

Symposium on Culture, Thought and by Lynne Hansen

Do patterns of thought and learning vary from culture to culture? If so, how can the differences best be dealt with in the classroom? These key issues in intercultural education were addressed in a symposium held on October 1 and 2, 1980 at the Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus. Sponsored by the Communication and Language Arts Division, the event was one of a series of symposia which commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the university with the general theme, "LDS Educational Horizons from a Multi-Cultural Perspective."

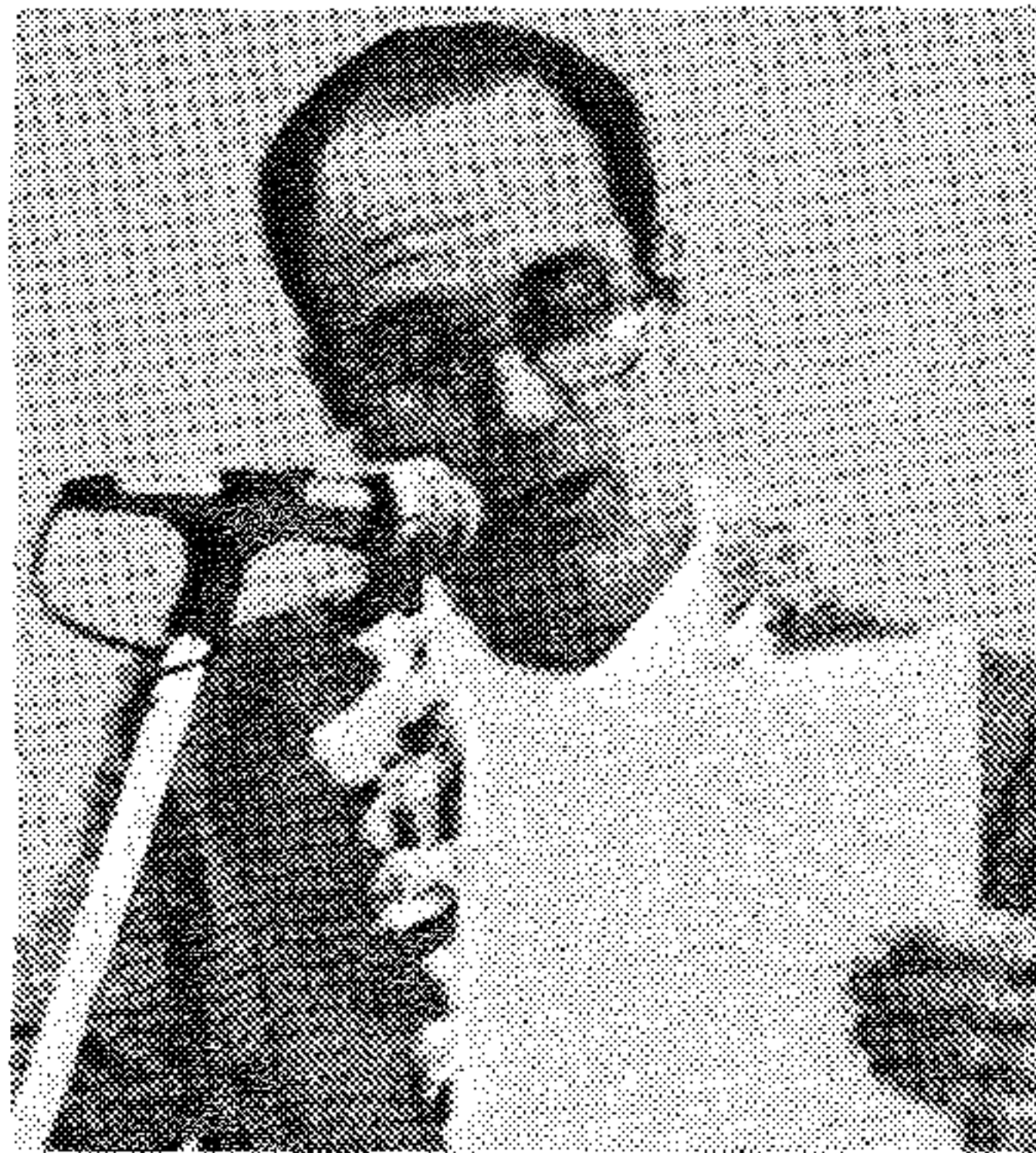
The featured speaker at the first symposium session was Lily Wong Fillmore from the School of Education, the University of California at Berkeley. An internationally recognized authority on bilingual education and second language acquisition, Fillmore brought to the symposium not only the abundant insights gained through a brilliant academic career but also those which had grown out of her own personal experiences early in life.

As a monolingual Chinese speaker (the only one in her first grade class) entering school in Watsonville, California, she found

greater acceptance among the Spanish-speaking minority group than the English-speaking majority. Thus, from a young age she acquired not only the language (and culture) of the school and larger community, English, but also Spanish, a tool that would facilitate her future contributions to the education of minority children.

During the past 11 years Fillmore has developed four major Spanish/English bilingual programs, and before that she was heavily involved in the development and implementation of educational programs for migrant farmworkers' children in California.

She is currently in the second year of a study (with Susan Ervin-Tripp) of individual differences in second language acquisition. An additional three-year research project funded by NIE was begun this fall under Fillmore's direction. This massive study will involve the collection of longitudinal data from 16 bilingual classrooms (8 Cantonese, 8 Spanish). These data will then be used to assess instructional practices, that is translation and direct language use, and to approach the question of what characteristics of learners interact with these two bilingual



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instructional practices to affect the acquisition of language skills.

Fillmore's symposium talk (see p. 23 for the complete text) included an overview of the sources of evidence on cultural variation in language learning. An underlying theme was the need for a cautious approach in applying research findings to educational practice.

The second symposium session featured presentations by three local scholars: Roland Tharp, Cathie Jordan and Morris Graham.

Roland Tharp, professor of psychology at the University of Hawaii, is also a consultant to the Kamehameha Early Education Program and has done extensive research on teacher strategies in the elementary school. His books include *Perspectives in Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *Behavior Modification in the Natural Environment* and *Self-Directed Behavior*. Tharp's symposium presentation (the text is on p. 35) examined areas of conflict between institutional formal education and other educational modes, offering suggestions for the resolution of these conflicts in a multi-cultural society.

Cathie Jordan is a research anthropologist

for the Kamehameha Early Education Program and has co-authored a book, *Culture, Behavior, and Education*, which is based on the first ethnographic and psychological study of the culture of modern Hawaiians. The major portion of Jordan's symposium paper was devoted to examples of cultural adaptations in classroom practices which have been found to be culturally compatible and educationally effective for children of Hawaiian culture. In her conclusion, the generalizability of these findings to other populations was suggested.

Morris Graham is a Professor of Psychology at Brigham Young University-Hawaii Campus. His presentation was a report of a cross-cultural study of semantic development. According to Graham, among ten cultural groups examined, two (Papago and native Hawaiian) displayed significantly slower development than the others in terms of the measures employed in his investigation.

In the culminating session of the symposium the four participating experts interacted with each other and the audience in a joint effort at clarification and synthesis of vital issues in intercultural education.