MARSHALESE AND ENGLISH
EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN IMMERSION MODEL
OF EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

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ABSTRACT

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, located in the Pacific region most commonly referred to as Micronesia, has recently assumed a new and more independent political status after nearly 400 years of colonization. The purpose of this paper is to propose educational reform through a language planning framework suited to the political, social, and cultural characteristics of this emerging nation.

The first section of the paper traces the history of language issues and education policies which have affected the entire Micronesian region and, more specifically, the Marshall Islands. This is followed by an overview of current language and education programs in the Marshall Islands, with a description of their administrative, financial, curricular, and staffing features.

The third section of the paper provides a summary of negative school outcomes which occur at all levels of the Marshallese educational system. Possible causes of these outcomes are considered from both infrastructural and global perspectives. The discussion ends with a mandate for change, suggesting that an immersion model of bilingual education is the most appropriate framework for analysis and language planning in the Marshall Islands today.

In the fourth section, a review of the basic features of immersion education is followed by a discussion of program varieties. The discussion centers on the argument that a program based on "additive bilingualism" is the most appropriate model for this student population. The fifth and final section provides general guidelines for the establishment of a pilot immersion project in the Marshall Islands elementary schools.
INTRODUCTION

Located approximately 2250 miles southwest of Hawai'i and about the same distance northeast of Australia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is comprised of 34 atolls and islands with a total land area of over 70 square miles. The islands are spread over an ocean area of 500,000 square miles at the eastern edge of the Pacific region most commonly referred to as Micronesia. The majority of the 36,000 inhabitants live in the two major population centers of Majuro, the capital, and Kwajalein, the site of a United States Army missile testing facility. The Marshallese people, famous for their long ocean voyages and navigational skill, are believed to have migrated to the area about three thousand years ago (Bunge and Cooke, 1984). Their language, Marshallese, with two mutually intelligible dialects, is of the Austronesian family of languages spoken throughout most of Micronesia.

Until recently, the history of the Marshalls has been inexorably tied to the history of the other islands and cultures of Micronesia. The term "Micronesia" was coined by outsiders to refer to the island groups which stretch across a vast portion of the northern Central Pacific Ocean. The term does not, however, reflect the variety of cultures in the area, nor the region's nine distinct major languages (Nevin, 1977).

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, The Federated States of Micronesia, The Republic of Palau, and The Commonwealth of the Marianas Islands are the four new political entities which have been formed, through a 20-year process of internal debate and plebiscites, from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.
The United Nations mandated the islands to the United States in 1947 following World War II. As the administering authority, the United States was supposed to "promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement" of the islanders, with the ultimate goal of self-government (Nevin, 1977). Despite attempts by the American overseers to unite the seven districts (Marshall Islands, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Truk, Yap, Palau, Marianas Islands) into one political state, all but one have elected to forge nations which will be politically separate from the other island groups. (The Marianas Islands have chosen commonwealth status under the United States.)

Economic benefits derived from lands leased to the U.S. for strategic purposes have caused the Marshall Islands to reject unification and to opt instead for republic status unto themselves (Heine, 1974). Palau has also rejected unification but remains the sole trusteeship due to its nuclear-free policy. The other four districts have joined to form the Federated States of Micronesia.

The Marshall Islands and the Federated States recently entered into a new political relationship with the United States which is termed "free association". Under the statutes of the Compact of Free Association (Committee on Political Education, 1983), while the United States remains responsible for defense matters and will continue to infuse money (though in decreasing amounts) into the islands, each of the new governments will now assume total responsibility for internal and foreign affairs, thus providing far more autonomy in government matters, economic planning, and educational policy. For the four new governments which have
gradually taken over the administration of their respective domains since the Trust Territory government began to phase out in 1979 (Craig and King, 1980), this marks the first opportunity for self-determination since colonial domination began in the 16th century. As former members of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the islands of Micronesia have begun to take their place as new and increasingly visible island nations of the once-colonized Pacific basin (Patterson, 1986).

Of the issues facing the leaders of the new nations of Micronesia, many are unique to the sociopolitical situation; all are crucial to the future development of these emerging nations. One issue which is of primary concern is that of language planning and education. As Rubin (1971) states, language planners should focus upon "solutions to language problems through decisions about alternative goals, means, and outcomes to solve [language planning] problems." Language problems in education, however, have typically been approached at the theoretical level. Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971) call for realistic language solutions which take into account such factors as teacher training and materials production, and not simply experimentation. Further, the choice of a medium of instruction in schools is just one problem which Dil (1968) claims can be approached through language planning.

One does not have to look far to realize that language planning and its effect on education must be analyzed in light of the influences which colonial powers have had on language and education policies in other regions of the world. In the Philippines, local vernacular languages, Spanish, the national language of Pilipino,
and English have all vied for positions as the medium of instruction in the educational system (Sibayan, 1971). Indonesian is now seen to be an effective language of instruction in Indonesian schools even though it was necessary to create a grammar for the language that would be satisfactory for speakers of the other languages in the country (Alisjahbana, 1971).

The effect of the superimposition of a foreign culture and language is a crucial factor in the development of language policies for both education, and national identity. Heine (1974) wrote that the lack of an "indigenous Micronesian language" precluded the derivation of "a Micronesian person or a Micronesian national awareness and oneness." The question of a national language for the newly-formed Republic of the Marshall Islands' identity should not be as difficult as it was for Micronesia as a whole. Marshallese now enjoys the distinction of being what Benton (1981) calls both the national and ethnic language of a people. As the nation emerges, Marshallese policymakers must try to define the new roles of English and Marshallese in the their educational system.

HISTORY OF LANGUAGE ISSUES AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

The status of education in the Marshall Islands today is a direct product of policies which resulted from treating all areas of Micronesia as one jurisdictional unit, regardless of each region's unique political, educational, and linguistic needs. In fact, it is difficult to distinguish a separate history of education and language policy for the Marshall Islands.
The following discussion will therefore treat the Marshall Islands as one with the rest of Micronesia until the point at which Marshall Islands history began to diverge from that of the other island groups.

Throughout the history of colonization in Micronesia, education has played varied roles in the policies of the colonizers. Spain, which was granted control over all the Micronesian islands in the early sixteenth century, focussed its efforts on the Marianas Islands and Pohnpei but did not extend its influence into the Marshall Islands (Heine, 1974). Germany purchased the islands from Spain and by 1888 had established the Jaluit Company, a trading company based in the Marshall Islands, with the intent of profiting from agriculture. The Germans made no attempt to alter the status quo of Micronesians through any form of educational policy. During both the Spanish and German periods, missionary schools (operated primarily by Americans) were established with curriculums aimed at religious conversion (Heine, 1974). It was not until the Japanese occupation of Micronesia in 1914 preceding Germany's World War I defeat, and the subsequent mandating of the islands to Japan under the auspices of the League of Nations, that a foreign model of formal education was introduced into Micronesian society.

As Gibson (1981) has made clear, formal education systems functioned in Micronesia long before colonizers arrived:

All the islands had viable educational programs before contact with colonials. Navigation systems for which the Pacific Islanders are famous were taught by master teachers to the most promising students. History, through elaborate genealogies and other forms of oral culture, was so well taught by master teachers that these genealogies are still
the most reliable sources of pre-contact history. Other everyday living necessities such as canoe and house building, fishing, farming, weaving, and medicine were taught formally through an apprentice system.

The educational system that the Japanese put into place was designed strictly for the preservation of Japanese dominance and native subservience throughout Micronesia. Micronesian children were not required to attend school; the few who did were generally able to complete only three grades, the highest level offered to Micronesian students under Japanese administration (Nevin, 1977). Content classes were taught through the Japanese language with the intent of instilling the Japanese culture into Micronesian society (Heine, 1974). Students who were deemed as promising by the Japanese were sent away either to Japan or to the well-regarded carpentry school in Palau (Benton, 1981). Two factors, the absence of secular education during the Spanish and German periods and the limited availability of education for a small minority under Japanese control, illustrate how education has been one of the tools employed to maintain the socio-economic structures which have benefited the colonial powers but have kept Micronesians in a subservient position.

When the United States assumed control of Micronesia in 1947 educational policy in the Trust Territory was determined by the U.S. Navy, the governmental body which had been delegated the task of forming policies for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). The initial policy implemented in all of the Trust Territory schools was that instruction would be provided in the first two grades through the vernacular, with English language arts instruction beginning in the third grade. Initially, the Navy
encouraged use of the native language and curriculum, supposedly to nurture the home culture (Benton, 1981). But as Nevin (1977) observes, another motive could be seen in an underlying attitude that the ultimate level of formal education should be limited to preclude false expectations: "education awakens minds in and out of classrooms, and the fear was that too much would be done, that expectations would be inflated beyond reason, and that the result would turn out to be exactly what, in fact, it has been." Nevin (1977) points out that "education is not enough to give them success in the new society [American], [but] it is ample to sever them from the old subsistence society."

When the Navy relinquished its administrative control of the TTPI to the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1951, civilians assumed responsibility for territory functions. This administrative turnover was accompanied by a change in language policy for the schools. Use of the vernacular was increasingly encouraged at the elementary level because few Micronesian teachers were adequately proficient in English (Benton, 1981). According to Robert Gibson, then TTPI Director of Education, educators also felt that instruction in the students' home language would enable them to begin their education in a familiar cultural setting (Nevin, 1977).

Policies affecting language and education changed radically in 1962 as a result of a Kennedy administration vow to improve conditions in the Trust Territory through an emphasis on education (Nevin, 1977). The new program consisted of three components that were put into effect at all TTPI schools. Universal high school
education was instituted for all Trust Territory students, with
school sites being established in the main population centers of
each district. These high schools were designed in large part to
Second, the administration of all elementary schools in the
territory was turned over to the Trust Territory government, thus
removing not only funding but also control from the local district
level. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, English replaced the
vernacular as the language of instruction from grade one through
high school. Training programs were established to improve the
English proficiency of native teachers. Several hundred Americans
were recruited to teach in Micronesia, causing most of the
education budget to be spent on transportation and housing for
expatriate teachers (Nevin, 1977).

Several events occurring after 1966 caused yet another shift in
attitude toward the role of English and vernacular languages, and
policy was reversed once again. It became clear that the
English-only policy was not working in the schools, and the
American teachers were leaving in large numbers (Nevin, 1977).
Concurrently, English teachers who had been assigned by the United
States Peace Corps were being trained in the local languages. In
1968 the policy shifted to vernacular instruction in the early
grades with English introduced as a language arts subject, taught
from an English as a Second Language perspective (Benton, 1981).

Funding from the U.S. Bilingual Education Act found its way to
the Trust Territory in 1971 (Gibson, 1981) and allowed leaders to
address a desire expressed by the Congress of Micronesia in a 1970
House Resolution that "more knowledge of the islands...and the people [would] have a unifying effect". The Micronesian Congress enacted a law which "specifically required that languages, customs, and cultures of Micronesia be included in the curricula at both the elementary and secondary schools of the Trust Territory" (Gibson, 1979). In 1974, as a result of the Congress of Micronesia's action and the unrelated but crucial funding of bilingual education programs by the United States Office of Education, the Bilingual Education Project for Micronesia (BEPM) was established. Educators from each of the Trust Territory districts were trained by the Pacific Languages Development Project of the University of Hawai'i in the use and development of materials (Gibson, 1979). The bilingual programs established throughout Micronesia operated through most of the 1970's until each of the emerging Micronesian states began to assume responsibility for its own educational policies.

In 1979, a task force composed of Marshallese education leaders was established by the president of the Marshall Islands to chart a course for education and its role in the development of the new nation (Marshall Islands Task Force on Education, 1981). The task force placed a strong emphasis on all aspects of Marshallese language, history, traditions, and culture and emphasized the need to integrate these areas into the total school curriculum. The task force also recognized that English would continue to play a vital role in education, especially at the secondary level where instruction continues to be conducted entirely in English.
EDUCATION IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS TODAY

Two Five-Year Plans for the 1986-1990 period, prepared by the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education and the College of Micronesia, provide statistical bases and projections for reform in educational matters. They also reflect the enormous changes which have resulted from the transition to "free association" status.

This section describes the administrative, financial, curricular, and staffing features of elementary and secondary programs offered in the Marshall Islands today. Issues and problems which face Marshallese educators and students are then discussed, with a consideration of possible explanations for negative school outcomes.

Administration

The Ministry of Education is the government body charged with providing public education at the elementary and secondary levels throughout the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The Department of Education is responsible for implementing Ministry of Education policy and is divided into four administrative units: Elementary and Secondary Division, Post-Secondary Division, Program and Development Division, and the Administrative Services Division.

Other educational programs not directly administered by the Department of Education include a pre-school program and the Majuro branch of the College of Micronesia. More important, though, are the private elementary and secondary schools which serve one-fifth of the elementary school population and more than one-half of today's high school students (Department of Education, 1986). With
the exception of two non-denominational schools, the private schools are church-sponsored. The curriculum offered, however, is similar to that of the public schools. The Ministry of Education provides support and funding to these schools, especially for curriculum and materials. Private schools are otherwise supported by student tuition and a substantial amount of supplementary funding from U.S. assistance programs.

**Funding**

In 1985, the Marshall Islands Department of Education operated on an annual budget of $7 million (Department of Education, 1986). The per capita expenditure for students in the Marshalls is just 20% of the most poorly funded U.S. state (Ministry of Education official, personal communication). Educators are faced with rapid population growth; school enrollments are growing at a consistent rate of 4.5% a year (Department of Education, 1986) at a time when the Department can barely afford to keep existing schools in operation. A new high school is planned for Ebeye (the heavily populated island on Kwajalein Atoll) and a new elementary school is scheduled for a rapidly growing rural area on Majuro. But even with these new sites, schools will continue to be filled beyond capacity.

While the current annual budget of $7 million is obviously inadequate, passage of the Compact of Free Association will further reduce levels of educational funding in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. As a member of the former Trust Territory, the Marshall Islands received more than 65% of its educational funding.
from the U.S. government prior to implementation of the Compact (Department of Education, 1986).

The terms of the Compact of Free Association provide a three-year transition period for the termination of direct grants for numerous types of federally supported education programs (College of Micronesia, 1986). The effects of these cuts will be felt at every level of the educational sector. There will be an immediate textbook crisis: all elementary texts and 60% of high school texts have been purchased with federal funds (Department of Education, 1986). Private schools will also be affected, as many of their texts and supplies were previously purchased under TTPI federal grant provisions. Other programs which will be seriously affected (if not discontinued) include: supplemental assistance for learning disadvantaged and disabled students, vocational education, teacher training, post-secondary guidance, and evaluation. A crucial source of native language materials may also be discontinued since loss of funding will result in closure of a center which has just begun to develop and print books in Marshallese.

Requests for continued direct-grant support for education and other social services are permitted under the Compact, but the U.S. government is not expected to be "generally responsive" (College of Micronesia, 1986). Requests for technical and developmental assistance are more likely to be met; there is some hope for funding of educational planning and policy issues.

While it may be logical to assume that Marshallese legislators will appropriate some funds from Compact settlements and/or new
sources of local revenue, funding remains as the primary concern for education planners in the Marshall Islands today. As the school-age population and resulting demands for educational services continue to grow at an alarming rate, funding can be expected to remain at or below previous levels.

The Schools: Enrollment and Curriculum

During the 1985-1986 school year, there were 11,240 students enrolled in grades 1 - 12. Roughly 80% of elementary students attended one of 69 public schools located throughout the islands. Of the 1,727 students enrolled at the secondary level (grades 9 - 12), more than half were attending one of the Republic's five private high schools (Department of Education, 1986). The remaining high school students received instruction at one of two public secondary school sites. Private schools play a more important role at the secondary level as they accommodate students who are unable to gain entrance to the public high schools.

Elementary Schools

According to a 1980 census, the proportion of elementary-aged children is particularly high in the Marshall Islands: 29% of the total population is under the age of 14. It is estimated that approximately 87% of these children receive instruction. (Curriculum, Language and Training Center, 1985).

The elementary curriculum consists of five components: language arts, mathematics, social studies, science/health, and art. Students receive daily instruction in Marshallese through grade
six, while English language arts are taught for an hour each day through the eighth grade. Literacy skills are introduced in the native language in grades 1 and 2 through Marshallese basal readers. English is introduced as a subject in the third grade with basal readers and the Tate Oral English Syllabus. It should be noted that English is treated solely as a second/foreign language component of the curriculum until the ninth grade, when the language of instruction and content shifts suddenly to English.

Outer-Island Elementary Schools

Students and teachers at outer-island schools face numerous additional hardships. Many of the outer atolls and islands receive supplies only once or twice a year. Outer-island teachers are without a support staff and remain, by and large, completely isolated and unsupervised. Though future plans call for rotation of the teaching staff to outer-islands, the current procedures for staff assignment may be seen as problematic.

In the outer-island elementary schools, students are disadvantaged in two ways. Due to a lack of supervision, a scarcity of materials, and large class sizes, teachers at outer-island schools may be tempted to use Marshallese in place of English lessons. Outer-island students are also unlikely to receive exposure to English outside the classroom, whereas students in the population centers have access to English through tourism, the media, and government proceedings. Test results which show that outer-island elementary students score lower on the all-English Micronesian Achievement Test Series than their "urban"
counterparts (Curriculum, Language and Training Center, 1985) may be traced to a combination of institutional weaknesses and less exposure to English.

Outer-island students also suffer additional disadvantages at the secondary level; all but one of the high school sites are located in the population centers. If outer-island students are fortunate enough to be admitted to a public high school, or if attendance at a private school is feasible, they are in most cases not able to benefit from the support usually provided by members of their immediate families.

Secondary Education

Roughly 85% of Marshallese children complete the eighth grade (Curriculum, Language and Training Center, 1985). The completion rate for high school students, however, is much lower. Fewer students (approximately 80% of eighth grade graduates) enter high school; of these, only 39% complete their secondary education (Ministry of Education, 1985).

In the 1985-86 school year there were 1,727 Marshallese students enrolled in high school. The two public high schools last year accommodated just 41% of the total number of applicants (Curriculum, Language and Training Center, 1985). Admission to public secondary schools is determined by the results of an all-English entrance examination. It is important to note that a student's level of English proficiency upon completion of grade eight determines his or her opportunity to attend the public high schools.
The secondary curriculum, designed to be delivered entirely in English, provides for instruction in general studies, college preparatory courses, and vocational specialization (Ministry of Education, 1985). While economic constraints and teenage pregnancies are commonly cited causes for early departure from the secondary setting, "early leavers" may actually be leaving school because they are ill-prepared for the transition to an "English submersion" situation in which the language of instruction shifts, suddenly and completely, from Marshallese to English.

The Teaching Force

Qualifications and Training

Officially, the 294 elementary teachers and 61 secondary teachers are to have at least an AA/AS degree (College of Micronesia, 1986). However, because an inadequate number of Marshallese adults have completed postsecondary degrees, the Department of Education in many cases accepts teachers with less training. At the end of 1985, just 60% of public school teachers had obtained an associate's degree (Curriculum, Language and Training Center, 1985). Of the 15 new elementary teachers hired in September 1986, eight had only a high school education and no teaching experience (Ministry of Education official, personal communication). The need for improvement of teacher qualifications and training continues to accelerate.

A teacher's proficiency in English is of central importance, especially at the high school level. Since most Marshallese students receive their postsecondary education at English-medium
colleges (often in English-dominant settings), it might be assumed that the teachers who meet the AA/AS requirement are sufficiently proficient in English. Roughly one-third of the teaching force, however, was hired prior to the implementation of the current teacher qualification standards. Many of the older teachers were educated during Japanese rule and may know little, if any, English. The unfortunate result is that many of the curricular components designed to be carried out in English are instead presented in Marshallese.


Remuneration

Today Marshallese teachers are, by a significant margin, the lowest paid teachers in the Micronesian region (Ministry of Education official, personal communication), contributing to low teacher morale (Marshall Islands Journal, 1986). As educational funding is not expected to increase in the next five years, this situation is likely to continue. Marshallese teachers are not only dissatisfied with pay levels. There is also evidence of frustration with other factors such as overcrowding, inadequate training in the delivery of the curriculum, and a general lack of support from administrators.
NEGATIVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: A SUMMARY

In the face of budgetary constraints and limitations resulting from a foreign model of education, the Marshallese government should be commended for the progress it has made to date. The following discussion of negative educational outcomes should be viewed in light of two facts: that the general level of education in the Marshalls has consistently improved, and that interest in the future of educational policy has been revived with implementation of the Compact of Free Association. There is an increased amount of concern and involvement on the part of both Ministry of Education officials and parents as communities begin to become more involved in the nation's educational future.

There is a considerable body of evidence to support the statement that education programs operating in the Marshall Islands today have not been able to produce many of their intended outcomes. Situations across the curriculum, ranging from elementary to post-secondary levels, suggest that review and adjustment will be necessary before Marshallese students can derive full benefit from their formal learning environments.

Although an attempt is made in this section to provide professional insight into possible sources and explanations for these perplexing trends, it should be emphasized that the challenges are multifaceted and interrelated, involving the efforts and influence of people and institutions at every level. Ultimately, it will be argued that the range of problems summarized here can best be viewed and addressed through an immersion model of bilingual education.
The vast majority of Marshallese students complete their elementary education. Results from the Micronesian Advanced Test Series (MATS), however, indicate that Marshallese elementary children score consistently and significantly below other Micronesian student groups. Moderate improvements have been made in this regard, but the discrepancies remain salient:

Compared to students elsewhere in the Trust Territory, as a whole the students of the Marshalls continue to score among the lowest in the basic skills of mathematics and English language acquisition. (Curriculum, Language and Training Office, 1985)

Several factors may be at the root of negative school outcomes in the early grades. One is the testing instrument itself; the Micronesian Achievement Test Series is a test battery which only measures achievement (not aptitude) in English and mathematics. Marshallese elementary students receive no exposure to English literacy in grades one and two. From grades three through eight, English is presented only as a second/foreign language arts component. Marshallese is the language of content instruction for these students, but their academic achievement is measured in English. As the most commonly used measure of educational achievement, the MATS should be brought into serious question in terms of its content (skills are never evaluated in Marshallese), appropriateness (the test was created and standardized for the entire Micronesian region), and reliability. For most Marshallese students, their first testing experience is a negative one. Implications for later attitudes towards education as a whole require serious attention. One thing is clear: Marshallese
students are set up for failure in the early years by virtue of the fact that they are underprepared for the MATS and underevaluated in terms of native language skills and knowledge of the home culture.

An article which recently appeared in the Marshall Islands Journal (the Majuro newspaper) reflects a deepening concern for school difficulties at the elementary level. Explanations offered by Department of Education officials center on three main categories: teachers, curriculum, and a lack of parent and community involvement. When negative school outcomes occur, there is a strong tendency for educators and the general public to first place blame on teachers. This attitude is today reflected in a push for teacher competency examinations in the U.S. and also remains prevalent in the Marshall Islands. Education officials claim that teacher-related problems lie in three areas: a lack of supervision (especially in outer-island schools where test performance is weakest), inadequate English proficiency on the part of teachers, and weaknesses in the delivery of instruction. They advocate an increase in ESL training and workshops on "problem areas" for teachers.

The curriculum has also come under fire. Teachers complain that texts are difficult to use, and administrators argue that materials should be more "colorful" to generate enthusiasm. While the Marshallese and English readers are admittedly dull, the entire approach to education and language learning has been given relatively little attention. The Marshall Islands Curriculum Language and Training Center (1985) has acknowledged that the problem may lie not so much in the quality of the materials
themselves, but rather in the fact that the curriculum for various subject areas has not been adequately integrated.

There appear to be two major problems with the elementary curriculum. English, when taught from a second/foreign language arts perspective, rarely allows students to use the language for meaningful communication or as a vehicle for learning. Further, the curriculum for the subject areas (taught in Marshallese), is in need of integration. It will later be argued that these two curricular weaknesses may be simultaneously addressed if an immersion approach to second language learning is adopted.

A third explanation offered by officials for early negative school outcomes is a perceived lack of parent and community involvement in education. Some progress has been demonstrated in schools with active Parent Teacher Associations as students from these elementary schools were more likely to be admitted to high school (Marshall Islands Journal, 1986). While parent and community involvement is a powerful factor for educational success, several issues need to be explored before parents and communities are blamed.

Education officials complain of a lack of parental concern and community involvement, claiming that most Marshallese adults hold the attitude that education should be left to the educators. Before such attitudes are judged, however, the role of the family and community in traditional education should be examined. Was education initiated solely by master teachers? Similarly, the role and form of learning in the home should be considered. Educators should also work to find ways to draw parents and communities into
the decision-making process.

As has been shown, negative school outcomes at the elementary level have been attributed to a wide variety of factors. Fortunately, a notion which plagues American educators (Cummins, 1984) seems curiously absent in the Marshalls: the students themselves have not yet been cited as causes of negative educational outcomes.

The educational problems which begin at the elementary level are exacerbated at the secondary level, when English becomes the language of instruction:

[The] continuing shortcomings in the elementary students' performance in the basic skills have serious repercussions on the instructional focus of the secondary schools. In the spring of 1985, young men and women accepted for entrance to the two public high schools averaged a 2.2 reading level on the Metropolitan Reading Test (second grade, second month). Students entering secondary schools from the elementary system require extensive remediation in all academic subject areas in order to begin secondary-level instruction, particularly in...up-grading study skills and English comprehension.

(Curriculum, Language and Training Center, 1985)

The high drop-out rate at the high school level may be attributed to many causes but the frustration of switching to a new language of instruction (when combined with the remedial nature of high school learning) may be seen as a crucial factor in negative outcomes at the secondary level.

Secondary education may also be seen to produce negative outcomes in terms of preparation for employment. High school graduates are generally overqualified for subsistence level work, but there are not enough jobs in the cash economy to employ them,
either (Bartsch, 1986; College of Micronesia, 1986). Administrators admittedly have little control over employment conditions. The curriculum could be modified, however, to better prepare students for the types of jobs that are beginning to open up in the private sector.

Given the already crowded conditions in secondary schools, it may seem reasonable to postpone specific occupational training until the post-secondary level. This will be virtually impossible, however, for two reasons. The Compact of Free Association disqualifies Marshallese students from U.S. assistance programs. As these student loans and grants are cut, Marshallese students will, with few exceptions, be less able to attend post-secondary institutions (College of Micronesia, 1986). Furthermore, the patterns which plague Marshallese students from the earliest grades continue well into the post-secondary level, as illustrated by Bartsch (1986):

Following [high school] graduation in 1982, 36 of the 66 graduates entered college, including 24 in two year institutions of the College of Micronesia. By mid-1985, six of these college students had graduated with A.A. degrees, 18 were still enrolled... and 13 had dropped out of college.

Completion of a bachelor's or post-graduate degree is even rarer for Marshallese students. Of the adults in the 1980 labor force, 25% completed high school, 12.3% had completed more than one year of post-secondary study, and just 5.1% had four or more years of college education (Bartsch, 1986).

Thus far, causes for the negative educational outcomes which occur across the school system have been discussed in terms of
infrastructural features. It is equally important, though, to consider the issues from a more global perspective. Historically, formal education systems have been used in the Marshall Islands to control the status quo of the Marshallese people. The formal education system introduced by the Americans was implemented because the United States saw education as the primary vehicle for development (Nevin, 1977). Education systems should not be seen as independent entities, for they are both outgrowths and causes for sociopolitical conditions.

In the United States, educators have long been grappling with the question of why certain language minorities experience persistent and disproportionate failure in American school systems. Ogbu (1986) indicates that hypotheses which center on cultural and linguistic "mismatches" have failed to explain minority school performance in the United States. He suggests that successful school outcomes occur when students perceive, through the adults in their community, a reasonable connection between school achievement and success in getting jobs, wages, and other societal benefits.

Since it is clear that Marshallese students fare worse than their Micronesian counterparts on the MATS, further thought should be given to the sociopolitical position of Marshallese students and the extent to which they perceive ultimate rewards from the education system. Since the Marshall Islands have experienced more U.S. military presence than other Micronesian regions, attention should be given to possible resulting influences on attitudes toward education in general.
Another non-school area which demands attention is that of learning in the home. There is a paucity of information about learning styles and contexts in the Marshallese home. Poor school performance may be the result of an incongruence between the learning styles used in the home and those required in the school. While sociopolitical and home/school differences will undoubtedly shed some light on negative school outcomes, language and language instruction remain as the most immediate issues.

REVIEW OF HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL EVIDENCE: A MANDATE FOR CHANGE

The negative school outcomes discussed in the previous section demonstrate a need for innovation in educational policy so that Marshallese educators can better serve and prepare the students of tomorrow. Previous approaches to language and instruction have only been minimally effective in bringing about improved academic achievement. Although educators have realized that the current English program is not effective and that alternatives need to be explored (Ministry of Education official, personal communication), English is still based on the Tate Oral English Series at the elementary level.

The Bilingual Education Project for Micronesia did not result in outcomes which educators hoped for when it was established in 1974. In fact, Gibson reports that these programs were bilingual only in that two languages were recognized in the school setting. In actuality, "perhaps 95% of the effort and 75% of the money were devoted to ESL", rendering such programs to a position little different from the previous language arts approaches to English (Gibson, 1979).
The bilingual programs have not, however, been without merit. In a 1981 review of bilingual education in Micronesia, Gibson reported improved student reading levels in English and the vernacular, increased class participation in classes taught in the native language, and frequent instances of increased parent and community support of the school. He indicates that the most significant problems in the bilingual programs were lack of materials in the vernacular, inappropriate English texts, a scarcity of qualified teachers, and inadequate funding (Gibson, 1979, 1981).

Because the approaches tried thus far have not provided the desired linguistic and academic outcomes, alternative approaches to language and education must be considered. In the following section, the historical and educational evidence presented in the first half of this paper will be analyzed within the framework of immersion education theory, an alternative way of approaching education in a context where two or more languages are used for instructional purposes.

Genesee (personal communication) has cautioned that while immersion has been shown to be an effective way to teach language, it does not necessarily cause successful schooling. As illustrated previously, there are clearly two issues involved: language policy and educational policy. An immersion model is not suggested here as a comprehensive solution to all of the problems which affect Marshallese educators and students today. Immersion is treated, however, as an approach which will allow integration of issues by combining ideal solutions (i.e., theory) with programmatic modifications.
Marshallese and English both play important roles in the Marshall Islands today. Planners and policymakers should be mindful of several factors in considering the relative importance of these languages. Marshallese has had to compete with languages which are more widely spoken around the world (German, Japanese, and now English). Just as Maori, Chamorro, and Hawaiian have been forced into a position of decline, so the survival of Marshallese may soon be endangered. Marshallese educators may take heart, then, from programs recently implemented to revive the indigenous languages in New Zealand and the Marianas Islands (Benton, 1981), and in Hawai'i (Doi, et al, 1986). Concern should exist not only for maintenance of Marshallese but also for its enrichment and elevation to a deserved level of prestige. Marshallese remains as the dominant language in the home, in school settings, in religious functions and in most daily transactions. Full proficiency in the native language, then, is absolutely necessary.

At the same time, the role that English plays in providing access to higher education and improved employment opportunities cannot be overlooked. English is necessary for almost any type of government job, and will be increasingly demanded in private sector employment where the greatest growth is expected to occur (Bartsch, 1986). With the implementation of the Compact of Free Association, Marshallese nationals receive a preferred status for immigration to the United States, where proficiency in English is an immeasurable advantage. Marshallese citizens are also now eligible for U.S. military service provided they have sufficient proficiency to pass the entrance examination. Proficiency in English, then, is an
ability which maximizes opportunities at every level.

Government and education representatives have officially expressed support for use of both languages. The Marshall Islands Task Force on Education (1981) has even suggested that the Marshallese language and teachings could form the ideal basis for an educational system. The Marshallese people, in supporting the Compact of Free Association and in proceeding with the development of a cash economy, have also expressed implicit support for the development of proficiency in both languages. Full bilingualism will not be necessary for every Marshallese citizen, but the education system should provide as many people as possible with the opportunity to acquire a sufficient level of English proficiency.

As Nevin (1977) states, the schools in Micronesia do not reflect the reality of the lives of the students. Education should, in fact, reflect what the students will face upon completion of school. The language arts approach to English at the elementary level does not reflect the types of English skills which students need at the high school level. Similarly, success at the high school level does not ensure employment in the new reality, the growing cash economy.

Marshallese society is changing at a rapid pace and further contact with the outside world will continue and most likely increase. What will emerge is a blend of traditional Marshallese society and foreign societies, primarily American. If, as Nevin (1977) claims, schools inevitably reinforce culture, then the culture to be reinforced should be the one existing in the Marshall Islands today, rather than the culture which is enforced by the
previously introduced mainstream model of American education. Schools are the instruments which socialize students to adapt to new and changing needs. A system of schooling based on an immersion model of education will help students cope with their new reality, and will thus better facilitate successful cultural socialization.

**IMMERSION EDUCATION**

Genesee (1984) defines immersion education as "a type of bilingual education in which a second language (or languages) is used along with the students' first language for curriculum instruction during some part of the students' elementary and/or secondary schooling." This sets immersion programs apart from ESL (where the language is generally not taught through content) and also from transitional bilingual education programs in which minority language children in the United States are instructed concurrently in two languages. Immersion is also distinct from programs commonly referred to as "submersion" where the medium of instruction is exclusively a language other than the students' first language (Genesee, 1984). Immersion programs are widespread and successful in Canada and also function effectively in several locations in the United States, including Silver Spring, Maryland and San Diego (San Diego City Schools, 1982), and in Wales (Beaudoin, et al, 1981).

Genesee (1984) states that the major goals of immersion education are:

1) To provide the participating students with functional competence in the second language
2) To promote and maintain normal levels of first language development

3) To ensure achievement in academic subjects commensurate with the students' academic ability and grade level

4) To instill in the students an understanding and appreciation for the target language group and their language and culture without detracting in any way from the students' identity with and appreciation for the home language and culture

Varieties of the immersion model are based on two primary factors: the grade level at which instruction through the second language is introduced and the percentage of instructional time spent in either language. Several factors remain relatively constant across the spectrum of program types. Content courses taught in one language are never repeated in the other language. When the language of instruction changes from class to class, students also change classrooms and teachers. Genesee (1983) claims that this is a vital component since students become accustomed to speaking each language in particular contexts.

In the early immersion model, all instruction is presented in the second language beginning in kindergarten. The first language is introduced in the middle elementary grades and its rate of use gradually increases until the level determined by the program, from 20% to 80% of the total instruction time. Students in the early immersion model are not prevented from using their first language, but the teacher always addresses the class through the second language.

Delayed immersion differs from early immersion in that the first language is used as the medium of instruction in the early
grades and then shifts to the second language in the middle elementary grades. Language arts instruction continues in the first language. Following one or two years of content instruction in the second language, the rate of first language use increases.

Late immersion postpones instruction through the second language until the seventh grade, although students do receive some second language arts instruction in elementary school. The secondary curriculum is similar to regular high school courses except that instruction takes place in the second language.

Evaluative studies of immersion programs are reported extensively and in great detail. The basic findings have shown that first language competency is maintained and students do attain near-native like skills in the second language while achieving grade equivalent competency in academic performance (see Genesee, 1983). Thus, the goals of immersion are achieved. Genesee states that immersion programs "represent workable models of multilingual/multicultural education of possible interest to ethnolinguistic groups who are interested in revitalizing heritage languages while at the same time wishing to acquire competence in an additional second language of some local or national relevance."

The choice of an immersion program model rests on decisions regarding the language of instruction at each grade level. Cummins (1979) states that instruction for children in a second language will be difficult if they have not developed sufficient first language skills for functions which are essential to success in school. If students do not possess these necessary skills for
school success, then they will be faced with the formidable task of not only learning a second language, but also acquiring academic skills in the second language. This problem is compounded by the fact that Marshallese students are currently not receiving adequate Marshallese instruction in the elementary grades, thus precluding the chance for the students to transfer skills acquired in the first language to the second language. If Cummins' (1981) interdependence principle is applied to this context, then indeed language skills which should be acquired in Marshallese will be transferred to the students' second language, English. Cummins (1979) suggests that the skills will transfer based on this principle if two factors are present: adequate motivation on the part of the student and adequate exposure to the second language either in the school or in the environment.

The preceding discussion would argue for intensive instruction in Marshallese in the initial stages of the students' schooling to provide an opportunity for the acquisition of academic skills in the native language during the early grades. In addition, since instruction currently is in Marshallese at the elementary level, the continuation of first language instruction would require few programmatic modifications. The task facing program planners would be to facilitate student motivation and exposure to English, especially as its rate of use in the curriculum is increased. Cummins (1984) argues that instruction which is activity based and embedded in content will increase student motivation. The introduction of content-based English instruction early in the students' career may provide the necessary exposure prior to
entering secondary school.

If high school students are dropping out of school because they have not acquired the skills necessary to perform successfully in an educational setting where instruction is given in a second language, then attempts must be made to facilitate acquisition of these skills. Cummins (1984) has proposed a framework for the empowerment of minority students which suggests that linguistic and cultural components of education must be additive and validate the students' language and culture in the classroom. Although Marshallese students are not in a minority group within their own societal context, they can be seen to be disadvantaged in terms of the present educational system, especially if they continue with further education in English dominant settings. Hernandez-Chavez (1984) suggests that immersion education models achieve "additive bilingualism" resulting from a key principle of immersion: "that children's academic achievement, native language development, and native cultural values not only will be unharmed but will be reinforced and enhanced by the addition of proficient bilingual skills."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations offered in this section are intended to serve only as general guidelines for the implementation of a pilot immersion education project in the Marshall Islands. They are intended to reflect the scope of modifications suggested by this alternative approach to language in education. The recommendations should not be seen as comprehensive solutions to the myriad of
educational crises which face Marshallese students today. On the other hand, planners may recognize the possibility that features of immersion (e.g., learning language through content) may indirectly address more general issues (such as low MATS scores).

Administration

One advantage of immersion education is that it may be adopted into existing programs with a minimum amount of administrative change. The ability to work within the existing infrastructure is especially crucial in the Marshall Islands because funding constraints disallow new programs. The Ministry of Education should integrate its efforts with other government branches to ensure that Marshallese students will be able to assume a productive role in government, the private sector, and higher education.

Funding

Immersion programs have been shown to cost no more than regular school programs once they are in place and operating (Cummins, personal communication). To cover the additional costs in the initial program stages, planners will need to take advantage of funding which may be available either from technical assistance clauses under the Compact (College of Micronesia, 1986), or monies which may be allocated locally. Cooperation should be sought with outside educational institutions to assist in program development and implementation. Furthermore, strong emphasis should be placed on presenting a pilot immersion project to parents and other community members to allow for involvement in the planning stages.
Initial Research

Programmatic features such as materials development and staff selection are of primary importance, but concurrent research into issues such as home learning styles, culturally-specific classroom participation patterns, and attitudes toward learning should not be disregarded. The role of literacy and patterns for learning outside the school setting should be studied.

If identified, the skills which students possess and the styles in which they learn at home may later be incorporated into the curriculum to create a learning environment which is congruent with the students' daily reality. Ensuring that school activities are in congruence with children's experiences is of vital importance. Studies in numerous other settings (Philips, 1972; Au, 1972; Heath, 1983) have shown that students' academic performance improves when lessons incorporate culturally specific patterns of participation. Research into participation structures in both school and non-school settings may help to identify the types of instructional activities which will be most appropriate and effective in the Marshall Islands setting.

Attitudes toward learning itself also require investigation. The attitudes toward learning which underlie Western education models may be incongruent with Micronesian perspectives on wisdom. Nevin (1977) states that in traditional Micronesia, wisdom is the mastery of things known which relate to experiences gained from emulating elders; whereas, Westerners place high value on individual achievement and the expression of new ideas through imagination. Marshallese attitudes toward learning and wisdom
should be studied both in comparison to the Micronesian attitudes expressed above, and in relation to possible implications for success in the formal classroom. Research proposals and grants should be sought at all levels, with cooperation from institutions of higher education, bilingual research centers, and independent research teams.

Teacher Selection and Training

Qualified Marshallese teachers must be identified and trained as early as possible. Teachers must be bilingual, as Genesee (1984) indicates that teacher bilingualism is a crucial element of classroom practice. Elders should be identified and recruited to assist with instruction in Marshallese skills and culture.

Once selected, bilingual teachers must be trained in the theoretical underpinnings and techniques for conducting classroom activities which form the basis of successful immersion education. Intensive teacher training (over a suggested period of one to two years) may be accomplished in conjunction with the scheduled reopening of the Majuro teacher training center and/or course work at outside institutions.

Curricular Considerations and Materials Development

Detailed planning will be required in order to delineate the courses to be taught in each language. It is premature to state, for example, that English should be the medium of instruction for science classes. Program planners should determine which subjects lend themselves best to instruction in Marshallese or English. The
grade in which English immersion begins should also be considered. It will also be necessary to identify the nature of the immersion program after a certain grade level. Since one of the chief goals is better student preparation for the shift to all-English schools, the program should continue through the eighth grade, though perhaps in varying proportions of English instruction. A task force is recommended to study and oversee materials development. In the initial stages of the project, existing materials may be used simultaneously with those designed specifically for the program. Cummins (personal communication) suggests that students may actually produce reading materials derived from writing about their own experiences.

Though the majority of recommendations for the pilot program focus on elementary schools, policies and practices at the secondary level will also require adaptation. The availability of classes taught through Marshallese at the high school level should be considered. Furthermore, until high schools are able to accommodate every student and until employment opportunities are more well-defined, it may be necessary to employ a multi-track system for high school students. If such a system is adopted, planners will need to give special consideration to testing and placement tools for determining the best track for individual students. The need for careful academic advising must be recognized and emphasized.
Integrative Approaches to Language Planning

Viewed separately, the recommendations offered above may seem overwhelming. In the past few decades anthropologists, sociolinguists, and educators have come to realize that individual features of education cannot be assessed in isolation. This has led to changes not only in the way that language, culture, and education are studied, but also in the way that such issues are approached and planned. While it is important to consider each feature within the educational system, it will also be critical to view and plan a pilot immersion program in the context of more global factors. As Spolsky (1978) indicates, bilingual education should be "examined in relation to a variety of factors: linguistic, psychological, cultural, religious, political, geographic, demographic, historical, and socio-economic, in conjunction with a 'generalized' education factor." With the passage of the Compact of Free Association, Marshallese educators will, for the first time in centuries, be able to do just that.

CONCLUSION

The authors of this paper hope that it will serve as an incentive for educators in the Marshall Islands and other Pacific Island nations to view today's issues from a new perspective. The evidence which has been presented should raise questions regarding current educational policy and areas which demand review, including classroom practices and pedagogy, the role of language in the school, and most importantly, the needs of the students. While an attempt has been made not to address the issues from an
ethnocentric point of view, any statements which may have been made in disregard for the genuine concerns of the Marshallese people are strictly an oversight on the part of the authors. It has been stated in the paper that foreign models of education are partly at fault for many of the problems which exist in the education system today. The proposal of yet another Western model, immersion education, is not intended to continue this practice, but rather to offer an alternative which can accommodate what the authors have presented as evidence for an innovative approach to language and education in the Marshall Islands.
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