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Language in the Ecumenical Movement

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"Looking back now to the years just before the First World War," says George Steiner in his essay "The Language Animal,"[1] "we can recognize the beginnings of a 'language revolution'." "Like most true revolutions, it has behind it a distinctive failure of nerve." Significantly enough, this language crisis and revolution, this rediscovery of the central role and the limits of the linguistic dimension in man and human culture, was contemporaneous both with the re-emergence of the Ecumenical Movement and with the appearance of the European 'theology of crisis' associated with the Swiss theologian Karl Barth.

The theology of crisis and the crisis of language both had their origin in the breakdown of liberal humanism in the first quarter of this century, in the sickness of European civilization suddenly erupting in the catastrophe of the First World War, then in the totalitarianisms of the post war period, in the Holocaust and the Second World War, and today in the stark contrast between the deeds of governments and nations and such verbal achievements as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Helsinki Final Act*.

Whatever else the Ecumenical Movement may be, it has undoubtedly been a language exercise on a massive scale. The exercise has been both diachronic and synchronic, wrestling with traditional verbal formulations of centuries of division *and* seeking to achieve agreement and unity across the contemporary Bable of tongues.

The author is a senior English translator in the Language Service of the World Council of Churches office in Geneva. He is also a minister of the United Reformed Church of England and Wales. This article is an abridged version of a longer discussion of the role of language in the Ecumenical Movement.

Despite the fact that the twentieth century ecumenical movement was coeval with the beginning of the 'language revolution' and with Barth's 'theology of crisis', it was only at the beginning of the present decade that the language problem reached the ecumenical agenda. Within the World Council of Churches, staff work on this problem began only in 1971. Even now the place of this theme on the agenda is a precarious one.

In January of 1971, the Central Committee[2] of the World Council of Churches (WCC) met in Addis Ababa. Among its major actions was the adoption of the final report of the structure committee. Of interest here is the program unit called "Education and Communication." Until this unit was created, language problems had been under the General Secretariat whose duties included: 'general supervision and coordination of . . . publications,' 'interpretation of the work of the Council to the churches and the public' and 'activities not otherwise assigned.' This latter activity included translation and interpretation. Within the General Secretariat there was a small 'Translation Section', a Department of Information and a Department of Publications. Some time after 1967, these three separate sections were amalgamated into a Department of Communications. In 1971, this Department became part of the new Education and Communication Unit and the Translation section was given the new and more appropriate name of Language Service, under this unit.

From 1967 onwards, the Committee responsible for this conglomerate of information, publications and language, was feeling its way toward a more

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coherent communications policy. In its 1971 report, the Committee pointed out that apart from the choice of three official languages, the World Council of Churches had at that time no agreed understanding of policy concerning language. The Committee report went on to say that the creation of the Education and Communication Unit 'provides the appropriate occasion and framework for a careful review, made in collaboration with people professionally qualified in this field, of the place and use of language in the Ecumenical movement.'

One of the first steps taken by the staff director of the new Education and Communication unit was to set up a staff 'Language Policy Task Force' (LPTF)[3] to review the language policy of the WCC. The LPTF 'brought together the concern of many who felt that the language policy and practices of the World Council of Churches needed drastic re-appraisal.' In 1972 the LPTF put out a paper entitled "The Threat of Monolingualism in the WCC." Relating language to the total activity of ecumenical fellowship, the report raised fundamental questions about communication. It emphasized that present language policy placed the majority of member churches and their participants at a serious disadvantage, because all who did not speak English as a mother tongue operated with a considerable handicap. In short, it said, language is power and present WCC policy results in an unjust sharing of power. Urged by the Central Committee to expand and continue its work, the LPTF explored the problem further and discovered a large degree of insensitivity on the part of English mother-tongue speakers and a rising level of frustration on the part of others. The staff 'week of meetings' in May 1973 included a plenary presentation of the language problem by the LPTF. This and the ensuing discussion was a fairly successful attempt to develop staff sensitivity to the issues. The 1973 report of the LPTF stated that 'human communication only becomes possible through common involvement in common action' and called in question the entire style of involvement in WCC affairs.

Practical follow-up from the 1973 Central Committee took several forms. Membership of the LPTF was broadened to include more staff members from Asia, Africa and Latin America. A more multilingual style was encouraged and developed in WCC meetings. Staff interest in learning languages and developing language skills was encouraged by subsidized courses. A questionnaire to all staff elicited useful information about available language skills, including the discovery that over 50 languages were spoken by staff members. Discussion of the language problem outside the WCC was promoted as a result of the interest shown in the LPTF's work within the Ecumenical Movement and beyond. The question of the languages used in WCC periodicals and publications was taken up, and a recommendation made that the Library should provide a wider range of books and periodicals in African, Asian and Latin American languages. Other practical recommendations were made concerning languages at the forthcoming Fifth Assembly, many of which were adopted. Finally a detailed set of proposals was presented concerning the Language Service and future WCC language policy.

At the 1975 Assembly itself, the delegates were reminded of language as a problem. The *Work Book* (a preparatory guide to the program and work of the Assembly), included a paragraph on "languages" in which among other things it was pointed out that 'interpretation facilities are provided to enhance the exchange and comprehension of views' and exhorted delegates to 'make full use of them both for speaking themselves and for listening to others.' Delegates were told that if they were tempted to stop listening because the speaker was using a language they could not follow easily, they should resist the temptation.[3] People were encouraged to speak whichever of the three 'working languages' (French, German or English) they were most fluent in and reminded that English was not obligatory. It was pointed out that the Rules permitted the use of other languages beside the 'working languages' and that adequate additional time would be allowed when consecutive interpretation was necessary. The delegates were also reminded that it would be helpful if they spoke clearly and distinctly and avoided unnecessarily complicated or idiomatic expressions.

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On the initiative of the LPTF, the 1974 Central Committee decided to charge a group of delegates at the Assembly with a watching brief on language and communication questions during the Assembly. This group of language consultants met several times during the Assembly to share observations and experiences and on two occasions took action in letters to moderators, drawing their attention to remediable language problems and frustrations experienced by delegates and making practical suggestions. The group also circulated to all delegates and participants a questionnaire on their language experiences at the Assembly, and on the basis of the replies, produced a detailed report for the Central Committee meeting in Geneva in 1976. One of the most effective contributions at the Assembly on the language issue came in a key-note address in plenary when the speaker drew attention to 'language imperialism' in the Ecumenical Movement and underlined his point by giving the rest of his address in Spanish — instead of in his mother tongue.

At the 1976 meeting of the Central Committee in Geneva, the language policy of the WCC was further refined as follows: "to recognize for the time being English, French, German, Russian and Spanish as working languages of the Council." This policy differed from earlier policies in two major ways first, the addition of Spanish and Russian to the 'working languages.' And secondly, the use of the phrase 'for the time being' emphasizing a refusal to establish any particular language as 'ecumenical.'

Another decision of the 1976 Central Committee was to ask the General Secretary in consultation with the Department of Communication to bring recommendations to the Executive Committee in 1977 concerning the precise size, composition and assignments of the Geneva-based language service, taking into account the working languages adopted for policy-making committees, the estimated translation and interpretation needs of these committees and the needs of the various sub-units and departments. A training program to build up translation and interpretation skills in the regions was authorized, provided finances could be raised outside the general budget. This has been pursued as far as funding has permitted; a promising beginning has been made in several regions of the world.

In 1973, for pragmatic operational reasons, the Department of Communication was removed from the Education and Communication Unit and relocated under the General Secretariat.

In February, 1977, the Executive Committee agreed that the present level of staff be maintained in the Language Service and that the implementation of the training program for translators and interpreters in the regions be added to the tasks of the Language Service. The present Language Service consists of only nine permanent staff: six translators working from three other languages into their respective mother tongues, French, German and English, with two administrators and a Head of Service.

In addition there is a roster of outside translators and interpreters. Money (or the lack of it) is, of course, a problem.

Is this a happy ending? Speaking personally, I confess to a strong conviction that the Ecumenical Movement has still a major task ahead of it to develop sensitivity to the place of language and languages in the movement toward the unity of the Church and of human beings. Language may now have struggled onto the ecumenical agenda and have established its place there. But the full treatment it deserves is still ahead.

NOTES

1. In Extraterritorial, *Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution by George Steiner. London: Faber and Faber, 1972.*
2. *Quotations and information are taken from the published* Minutes *of the Central Committee of the WCC.*
3. *Information on the LPTF given here is taken from* Uppsala to Nairobi, *1968-1975, Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, ed. by David Johnston. 1975. New York: Friendship Press and London: SPCK.*

LPTF DOCUMENTS

1. The Threat of Monolingualism to the WCC, *Interim Reflections on WCC Language Policy. Report of LPTF to Central Committee, Utrecht 1972. Doc. 15.*
2. LPTF Paper for Week of Meetings, *Geneva, May 1973.*
3. Interviews on Language Policy and Practice in the WCC, *LPTF and Language Service Paper, Geneva 1973.*
4. LPTF Report to Central Committee, *Geneva 1973,* Minutes, *App. VI.*
5. LPTF Third Report and Recommendations, *Central Committee, West Berlin, 1975, Doc. 4.*
6. Towards a Language Policy for the World Council of Churches, *Fifth Assembly 1975, Hearing on General Secretariat, Doc. 8.*
7. Report of the Language Consultants, *Central Committee, Geneva 1976, Doc. GS 5.*

LANGUAGE SERVICES DOCUMENTS

1. Language Service WCC.
2. Ecumenical Terminology, Terminologie Oecuménique, Ökumenische Terminologie, Terminología Ecumenénica, *WCC Geneva 1975.*

NOW AVAILABLE — "Language and National Development: the Public Debate, 1976, ed. by Bob McDonald, Occasional Paper No. 11, 1976, University of Papua New Guinea.

Contains a reprint of T. E. Dutton's inaugural lecture, "Language and National Development — long wanem rot?"; a transcript of Newsman radio interview of Prof. Dutton; and 57 press and radio items dealing with the debate over a national language for Papua New Guinea.

NOW AVAILABLE —*The Conversion of Scripts —Its Nature, History, and Utilization* by Hans H. Wellisch. New York, Chichester, Brisbane, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons. 509 pp. $29.95.

Practitioners and students of language reform will learn much from this book, particularly Chapter 2, "The Adaptation of Scripts to Various Languages. Other important chapters include Chapter 5 "The Requirements of Scrips Conversion" and Chapter 1 "Writing Systems, Scripts, and Conversion of Scripts: Classification, Typology, and Definitions." The material on script selection policy in the Soviet Union is of particular interest. (Richard E. Wood)

NOW AVAILABLE — "Pidgins, Creoles, Lingue Franche, and National Development" by Stephen Wurm, in *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics* ed by Albert Valdman, Bloomington and London": Indiana University Press.

A discussion of the languages which may be chosen as national language in Papua New Guinea. (called external language planning) Also includes a discussion of ongoing corpus planning for New Guinea Pidgin (he calls this 'internal language planning'). Finally, discusses the outlooks for the future and especially the need for more language planning if Pidgin is chosen. While the distinction Wurm uses "external and internal language planning" corresponds to what Kloss calls status and corpus planning (and more or less to what Jernudd and I call allocation of language use and corpus planning), Wurm's distinction between language engineering (actual language interference) and language planning (stages of deliberation and programmatic planning) seems artificial and unnecessary. Given that language planning processes are cyclical and reiterative the two processes are interwoven in ways in which it is theoretically impossible to separate. Further, the two interact processually and should not be separated. It is possible to look at the linguistic changes but these cannot be understood without understanding the sociolinguistic and political setting which operate on the choice of changes and their subsequent implementation and acceptance.

NOW AVAILABLE — *Språkpolitikk på fem kontinent. Eit oversyn og ei jamføring.* (Linguistic Politics on Five Continents. A Survey and a Comparison) by Lars S. Vikør. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1977. 238 pp. NKR 58.00 (Address: Postboks 4672, Sofienberg, Oslo 5, Norway).

Vikør, himself an active member of the Nynorsk language movement in Norway, offers the first Norwegian language (Nynorsk) book on worldwide language policy or linguistic politics (the title implies both). The book is a combination of articles by outside specialists and chapters by Vikør himself. It ranges from an elementary presentation in Norwegian of the contents of already widely available studies in other languages, mainly English and German, to valuable original studies based on primary source materials, notably the chapter on Iceland. Chapters with relevance to language planning include "Greece: Two Standard Languages in Confrontation," "China: Language and Linguistic Politics," "Malay: From Lingua Franca to National Language," and "Africa: Languages Without Nations or Nations Without Languages?" (Richard E. Wood).

NOW AVAILABLE — *Culture in Crisis: The Future of the Welsh Language* by Clive Betts. Upton: The Ffynnon Press. Hardback 5.50 pounds. Paperback 3 pounds. [Address: P.O. Box 2, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside L49 ISV].

We hope to have a review of this book in a later issue. The author, a reporter, carried out an investigation of the state of the Welsh language, looking into its prospects for survival. He found that over much of Wales, the language is firmly on the way out. In the book, he outlines a detailed set of policies on how it can be saved — particularly in one region — the Heartland of the West and North. This is the first time that the idea of creating linguistic zones has been put forward in the English language. Betts feels that the very recent shift of thinking among those dealing in Wales with language questions — namely, the concentration of effort among the Welsh-speaking districts — may be due in part to some of the information and theory found in his book.

NOW AVAILABLE — *African Languages,* No 3, 1977 (address: International African Institute, 210 High Holborn, London WC1V7BW, England).

This issue includes two articles of interest: Chinebuah, Isaac K. "The National Language Issue in Africa: the Case for Akan in Ghana," and Osaji, Debe "Language Imposition: Socio-linguistic Case Study of the Hausa Language in Nigeria."

NOW AVAILABLE — Språkvård, No 4, 1977 (address: Svenska språknämnden, Birger Jarlsgatan 9, S-111 45 Stockholm, Sweden) 20 SwKr for four issues.

This is a strongly language planning oriented issue, consisting of: "Erik Wellander 1884-1977" by Bertil Molde, a necrology of the pioneer in Swedish language planning. "Svenskan i Finland och finlandssvensk språkvård" (Swedish in Finland and Finland-Swedish Language Cultivation). "Om språkvård i statens tjänst" (On Language Cultivation in the Civil Service) by Inger Marcks von Wurtemberg. "International sprogplanlægning" (International Language Planning) by Peder Skyum-Nielsen. (Richard E. Wood)

NOW AVAILABLE — *National Languages in the USSR: Problems and Solutions* by M. I. Isayev. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1977. 431 pages (in English).

This book offers a classification of the languages spoken in the USSR and their respective spheres of use. Considerable attention is given to the role of Russian as the "cross-national" language. Isayev compares language planning in the Soviet Union favorably with that in other countries, particularly those in the West. Much of the book is historical and traces language construction (iazykovoe stroitel'stvo) over the decades of Soviet power. (William Fierman).

NOW AVAILABLE — "Språkplanlegging og toleranse" Language Planning and Tolerance by Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen in *Språknytt,* 4:4 (1976), 6-9.

Writing-unlike Vikør-in Bokmal, Halvorsen calls for tolerance in language planning in Norway. He discusses the remarkable history of language conflict and language standardization in Norway, for which, he says, there is no parallel in Western Europe. Language planning in Norway, has, according to Halvorsen, been in the hands of activists who have sought to implement numerous changes, often against the passive resistance of the silent majority. Halvorsen warns against "heavy-handed direction of language development," against underestimating the power of the traditional written language as recorded in standard literary works, and against a hasty assumption of a public demand for the approximation of written and spoken language. He calls for greater freedom, i.e. less legal enforcement of orthographic unity and reform. Halvorsen's laissez-faire Bokmal paper is something of an exception in *Språknytt,* organ of the Norwegian Language Council, which tends to be written mainly by members of the Nynorsk activist minority. (Richard E. Wood).

NOW AVAILABLE — The Bulletin of the Zambia Language Group, editor Robert Serpell (address: Psychology Department, University of Zambia, Box 2379, Lusaka, Zambia).

To date, five issues have appeared. Vol. 1, No. 1 and Vol. 2, No. 2 are of particular interest to language planning students. Items of interest in Volume 1 are:

Kashoki	Report on the survey of language use and language teaching in Zambia
Tempo	The medium of instruction
Phiri	The place of local languages in the Zambia Primary School System
Lamba	Some language problems facing the adult literacy programme
Kaemba	Who reads the Zambian language newspapers. Some observations on past and present trends in readership

Volume 2 contains the following:

Mwanakatwe	Language and national unity
Kashoki	Language: a blueprint for national integration
Mytton	Multilingualism in Zambia
Serpell	Multilingualism in an urban area

Copies of these two issues are available from the editor.

(Note: the editor apologizes for only listing the last names of the above authors; by oversight she only took these down).

NOW AVAILABLE — "Community Involvement: The Response of Second Language Teaching to the Challenge of the Multi-Cultural Society" by D.E. Ingram in *Towards a Multi-Cultural Tasmania,* Report of a Conference, June 25, 1977. (Available from: Multi-Cultural Conference Committee, GPO Box 252C, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia 7001).

NOW AVAILABLE — "Ethnic Consciousness in the British Isles: Questions for Language Planning" by Patricia C. Nichols in *Language Problems and Language Planning* Vol. 1, No. 1977, pages 10-31.

Discusses the current claims being made for language recognition by Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Further she considers the language problems of West Indians and Asians in the British Isles.

NOW AVAILABLE — *Alternatives of Ethnicity* by William W. Bostock. Hobart, Tasmania: Hobart, Cat and Fiddle Press. (Address: 81 Murray Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7000) $4.95.

Contains references to Language Education, Standard of English, Lack of English and the role of the vernacular in education and ethnicity.

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CONFERENCE: Educational Planning in Multilingual Countries

A conference on Educational Planning Multilingual Countries was held in Peru January 14-20, 1978. Participants were educators and social scientists from Peru, Bolivia, and Guatemala, consultants from the United States, and education officers of the U.S. Agency for International Development. AID and the Peruvian Ministry of Education cosponsored the meeting, which was organized by the Languate Policy Research Program of the Department of Linguistics of Cornell University. The days of the meeting were divided between Cuzco, where experimental bilingual education projects are under way, and the national capital, Lima. The agenda included discussion of sociolinguistic and policy differences and similarities among the three Latin American countries with respect to education for vernacular language speakers, exchange of information about technical and institutional aspects of bilingual education at the classroom, district, regional, and national levels, and examination of considerations in planning. The conference produced a set of conclusions and recommendations for future action.

SYMPOSIUM: NATO Symposium: Language Interpretation and Communication

A symposium on language interpretation and communication under the auspices of NATO was held September 16 - October 1, 1977 in Venice, Italy. It was organized by H. Wallace Sinaiko, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. and David Gerver, University of Stirling, Scotland, England. Since interpretation and interpretation are often solutions to language problems and since practitioners often seek solutions to language inadequacies which they encounter, this area should be of interest to language planners. The proceedings will be published by Plenum Publishers in Great Britain, Spring, 1978. Further information on the meeting can be obtained from:

Dr. David Gerver
Dept. of Psychology
University of Stirling
FK9 ALA
Scotland, U.K.

SYMPOSIUM! Sociocultural Aspects of Language Planning

Paul L. Garvin, State University of New York at Buffalo, organized a symposium entitled "Sociocultural Aspects of Language Planning" for the 1978 Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropolitical Association. It was held 17-19 March at Laval University, Quebec City. In addition to a paper by Garvin "Types of Language Loyalty", papers presented were: "Sociocultural Aspects of Second-Language Teaching" by Gerardo Alvarex, Laval University; "Language Problems of Ireland" by John Edwards, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia; "Cultural and Educational Problems of the Caribbean Francophone Creole Community,, by Gilles Lefebre, Université de Montréal; "Sociocultural Factors in the Revival of Hebrew" by Moshe Nahir, University of Manitoba; and "Language Problems of the Flemings of France" by Richard E. Wood, Plymouth State College of the University of New Hampshire.

CONFERENCE: International Dimensions of Bilingual Education

The 1978 Georgetown University Round Table had as its topic "International Dimensions of Bilin-

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BOOK AND ARTICLES
(Continued from Page 4)

IN PRESS — *Language in Zambia* edited by Sirarpi Ohannessian and Mubanga E. Kashoki. London: International African Institute. Available March, 1978. Price $13.00.

Concentrates on 3 major aspects of language: (1) language distribution and relationships, (2) Language use by different groups, including intelligibility studies and (3) Language in education at various levels, with special emphasis or Zambian languages.

NOW AVAILABLE — "Some Aspects of Language Planning in Malaysia" by John T. Platt *Kivung* Vol. 9, No. 1, June, 1976.

NOW AVAILABLE — Soviet Language Planning: Goals, Results and Opinions by Jonathan Pool, Dept. of Political Science, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 98195.

This article has been submitted for publication in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices,* ed by Jeremy R. Arzael (New York: Praeger, 1978). Preprint copies may be requested from the author who spent several months in the USSR collecting date on language planning.

gual Education". It was held in Washington, D.C., March 15-18. Some 45 speakers gave presentations in the following topical areas: conceptual issues, parameters of bilingual education policy, implementation: strategy and structure, bilingual education and dialects and bilingualism and language learning. The speakers came from the Philippines, Ghana, Nigeria, Canada, Wales, Germany, the West Indies, Israel in addition to the United States. The papers of the conference will be edited by James E. Alatis and published by the Georgetown University Press. Further information can be obtained from:

Dean James E. Alatis
Institute of Languages and Linguistics
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C. 20057

MEETING: Teaching of Languages in a Multicultural and Bi-or Multicultural Context

A meeting of experts on language teaching in a bi-or plurilingual and multicultural environment was convened by UNESCO in Paris, France, December 19-23, 1977. Since its creation, UNESCO has opposed all forms of discrimination, including those forms based on language, and since language is an important part of education, of mass communication, and public life in general, it has been the subject of a number of international conferences. The work on mother-tongues has allowed the following issues to be clarified and approached: the maintenance of cultural and national identity; the safeguarding of cultural tradition; and the rapport between the student and his environment. The meeting brought 24 specialists together from all over the world to consider the state of the art, identify problems and research needs, strengthen international cooperation, and make recommendations for future international efforts. According to Rudolf Troike, president of the Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C. the meeting revealed a number of common situations and problems throughout the world, at the same time that it identified significant regional and national differences owing to social, linguistic, or historical factors, or to particular goverment policies. In most countries, local groups have very little say with regard to decisions as to which language will be used in the schooling process. Further information on this meeting can be gotten from:

ALSED
Division of Structures, Content, Methods
and Techniques of Instruction
UNESCO
Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris

(taken from ALSED Newsletter and CAL Newsletter)

CREATION OF AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS (AAAL)

AAAL consists of scholars interested in and actively contributing to the field of applied linguistics, which, for the purposes of the Association, is defined as "a multidisciplinary approach to language problems and issues." Candidates for membership will be expected to demonstrate that they are involved in productive activity which applies linguistic, psycholinguistic, or sociolinguistic knowledge to other areas such as education, speech pathology, language acquisition, reading, language planning, bilingualism, lexicography, translation, literary analysis, testing, rhetoric, or sound transmission.

Officers and Executive Committee for 1978 are as follows: President: Wilga M. Rivers (Harvard University); Vice President: Roger Shuy (Georgetown University and Center for Applied Linguistics); Secretary-Treasurer Bernard Spolsky (University of New Mexico); Members of the Executive Committee: Charles Ferguson (Stanford University), Albert Valdman (Indiana University), Betty Robinett (University of Minnesota), and John Hammer (Center for Applied Linguistics, ex officio).

AAAL plans to work closely with groups of similar interest, and to hold its meeting in conjunction with related associations, as affiliations and invitations are forthcoming. The 1978 meeting will take place in Boston in December in association with LSA. Betty Robinett is chairing the Program Committee, and would welcome suggestions from members about the form of the meeting. AAAL also plans to affiliate with AILA (Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquee) which is holding its next triennial congress in Montreal, Canada, in August 1978. A Publications Committee under the chairmanship of Albert Valdman, is considering publishing a yearbook of articles by members.

Applications for membership in AAAL, which should include a brief resume or other details of the candidate's activity in the field of applied linguistics as described above, should be addressed to AAAL Membership Office, Tenth Floor, 1611 North Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209. After consideration by the Executive Committee, qualified candidates will be notified of acceptance, at which time the yearly dues of $10 should be sent to the Membership Office. Correspondence on matters other than membership and dues may be addressed

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to the Secretary-Treasurer, AAAL, Department of Linguistics, the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131.

ASEAN: Common Language Progress Seen

A number of Philippine language experts have proposed that the Indonesia-Malaysian language be made the common language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. This was stated by Haji Hassan Achmad. Head of the Malaysian Language Committees delegation, at the Tenth Session of the Indonesia-Malaysian Language Council recently.

He said that the proposal had been made by the Philippines leading linguist of the consideration that the Malaysian and Indonesian languages, which belonged to the same linguistic family, had gained increasing popularity and importance, as well as a distinct image, in the ASEAN region.

He pointed out that the two joint language development and unification efforts made by the two countries through the Indonesian Malaysia language Council were being closely followed, not only by Indonesia and Malaysians but also by people from other countries. "This should be a reason for us to work harder to convince many more of the ASEAN peoples that the Indonesian-Malaysian language, or Malay, is truly the most important language in this area." he said.

(From: The Asia Mail, February, 1978)

ORTHOGRAPHIC REFORM IN FRISIAN

An official orthographic reform has recently been implemented in Frisian, the continental language most closely related to English within the West Germanic group. This reform, and particularly its immediate application rather than the delay of implementation until 1980, which had previously been proposed, is associated with rapid strides made by Dutch-Frisian bilingual education, particularly the introduction of Frisian as an obligatory subject in primary schools. Textbooks must therefore be prepared in a standard orthography without further delay.

The main purpose of the reform is simplification and the bringing of the written language more closely into line with the contemporary spoken language. The most important changes include the removal of the silent *h* in the former consonant cluster *hw*, e.g. former *hwat* "what" is now *wat*, the change of the long *a* from former *ae* to new *aa* (a change which Dutch likewise underwent in spelling reforms of the 19th century), and the rendering of schwa in the unstressed prefixes formerly given the historical spellings *to-, for-* and *bi-* as *te-, fer-, be-*.

Reactions to the reform, which was enacted by the Provincial Parliament *(Staten)* of Friesland on 28 April 1976, are predictably mixed. In general, authors reject any spelling reform, whereas teachers, particularly those in the new bilingual education system, which has no inbred traditions, suggest that the reform is not far-reaching enough. An international conference on bilingual education with particular reference to countries where the marked language is closely related to the unmarked and its identity unrecognized by many speakers, is currently being prepared jointly by Friesland and Scotland.

The new orthography is likely to affect only Frisian speakers on the territory of The Netherlands. The remaining Frisian speakers in small areas of the Federal Republic of Germany and a minute area of Denmark are not generally literate in their native language and tend to have limited contacts with their fellow-speakers in The Netherlands, who have established such language-treatment organizations as the Fryske Akademy of Ljouwert (Dutch: Leeuwarden).

Richard E. Wood

References

Kr. Boelens, Frisian-Dutch Bilingual Primary Schools. *The Hague: 1976 Government Printing Office. 86 pp.*

J. M. van der Horst, "Niet zoo maar zo in het Fries," Onze Taal, *1976 45, pp. 69-72.*