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ABSTRACT

Early Russian religious and educational influences on the 20 various Alaskan Native languages are described, followed by those of American origin in schools and religious groups after the American purchase in 1867, all of which show the development of diglossia and language shifts. The present dual educational system, which includes state schools and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools, has contributed to shifts in language use from Alaskan Native languages to varieties of English or combinations of both. Alaskan Native and non-native students learn native language-specific dialects of English which have their own phonological and syntactical characteristics. Teacher attitudes, knowledge, and understanding, as well as differences in culture-specific modes of discourse, and the use of formalized textbook English are seen as factors which create interethnic communication problems. The geographic and cultural isolation has also been influential in creating a lack of language proficiency and educational achievement. Recommendations for student eligibility for the bilingual program in ESEA Title VII include: identification of limited English proficient students by teacher recommendations and testing; documentation of community language and cultural influences by languages other than English; and description of historical community cultural contribution to the limited English proficiency of target students. (JD)

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ED195362

Significant Impact of Environment Regarding  
Eligibility of Native American and Alaskan  
Native Students for ESEA Title VII Regulations

A Position Paper of the Alaska State Department of Education



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

This position paper will discuss, through a historical perspective, the environments in which a language other than English have had a significant impact on the English language proficiency of Alaskan Native students and recommendations for determining the eligibility of students under Section 703 (a) (1) (C) of the 1978 Education Amendments.

## II. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS HAVING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Twenty distinct languages are spoken among Native people of Alaska. These languages can be classified into five major linguistic families: Eskimo-Aleut, Tsimshian, Haida, Tlingit and Athabascan-Eyak. Table I and the following map indicate the general patterns of Native language viability and geographical distribution.<sup>1</sup>

A number of Alaskan Native languages have become increasingly disused with the rapidly growing diglossia created in semi-isolated communities by the impact of non-Alaskan Native cultures. The degree of diglossia varies greatly throughout the State. Table I, however, enables us to see the general pattern of diglossia and the shift to English usage by most members of certain

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<sup>1</sup>Orvik, James M. "An Overview of Alaska Native Bilingual Education," in Richard W. Brislin, ed. Topics in Culture Learning, pp. 109-110.

\* diglossia - the use of two (or more) languages or varieties of the same language based on functional differentiation at the societal or community level.

Table 1  
Alaska Native Languages and Populations<sup>a</sup>

Language Family	Language Name	Population	Number Speaking	
Eskimo-Aleut:	Aleut:	2,000	700	
	Eskimo:	Sugpiaq	3,000	1,000
		Central Yupik	17,000	15,000
		Siberian Yupik	1,000	1,000
		Inupiaq	11,000	6,000
Tsimshian:	Tsimshian	1,000	150	
Haida:	Haida	500	100	
Tlingit:	Tlingit	9,000	2,000	
Athabaskan-Eyak:	Eyak:	Eyak	20	3
		Ahtna	500	200
	Athabaskan:	Tanaina	900	250
		Ingalik	300	100
		Holikachuk	150	25
		Koyukon	2,100	700
		Upper Kuskokwin	150	100
		Tanana	360	250
		Tanacross	175	120
		Upper Tanana	300	250
		Han	65	20
		Kutchin	1,100	700

<sup>a</sup> Source: Map of Alaska Native Languages, Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 99701.



language groups. One must remember that the development of diglossia and language shifts have, for the most part, occurred within the last generation.

Two institutions greatly influential in these phenomena were the Christian Churches; Orthodox, Catholic and various Protestant Churches, and schools. During Russian colonial days schools were run by the Russian Orthodox Church and during American Territorial days schools were often run by religious groups until the Federal Government or the Alaska Territorial government took over all responsibility for schooling in 1885 and 1905 respectively.

Schools in Alaska were first begun by the Russians in Kodiak, Sitka, St. Paul and Unalaska. The media of instruction in these schools were Aleut or Tlingit and Russian. In 1887, twenty years after the American purchase, there remained 17 schools supported by the Russian Orthodox Church of the Russian Empire. These schools continued until 1916.

Other schools were established and run by other religious groups. These included the Presbyterians who established schools in Wrangell, Sitka, Haines, Hoonah, and Point Barrow between the years of 1877 and 1890. The Moravians established a school near Bethel in 1880 for Yup'ik Eskimos. The Episcopal Church started schools in

Anvik (1887), Point Hope (1890), Nenana (1908), Allakaket (1910), Ketchikan (1897), Tanana (1890) and Ft. Yukon (1890). The Roman Catholic Church began schools at Holy Cross (1888) and Nulato (1899). Approximately seven other schools were begun by other religious groups between 1890 and 1913.

In all of these schools English was the medium of instruction and the curriculum was set up to "civilize" the Natives and help them become citizens. Children were first taught to speak, read and write the English language and secondly to be given vocational education in trades. The early educational program definitely set forth to sublimate Native culture to that of white culture.<sup>2</sup>

It is of interest to note that of the 36,000 people in Alaska in 1885, not over 2,000 could speak English and these were mainly in the settlements of Juneau, Sitka and Wrangell.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Native people of Alaska outnumbered the whites and were in the majority in the culture until 1930.<sup>4</sup>

From 1905 until present a dual system of education for Alaskan

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<sup>2</sup>Defoe, Don. Some Problems in the Education of Native Peoples In Alaska, pp. 29, 30.

<sup>3</sup>Alaska Department of Education. North to the Future: The Alaska Department of Education and Education in Alaska, 1785-1967, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Defoe, op. cit., p. 17.



Natives has existed. This system includes schools initially run by the Federal Office of Education and then the Bureau of Indian Affairs and schools run by the Territorial and later the State Department of Education. In figures for 1957 and 1975, more Native students were enrolled in State schools than BIA schools.<sup>5</sup>

Since the beginnings of formal education in Alaska, either under BIA or the State, few generations of Alaskan Natives have been able to complete elementary and secondary school. In the population over 25 of the 1970 census, Natives had a median educational achievement of about 7½ years. Among rural Natives the median was only about 6 years; and about 40% were, in effect, unschooled.<sup>6</sup> In the seven years before 1975, enrollment increased by half in elementary schools and doubled in high schools.<sup>7</sup> It was not until after the mid-sixties that students had access to elementary education in their own communities.

From a historical context, then, we can see that the shifts in language use from Alaskan Native languages to varieties of English or combinations of both have taken place to varying degrees,

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<sup>5</sup>Defoe, op. cit., p. 35.  
Orvik, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>6</sup>Nathan, Robert R. and Associates. 2 (C) Report Federal Programs and Alaskan Natives: Introduction and Summary, Part C: Section 2, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Nathan, Robert R. and Associates, op. cit., p.3.

Table 2  
 Numbers of School-age Speakers of Native Languages in  
 Alaska by School Agency and Bilingual Programming Status  
 1975

	No. of School-Age Speakers	No. of School-Age Non-Speakers	Agency	No. Speakers Total in Bil. Prog.	% Speakers in Bil. Prog.	
<u>Eskimo-Aleut</u>						
Yupik	2,343	542	BIA	2,385	270	11.5
	<u>1,096</u>	<u>929</u>	ASOSS	<u>2,025</u>	<u>283</u>	<u>25.3</u>
Total Yupik	3,439	1,471		4,910	553	16.1
Inupiaq	862	1,011	BIA	1,873	180	20.9
	<u>305</u>	<u>489</u>	ASOSS	<u>794</u>	<u>222</u>	<u>72.8</u>
Total Inupiaq	1,167	1,500		2,667	402	34.4
St. Lawrence Island Aleut	218	0	BIA	218	89	40.2
	66	472	ASOSS	538	13	19.7
Total Eskimo-Aleut <sup>a</sup>	4,890	3,443		8,333	1,057	21.6
<u>Tsimshian</u>						
	0	300	b	300	0	
<u>Haida</u>						
	0	100	b	100	0	
<u>Tlincit</u>						
	0	2,800	b	2,800	0	
<u>Athabaskan</u>						
Ahtna	0	150	ASOSS	150	0	
Han	0	20	ASOSS	20	0	
Holikachuk	0	50	ASOSS	50	0	
Ingalik	0	75	ASOSS	75	0	
Koyukon	0	600	ASOSS <sup>b</sup>	600	0	
Kutchin	17	0	BIA	17	17	100.0
	<u>86</u>	<u>129</u>	ASOSS	<u>215</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>66.3</u>
Total Kutchin	103	129		232	74	71.3
Tanaina	15	250	ASSOS <sup>b</sup>	265	0	0.0
Tanana	0	100	ASOSS	100	0	
Tanacross	15	15	ASOSS	30	0	0.0
Upper Kuskokwim	25	0	ASOSS	25	25	100.00
Upper Tanana	15	10	BIA	25	15	100.00
	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>	ASOSS	<u>50</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Total Upper Tanana	40	35		75	40	100.00
Total Athabaskan	32	10	BIA	42	32	100.00
	<u>166</u>	<u>1,414</u>	ASOSS	<u>1,580</u>	<u>107</u>	<u>64.5</u>
	198	1,424		1,622	139	70.2
Agency Totals	3,455	1,573	BIA	5,060	571	16.5
	<u>1,633</u>	<u>6,504</u>	ASOSS	<u>8,137</u>	<u>625</u>	<u>38.3</u>
Grand Total	5,088	8,077		13,165	1,196	23.5

<sup>a</sup> Exclusive of Sugpiaq, which is served by the Kenai Peninsula Borough School Districts

<sup>b</sup> Served by various school districts as well as ASOSS

depending upon the length of contact with the Anglo culture and the inclusion in the school systems of either the State or Bureau of Indian Affairs.<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, the language shifting that is taking place has only occurred in the last 40 years to any great extent.

From Table 2 we can see that the shifting from an Alaskan Native language to a variety of English has occurred most among the Aleut, Inupiaq, Tsimshian, Haida, Tlingit and various Athabascan languages.<sup>9</sup> The varieties of English being used by people of these linguistic backgrounds probably has had significant impact from the Native languages and have at least surface details replaced in whole or significant part by the influence of one of these languages. As with U.S. Southwestern Indian students, Alaskan Native and non-Native students learn Native language-specific dialects of English which have their own phonological and syntactical characteristics.<sup>10</sup> These varieties of English have been evolving for only two or three generations.

At present little research has been done on the varieties of English used in Alaska, but experience shows us that there are

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<sup>8</sup>See Table 2

<sup>9</sup>See Appendix A

<sup>10</sup>Harvey, Gina P. "Some Observations About Red English and Standard English in the Classroom," p. 2.

probably various varieties of this language used throughout the State. Historically, the features of these varieties (village Englishes) may have originated in a) the makeshift English which developed in early contacts, b) pre-existing pidgin English used by whites in early contacts, c) interference from the Native language in post-contact acquisition of English and d) the various regional and social dialects of English which have served as models in the villages.<sup>11</sup>

Research on the varieties of English used in an Alaskan School District has been recently completed by Nancy Higgins.<sup>12</sup> Additional research is sorely needed, however.

As the above research points out, factors other than the use of language varieties may have a great bearing on the English language proficiency of Alaskan Native students. These include: a) teacher attitudes and understanding of the characteristics and uses of varieties of English, b) teacher knowledge of the differences between teaching Standard English and reading and writing, c) teacher understanding of the child's culture and history, d) self-fulfilling

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<sup>11</sup>Tabbert, Russell. "Some Assumptions About 'Village English' in Alaska," Personal Communication to the Department of Education, August 28, 1978, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Higgins, Nancy. NonStandard English - A First Look, Boulder, Colorado: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1978. See Appendix B for excerpts.

APPENDIX B

EXERPTS

from

NONSTANDARD ENGLISH -- A FIRST LOOK

by

Nancy Higgins

CONCLUSIONS

Based on quantitative, as well as qualitative analysis from three areas-- student, teacher, and direct observation--the following conclusions may be offered:

- (1) A number of Nonstandard English patterns exist among Native students.
- (2) These patterns vary from individual to individual and between schools.
- (3) Some Nonstandard English patterns appear to be based on the Athabaskan language patterns.
- (4) Nonstandard English patterns appear to differ from Standard English patterns in attention to certain surface elements; however, meaning is conveyed.
  - (a) Redundant Standard English elements are often omitted in Nonstandard English patterns.
  - (b) The context of a Nonstandard English utterance may be used to convey meaning.
- (5) Teacher perceptions of Nonstandard English patterns vary widely.
- (6) Several colloquial language norms which differ from Standard English were observed in Native and non-Native students' speech in the different communities.
- (7) Nonstandard English patterns may vary according to the situation (e.g., school versus outside of school).
- (8) Nonstandard English appears to vary between communities.
- (9) The use of Nonstandard English may reflect an individual's concept of self, may illustrate and/or maintain the speaker's membership in various social groups.
- (10) Nonstandard English may be used as a social marker in school by non-Native students.

Because teacher perceptions of students are so important a memorandum explaining some areas of cross-cultural misunderstandings that appeared during this project were submitted to the Alaska Gateway School District Board to provide Board members with information to design cultural awareness courses for teachers in the District.

In addition other factors which may affect Native student achievement were included in the memorandum. Briefly these factors point to the absence of culturally relevant curriculum guidelines, the need for more Native personnel, the need for more communication mechanisms to link the social, economic and cultural situations of the school personnel and Native village residents and the need to upgrade and integrate the bilingual program with other school classes. All of the above factors potentially affect Native student achievement.

Taking a wholistic view of education within the District schools, Non-standard English is only one symptom of the Native child's lack of fit with the language and culture of the school; or viewed another way, the school's lack of fit with the child's language and culture.

#### SUMMARY

Based on linguistic and educational research on the implications of Non-standard English in the classroom as well as data collected in this project, the following summary remarks may be offered.

- (1) The hypothesis that Nonstandard English speakers will achieve or perform better in school or in society if they acquire Standard English appears to be based on (a) a recent trend in education to discover what kind of defect or disadvantage children are suffering from, and (b) certain premises about the relationship between Standard English and achievement and social and economic prestige that are as yet unproven.
- (2) Nonstandard English-speaking students appear to understand (perceive) Standard English but may produce only Nonstandard English, depending on the individual language patterns of each student.
- (3) Researchers in general have indicated that the teacher's understanding of the child's Nonstandard English patterns are crucial to the child's school experience.
- (4) Researchers indicate that rejection of the child's Nonstandard English patterns by teachers may be one of the major problems interfering with learning.
- (5) Researchers indicate that there is a difference between reading for understanding and pronunciation of written words.

prophesy of teachers, e) inappropriateness of testing and evaluation instruments and f) lack of student-centered, appropriate instructional materials and methods.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, research being conducted by Dr. Ron Scollon of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, suggests that other major influences upon the interethnic communication found in almost all Alaskan communities and schools include differences in culture-specific modes of discourse regardless of the language used and the notion that formalized textbook English is another mode which creates interethnic communication problems for individuals whose community and home environment is primarily based on oral rather than written discourse.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly, the real isolation of rural communities both geographically and culturally, from the "mainstream" Standard English-speaking community has been very influential in helping to retain the linguistic and social factors at play within these self-contained sub-systems. Although diglossia and dialects are most noticeable

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<sup>13</sup>Higgins, op. cit., pp. 34, 46-47. See also Soboleff, Walter. "Reflections on the Significant Impact of the Environment Upon the English Skills of Alaska Native Students." Paper prepared for the Alaska State Department of Education, 1979. See Appendix C.

<sup>14</sup>(a) Scollon, Ron and Suzanne B. K. Scollon. Athabascan-English Interethnic Communication, Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska, Alaska Native Language Center, January, 1979. Monograph.

(b) Scollon and Scollon. "Literacy as Interethnic Communication: An Athabascan Case," in Working Papers in Sociolinguistics, Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, April, 1979.

here, these varieties of English have had the greatest impact from non-English languages and cultures. Often the only contact with Standard English is through the teachers and possibly television or radio. In addition, the cultural history of these isolated communities remains a very influential factor in interethnic communication and the cultural discontinuity of home and school, hence influencing both language proficiency and educational achievement.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DETERMINING STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

The Alaska State Department of Education makes the following recommendations for determining student eligibility under Section 703 (a) (1) (C) of the Interim Regulations for ESEA Title VII:

1. Projects sites shall identify Limited English Proficient students by:
  - (a) teacher recommendations and
  - (b) Testing of English proficiency through standardized tests and reading tests, the results of which are two or more standard deviations below normal;
2. Projects sites shall document that the community in which the project will be implemented has Language Other Than English speakers and/or has a culture and language heavily influenced by a Language Other than English and the culture indigenous to that language;
3. Project sites shall describe how the cultural history of the community has contributed to the limited English proficiency of target students. When appropriate, the social isolation of the community will be described in terms of the degree to which this isolation influences and maintains the level of diaglossia.



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c/o Southeast Regional Resource Center, 127 South  
Franklin Street, Juneau, Alaska, 99801

APPENDIX A

EXERPT 2/22/79

Alaska Department of Education  
Bilingual-Bicultural Ed. Programs

Language Assessment Report  
Interim Report  
April, 1978

DISTRICT NAME	LANGUAGE	ALASKA LANGUAGE CATEORY					TOTAL
		A	B	C	D	E	
ANCHORAGE SCHOOLS	Korean						
	Japanese						
	Spanish						
	Chinese						
	French						
	German	96	165	147	481	50 *	939
	C. Yupik						
	Inupiaq						
	Italian						
	Norwegian						
	Pilipino						
	Thai						
	Swedish						
	Vietnamese						
DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	Central Yup'ik			30	8	40	78
COPPER RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT	Ahtna					11	11
JUNEAU BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT	Pilipino		1	13	14	2	30
	Tlingit				2	34	36
	Spanish			1	3	1	5
	Korean			3			3
	C. Yup'ik			1			1
	Malayan		1				1
	Totals		2	18	19	37	76
PRIBILOF SCHOOLS	Aleut					24	24

\* Languages with fewer than 10 students not listed, but included in the data.

- Alaska Language Category :
- A: Students who speak a language other than English exclusively;
  - B: Students who speak mostly a language other than English, but also speak some English;
  - C: Students who speak a language other than English and English with equal ease;
  - D: Students who speak mostly English but also speak a language other than English;
  - E: Students who speak English exclusively but whose manner of speaking reflects the grammatical structure of another lang.



DISTRICT NAME	LANGUAGE	A	B	C	D	E	TOTALS
KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH SCHOOLS	Aleut			9	16	60	85
	Pilipino		6	16	28		57
	Spanish			6	6	3	15
	Korean		2	8			10
	Vietnamese	2				1	3
	Sugpiaq				3		3
	Norwegian			1		2	3
	Russian			1	1		2
	Tanaina					2	2
	Other					12	6
	Totals	7	10	41	66	74	198
MAT-SU BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT	Spanish			1	13		14
	C. Yup'ik		3		9		12
	Inupiaq			1	13		14
	German				7		7
	Czech			2	2		4
	Greek				2		2
	Dutch				2		2
	French				1		1
	Japanese				1		1
		Totals		3	4	50	
NOME PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Inupiaq				2	482	484
	Siberian						
	Yup'ik			19	2	10	31
	Vietnamese			3			3
	C. Yup'ik				3		3
	Spanish				2		2
	Other				10	9	19
	Totals			22	19	501	542
NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOLS	Inupiaq	6	153	405	302	115	981
PETERSBURG CITY SCHOOLS	Tlingit				2	2	4
	Spanish			1	1		2
	Norwegian					1	1
	Totals			1	3	3	7
SITKA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT	Pilipino	1	4	5			10
	Japanese	1			2		3
		Totals	2	4	5	2	
ST. MARY'S SCHOOL DISTRICT	C. Yup'ik				109		109
WRANGELL CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	Japanese		2				2
	German			1			1
		Totals		2	1		

District Name	Language	A	B	C	D	E	Total
N,W. Artic S.D.	Inupiaq		9	204	528	333	1,074
	Vietnamese		2				2
	Total		11	204	528	333	1,076
Bering Strait REAA S. D.	Siberian		79	1	1	1	82
	Yup'ik			1	6	13	20
	Inupiaq		2	110	67	138	317
Total		81	112	74	152	419	
Lower Yukon S.D.	C. Yup'ik		6	173	346	361	886
Lower Kuskokwim	C. Yup'ik		450	241	182	1	874
Kuspuk S. D.	C. Yup'ik			27	34	132	193
	Tanaina					3	3
	Tlingit					2	2
Ingalik					1	1	
Total				27	34	138	199
Southwest Region School District	C. Yup'ik	129	147	40	178	54	548
Lake & Penn. S. D.	Sugpiaq			27	111	19	157
	C. Yup'ik			31	114	7	152
	Tanaina			14	55	6	75
Total				72	280	32	384
Aleutian Chain	Aleut			11	7		18
	Spanish	1					1
Total		1		11	7		19

District Name	Language	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Iditarod S. D.	C. Yup'ik				3	8	11
	Ingalik					9	9
	Holikachuk					3	3
	Tanaina		3	1	7	3	14
	Upper Kuskokwim			9	18	6	33
	Shaguluk					1	1
	Total		3	10	28	30	71
Yukon-Koyukuk S. D.	Koyukon				3	199	202
Yukon Flats S. D.	(Gwich'in)		37	28	58	69	192
	Kutchin				6	13	19
	Koyukon						
	Total		37	28	64	82	211
Alaska Central Rail Belt S.D.	Icelandic			1			1
Alaska Gateway S. D.	Ahtna				13		13
	Tanacross		1	1	14	9	25
	Han			3	2		5
	Upper Tanana			3	42	11	56
	Spanish				2		2
	Total		1	7	73	20	101
Annette Island	Navajo			1			1
	Tsimsian				1		1
	Total			1	1		2
		A	B	C	D	E	Total
		266	1,227	1,681	3,026	2,234	8,482

APPENDIX C

"Reflections on the Significant Impact of the Environment  
Upon the English Skills of Alaskan Native Students"

By

Dr. Walter Soboleff

January 15, 1979

Historically classroom education in Alaska had its beginning by the Russian Church for its workers. However, shortly after 1867 the American type education opened; one for American speaking and another for Native Speaking. (Tlingit, etc.). Eventually through gradual population growth and the resulting economic growth, primarily gold discovery, lumbering, salmon, herring, and halibut fishing, schools grew proportionately.

Population centers were noted for having two schools; a territorial school for non-Indians and a Federal school (U.S. government) for the Indians. Integration of the two systems was an abrasive experience. The dominant culture in population centers frowned upon this change. A few diehards asserted that Indian admission would lower educational excellence and be a health hazard. Both excuses were false.

We realize change does not basically make students overnight into average U.S. American-type students. At best, our school system has grown in spite of inadequate planning of school facilities much less classroom subjects and teachers.

The Grand Camp of the Alaska Native Brotherhood since its start in 1912, has advocated the best possible education for its youth and has been supportive of school systems, aimed at creating a pleasant learning experience and through it, imparting basic requirements for the pupils' success.

To begin with, the Native Alaskan student is not at home in the English language. The entire background of all the students this article covers are first: Inupiat, Yupik, Athapascans, Aleut, Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimpsean. Out of these groups few, if any, had grandparents who attended the U.S. American school system. Other parents possibly went as far as the third or fifth grade.



From a traditional family lifestyle with a background of strong family ties, language, loyalty, and learning that was continuous, American schools came upon the scene.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Certainly, a culture that possibly extends to some 40,000 years does not change rapidly in adjustment to current school patterns. There are a few school administrations sagacious enough to implement orientation seminars annually for the entire staff. Parents and community leaders may also be helpful in this educational process.
2. The opportunity for students to include topics for study from their culture should be allowed, a student-centered curriculum.
3. For those desire, a study of their language. This opportunity must be provided.
4. Local resource people should be retained and adequately compensated.
5. Adequately prepared teacher-aide programs be implemented and teacher-aides be employed and their services clearly outlined to prevent abuse by either teacher-aides or teachers in charge.
6. To consistently improve the Native studies program instructors and/or teachers involved should meet periodically for the sharing of ideas and professional guidance to improve techniques.
7. Flexibility of courses are necessary for such cases as a student to go on a hunting trip with an expert. In this would be included: Gear preparation and care, camp selection and set-up, game stalking, vulnerable aim, cleaning and butchering, skinning, weather observation, safety, how to meet emergencies, care of self, physical preparation and other customs.

Finally, there is an adequate number of Inupiat, Yupik, Aleut, Athapascans, Tlingit, Haida, Tsimpsean, and other Native Alaskan students to justify continued funding to properly meet vital and meaningful educational requirements necessary for a people in a cultural transition.

This cultural transition is not anything we imagine, such as in one generation a group moving from the stone age into the jet age; dug-out canoe travel to modern type fiberglass, high speed vessel; from no communication except mail, then a telegram, and now phone via satellite and television.

Social pressures in schools by dominate western cultures is a hardship on Native Indians and Eskimos in Alaska; causing drop-outs and push-outs. Such problems can be caused by poor teaching, supervision, as well as student pressures. School boards, not realizing these problems, are also at fault.

Through this entire scheme of Native education, supplemental aid may insure success of the pupil from start to finish.

Therefore, any amendments and/or regulations to improve education as herein mentioned are highly desirable: an emergency exists.

Dr. Walter Soboleff

January 15, 1979

APPENDIX B

EXERPTS

from

NONSTANDARD ENGLISH -- A FIRST LOOK

by

Nancy Higgins

CONCLUSIONS

Based on quantitative, as well as qualitative analysis from three areas-- student, teacher, and direct observation--the following conclusions may be offered:

- (1) A number of Nonstandard English patterns exist among Native students.
- (2) These patterns vary from individual to individual and between schools.
- (3) Some Nonstandard English patterns appear to be based on the Athabaskan language patterns.
- (4) Nonstandard English patterns appear to differ from Standard English patterns in attention to certain surface elements; however, meaning is conveyed.
  - (a) Redundant Standard English elements are often omitted in Nonstandard English patterns.
  - (b) The context of a Nonstandard English utterance may be used to convey meaning.
- (5) Teacher perceptions of Nonstandard English patterns vary widely.
- (6) Several colloquial language norms which differ from Standard English were observed in Native and non-Native students' speech in the different communities.
- (7) Nonstandard English patterns may vary according to the situation (e.g., school versus outside of school).
- (8) Nonstandard English appears to vary between communities.
- (9) The use of Nonstandard English may reflect an individual's concept of self, may illustrate and/or maintain the speaker's membership in various social groups.
- (10) Nonstandard English may be used as a social marker in school by non-Native students.

Because teacher perceptions of students are so important a memorandum explaining some areas of cross-cultural misunderstandings that appeared during this project were submitted to the Alaska Gateway School District Board to provide Board members with information to design cultural awareness courses for teachers in the District.

In addition other factors which may affect Native student achievement were included in the memorandum. Briefly these factors point to the absence of culturally relevant curriculum guidelines, the need for more Native personnel, the need for more communication mechanisms to link the social, economic and cultural situations of the school personnel and Native village residents and the need to upgrade and integrate the bilingual program with other school classes. All of the above factors potentially affect Native student achievement.

Taking a wholistic view of education within the District schools, Non-standard English is only one symptom of the Native child's lack of fit with the language and culture of the school; or viewed another way, the school's lack of fit with the child's language and culture.

#### SUMMARY

Based on linguistic and educational research on the implications of Non-standard English in the classroom as well as data collected in this project, the following summary remarks may be offered.

- (1) The hypothesis that Nonstandard English speakers will achieve or perform better in school or in society if they acquire Standard English appears to be based on (a) a recent trend in education to discover what kind of defect or disadvantage children are suffering from, and (b) certain premises about the relationship between Standard English and achievement and social and economic prestige that are as yet unproven.
- (2) Nonstandard English-speaking students appear to understand (perceive) Standard English but may produce only Nonstandard English, depending on the individual language patterns of each student.
- (3) Researchers in general have indicated that the teacher's understanding of the child's Nonstandard English patterns are crucial to the child's school experience.
- (4) Researchers indicate that rejection of the child's Nonstandard English patterns by teachers may be one of the major problems interfering with learning.
- (5) Researchers indicate that there is a difference between reading for understanding and pronunciation of written words.

- (6) Exposure to concepts, vocabulary, and figures of speech contained in national standardized tests may present some difficulties to Native and non-Native students.
- (7) Other factors including teacher perceptions of Nonstandard English, teacher interpretations about Native culture and life style, integration of Native language and culture in the classroom, and communication between school personnel and village members may also influence achievement.

## SECTION V

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### PART I. DISTRICT-DIRECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

District policy should include a commitment to recognizing Nonstandard English as a valid language variety in District schools and a commitment to further study of Nonstandard English.

Due to the fact that grammars of Han, Upper Tanana, Ahtna, and Tanacross languages are not as yet written or available, it is not known to what extent the features of Nonstandard English reported herein reflect those of a particular language or language family. I suggest that the data collected in this project be given to both Paul Milanowski and the Alaska Native Language Center for analysis of this crucial relationship.

Another critical dimension which has not been covered here, but should be conducted separate from the above, is an analysis of the Nonstandard English grammar, syntax, and meaning. Nonstandard English may have patterns of its own not related to the traditional language base. In order to make effective educational decisions, the District must know not only the historical relations of Nonstandard English but also the current patterns being used.

Further research should be approved to provide more in-depth analysis of Nonstandard English syntactic patterns. The results of this project and future research could then be utilized to provide teachers with a better understanding of Nonstandard English patterns. Teacher in-service or ongoing orientation should be offered in each school based on these findings.

#### PART II. TEACHER-DIRECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher in-service or ongoing orientation programs should include the following topics:

- (1) Utilizing a device similar to Lambert's Matched Guise Test, teachers should be made aware of their own sensitivity to language usage.
- (2) In-service should familiarize teachers with the patterns of Nonstandard English which differ from Standard English, identified by this project, and also the syntactic patterns discovered in further research.
- (3) Teachers should be made aware of the function of Nonstandard English to students' individual, peer group, and village identity.

- (4) Teachers should be made aware that there is a difference between teaching Standard English and the teaching of reading and writing, and that these realms should be kept separate whenever possible. The following methods could be employed to ensure that Nonstandard English forms are accepted and valued in school:
- (a) In reading, specific class times could be devoted to reading Standard English with the main emphasis placed on comprehension. Students should be allowed to read orally in Nonstandard English without correction. At other times, reading should be encouraged for the joy of obtaining new information about new topics. Possibly, each school could set aside a special portion of each day for a school-wide silent-reading time. Any subject matter that a student wanted to read would be accepted during this special time. Teachers could use this opportunity to read also. Related emphasis should be placed on acquisition of library, comic, or other books that might interest students.
  - (b) In the above manner, specific class time should be set aside for the students to write for the sake of seeing one's thoughts on paper. No correction of errors in writing would be made at this time. Perhaps students could keep a journal of experiences, feelings, etc., that would provide encouragement for writing for pleasure without the pressure of correction.
  - (c) Conversation, in the same sense, should not be corrected for pronunciation or grammar except in specified contexts.
- (5) Since awareness of language in this author's opinion cannot be separated from cultural sensitivity, the teacher in-service should provide the following topics and also time for discussion. Every effort should be made to identify similarities as well as differences between the cultures, while at the same time recognizing that individual differences exist within each group's members. A respect for this individuality and uniqueness should be fostered also. Topics for inclusion are:
- (a) the history and culture of Athabascan tribes within the District area
  - (b) the present culture, social and kinship structure of the Native villages
  - (c) the value of the extended family
  - (d) discussion about alcoholism by the Public Health nurse and a community village member can put this disease into perspective for teachers.
- (6) Teachers should be made aware that some of their beliefs about the language and culture of their students could influence their

expectations of their students, thereby affecting student performance. [A discussion of Rosenthal's (1968) findings as well as other findings concerning self-fulfilling prophecies would be helpful here. Howard Van Ness of the University of Alaska Fairbanks XCED program could probably recommend someone to conduct a workshop on this most important topic.]

(7) Some mechanisms should be provided so that teachers may be able to handle the situation of non-Native students mimicking Native speech patterns. For example, the following techniques could be used to make students aware of the value of different dialects (Nonstandard Dialect:17):

(a) Compare the many dialects in the United States.

1. With the aid of a regional dialect map, discuss with the class the major dialects existing in the United States.
2. Play tapes of nationally and locally important Americans to identify regional dialects. Have pupils listen for the differences in the dialects. Such famous Americans may include Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Hubert Humphrey, etc.
3. Have students listen to television and movie personalities' dialects.

(b) Discuss how each person has a right to his or her own form of speech no matter how it differs from that of others.

In each situation extreme caution should be taken to ensure that Nonstandard English speech is not denigrated.

(8) Teachers should be made aware that individual students may have difficulty with figures of speech and homonyms. They should watch their own use of these forms and be sure that students understand the hidden meanings of these forms.

(9) Vocabulary words should not be taken for granted. The meaning of new words should be explained in depth and many examples given.

### PART III: STUDENT-DIRECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) Testing for perception and production could be implemented if a qualified linguist, who has conducted research in the area of Non-standard dialect and academic success, were employed. Dr. Kenneth Goodman, professor of education at the University of Arizona, is a good source of information on this subject. He is currently publishing the results of a six-school study on the effect of Nonstandard English and reading. Since the school at McGrath, Alaska, was included in this study, results may pertain to Native students in this District as well.



- (2) The Distar reading program seems to have had good results with other Nonstandard English speakers despite the fact that linguists do not agree with the Distar author's basic premise about the cognitive capacity of Nonstandard English speakers (Labov 1969a; Fillmore 1978: personal communication; Coberly 1978: personal communication). The Peabody Language Kit has been recommended as an alternate or additional program which has produced good results among other Nonstandard English-speaking students in the Lower 48 (Fillmore 1978: personal communication).
- (3) In New York, several techniques have been used to encourage Non-Standard English speakers to differentiate consciously between Standard English and Nonstandard English. However, this researcher has serious reservations about calling more attention to Nonstandard English patterns in view of (a) the sensitive political climate now present in the District; (b) the fact that non-Native students may use Nonstandard English in school to imitate Native students; (c) the fact that further in-depth syntactic analysis of Nonstandard English patterns is needed; and (d) the fact that Nonstandard English is considered a communicative disorder or a handicap by some District administrators and some teachers. Therefore, I recommend that in the short term no programs be initiated to make students more conscious (or self-conscious) of Nonstandard English patterns until further research is conducted, the climate cools, and Native and non-Native students and teachers are informed of the value of Nonstandard English.

#### PART IV: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research could profitably be conducted in the following areas:

- (1) longer-term sociolinguistic studies of more groups of which the student is a member (e.g., family, peer)
- (2) studies of the cultural patterns of learning of Native children
- (3) studies in the use of silence as culturally prescribed behavior in certain social situations
- (4) studies of Nonstandard English and traditional language discourse rules
- (5) studies to elicit cross-cultural communication techniques that could be employed to improve school-village interchange.