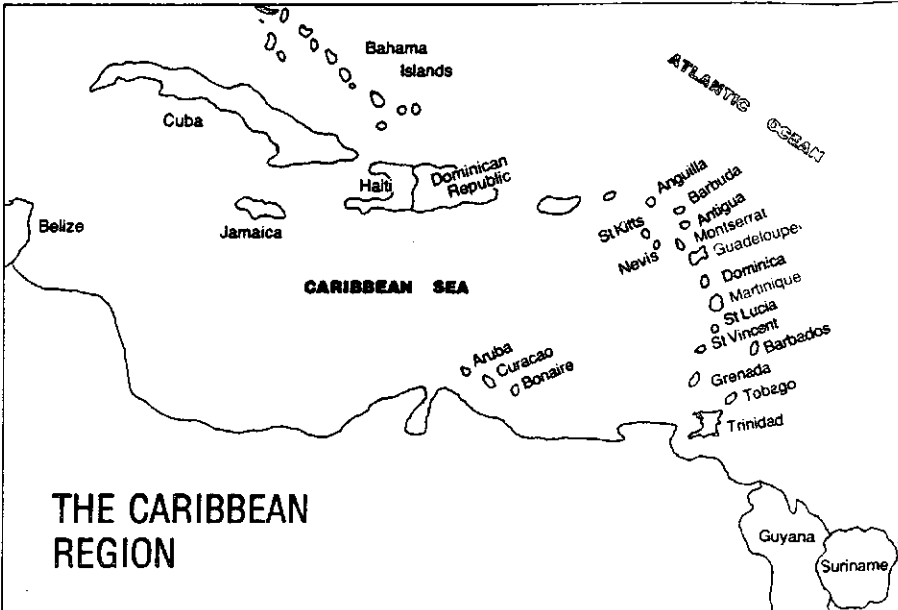


200/108/108



GENERAL  
 E/CEPAL/CDCC/108  
 2 December 1983  
 ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA  
 Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean  
 CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE



PROGRESS REPORT  
 PRIORITY PROJECT ON  
 THE REMOVAL OF LANGUAGE BARRIERS



**UNITED NATIONS**  
 ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean



## INTRODUCTION

1. The Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) at its First and Second Sessions decided to work toward the removal of language barriers impeding co-operation and development in the Caribbean. As a result, a consultant was commissioned by UNESCO and ECLA to prepare an "Initial Survey of Foreign Language Teaching Policies, Facilities and Methodology in the Caribbean". The report on the survey was considered at a meeting of experts in Belize 4-7 April, 1978.
2. At its Third Session held in Belize, CDCC expressed its satisfaction for the work accomplished and gave the highest priority to the activities proposed. The Committee recommended:
  - i) The organization of a "Caribbean Regional Workshop on modern approaches to the teaching of foreign languages (involving) the widest possible participation of relevant policymakers, language teachers, especially teachers holding pivotal positions in universities, teacher-training institutions and perhaps senior secondary schools";
  - ii) A series of national level workshops similar to the one mentioned above as well as other training courses "to facilitate the widest possible acceptance of the modern approaches accepted at the subregional workshops and, hence, the improvement of language teaching in the national systems"; and
  - iii) Preparing and implementing a course for the training of translators/interpreters.

In addition the Committee decided that the establishment of a new Caribbean institution dealing with linguistic and language studies should be deferred until detailed studies had been prepared and considered by the Committee in order to avoid duplication and unnecessary proliferation. (Report of the Third Session of the CDCC, Belize 12-18 April 1978, E/CEPAL/CDCC/44.Rev.3 pp.13-14-15).

2. In compliance with recommendation (i) above, it was planned to hold the regional workshop in the Dominican Republic in 1978. To this end the same consultant was engaged to prepare a report on the substantive aspects of a Caribbean workshop on modern techniques of foreign language teaching and system of national workshops organized around a Caribbean language teaching resource group. This report was duly submitted but for lack of financial resources the workshop was not held. These constraints continued to impede the implementation of the recommendations on the removal of language barriers. (See Reports of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Sessions of the CDCC).

3. At the Seventh Session of CDCC, held in Port of Spain in January 1983, the Netherlands Antilles gave an undertaking to assist in implementing the project, and in May of the same year confirmed the offer in a communication from the Prime Minister stating inter alia:

"Considering the high objectives of the Committee towards the promotion of intra-Caribbean co-operation and considering the vivid interests of the Government of the Netherlands Antilles to offer the seat of the Caribbean Language Institute (E/CEPAL/CDCC/29), pleased to convey to you and through you the Committee as requested by member countries during the Seventh Session, Port of Spain, that the Government of the Netherlands Antilles has decided to finance the Regional Workshop of the Project Removal of Language Barriers and to provide the co-ordination of foreseen project".

4. The present progress report will deal with:

- I. The organization of the Regional Workshop of the Project on Removal of Language Barriers;
- II. The preparatory activities for the follow-up national workshops;
- III. The feasibility study for the Caribbean Language Institute; and
- IV. The preparation and implementation of a course for the training of translators/interpreters.

I. REGIONAL WORKSHOP OF THE PROJECT ON  
REMOVAL OF LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Preparation

5. On 1 June 1983 the Secretariat engaged the consultant who carried out the preparatory reports referred to earlier, in order to:

- i) Co-ordinate with the Government of the Netherlands Antilles the Regional Workshop on Removal of Language Barriers;
- ii) Discuss and update the programme and curriculum of subject matters;
- iii) Select lecturers; and
- iv) Prepare the final evaluation report.

6. In accordance with available financial resources, the Government of the Netherlands Antilles decided that the duration of the Regional Workshop would be two weeks and the number of participants paid for from the workshop budget would be one from each CDCC member country, six from the other territories of the Netherlands Antilles and a wide selection from Curaçao, the host island. CDCC member governments were informed that they could each send one other participant at their own expense, but none did.

Objectives and organization

7. The Workshop was designed to sensitize participants to the issues involved in language planning and language policy. Work was organized as a series of concentric circles, aimed at:

- i) Professional upgrading in terms of evaluation and elaboration of materials; teaching of different language skills, (in the context of);
- ii) Sensitization through reflection on curriculum objectives, adaptation of pedagogical approaches to needs of particular groups and particular communicative needs - functional and instrumental learning, language for communication, language for

special purposes. This reflection would therefore include problems of teaching outside the formal school system - adult education, autodidactic learning, etc.; and

- iii) All the above in the context of language policy and planning - study of long, medium and short-term needs of the region and individual countries.

8. The mandates for the Programme on the Removal of Language Barriers<sup>1/</sup> imply a set of structural changes, which at this first stage of implementation were operationalized around the role foreseen for the participants. Each participant was expected on his/her return to become the nucleus of a pressure group in favour of rational language planning on the part of his/her government, as well as the possessor of wider horizons in relation to the range of possible language teaching objectives and the methods and materials available for their achievement.

9. Consequently, the main themes of the exercise, methodology and language planning, were entrusted to well known specialists, operating as team leaders; and very specific complementary topics were allocated to other teacher-trainers.

10. Moreover, the basic policy orientation of the CDCC<sup>2/</sup> guided the preparation and organization of the event. Due to the particular value of Curaçao as the site of a workshop of this type because of its multilingual character, the agreement of the host country to prepare a study on the subject of language learning and the role played by teaching in

---

1/ Work Programme of the CDCC, Chapter III. Spheres of Action, A. - Technical Co-operation among the Caribbean countries. E/CEPAL/CDCC/18/Rev.1, 27 February 1976, p.41.

2/ Ibid. "The willingness of the countries themselves to share their capacities and experience is an essential prerequisite for collective action aimed at substantive changes of mutual benefit. Some of the countries possess a wealth of human, material and institutional resources which they could place at the disposition of other interested countries".

the process was obtained. It has been agreed that a pre-seminar meeting would be held to sensitize the teachers of the Netherlands Antilles to language planning and methodological problems; and following this, a presentation entitled "The Learning of Foreign Languages in the Language Situation of the Netherlands Antilles" was prepared. It is expected that the process of reflection on the achievement of this Caribbean country in the field of language learning will be pursued and made available to CDCC member countries.

#### Conduct of the Workshop

11. The Regional Workshop took place from 29 August to 9 September 1983 under the sponsorship of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee and the Government of the Netherlands Antilles, with the collaboration of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which covered the travel costs of the participants to and from the host country.

12. One participant from each of the following member countries attended: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Montserrat, the Netherlands Antilles, St. Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. The participant of Jamaica was nominated but did not arrive, and Suriname declined to send one. The sole Cuban delegate was both participant and teacher.

13. At the opening session, the Deputy Director of the CDCC Secretariat gave a brief history of the Programme for the Removal of Language Barriers. He expressed the hope that the event would be followed in rapid succession by other approved activities, namely the follow-up national workshops, the training course for translators and interpreters and the creation of the Caribbean Language Institute.

14. The Minister of Education of the Netherlands Antilles pointed out that regional integration and co-operation was essential in acquiring and maintaining a viable state of sovereignty in the Caribbean. He referred to the complex language reality of his country, to the development of the native

language Papiamentu and to the popular ease in communicating in several foreign languages. The Minister stated that the deepening of this asset was of utmost importance to the participation of the Netherlands Antilles in regional political, economic and cultural interaction. He derived from this policy objective the strong interest of the country in the establishment of the Caribbean Language Institute, sketched the main tasks of the institution and proposed a time frame of three years to have it operational.

15. In addition to the individual sensitization and professional upgrading of the participants, the workshop produced a degree of common reflection on the problems of language barriers in the Caribbean and suggestions for their solution, as well as participants' evaluation of the conduct and achievement of the workshop itself. The method used to achieve this was a round table discussion at the beginning of the second week to concretize the ideas participants had been developing as a result of other sessions. The output from this round table together with the results of further reflection were an input to the final evaluation session.

16. As regards the method of conducting the sessions and the emphasis placed on different aspects of the themes, a balance had to be achieved between previous planning and the interests and background of participants which could only be known after their arrival. In this regard the highest tribute must be paid to the team leaders, who combined solid preparations with flexibility in responding to participants' needs as they emerged. This involved them in a considerable amount of additional work at all hours, not only in analysing the results of the several surveys they took of participants' reactions and desires, but in preparing additional material at short notice. The generous contribution of the team leaders and the teacher-trainers must be stressed; it underscores the interest of the language teaching professionals and augurs well for the future of the entire programme for the removal of language barriers.

17. The interest shown by the participants and expressed through their assiduity was very rewarding. In matters relating to language policy and language planning, some modifications in the original plans of action were necessary in view of the heterogeneous background of the participants.



On the other hand discussions of methodological issues benefited from similarities deriving from the fact that most participants had been teachers at some time in their careers. In this respect, demonstration of communicative games and other classroom techniques were particularly welcomed since they responded to the constant desires of practical teachers for information on classroom procedures.

18. Some differences in the local context in which teaching evolved surfaced particularly during discussions on the theme of massification techniques of foreign language teaching. These techniques are of importance in dealing with large groups of students; this occurs, however, in only a few CDCC countries. The need for the follow-up national workshop to cater for these and other specific needs of member countries was readily acknowledged.

19. The Secretariat wishes to emphasize the variety of extra-curricula activities organized by the Instituto Lingwistiko Antiyano the host institution and designed to provide participants, teacher-trainers and the Secretariat staff with some insight into the culture of the country. Moreover, the Secretariat is particularly aware of the coverage of the event by the media and it can safely inform the Committee that the CDCC, its main functions and activities have reached the public attention in the host country.

20. The summary of conclusions of the workshop approved by the participants is at Annex I.

## II. FOLLOW-UP NATIONAL WORKSHOPS OF THE PROJECT ON THE REMOVAL OF LANGUAGE BARRIERS

21. To maintain the momentum generated by the Regional Workshop, the Government of the Netherlands Antilles has earmarked funding from its own budget to finance the co-ordination of follow-up national workshops for a period of one year following the Regional Workshop. It is assumed that governments interested in the follow-up workshops will make provisions for their organizations within their respective budgets or draw upon the assistance of the UNESCO Regional Participation Programme or any other sources at their disposal. These provisions should cater for the travel expenses and token honorariums

of a limited group of teacher-trainers and for a meeting of the participants at a single convenient location. The number of teacher-trainers would vary according to the specific needs of the local foreign language teachers as identified by their respective governments.

22. After the Regional Workshop, an Interim Co-ordinating Committee was set up comprising the Minister of Education of the Netherlands Antilles, the representatives of the Instituto Lingwistiko Antiyano of the Netherlands Antilles, the Social Affairs Officer of the CDCC Secretariat, the representative of UNESCO/CARNEID Programme and the Consultant to the CDCC on Foreign Language Teaching. The Minister of Education of the Netherlands Antilles chairs the Committee and co-ordinates its activities.

23. Two undertakings were identified:

- i) The organization of follow-up national workshops aimed at upgrading the skills of the local foreign language teachers; and
- ii) The creation of the Caribbean Language Institute charged with research in modern methods and techniques of foreign language teaching as well as production of corresponding teaching materials.

24. The Secretariat of UNESCO and the Division of Operations at ECLA Headquarters were alerted about these developments. It was decided that the Chairman of the Interim Committee would undertake a series of representations with his fellow Caribbean Ministers of Education, prior to launching the substantive activities foreseen in the project.

25. To date, the mechanism is therefore set up to organize the follow-up national workshops at the earliest convenience of interested member governments.

### III. THE CARIBBEAN LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

26. At the request of the Government of the Netherlands Antilles, the Secretariat of the CDCC had informed member governments that a session of the Regional Workshop would be dedicated to a preliminary discussion on the project

idea relating to the creation of a Caribbean Language Institute, and suggested that the participants to the Regional Workshop should be briefed accordingly.

27. On the last day of the Regional Workshop, in opening the discussion on the Caribbean Language Institute, the Secretariat reiterated its mandates to further intra-Caribbean technical co-operation, while avoiding duplication and unnecessary proliferation of institutions. As an illustration of CDCC policy, the Secretariat gave a brief description of the CARISPLAN network set up by the Caribbean Documentation Centre and in which existing national institutions were the primary actors. The chief ideas which emerged from the discussion were:

- i) The Caribbean Language Institute was highly desirable; and
- ii) It should not seek to compete with or replace existing institutions such as the national language institutes or the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC).

28. Two problems remain to be solved:

- i) The selection of the consultant to carry out the feasibility study; and
- ii) Securing funding for the study and for convening a meeting of government representatives to assess its results and formulate recommendations on the implementation of the Caribbean Language Institute.

#### IV. TRAINING OF TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS

29. While the actions undertaken or foreseen in the near future are addressed to the long-term aspects of the removal of language barriers in the Caribbean, there have been no activities aimed at meeting the short-term needs of member governments on this matter. Since the Third Session of the CDCC in Belize (1978) several enterprises offering interpretation services have been created in the region. The Secretariat is of the view, however, that there is still room for progress towards self-sufficiency. In addition, the need for chartered and free-lance translators has not decreased.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

30. The following are the main conclusions of the Progress Report on the implementation of the priority project on the Removal of Language Barriers in the Caribbean:

- i) The Regional Workshop of the Programme has been held thus completing the initial stage;
- ii) The follow-up national workshops may be initiated upon request of national governments. The financial implications do not seem onerous. There is need for funding:
  - a) To assemble the foreign language teachers in one location (two or three small countries may wish to consider joint ventures in order to save resources and time); and
  - b) To cover travel costs of a small group of teacher-trainers as well as token honorariums.
- iii) The travel costs for co-ordinating the national workshops are being borne by the Government of the Netherlands Antilles for a period of one year commencing September 1983. The consultant on foreign language teaching to the CDCC Secretariat is prepared to assist in assembling the team of resource personnel. It must be noted that this situation is irregular and raised some administrative difficulty. Moreover, there is need to foresee the organization of national workshops beyond August 1984.
- iv) The establishment of an Interim Co-ordinating Committee to pursue the implementation of the project has been of great assistance to the Secretariat; it is, however, an innovation within the CDCC network of institutions. The CDCC may wish to consider the situation and advise the Secretariat accordingly.

- v) Preparatory activities for the creation of a Caribbean Language Institute (CLI) are well underway. The Netherlands Antilles has expressed its unequivocal support for and its candidacy to host the institution. Member governments, in particular their Ministries of Education, may wish to consider the possibility of assisting in securing funding for the feasibility study and the meeting of their representatives to be convened to assess the proposal and formulate recommendations.
- vi) With respect to the preparation and implementation of a course for the training of translators/interpreters agreed upon in 1978, the Committee may wish to advise the Secretariat on its timeliness.



ANNEX I

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON REMOVAL  
OF LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN THE CARIBBEAN

The tentative framework announced in the opening day for the Workshop's deliberation was as follows:

Professional upgrading

Reflection on purposes of language learning and teaching inside and outside the formal school system, including therefore adult learning and autodidactic learning.

Reflection on language policy and planning in the Caribbean on the basis of the present situation of the region and of individual countries.

General framework of discussions

Discussions in the Workshop took place within the general framework of:

- i) Acceptance of the mother-tongue education as an essential part of the Workshop's deliberations because of
  - a) the essential psycholinguistic unity of cognitive and linguistic development;
  - b) the necessity for a firm cognitive base for later skills, including language skills;
  - c) the extent of the problem of mother-tongue education in the Caribbean;
  - d) the location of the Workshop in the Netherlands Antilles at a particularly significant point in the history of language planning of that country;
  - e) the fact that Caribbean vernaculars already cross national boundaries and may do so more widely in the future.

- ii) Acceptance of communicative foreign-language teaching and the necessity for investigating, refining and adapting research findings and pedagogical approaches based on it.
- iii) General acceptance of the "foreign" languages under consideration as being Spanish, English and French, with recognition of the particular status of Dutch, Portuguese and Russian for different reasons and taking into consideration the value of teaching and learning any foreign language.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORKSHOP

The Workshop was therefore conceived of as an exercise in sensitization of participants to Caribbean problems and to the extent of information available in the disciplines of language pedagogy and language planning. Its deliberations can be summed up as an attempt to find a middle way between the general and the particular - the need to recognize the interrelatedness of all the aspects of its theme and the search for specific concrete solutions to narrowly defined problems.

#### The scope of the themes

The interrelatedness of all aspects of the Workshop's theme became evident in several ways.

In methodology, the need to locate the preparation of materials and decisions about objectives of programmes within the socio-economic framework of the region and its component countries, and the consequent need for inter-disciplinary research for underpinning decisions.

This was illustrated by discussions on the very fundamental question of what language barriers existed - i.e. between whom - and for whom they need to be removed.



Very prominent in discussions was the question of defining Caribbean languages on the basis of what languages were considered important in particular countries and groups of countries, and the extent to which vernaculars were already or could become languages of intra-Caribbean communication. These considerations in turn were perceived as relating to the basic psycholinguistic questions underlying language-learning activities, and the mutual influence of planning and teaching on the one hand and situation on the other. Since language is learned when situations render communication necessary, one view of planning is that pending the development of international contacts, curriculum efforts should be concentrated on non-oral communicative skills. Another view saw the Caribbean planning situation as unique in that planning and teaching must seek to anticipate need by attempting to influence the development of multilingual communicative situations. This might be done, for example by teacher and student exchanges, and by exploiting the findings of socio- and psycholinguistic research and mother-tongue education programmes in activities similar to immersion programmes carried out in Canada and elsewhere. This involves the teaching of non-language subjects in foreign languages. The implication of this for the level of communicative competence of teachers were examined. This constitutes another aspect of rapprochement between Caribbean mother-tongue and foreign language planning, in that mother-tongue education is recognized as contributing to a higher degree of linguistic sensitivity.

A further dichotomy perceptible in the deliberations was that between the Caribbean and the larger world context. It was generally accepted that dependence on the outside should be transitory as far as teacher training and materials were concerned, and that in many respects the process of planning must be a process of liberation. Thus it was necessary not only to know what was happening in countries where theory was linked closely to practice and responded to local conditions; to select rigorously those aspects which suited our immediate needs; but also to develop an inventory of our own resources at ground level and a plan for using them, in a framework of liberation from psychological dependency. This means the overcoming of self-doubt in a rigorous search for our own solutions. If the level is low, as it undoubtedly

is in many areas, we have no choice but to begin with the level we have. At the same time, the lack of resources in individual countries can to a great extent be overcome by flexible Caribbean institutions. The discussion of Caribbean institutions, apart from agreement on the need for a Caribbean Language Institute, centred to some extent on the question of evaluation and certification. On the one hand, the peculiar nature of language as a subject of instruction and the recognition of the need for a large variety of different objectives and therefore courses, as well as the observation that the prospect of fixed examinations discourages parents from accepting immersion programmes, led to the view that testing, especially as it is a part of teaching, should be done in the teaching institutions with national or Caribbean monitoring of results, as was indeed the case to a great extent in the non-English speaking countries; the contrary view held that psychological liberation and the development of trust had to be gradual, and that standardization had value in terms of links with foreign universities and employers in the region.

A further dichotomy which manifested itself, and which may be described as that between product and process, relates both to the theme of the Workshop on the one hand and its organization and follow-up on the other.

The sensitization process the Workshop was meant to undertake is expected to be extended by the participants to their governments, their colleagues and the public of their home countries. In this regard three main needs were identified:

- i) the need to sensitize all three, as part of the process of diffusion of information, to the cognitive value of foreign language learning (the "bilingual brains" theory);
- ii) the need for careful preparation both of foreign language and mother-tongue education to allay fears of intellectual and social ghettoization; and
- iii) the need to avoid blaming all shortcomings of the education system on mother-tongue problems.

Several concrete suggestions for actions to be taken in this area, as in those of exchange of resources and teacher upgrading, were made in the course of the workshop, including some for exchange of cultural centres which will need to be further discussed in the context of proposals for the establishment and operation of language institutes.

#### Organization and conduct of the Workshop

It is within the framework of the process-product dichotomy that discussions on the conduct of the workshop can best be viewed. The major criticisms related, as was to be expected, to the problem of shortage of time for preparation. This seemed to several participants to have led to a lack of precise orientation, though others recognized that the difference in background and orientations of the participants, as well as the sensitization objective, made a precise set of products impossible, that learning required people not only to receive information but to make it part of themselves. In this context while the quantity of material supplied was highly appreciated, there was a view that in certain respects a judicious selection might have been helpful; that a pre-questionnaire could have overcome some of the problems of background differences, and a pre-survey in individual countries would have facilitated discussions on needs. It was also suggested that a smaller number of themes treated in greater depth might have been advisable. It was however recognized that questionnaires distributed at the beginning had contributed to some useful changes in the mode of operation.

The organization of work in the conference room itself was criticized by some participants as being unstructured, some thought for the lack of "chairpersons", that the role of the U.N. consultant was not clear and that there had tended to be an excess of dialogue between him and one of the two team leaders.

Counter to this was the view that because of the importance of process it had been considered essential by both of them that the procedures in the workshop should reflect the attitudes of participation rather than direction, of dialogue between equals, which the workshop was seeking to encourage in Caribbean education processes, and that "chairmanship" had been specifically excluded for that reason.

Finally, attention must be drawn to those themes, of undeniable relevance to the objective of the workshop, which in the time available could be touched on only briefly or not at all; the use and influence of the media in foreign language teaching; foreign language in information networks; the development of translation and interpretership services; and several others which must be subject to further deliberation as part of the effort to eliminate communication barriers.

Because of the composition of the workshop which was attended almost exclusively by participants from the field of education the question of language learning outside of formal settings could not be treated in sufficient depth. It is therefore essential that, in keeping with this Workshop's recognition of the interdisciplinary work needed to support language programmes, future planning exercises include people from other communicative disciplines, although it is fully recognized that the mandate and the Budget of the Workshop did not permit this on the present occasion.

It is considered essential to include eventually the non-CDCC Caribbean countries in activities related to removal of language barriers to the maximum possible extent.



