Ontario. On considère les facteurs qui contribuent à cet échec apparent dans l'apprentissage d'une seconde langue et on fait des recommandations qui visent à améliorer cette situation.

Academic discussions of Canadian Native² education often begin with a documentation of failure: relative to other Canadian students, Native students drop out of school more frequently and at earlier ages, they are more frequently in grades lower than appropriate for their ages, and they enrol in and complete high school less frequently (Canada, 1980; Dosman, 1972; Hawthorn, 1967; Sterling, 1975). The data used to describe this failure are very general and are gathered on national, provincial, or regional bases. Distinctions are not usually drawn, for example, among Native students schooled in urban settings, in areas close to urban settings, or in more remote areas. There is great diversity in the

characteristics of communities where Native people live across Canada, as there is great diversity in other communities not identified as Native; very few studies of Canadian Native education carefully describe any particular communities, or even kinds of communities. Most available descriptions of Native schools and documentation of results of Native schooling are so general that it is very difficult to identify significant factors contributing to failure. If problems in Native schools are to be identified, more nearly complete and precise descriptions of kinds of Native communities and kinds of schools and school programs must become available.

This paper reports on a case study which provides information about one Canadian Native school: a school operating in a northern, geographically isolated Cree community where students enter school speaking mainly or only Swampy Cree.³ The study describes the language education program offered in the school and evaluates the extent to which students are developing proficiency in the school's major medium of instruction, English.

In many northern communities in Canada, children enter school speaking a Native language.⁴ In Ontario, for example, most schools serving communities located north of the trans-Canada highway enrol students who speak either Cree or Ojibwa as a first language. Most students in Canada (and all in Ontario) who speak Native languages as first languages are served by schools where the medium of instruction is English; in evaluating carefully one Native school which is not a unique case, it may be possible to refine our generalizations about learning English in other similar communities.

This evaluation of a second language learning program was undertaken not because it is assumed that the success or failure of a second-language program in itself adequately explains general results of schooling. However, proficiency in the school's medium of instruction is assumed to be a variable contributing to schooling results, and it has not previously been extensively examined in Canadian discussions of Native education.

THE CREE COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL

The community, Fort Albany, is located in northeastern Ontario near the mouth of the Albany River where it flows into James Bay. Established as a Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading post in 1679 (and one focus of the French-English fur-trading company rivalry in the eighteenth century), it is now a community of about 700 people. As the northern terminus of railway transportation from southern Ontario is located at Moosonee,

approximately 160 kilometres south of Fort Albany, travel to and from the community is by airplane. Besides a limited number of government personnel, teachers, and nurses, not many English-speaking "outsiders" reside in or visit the community.

No industrial development is taking place on the Ontario side of James Bay. There are very few wage employment opportunities in Fort Albany, and most families subsist on government transfer payments. In addition, many people collect bush resources (geese and other waterfowl, some game, and berries) seasonally. A few residents are employed by the reserve Band⁵ administration, and others are employed in various service capacities (at a small regional hospital, two retail stores, or the school).

A school has operated at Fort Albany since 1902; that first school was established by the religious order of Grey Nuns and it subsequently became a large residential school serving Native children from a number of Ontario James Bay communities. In 1976, the school closed down its residential facilities and has served only local children since that time. Equipped to teach kindergarten through Grade 9, the school enrolled 146 children in 1981. Students wishing to continue their education at secondary school leave the community and attend school in one of two small cities south of Fort Albany. Teachers in the Fort Albany school are employees of the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the school's administration is also provided through that department. Parents appointed by the local Band administration sit on a school committee. Like many school committees set up on Indian reserves across Canada, this one has little actual power to make hiring, firing, or curriculum decisions, and does not concern itself with those kinds of issues. Mainly the committee functions as an opinion channel, so that administrators or teachers have some access to community opinion about school practices.

Teachers report that all Fort Albany children begin school speaking mainly or only Swampy Cree, and that they continue to speak Cree in interactions with peers in school throughout their school careers. Interviews conducted with community residents, teachers, parents, and students make it clear that Cree is spoken very widely in the community by persons of all ages. One can shop, attend religious functions, purchase airplane tickets, receive medical treatment, attend local government meetings, and engage in almost any community activity in Cree. What one cannot do in Fort Albany exclusively in Cree is go to school. While the school does offer some instruction through the medium of Cree (Cree literacy classes and religion classes) from kindergarten to Grade 9, the amount of time students spend in Cree-medium classes is insignificant in terms of their total school program. All other school subjects are taught in

English by non-Cree teachers who do not usually speak or understand much Cree. Students are exposed to a school curriculum which is minimally different from that of any southern Ontario English-medium school; reading in English is introduced in Grade 1, and students use commercially available texts used elsewhere in Ontario. Students receive no systematic teaching of English as a second language, and it can be assumed that they are expected to "pick up" English from contact with their educational materials and with English-speaking teachers.

Teachers express the opinion that beginners might have some difficulty with school because of insufficient knowledge of English, but teachers believe that by about Grade 3 or 4, students are "fully bilingual." Teachers state that problems with school work are not linguistic problems but are conceptual, cultural, motivational, health-related, personal, or even "special education" problems of some sort. It may be assumed that administrators of northern schools (not only in Ontario) share this opinion: bilingual (Native language and English) teacher-aides are usually only available for kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms in northern Native schools; training in second language teaching techniques is not required for teachers in northern Native schools; and little or no in-service training in second-language teaching techniques is provided for northern teachers. In a study which surveyed Native schools across northern Ontario, it became clear that almost no teachers there had had any training in second-language teaching techniques, and few felt such training was important professionally for them (Burnaby, Nichols and Toohey, 1980). These teachers clearly did not believe that the language of school instruction was a problem for their students.

This study attempts to assess the validity of this belief by asking whether northern Native students are developing high levels of English proficiency through the type of "English immersion" second-language program their schools offer. Research concerning Canadian French immersion programs, especially early total French immersion, has shown that students show high proficiency in their second language when tested after four, five and six years in school (cf. Swain and Lapkin, 1981, for a survey of research conducted over the last ten years in Ontario). Is English immersion in Fort Albany producing the same kinds of second-language learning results?

THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

An oral English proficiency test was designed and administered by the author to students in Grades 2, 4, and 6 in Fort Albany and to students in the same grades in another northern community, Moosonee. Moosonee is

different from Fort Albany in many ways and one difference concerns language: Most students attending school in Moosonee (many of whom are Cree in ethnicity) speak English as a first language and most community functions as well as business transactions occur in English.

In selecting another school and group of children to provide norms for the researcher-designed test, it was necessary to consider a number of factors. The selection of a *northern* community was made to ensure that the English proficiency of Fort Albany students was compared with the English proficiency of students who could, conceivably, be classmates if the Fort Albany students continued their education beyond Grade 9. Also, it was felt that it would be preferable to avoid making comparisons involving whatever dialectal differences exist between the non-urbanized north and the heavily urbanized south of Ontario. The study also was concerned with addressing the validity of the teachers' and the administrators' beliefs that the educational problems of northern Native children do not involve a linguistic disadvantage but exist because their culture does not value education, or because their textbooks do not reflect northern Native background knowledge, or for other similar reasons. Because of this, it was felt that a comparison with northern anglophones, some Native, would be useful.

The full report of this research describes in detail the design, administration, and scoring of the assessment instrument administered to students (Toohey, 1982). Because the students involved in this study are required to produce English at school primarily, the oral tasks presented to students were designed to focus on "school uses" of language. Tough (1977) provides a categorization of such uses based on ethnographic observation of children in British schools; she observes that school children are required to use language to describe things, to interpret events, to explain processes, to predict outcomes, and for harmonious interaction with teachers and peers. While it is obvious that this list of uses does not exhaust even the oral uses of language in classrooms and that the category labels are not completely distinct from each other, this list appeared to represent a plausible subset of school uses of language. On the basis of this categorization, a picture description task, a story retelling task, an explanation task, a prediction task, and a requesting task were designed and presented to students.

The oral interview between the researcher and each student took about 20 minutes, and the same materials and procedures were used with students in all three grades in both schools. The picture description task involved showing students a picture with a lot of action (portraying a boat and fishermen, topics familiar to the students) and asking them to tell the researcher, who could not see the picture, what was "going on" in the

picture. The story retelling task was presented after students had seen a filmstrip with an accompanying record; in an interview students were asked to tell the researcher what had happened in the story. For the explanation task, students were asked to explain how to play a game they knew well (in Fort Albany, all students explained one game; in Moosonee, students did not all know the same game and they explained a variety). The prediction task was presented exactly as described in Tough (1977, pp. 112–113): the student was shown cards with drawings of stick figures involved in action sequences and asked “Tell me what’s going to happen next.” The requesting task was presented in a way similar to that described by Bates (1976) in a study of Italian children: The student was introduced to a puppet said to be “in charge” of some articles and was told by the researcher to ask the puppet politely for a cookie, a pencil, and other items, then to ask permission to leave the room, to open a window, and so on. All of these tasks have been used previously in many studies designed to elicit child language (see, for example, Bates, 1976; Burt, Dulay, and Hernandez, 1975; Cummins, Swain, Nakajima, Handscombe and Green, 1981; Tough, 1977).

All but two students, students in Fort Albany whose interviews were terminated, appeared to enjoy the interview and all produced discourse in response to the eliciting procedures. The researcher had resided in both communities and attended the children’s classes before testing procedures began, and students were somewhat familiar with her. Especially on the first four tasks (picture description, story retelling, explanation, and prediction), it was clearly apparent that the Cree-speaking students’ responses were not extensive or fluent. Frequently their pronunciation showed Cree interference, sometimes to the point of non-intelligibility, and their syntax was rudimentary and often erroneous. However, some Cree students did not appear to have as much difficulty with the requesting task as with the others. With this task, there was little hesitation in some student responses and some produced conventional request forms with no phonological or syntactic errors.

The five oral tasks were presented to a total of 95 students in the two schools. The students’ performances were tape recorded and later rated independently by three adult native speakers of English. The rating criteria and their definition were adapted from a scheme developed by Cummins et al. (1981) for a Toronto study involving child oral interview data and are not unlike those developed by Politzer, Shohamy and Groarty (1981) for describing child oral interview data. Each task of each student was separately rated on detailed criteria including pronunciation, syntactic sophistication, richness of information, unity (coherence and cohesion), and interactional appropriateness.⁶ Rating definitions were

descriptive: With syntactic sophistication, for example, the lowest rating, zero, was defined as *restricted, uninflected nouns and verbs*, and the highest rating, 4, was defined as *elaborated syntax, few errors*. Each student's performance on each task was also assigned a *global task score*, which rated in general how well the student had accomplished the task of picture description, story retelling, and so on. Descriptors for the global task score were *poor, fair, good, very good, and excellent*. Interrater reliability was high both for the detailed criteria and for the global task scores (ranging between .87 and .97, $p < .001$).

The separate detailed and global ratings for each student for each task were given so as to investigate a number of questions. Tasks were rated separately to ascertain whether students' performances would vary according to the type of speech task in which they were engaged (might the students perform relatively better, for example, on the picture description task than on the explanation task?). The detailed criteria scores were assigned and analyzed to see if, within any one task, a student's performance might be rated high on some criteria and low on others (for example, high on pronunciation but low on richness of information). Also, might a student's performance be rated high on a global task score but low on some of the detailed criteria?

Reporting of the statistical results which examined these questions in detail can be found in Toohey (1982). In brief, analysis showed high positive correlation between the detailed criteria scores and the global scores for each task (r ranging from .75 to .97, $p < .001$). This correlation indicated that, for summary purposes, students' global scores on each task could be used. Furthermore, there was high positive intercorrelation of students' global scores across the five tasks (r ranging from .70 to .89, $p < .001$). It was therefore determined appropriate to treat the five separate tasks as homogenous items of a single test and to use the sum of the global scores as the measure to be further analyzed.

By a 2×3 factorial analysis of variance (school by grade), it was determined that there was a significant difference between performances in the two schools. The Fort Albany students in general performed less well than the Moosonee students (see Table 1). There was also a significant difference between grades which is reflected in a significant main effects in the analysis of variance.

Using the Scheffe F statistic for multiple comparisons, the grade means were compared to determine the source of the differences indicated by the significant main effects for *Grade*. It was found that the Grade 6 performance was superior to any other grade level but there was no significant difference between Grades 2 and 4 (see Table 2).

A note about the Grade 4 Fort Albany students is required. Teachers

TABLE 1
Anova Summary

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>Sums of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F-Value</i>
Schools	81.957	1	81.957	124.256*
Grade	13.657	2	6.828	10.352*
Schools by grade	1.594	2	0.797	1.208
Residual	58.702	89	0.660	

* $p < .01$.

TABLE 2
Multiple Comparisons: Scheffe

<i>Contrast</i>	<i>Calculate F</i>
Grade 2 vs. Grade 4	2.28*
Grade 2 vs. Grade 6	18.59†
Grade 4 vs. Grade 6	8.38‡

*no significant difference

† $p < .01$

‡ $p < .05$.

reported that this group of students had had, during the time they had been in school, an unusually great number of inexperienced teachers with a number of their teachers terminating their teaching in the middle of the school years. Teachers felt that the interruptions these students had experienced in their schooling could not help but effect student performances in a number of areas. While this particular group of students had had especially interrupted instruction from teachers who were professionally and sometimes personally unprepared, such a situation is not unusual for northern Native students over the course of their school careers. Teachers in northern Native schools terminate their employment before the end of school years more commonly than do teachers in other – for example, urban – school jurisdictions.

Finally, it should be noted that generally all of the mean scores for the Fort Albany population by grade are lower than the mean scores for the Moosonee population (see Table 3). The mean for the Fort Albany population in Grade 6 is lower than the mean for the Moosonee population in Grade 2. A studentized *t*-test was performed to compare these two means. This test was chosen as it is less conservative than the

TABLE 3
Means & Standard Deviations

	<i>Grade</i>			<i>School Means</i>
	2	4	6	
Fort Albany	1.86	1.95	2.48	2.08 (38)
	S = .6185 (12)	S = .4947 (15)	S = .4951 (11)	
Moosonee	3.39	4.06	4.54	4.53 (57)
	S = .6958 (21)	S = 1.1869 (19)	S = .9212 (17)	
Grade Means	2.83 (33)	3.13 (34)	3.73 (28)	3.20 (95)
				Grand Mean

NOTE: N is in parentheses.

Scheffe and provides more powerful analyses. The *t*-statistic (1.35) was not significant (.95 *t* 30 = 1.697). Even at this relaxed alpha level, there is no significant difference between the means. One can therefore argue that by Grade 6 the Fort Albany students have only just attained the oral English proficiency level of Moosonee Grade 2 students.

This assessment of English proficiency shows that Cree-speaking students do worse on a productive test of English proficiency than do English-speaking students. That might seem a trivial observation, except that it throws into doubt the opinion of many teachers and administrators involved in Native education who believe that, after about three years of English-medium schooling, student mastery of English suffices to make it subsequently non-problematic in their schooling. The fact that sixth grade Cree-speaking students exhibit the English proficiency of only Grade 2 anglophone students indicates serious problems. The Grade 6 curriculum, for example, assumes English proficiency far beyond the level these students have. In three or four years, some of these sixth grade Cree-speaking students will attend school outside their community with anglophone classmates. If the trend shown here continues, the Cree students' proficiency in the medium of instruction of the secondary school might well be very much lower than that of many of their classmates.

While research into Canadian French immersion programs has not been conducted in exactly the same way as the present research, very positive observations about second-language learning on the part of French immersion students are generally made. It is difficult to regard the present findings as similarly positive in the matter of the second-language learning of these northern Native students.

DISCUSSION

It is clear that, unlike French immersion students but like many other minority students who experience a home-school language switch in other parts of the world, these Native students do not perform well in the second language in which they are schooled. In a less systematic evaluation of the English skills of Native students in a number of schools across northern Ontario, Burnaby et al. (1980) made similar observations about poor second-language learning. The following discussion explores reasons for these Fort Albany results by documenting differences between French immersion programs and this case of northern Native education. As well, second-language learning in another Native North American community is discussed, and suggestions are made regarding improving the second-language learning of northern Native Canadian students.

Comparing generally unsuccessful minority second-language learning with generally successful French immersion learning has been quite common in second-language learning literature. Cohen and Swain (1976) discuss and account for the differential results noted between French immersion programs and what they term "submersion" programs (second-language programs for minority students) mainly in terms of the differences between the in-school operations of French immersion and submersion programs (that is, in terms of teacher and program characteristics). Cummins (1978) and Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) discuss the relative failure of second-language learning programs for minorities in contrast to French immersion programs, focusing in their discussion on the differential psycholinguistic development of students entering such programs. Elsewhere I have argued that, while a school-program focused explanation and/or a psycholinguistic explanation might be suitable for explaining second-language learning results in urban immigrant situations, such explanations are not necessarily very illuminating in themselves when examining northern Canadian Native situations like Fort Albany (Toohey, 1982). In such cases it appears necessary to look at other factors which show clear differences in the successful and the unsuccessful educational situations. Swain (1980) considers aspects of the social context of second-language learning programs, in addition to aspects of the structure and methodology of school programs, in discussing application of second-language immersion models for speakers of minority and vernacular languages. The following discussion also considers context in an attempt to explain why some second-language education programs appear so successful and some so unsuccessful.

Paulston exhorts researchers to consider outside-school contexts of language education (1975, 1977). She states:

It is very clear to me that unless we try in some way to account for the socio-historical, cultural and economic-political factors which *lead* to certain forms of bilingual education, we will never understand the consequences of that education. (1975, p. 5 [*italics added*])

Paulston observes that context is largely ignored or deemed irrelevant in many descriptions and/or evaluations of second-language teaching programs; she further points out that it is infrequent in second-language teaching discussions for particular programs to be regarded as *changes* initiated by persons acting within certain social, political, and economic contexts in response to specific problems or conditions. She advocates looking at language education programs not as stable *facts*, open to investigation a posteriori, but as symptoms of strains and changes between groups.

Paulston quite correctly shows a gap in the literature: Serious consideration of the effects of outside-school social, political, or economic factors has too seldom been a feature in describing and explaining why certain language programs are initiated and why they operate as they do. Too seldom have we looked at who benefits from such programs, who has initiated them, who supports them, and when, why, and how they continue to operate. It may well be, as Paulston suggests, that if we can account for the *initiation* of language education programs, if we view them as changes and not as facts, we may see better why they evidence differing results.

Canadian French immersion programs were initiated in Québec in the 1960s as a result of pressure exerted by largely middle-class anglophone parents who perceived that French-English bilingualism would benefit their children (Paulston, 1975). There is, of course, a large Canadian literature which describes Québec of the 1960s. While this literature reflects a wide range of ideological perspectives, probably all observers would agree that Québec of the 1960s was a place where political relationships between francophone and anglophone Québécois were strained and changing, and where it was becoming obvious that obtaining and keeping well-paid positions would increasingly require French-English bilingualism (Swain, 1978, 1980). Relatively economically privileged anglophones began to see that maintaining economic privilege would require second-language programs different from those previously offered by their schools.⁷ University academics were involved in monitoring student instruction in what was regarded as the French immersion *experiments*, in monitoring children's progress in both official languages, and particularly in monitoring children's progress in their first

language, usually English. Parents wielded a great deal of control over French immersion programs: They lobbied for their initiation; they were in close touch with the schools; and if children appeared to be experiencing difficulty they could remove their children from French immersion programs and put them back in the regular English program. In terms of an ideological context, French immersion students, predominantly anglophone, were seen to gain competence in an official, internationally regarded modern language, in addition to their competence in a similarly regarded first language.

What about northern Native education? When was policy for second-language immersion programs implemented? In the Fort Albany case, it appears that the policy for English as the almost exclusive medium of school instruction was enunciated in the early 1950s. The superintendent of education for the federal Indian Affairs Branch wrote in 1952 to the principal of the Fort Albany school stating that all instruction occurring in Cree at the school was to cease (Fort Albany Mission Papers). Community residents interviewed in 1981 stated that Cree was used fairly extensively in the school in the 1930s and 1940s; religious materials written in Cree were available, the content of the school curriculum was heavily religious, and many of the religious personnel teaching at the school knew Cree.

While there has not been any extensive historical examination of policy concerning the media of instruction in Canadian Native schools, and while many survey discussions suggest that Native schooling has always prohibited school use of Native languages, there is scattered and brief mention of Native language-medium classes in various parts of Canada at various times (Daniels, 1973; Scollen and Scollen, 1979; Tschanz, 1980). It is clear, however, that those schools which maintained use of Native languages into the 1940s or later were northern, remote, and isolated. Can changes in social relationships be seen which were reflected in changes in schooling policy and practices?

Generally, after the Second World War, the Canadian government became more directly involved in administering northern Native communities. Northern transportation had increased during the War years, and in the late 1940s and early 1950s welfare, policing, health care, hydro-electric, and other services were extended to northern communities. Usher (1971-72) and Brody (1975) see these services as contributing to the increasing entrenchment of colonialism in the north. Many writers have written of Native Canadian communities as colonies, noting that authority for decision making in a colony is located outside the community (Adams, 1969; Carstens, 1971; Fisher, 1976; Manuel and Posluns, 1974; Patterson, 1972; Urion, 1978). These writers see the concept of the "internal colony" as central in describing Native life in Canada.

It cannot be proven here that colonialism became more strongly a feature of life in Fort Albany in the post-War years, but some of the concomitants of increasing colonialism in other places obtained in northern Ontario at the same time. The services listed above were extended to northern Ontario communities, and centralization of decision making regarding those services also occurred. Looking at decision making regarding school services also points to increasing colonialism.

In the Fort Albany case, before the early 1950s, Roman Catholic religious personnel had built, staffed, and provided major financial support to the residential school located there, with infrequent federal government inspection and minimal government financial involvement (Fort Albany Mission Papers). The religious personnel who made decisions concerning the school were responsible to agencies outside the community, but they customarily resided in Fort Albany for long periods of time, and they had relationships with the Native people they served on a number of different levels besides schooling matters. Furthermore, many Native residents of Fort Albany worked in the residential school in various service capacities, and they had access to some, albeit limited, knowledge about the day-to-day operation of the school. In the early 1950s there were efforts on the part of the federal government to inspect schools, to articulate and implement policy directives concerning staffing and curriculum, and to provide more financial support to such schools. In 1954, the federal government directed that the curriculum of all Native schools in Ontario be made that of the Province of Ontario (Burnaby, 1980), thereby taking control of content away from resident teachers. The federal government statements at the time quite explicitly saw centralization and professionalism as goals in providing schooling services to Native students, and centralized decisions affected schooling policy in Fort Albany (cf. the historical discussion in DIA Education Division, 1965, in which centralized procedures for upgrading the skills of school staff were discussed by bureaucrats and principals).

At the same time that schooling in Fort Albany was falling out of the control of community residents, a change in policy regarding medium of instruction occurred. Northern Native people did not ask for English-only instruction; switching to English was a decision of that branch of the federal government which administered Indian affairs. Northern Native people were not members of economic elites, nor did Native people see that learning the second language would give them access to economic privilege. Native parents in the 1950s were not politically able to pressure their schooling authorities to make changes; if anything, the decision-making power of Native parents regarding schools became even more severely limited when English-speaking non-resident government civil

servants took over control of schools. Students, their parents, and even their teachers did not participate in language policy decisions, and the switch to instruction in the second language did not have the effect of bringing parents into close contact with the school. There were no Native language-instruction classes available as options to the English program, the program was not regarded as an experiment, and there was no monitoring of the switch by academics or even policy makers. While Native parents may have regarded English as a potentially useful modern language which could complement children's competence in their first modern language, Cree, it is by no means clear that this ideological perspective was shared by administrators, teachers, or policy makers. Certainly, there is no evidence that any of the decision makers were concerned at all with first-language maintenance in this case.

On all the variables listed above, the initiation of northern Native English-medium schooling differed from the initiation of French immersion programs. All of these observations concern outside-of-school characteristics of the context of the programs at the time of their initiation. The differences between the two situations (and their results) continue to be extreme. It is very important that second-language researchers consider carefully how contextual aspects might be involved in the success or failure of particular second-language teaching treatments. A model for second language teaching which is successful in one context (for example, language immersion) may be successful primarily or at least importantly because of that context. The final part of this paper attempts to provide some suggestions for second-language teaching improvements which could be undertaken in northern Native schools like Fort Albany.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

These Cree children after six or seven years of English-medium schooling are about as proficient in school-situated uses of English as are a group of anglophone children, about four years younger, after two or three years of school. It is to be expected, of course, that second-language learners will not exhibit proficiency in a second language that mother-tongue speakers of it will. However, are the English proficiency levels exhibited by the Cree students in this study to be regarded as satisfactory, or are higher levels necessary for these students, if they are to benefit substantially from time spent in school or if they are to attend secondary school in a few years with anglophone peers? This author assumes that setting goals for the second-language proficiency of students in northern Native communities is properly done by Native residents of those communities.

If Native parents were aware of how their children currently perform, they might be better able to articulate goals and choose programs to achieve those goals more effectively.

Native parents may not see present levels of English proficiency as satisfactory if the Fort Albany results illustrate the second-language learning of northern Native students. Criticisms of schools by Native people have been so frequent and widespread, and have been so often concerned with the alienating nature of schools, that the fairly low levels of English proficiency exhibited here might be thought to show too little return for the costs of educating children in a milieu and a language foreign to them. If that is the case, alternative forms of second-language instruction may be of interest.

Many educators believe that early vernacular⁸ instruction and literacy, with later introduction of the majority language, has the best potential for success with speakers of vernacular languages and with students who come from backgrounds of poverty. In one recent study conducted at the Rock Point school of the Navajo reservation in Arizona, second-language learning of English appears to be remarkably successful when students are initially instructed in and gain their first literacy in Navajo, with later introduction of systematic English as a second language (ESL) instruction (Rosier and Holm, 1980). This Navajo-English bilingual program promotes more successful second-language learning than a program in another nearby reservation school which utilizes only English and which provides systematic ESL. Rosier and Holm report that by Grade 6, the Rock Point bilingually educated students approach national norms in achievement tests in English reading, science, and social studies. For Native students anywhere in North America to approach national norms on achievement tests is a radical departure from what is usually the case.

The benefits accruing to a Native community which engages in a program of initial vernacular instruction may indeed involve improved second-language learning and improved school achievement. Students become literate in two languages. In addition, such an innovation necessitates the hiring of Native language speakers (normally, Native people) as teachers, the production of teaching materials, and the small-scale production of a literature. In the Navajo case, improved relations between the home and school, improved self-esteem on the part of children, and a sense of hope and commitment on the part of educators are reported. For all these reasons, northern Native parents in Ontario may well wish to investigate the possibility of bilingual programs.

This paper has emphasized differences between the out-of-school characteristics of French immersion programs and northern Native programs like Fort Albany's partly because contextual characteristics are

so seldom discussed in literature concerned with second-language teaching and learning but also because, in these cases, differences in context appear so startling. Nonetheless, there are some differences also in the in-school operations of programs and a salient difference concerns teacher characteristics. French immersion teachers were in the 1960s and are often now bilingual, and are almost always trained in second-language teaching techniques. Corresponding bilingualism is rarely a characteristic of northern non-Native teachers, and these teachers rarely have any training in techniques for second-language teaching. These surely must be important considerations contributing to the differential success rates in the two programs.

If education in northern Canadian Native communities were bilingual education, where serious attention was paid to developing first-language skills, and if teachers in northern Native schools were predominantly speakers of Native languages, and if those persons were trained extensively in teaching second languages, second-language learning results, as well as schooling results generally, might be quite different from current results. These conditions are quite far from being realized at present, although there have certainly been efforts on the part of various agencies over the past ten years to encourage Native Canadian people to obtain teacher qualifications. In the meantime, it is necessary that administrators and teachers in northern Native schools realize that they are dealing with ESL students who are not being provided with optimal second-language learning conditions. Teachers must obtain training in second-language teaching techniques, and the schools must seek to provide better second-language learning environments than those currently offered.

NOTES

- ¹ The author would like to thank Lynn Cannon, Dr. Jupian Leung and Dr. Tom O'Shea for valuable help with the statistical analyses in this paper. The research reported in the paper was partially funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council doctoral fellowship.
- ² The term *Native* will refer, throughout this paper, to persons who now identify themselves as being of aboriginal North American ancestry. The term *Indian* has become a legal term, referring in Canada to persons now under the jurisdiction of the federal government's Indian Act (1951). This paper is concerned primarily with linguistic and social aspects of persons of aboriginal ancestry. It should be noted, however, that many people identified as Native in this paper are also legally Indians.
- ³ Cree is an Algonkian language spoken by some 55,000 people in Canada; there are also Cree speakers in the northwest United States. Cree has at least five major dialects, characterized by systematic phonological, syntactic, and lexical differences. Swampy Cree, often known as the "N-dialect," is spoken in Manitoba as well as in Ontario.
- ⁴ Native languages in this paper refer to those ancestral languages of Native people.
- ⁵ "Band" is a federal government term for a residentially defined group of Indians.

- ⁶ Interactional appropriateness (defined as *courtesy*) was used as a criterion for rating only with the requesting task, as it was only for this task that test takers were explicitly asked to be concerned with matters of social relations.
- ⁷ The subsequent proliferation of French immersion programs across the country might be seen to attest to the persisting perception of many parents that French-English bilingualism will "pay off" in Canada.
- ⁸ A 1953 UNESCO conference on second language learning provided this definition for a vernacular language: "A language which is the mother tongue of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language. We do not consider the language of a minority in one country as a vernacular if it is an official language in another country." (p. 46)

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In vielen nördlichen Gegenden Kanadas sprechen Kinder, die ihre Ausbildung beginnen, vorwiegend oder nur eine einheimische Sprache. In vielen dieser Orte wird Englisch oder Französisch selten im Gesellschaftsmilieu benutzt, wobei die Schule manchmal eine der wenigen Stätten ist, wo eine der offiziellen Sprachen Kanadas gesprochen wird. Die

Untersuchung, über die hier berichtet wird, betrifft eine abgelegene Gemeinde in Nordontario, in der eine englischsprechende Schule einer Bevölkerung, die "Swampy" Kri spricht, dient. Diese Arbeit berichtet über die Ergebnisse einer mündlichen Prüfung von englischen Sprachkenntnissen, die Schülern im zweiten, vierten und sechsten Schuljahr in der krisprechenden Gemeinde und in einer nördlichen englischsprechenden Gemeinde erteilt wurde. Die englischen Sprachkenntnisse der krisprechenden Schüler waren weit unter dem Niveau einer aus gleichaltrigen englischsprechenden Schülern in Nordontario bestehenden Gruppe. Faktoren, die zu diesem anscheinenden Mißerfolg beim Erlernen einer zweiten Sprache beigetragen haben, werden untersucht und Vorschläge gemacht, diese Situation zu verbessern.

En muchas comunidades del Norte canadiense, los niños empiezan su escolaridad hablando principalmente o solamente su lengua nativa. En muchas de estas comunidades el inglés o francés raramente se usan en el ambiente comunitario, y la escuela es a veces uno de los pocos lugares donde se habla una de las lenguas oficiales de Canadá. El estudio que es el tema de este informe se refiere a una comunidad aislada del norte de Ontario donde una escuela cuyo medio es inglés sirve a una población de habla Swampy Cree. El estudio informa sobre los resultados de una prueba oral de habilidades de inglés, aplicada a estudiantes de segundo, cuarto y sexto años, tanto en una comunidad de habla Cree como de una comunidad nortea de habla inglesa. Las habilidades de inglés de los estudiantes de habla Cree fueron muy inferiores a sus pares anglófonos del norte de Ontario. Se discuten los factores involucrados en esta aparente falla de aprender una segunda lengua y se hacen recomendaciones para mejorar la situación.

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