SOME EARLY INDICATIONS OF LEARNING A SECOND DIALECT

Dennis R. Craig
Department of Education, University of the West Indies

A PREVIOUS PAPER in *Language Learning* (Craig (1966)) outlined some language teaching principles which apply in teaching English to speakers of an English-based Creole and showed that these principles might suggest a model of the procedures required in teaching a standard form of a language to non-standard speakers generally.

The present paper seeks to examine some of the effects which became apparent in the language of some seven-year old Jamaican school children taught by the procedures referred to. For the sake of clarity the principles followed will be restated here before the results are discussed.

Before a teaching programme was formulated the speech of school children in formal as well as informal social situations was recorded and studied. Such study showed that relative to the non-standard speaker, the patterns of standard speech may be graded in four theoretical classifications as follows:

Class A: Patterns common to both standard and non-standard speech and therefore within the production repertoire of the child.

Class B: Patterns not usually produced in the informal, non-standard speech of the child, but known (probably partially) to him and produced under stress in prestige social situations.

Class C: Patterns which the child would recognise and comprehend if these are used by other speakers in a meaningful context, but which the child cannot himself produce.

Class D: Patterns totally unknown to the child.

The special implication of this stratification of patterns is that the child's recognition of the language being taught creates effects not usually experienced in foreign language teaching; but at the same time all the other factors involved make the situation different from what it would be in native language teaching.

These factors give rise to the following principles in formulating a language programme:

(1) Pattern drills such as are usual in foreign language teaching have to be used especially for teaching patterns of Class D and to some extent those of Class C.

(2) Patterns of Classes C and D which are being introduced in lessons have to be introduced in a graded sequence for the same reason that applies in foreign language teaching.

(3) Because of the relatively close relationship between standard and non-standard language, the effect of the high level of "recognition" mentioned already above, and the fact that in any given situation the native speech of the learner is an easy replacement of the speech being taught, pattern drills by themselves are inadequate for transferring mastery of the standard language into actual everyday contexts. For this reason, much of the language teaching has to be planned to take place through real or imagined social situations, controlled in such a way that a target Class D or C element would be repeated in spontaneous speech with elements of Classes A and B. For some examples of this kind of situational teaching reference may be made to Craig (1967).

(4) Before the teacher has given the children the habit of producing standard patterns of speech, the teacher has to accept the natural speech of the child, without the inhibiting practice of intermittent "correction." When specific English patterns have begun to be taught, only then can the teacher insist on the child producing standard patterns, and producing at each stage only those patterns which have actually been taught. This means that free conversation, argument and description by the child in his own vernacular or in his vernacular plus substitute English patterns learned, have to be a regular classroom feature until the child has been taught sufficient standard patterns to replace his non-standard vernacular in school and on formal occasions.

(5) The teacher promotes natural usage of the English patterns being learned and makes them an effective substitute for the non-standard vernacular by re-inforcing aural-oral practice as follows: (a) following up oral work by reading and writing which repeat in meaningful contexts the specific patterns being learned; (b) using the specific patterns taught in language lessons as frequently as possible in other areas of the school curriculum; and (c) controlling the treatment of all classroom subject-matter in such a way that frequent repetition is being given to the specific patterns being learned at any given time.

The children whose response to these methods form the subject of this paper are seven-year-old rural Jamaican children attending primary school. Before the attempt to teach these children by methods as outlined above, a few of them were asked to talk individually to an interviewer about a given picture. Each child was encouraged to talk as much as he wished and his language was recorded. Two typical examples of the resulting speech, sufficient to indicate its main formal characteristics are as follows:

(1) di 'uman 'av di 'fish in iz 'han // an 'dis 'wan a 'got 'im // an 'den di 'kuoknot 'trii intu di 'yaad // an 'dis 'wan 'stanop and a 'luk // an di 'smuok // an di 'uman 'av di 'fish intu ii . . . . 'ii 'an.

(2) 'wons . . . 'wons 'upon a 'taim / di 'liedi woz 'skielin di 'fish // an a 'man wor 'laafin // 'an . . . . . an di 'liedi an di 'gyorl woz 'laafin 'tuu// 'an . . . . an di 'likl 'boi woz 'lukin at di 'man 'wen ii 'laafin// 'an. . . . an di 'ous 'tuu // an di 'kuoknot 'trii // shi 'tek. . . . di. . . . . or 'an. . . . . an 'uol di 'fish // an 'tek di 'naif an 'skiel 'it.

Analysis of the speech of these and similar children shows that on an average over 60% of their verb-patterns are non-standard, to take just one indicator of the form of their speech. By the time they reach age fifteen, after eight years of education based on native-language assumptions about English teaching, even the more favoured children of this type still show an average of 35 to 40% of non-standard verb-patterns in written composition (Craig (1963)).

To assess some of the effects of the procedures outlined above five groups were studied over a six-month period. The first group, C_{10}, was comprised of working-class children who had attended infant school from about age five and in this respect was a more favoured group educationally than three of the others: E_{10}, E_{20}, and E_{30} which were comprised of similar working-class children beginning school for the first time at age six and one-half to seven. The remaining group, E_{40} existed under certain middle class economic and social conditions which caused it not to be really typical in respect of the general language-teaching problem.

The group, C_{10}, was not involved in the teaching procedures outlined, but was used as a control group for judging the progress of the others. It was felt that this group would provide a reliable basis for comparison because of its favoured educational position and also because of the fact that the group was already exposed to the stimulation of teaching projects employing native language methods; the

imbalance of a Hawthorne effect operating in the other groups would thus tend to be compensated for.

Each group was in a different school and taught by a different teacher. The same speech production test, which required children to talk about a picture, was given at the beginning of the teaching procedures and was repeated after three months and after six months. The test results that are available do not cover all the groups over the entire period, but are yet sufficient to indicate the general trend of effects on the children's language. The symbols used above to designate the groups of children are also used to indicate the test results as follows:

C_{13} = The control group of children, C_{10}, three months after the beginning of primary school at age six and one-half to seven

C_{16} = The children in C_{10} at the end of six months of primary school.

E_{10}, E_{20}, E_{30}, E_{40} = The four groups (experimental) of children at the beginning of the teaching procedures outlined and of primary school at age six and one-half to seven.

E_{13}, E_{23} = The groups (experimental) in E_{10} and E_{20} at the end of three months.

E_{16}, E_{26}, E_{36}, E_{46} = The groups (experimental) in E_{10}, E_{20}, E_{30}, and E_{40} respectively at the end of six months.

Four characteristics of language which in the Jamaican context have been generally found to differentiate non-standard from standard speakers on formal occasions were selected for study in the speech produced by the children in these tests. These characteristics are as follows: (1) The average proportion of clauses containing non-standard verb patterns or non-standard relationships between nominative and verb, (2) the average proportion of clauses linked together by *and*, (3) the average length of clauses in terms of words, and (4) the average length of children's speeches in terms of words. The statistics relating to these characteristics are shown in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

From Section 1 of all the tables it is obvious that the control group did not change significantly over the period studied in respect of any of the four language characteristics selected. The control group all the time appeared to be just slightly better than the average for this type of child. From what has been said already about this group, this finding could be expected.

In respect of non-standard verb-constructions (Table 1), all of the experimental groups showed marked decreases over the period. The groups E_{10}, E_{20}, and E_{30} which had begun with far higher

TABLE 1

MEAN PROPORTIONS OF CLAUSES CONTAINING NON-STANDARD VERB-CONSTRUCTIONS

	Samples	Means Compared	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Level of Significance
1.	C_{13} vs C_{16}	.586/.480	.093	1.14	NOT
2.	C_{13} vs E_{10}	.586/.647	.141	.43	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{20}	.586/.666	.123	.65	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{30}	.586/.630	.143	.31	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{40}	.586/.347	.140	1.71	NOT
3.	C_{13} vs E_{13}	.586/.340	.116	2.12	.05
	C_{13} vs E_{23}	.586/.220	.089	4.00	.01
4.	C_{16} vs E_{16}	.480/.140	.088	3.86	.01
	C_{16} vs E_{26}	.480/.200	.088	3.18	.01
	C_{16} vs E_{36}	.480/.186	.111	2.65	.05
	C_{16} vs E_{46}	.480/.164	.102	3.09	.01
5.	E_{10} vs E_{16}	.647/.140	.130	3.90	.01
	E_{20} vs E_{26}	.666/.200	.115	4.02	.01
	E_{30} vs E_{36}	.630/.186	.163	2.72	.05
	E_{40} vs E_{46}	.347/.164	.111	1.65	NOT

TABLE 2

CLAUSES INTRODUCED BY *AND* AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL CLAUSES

	Samples	Means Compared	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Level of Significance
1.	C_{13} vs C_{16}	.250/.326	.084	.90	NOT
2.	C_{13} vs E_{10}	.250/.621	.118	3.13	.01
	C_{13} vs E_{20}	.250/.196	.105	.51	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{30}	.250/.628	.129	2.93	.01
	C_{13} vs E_{40}	.250/.299	.102	.48	NOT
3.	C_{13} vs E_{13}	.250/.027	.069	3.23	.01
	C_{13} vs E_{23}	.250/.009	.060	2.67	.01
4.	C_{16} vs E_{16}	.326/.011	.077	4.09	.01
	C_{16} vs E_{26}	.326/.032	.078	3.78	.01
	C_{16} vs E_{36}	.326/.112	.114	1.87	NOT
	C_{16} vs E_{46}	.326/.000	.108	3.02	.01
5.	E_{10} vs E_{16}	.621/.011	.089	6.85	.01
	E_{20} vs E_{26}	.196/.032	.085	1.94	NOT
	E_{30} vs E_{36}	.628/.112	.171	3.01	.01
	E_{40} vs E_{46}	.299/.000	.128	2.34	.05

TABLE 3

QUANTITY OF LANGUAGE ON A GIVEN OCCASION; SHOWN IN TERMS OF AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORDS

	Samples	Means Compared	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Level of Significance
1.	C_{13} vs C_{16}	48.8/42.0	8.34	.82	NOT
2.	C_{13} vs E_{10}	48.8/31.5	9.34	1.85	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{20}	48.8/24.1	9.04	2.72	.01
	C_{13} vs E_{30}	48.8/21.0	10.41	2.66	.05
	C_{13} vs E_{40}	48.8/50.6	11.57	.16	NOT
3.	C_{13} vs E_{13}	48.8/47.9	10.64	.08	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{23}	48.8/35.9	8.20	1.57	NOT
4.	C_{16} vs E_{16}	42.0/53.6	10.59	1.09	NOT
	C_{16} vs E_{26}	42.0/70.6	9.70	2.94	.01
	C_{16} vs E_{36}	42.0/50.8	6.20	1.42	NOT
	C_{16} vs E_{46}	42.0/114.9	19.04	3.87	.01
5.	E_{10} vs E_{16}	31.5/53.6	8.99	2.46	.05
	E_{20} vs E_{26}	24.1/70.6	12.21	3.80	.01
	E_{30} vs E_{36}	21.0/50.8	10.49	2.84	.01
	E_{40} vs E_{46}	50.6/114.9	25.74	2.50	.05

TABLE 4

LENGTH OF CLAUSES IN TERMS OF AVERAGE WORDS PER CLAUSE

	Samples	Means Compares	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Level of Significance
1.	C_{13} vs C_{16}	4.27/4.48	.42	.50	NOT
2.	C_{13} vs E_{10}	4.27/2.78	.55	2.69	.05
	C_{13} vs E_{20}	4.27/3.48	.54	1.44	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{30}	4.27/2.92	.58	2.31	.05
	C_{13} vs E_{40}	4.27/4.95	.73	.94	NOT
3.	C_{13} vs E_{13}	4.27/4.48	.45	.45	NOT
	C_{13} vs E_{23}	4.27/4.93	.33	2.03	.05
4.	C_{16} vs E_{16}	4.49/4.91	.52	.82	NOT
	C_{16} vs E_{26}	4.49/5.15	.42	1.59	NOT
	C_{16} vs E_{36}	4.49/4.40	.54	.88	NOT
	C_{16} vs E_{46}	4.49/5.30	.50	1.64	NOT
5.	E_{10} vs E_{16}	2.78/4.91	.75	2.85	.01
	E_{20} vs E_{26}	3.48/5.15	.53	3.15	.01
	E_{30} vs E_{36}	2.92/4.40	.62	2.39	.05
	E_{40} vs E_{46}	4.95/5.30	.91	.38	NOT

frequencies of non-standard verbs than E_{40}, showed more highly significant proportional decreases in this characteristic than E_{40}. It has been remarked already that E_{40} was not really a typical group. It was in addition a very small group of just ten children and though its proportion of non-standard verbs decreased by one-half, yet the decrease just missed being statistically significant.

The next characteristic studied may be regarded as a stylistic peculiarity of non-standard speech. The non-standard speaker tends to string all his clauses together by means of *and*. Consequently, it was felt that as standard language sequences were learned there might be a reduction in the frequency of *and* as a link between clauses. The test of this probability is shown in Table 2. From the table it is clear that all four of the experimental groups showed significant reductions in this characteristic over the period.

These two sets of results (Tables 1 and 2) may be taken as indicators of the fact that the language of these children on formal occasions changed structurally along the lines predicted by the teaching procedures which have been outlined. Before these procedures began, however, it seemed probable that the attempt to teach a formal language to children of this age might result in a decrease in the quantity of language which the children might feel disposed to give in a formal situation. Thus probability is tested in Tables 3 and 4. From these tables it is clear that in all the experimental groups the quantity of words spoken about the given picture increased significantly and in three of the groups, the average length of clauses also increased significantly.

This evidence of an increase in the quantity of language which the children feel disposed to give in what must be regarded as a formal language situation seems very important. It is probably indicative of an increase in confidence owing to the new language capability which the speaker is conscious of possessing. It seems likely that these children even at this age, are conscious of the unusual language requirement of a formal situation; when they know instinctively that the required language is available to them the result is a lessening of inhibitions and a greater flow of language. The fact that the teaching method does not stifle the child's natural dialect but actually uses it until replacements become available step by step, very probably helps to promote this result.

The findings commented on here could probably have been more extensive if they were drawn from a better controlled experiment, but the teaching procedures were of necessity taken into schools under very inadequate experimental conditions and the findings may therefore be regarded as tentative. They seem sufficient to indicate, however, that the teaching procedures outlined are practicable

and can produce the results aimed at. Further work along these lines is essential if the teaching of a standard dialect to non-standard speakers is to be placed on a sound basis of theory and application and ceases to be regarded as a special dead-end of native language teaching on the one hand or of foreign language teaching on the other.

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