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Meeting on Removal of Language Barriers  
Belize

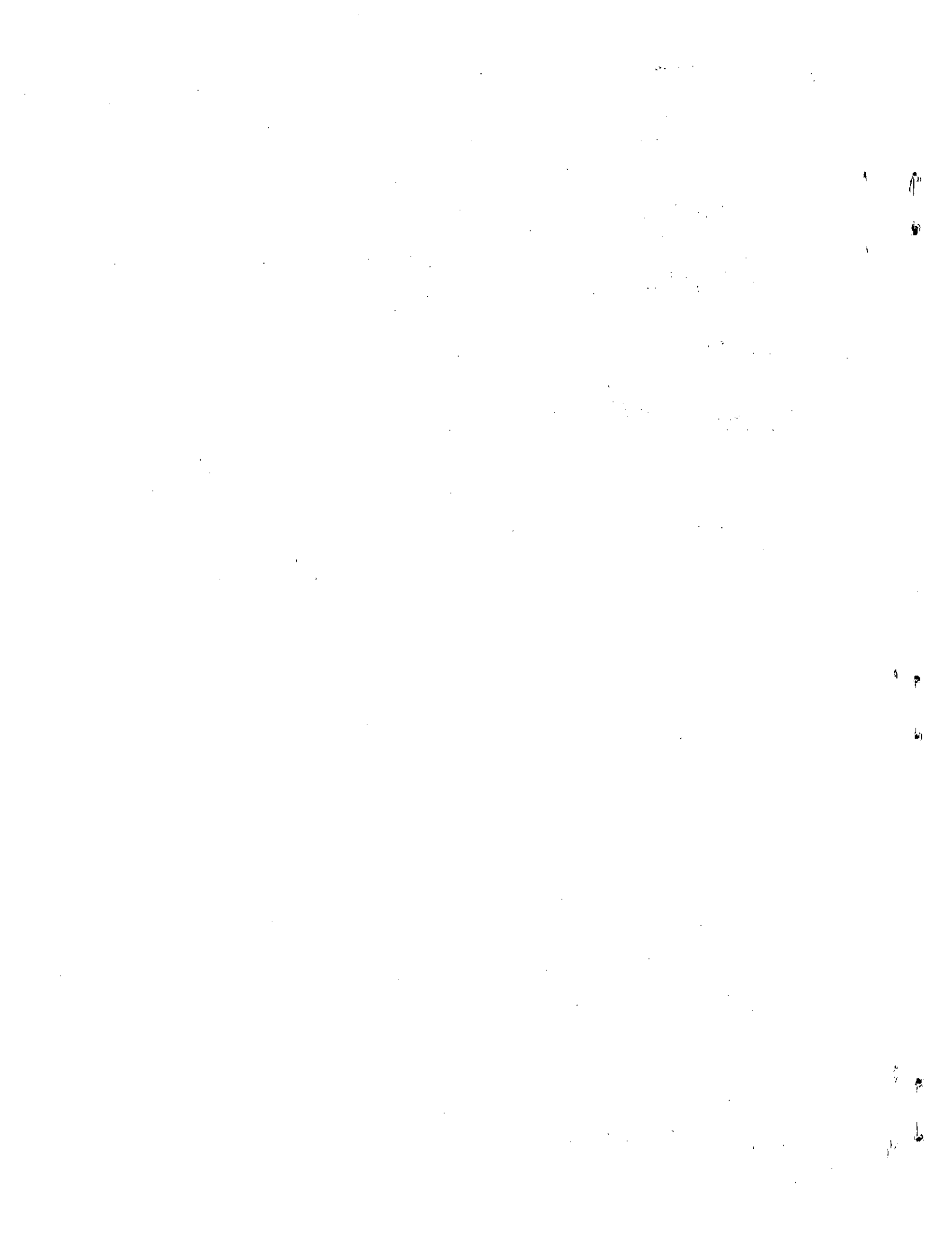
INITIAL SURVEY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
TEACHING POLICIES, FACILITIES AND  
METHODOLOGY IN THE CARIBBEAN

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## INTRODUCTION

Terms of Reference

This study was originally commissioned by UNESCO in response to a request made by the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO on behalf of the Caribbean Member States represented at the Sixth Regional Conference of UNESCO National Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Bogotá in July 1976. Since the Caribbean consists of English, Spanish, French and Dutch-speaking states, the meeting was aware that special efforts would have to be made to overcome the language barriers if these countries were to establish meaningful co-operation on a sub-regional basis.

The meeting was also aware that the Governments of the Caribbean Member States had recently established, through ECLA, a Caribbean Development Co-operation Committee which would deal with a wide range of developmental problems including matters within the competence of UNESCO. Accordingly, the Caribbean National Commissions for UNESCO pledged their support for all CDCC/UNESCO efforts to achieve sub-regional co-operation. They have demonstrated their support by requesting this survey and by providing the administrative support for it in all those countries of the sub-region where UNESCO National Commissions exist.

The survey has, however, been conducted in consultation with the CDCC Secretariat, which is to present it for consideration by Member States of the CDCC.

The programme request submitted by the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission on behalf of the Caribbean National Commission for UNESCO proposed that the survey should cover, in all countries of the region, the following areas:

- Foreign-language teaching in the public school systems.
- Foreign-language teaching in private schools.
- Foreign-language teaching in specialized institutions (including instruction in national language for foreigners).

- Government policy on the future of foreign language teaching.
- Government policy on bilingualism in bilingual countries.
- Foreign language teaching for specific purposes (e.g. interpretership and translation services).
- Teaching methods and materials in use, and research in progress on methodology.
- Arrangements for production of teaching materials.
- Teacher training.
- Actual and projected programmes of student and teacher exchange.
- Scope for professional improvement (conferences, seminars, technical journals, etc.)
- Programmes of linguistics in general, and applied linguistics specifically, at University level.

It further proposed that out of the initial effort should come, in addition to the survey report, at least a census of institutions, teachers and researchers in the field and the beginnings of a regional professional association or associations for foreign language teaching.

The survey, according to the request, was intended to provide a valuable input into the deliberations of the meeting of the Caribbean Development Co-operation Committee (CDCC) scheduled to be held in March 1977 in the Dominican Republic.

In addition it was intended that the survey should provide valuable data for both the Symposium on language-teaching and the ALSSED programme provided for in the UNESCO budget for 1977-1978.

The survey was also intended to indicate, if possible, the extent to which the unofficial Creoles spoken in the region could cut across the barriers of official languages and provide a possible means of communication and cultural contact between the peoples of the region.

The creation of the Committee for Development Co-operation in the Caribbean of ECLA, and its adoption of a wide-ranging Constituent Declaration, demonstrated that the Governments of the sub-region recognized the common background and specificity of the Caribbean area, regardless of the linguistic differences inherited from the metropolitan powers which previously dominated their existence. At the same time, Governments have recognized that language

problems will have to be tackled with the utmost urgency in order to create a viable basis for action in other fields.

In 1976, ECLA and UNESCO jointly developed proposals for consideration of the Inter-Agency Co-ordination Meeting on the Work Programme of the CDCC.

Among these proposals was a suggestion that a well-endowed Research Institute for the Removal of Language Barriers should be established, containing a Graduate School of Interpretership and Translation, in conjunction with a series of national language learning centres, benefiting from its development of language-teaching materials and methodology.

A joint ECLA/UNESCO team should be responsible for establishing:

- i. A sub-regional project covering Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, with provisions for other countries in the sub-region to join the project. This sub-regional project would include the Research Institute and the Graduate School, should be conceived as a permanent support for CDCC activities, and should at its very initiation be in a position to service the Committee; and
- ii. A series of national projects, each having built into it the features necessary for inter-linking to other similar national projects, and articulating through them a sub-regional network of national language learning centres.

At the Second Session of the CDCC in Santo Domingo in March 1977, the programme of activities proposed by the CDCC Secretariat included:

- (a) a joint ECLA/UNESCO mission in order to establish with government officials the priority target groups, and also
- (b) a meeting of about 20 experts to be convened in order to advise on teaching methods appropriate to the respective target groups.

The joint ECLA/UNESCO programme submitted to this meeting contained the following statement:

### "CDCC Mandates

In the Work Programme of the CDCC, reference to technical co-operation among the Caribbean countries is presented as "the need to undertake special measures or programmes to overcome language barriers" with "practical instruction in the English, French and Spanish languages in all member countries".

"This mandate refers to the whole population of the sub-region, but its implementation can only be gradual, and it is necessary to distinguish various target groups and to initiate action as may be appropriate. The following appear to be priority target groups - public servants, staff of inter-governmental organizations, of academic institutions or of private enterprises, specific urban or rural groups such as those linked to the tourism industry, or more generally the school-age population.

These target groups can in turn be sub-divided in order to design measures more adapted to their respective requirements; for example, public servants may be further classified according to their location in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Commerce, Agriculture or Education. In summary, the intention is to approach the teaching of languages more functionally, taking into account that the target groups will be determined in consultation with the governments of the sub-region.

"It is necessary to keep in mind the need for the governments to have at their disposal, as soon as possible, a staff of translators and interpreters to satisfy the urgencies arising from an increase in international relations, commerce and tourism. To give effect to official action by the CDCC in the removal of linguistic barriers, it is necessary to augment the number of persons who speak the official languages of the sub-region, at the same time that the need for using these languages is being stimulated. The implementation of this project will therefore be parallel to the execution of other programmes presented in this document.

### "Implementational Approach Proposed

The programme for the Removal of Language Barriers will have specific tasks -

In the short-term:

- (a) provision of language courses for specific target groups;
- (b) provision of translators and interpreters necessary to service governmental, inter-governmental and international institutions; and
- (c) training and re-training of language teachers to service the educational system, and to put into action a self-propelled trend toward multilingualism.



" In the medium-terms:

- (a) translation services to provide access to and dissemination of documentation and audio-visual materials in the Caribbean languages within the priorities determined by the Work Programme;
- (b) research into comparative methods of language-teaching in order to advise governments on curricula and other changes required to produce competence in the second and third languages at various levels of the educational systems;
- (c) production of pedagogic materials for the teaching of languages taking into account the official languages and the different "creole languages" in the sub-region;
- (d) co-ordinated use of mass media as a vehicle for language-teaching; and
- (e) development of linguistic research.

"In the long-terms:

To help in the development of a manifold Caribbean cultural identity through the stimulation of cultural and personal inter-changes and the communication at all levels between the people of the area.

#### "UNESCO Mandates

In the Programme and Budget approved at the 19th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, there is no chapter which fully supports the implementation of the programme for the Removal of Language Barriers. UNESCO is dealing, notwithstanding, through its Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education, with problems raised by the teaching of languages, and foresees the realization during the biennium 1977-1978 of a colloquium on "Language-teaching in a pluri-lingual and multi-cultural context".

"UNESCO's participation in the programme for the Removal of Language Barriers, through missions, could be included in the normal activities of the Regional Office for Education, with headquarters in Santiago, Chile, or of the above-mentioned Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education.

"Specific support comprehensive to the programme for the Removal of Language Barriers should be proposed in the 20th General Conference of UNESCO in 1978, for inclusion in the Programme and Budget of the Organization for 1979-1980.

"Action Under Consideration"

To initiate the task related to the Removal of Language Barriers, a joint ECLA/UNESCO mission is recommended in order to determine, with governments, their priorities on the matter, the priority target groups and the incentives that can be applied in order to stimulate the study of a second or third language."

The Work Programme approved at the Second Session stated that in an effort to undertake special measures and programmes to overcome language barriers, (a) a joint ECLA/UNESCO mission was proposed in order to establish with Government officials the priority target groups, and also (b) a meeting of experts should be convened in order to advise on teaching methods appropriate to the respective target groups. Special attention was to be given to the need of those countries which currently have no or only limited language-training facilities. Details on these proposals are contained in paper E/CEPAL/CDCC/19, Section II.

The CDCC in its report of the meeting affirmed that the programme for overcoming language barriers should be implemented with special and urgent attention to the needs of those countries within the sub-region which at present have no or very limited related training facilities or none at all.

In the survey being carried out on a country-by-country basis, particular attention should be paid to identifying the target groups, including journalists and other communications specialists, on which the efforts and related activities should be concentrated during the initial stages. To cover the urgent needs of countries lacking training facilities, during a transitional period maximum use should be made of facilities available elsewhere within the sub-region. A further feasibility study on this subject would be undertaken.

In March and July 1977, I signed contracts with UNESCO and ECLA respectively to undertake an "initial survey of Foreign Language Teaching Policies, Facilities and Methodology in the Caribbean" and "to discuss with Government officials priority target groups for the teaching of foreign language, to examine possible incentives suitable for including a self-propelled trend towards language-learning, to evaluate the present situation and advise on possible modifications. The identification of the ad hoc means that exist now for the provision of translation and interpretership services to governments, businesses and educational institutions, with a view to organizing them and standardizing them on a national and sub-regional basis".

A work plan prepared in collaboration with the ECLA Office in Port of Spain was approved by UNESCO, which requested that the report stress, if possible, attitudes to mother tongues in foreign language policies.

This study has, therefore, the following objectives:

- i. To describe and evaluate the policies, practices, facilities and methodology of foreign language-teaching in the countries of the sub-region, including the teaching of national or official languages to foreigners, by means of a study of the public and private sector, the media and any other relevant institutions;
- ii. To describe and evaluate the external resources in the field of language-teaching available to countries of the sub-region;
- iii. To examine the language patterns existing in the sub-region and the language attitudes and language policies of peoples and governments;
- iv. To describe and evaluate the means currently at the disposal of the countries of the sub-region for the overcoming of language barriers, e.g. interpretership and translation services; and
- v. To make, where possible, recommendations for short, medium and long-term projects for the reduction of language barriers in the sub-region, bearing in mind the proposals of ECLA, UNESCO, the CDCC and the Caribbean National Commissions for UNESCO.

#### Method of Work

The questionnaires reproduced at Appendices V and VI were sent in advance, the first to education authorities, institutions and certain selected individuals in all the countries of the sub-region, the second to Chambers of Commerce and to the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce for circulation to member firms, and to governments for circulation to their ministries and other agencies in the public sector.

From a base in Trinidad and Tobago, visits were then made to the following countries in the sub-region:

Grenada, St. Lucia, Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, the Bahamas, Curacao, Guyana and Surinam. Visits were also made to Martinique and Guadeloupe.

The visit to the Bahamas was of little value because of the unavoidable shortness of my stay and because of the imminence of an election which made it difficult for interviews to be arranged. Nevertheless, the persons I did manage to interview there were very helpful, and considerable data was received by correspondence.

The list of people interviewed is at Appendix VII.

I should particularly like to thank Mr. George Cave of the University of Guyana for acting in an extremely energetic manner as agent for the investigation by persuading firms and agencies in the private sector to fill out the questionnaire.

Of the countries not visited, very few did not return the large questionnaire, but in many of the countries visited or not visited return of the short questionnaire (on interpretership and translation) was patchy.

It was unfortunately impossible for me to visit Puerto Rico (although I received a completed questionnaire and helpful correspondence from the Secretariat for Education there). Although Puerto Rico is not a member country of the CDCC, it is a potential source of assistance in language-teaching and an interesting laboratory of language contact and language planning. I have, therefore, included a recommendation (See Chapter VIII) that this study should be completed by an investigation of the language situation in Puerto Rico.

It is also regrettable that I was not able to visit Mexico, which is a member of the Caribbean group of UNESCO National Commissions and which strongly supported the project request. Panama also expressed great interest in the study because of traditional links with the English-speaking Caribbean.

## II.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN CARIBBEAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

In most of the countries of the sub-region, formal language-teaching has had very little effect in reducing barriers to communication in the area. This, of course, is the rule rather than the exception everywhere in the world, and the fact that one or two notable exceptions to it are in fact to be found in the Caribbean is not only an encouragement to educational planning but may well provide certain indications of the forms such planning should take.

#### The Commonwealth Caribbean

Dr. Clemens Hallman, Language Consultant to the Trinidad and Tobago OAS Technical Assistance project, said in his final report in 1970:

"Overall, the language instruction in Trinidad and Tobago is quite traditional and geared to tests (GCE), the validity of which is highly questionable for this country. Teachers are using textbooks which emphasise translation, grammar from a deductive and analytical point of view, and reading. The textbooks often contain Spanish of an earlier century and tend to be pedantic, viewed in the light of a modern, contemporary, thriving Spanish language spoken by millions today. Little or no emphasis is placed on the oral aspect of the language, either because of not having an oral emphasis in the text, or because teachers can't afford to "waste time" on conversation because they have to get their students ready for the traditional GCE exams. These exams, by the way, seem to be an enormous obstacle, in fact they appear to be an educational millstone. Naturally, an institution or agency requiring these exams as an entrance requirement or a passport to a job is also at fault and encourages teaching for a test. This is not educationally sound.

"A typical teacher will have his traditional textbook and a blackboard. No visual aids, modern materials, nor electromechanical equipment are available.

"Naturally, there are, happily, noticeable exceptions to the above picture. However, they are only exceptions as the general picture is the one described above. This is generally true at all levels of the educational system. The difference at the post-secondary level is more emphasis on literature, again a questionable objective for future foreign language teachers.

"In several words, the entire profession seems to ignore, for one reason or other, the enormous strides made during the past ten years or so in foreign language.

"Many secondary school teachers with whom the writer discussed methodology expressed a strong desire to change the instruction emphasis to a more modern approach, stressing language as communication. Some are trying to do so; however, they feel as though they must do so in an under-ground fashion lest the parent and the school authorities learn of their "mischief","

In his report on Jamaica, written in 1971, Dr. Hallman stated:

"Perhaps the single biggest problem concerning the teaching of Spanish in Jamaica lies in the junior secondary school. Not only are there not enough teachers but many, if not a majority, of the Spanish teachers are not adequately prepared in terms of (1) knowledge of Spanish, and (2) knowledge of modern teaching techniques.

"How does one expect to teach Spanish and to develop positive attitudes toward Spanish speaking peoples if the language is not taught?

"In addition to the above weaknesses in the junior secondary school, the teachers seem to be suffering from a lack of support in terms of curriculum guides, planning, instructional material and media.

"One cannot entirely blame, however, the present junior secondary school teachers as they are victims of the present administrative and teacher education system.

"Tied in with the above problems, and perhaps the cause of it to a large extent, is the situation found at the teacher training colleges...

"In addition, once the student enters the college the curriculum followed is on the whole not in keeping with modern pedagogy in terms of language content. There also is a weakness, with the exception of one or two colleges, in terms of incorporating in the curriculum the teaching of modern techniques and methods of teaching a foreign language...

"How then, with such a preparation, are teacher training graduates expected to teach a living language effectively, using modern approaches, in a junior secondary school?"

The same might have been said for all the former British colonies, the Bahamas and Belize.

Since 1971, the situation has altered somewhat, in the following respects:

- i. The number of children (though not of adults) in the education system has increased. This has in some cases had a deleterious effect on the quality of the education provided. The most notable case is that of Trinidad and Tobago, where in spite of a large increase in building of secondary schools, delays in construction and inadequate teacher-training and curriculum programmes led to a crisis situation in 1976. Approximately 100% of children under 11 are in primary schools, although the rate of overcrowding is 15% and much of the plant is inadequate. But in spite of the increase in secondary school (particularly junior secondary school) building, a "common entrance" examination has to be administered which admits only about half the 11-year olds to junior secondary school. The Draft Education Plan called for 35% of the first batch of graduates of these schools (14-year olds) to find places in either senior secondary or technical schools. At the end of 1975, only one of these schools was completed; but in 1976 it was announced that places would be found not for 35% of the 14-year olds but for 100%; and with the help of a "14+" placement examination they were all (except for an unknown number who dropped out) crammed into largely incomplete and understaffed senior secondary schools and the two existing technical colleges;
- ii. Training programmes for language teachers, and their content, have improved. In Trinidad and Tobago the In-Service Diploma programme of the UWI School of Education (for Junior Secondary teachers) has a certain amount of methodological instruction of fluctuating quality; in Jamaica the Spanish Section of the Ministry of Education and the Spanish Teachers' Association struggles valiantly with the help of the OAS to provide teachers' workshops and seminars, and the Jamaica 20 year Education Plan has ambitious plans to "lead Jamaica along the path of becoming a bilingual nation" by teacher training, curriculum development and exchanges with Spanish speaking countries. The UWI, Mona Campus, has plans for a Regional Summer Workshop in Language-teaching. UWI graduates from St. Augustine and Mona with training in applied linguistics and/or language-training received in the University's modernized teaching programmes have begun to enter the teaching service. In as small a country as St. Lucia, courses in language-teaching methodology (for French, not Spanish) are to be included in the Teachers' Training College curricula from next year. In Grenada, a

teacher-trainer is developing a programme in Spanish for both in-service teachers and training college students, with emphasis on audio-lingual methodology;

- iii. The quantity of teaching material produced in the area has increased somewhat and their quality has improved. Some curriculum development is going on. University and secondary school teachers in Trinidad and Jamaica have published good texts in Spanish (Vamos Amigos, books with recorded exercises) and French ("O" Level French for West Indian Students). In Jamaica the Ministry of Education and in Barbados the curriculum unit are producing Spanish materials and a Spanish syllabus for Forms 1 to 3, respectively; the UWI School of Education in Barbados has produced some materials. The Schools Broadcasting Service of Radio Belize has developed some Spanish materials. In Guyana, the Curriculum Centre has done the same for the Guyana Multilateral schools. In St. Lucia, one of the better (and more expensive) commercially produced French courses, La France en Direct, by Capelle & Capelle, is used in schools. The Central Curriculum Committee of the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, made up of Education officials and teachers of all levels, is developing syllabuses for various language programmes;
- iv. A considerable quantity of hardware, including language laboratories, has become available, especially in the richer countries. In Jamaica, there are five; in Guyana one, in Barbados, one in existence and another under construction; in St. Lucia, one, and in Trinidad and Tobago all the comprehensive senior secondary schools are to have them, and several of the older grammar schools already do. These figures do not include institutions outside the formal education system, some of which have laboratories also; and the three OAS sponsored language institutes are also so equipped;
- v. Language instruction is compulsory, or about to become compulsory, for periods ranging from three to five years of secondary school in most of the English-speaking Caribbean. The most significant exceptions are Barbados, St. Lucia and the Bahamas. In all the countries, the compulsory language is Spanish, except for Antigua, where either French or Spanish must be chosen. In Grenada, Belize and Jamaica, a beginning has been made in the teaching of Spanish in primary school. (In Belize many children are native speakers of Spanish). In many cases, however, the effects of the regulation are nullified by lack of teachers. In Trinidad Spanish is compulsory not only in junior and senior secondary schools but in the specialised craft and pre-technical curricula in senior comprehensive schools; in many cases, however, it cannot be included in the programme. The discrepancy between