A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
OF FRENCH AS TAUGHT
TO BEGINNERS IN BRITISH SCHOOLS,

by

ANDRE S. LINCE, Ph.D.(Soc.)(Surrey).

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY
September 1976.
A NOTE OF THANKS.

The conceptual framework which constitutes the backbone of the present work has evolved under the guidance of Professor F.G. Healey.

Professor Healey, whose pointed questions led me to frame my opinions in a more comprehensively informed manner, deserves my thanks for the morale booster resulting from his penetrating comments on the topics forming the core of the thesis.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude for the intellectual stimulus and the pleasure derived from the debates which were enhanced by Professor Healey's personal interest in methods of teaching and teacher-training.
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ABSTRACT.

In the main, the aims of the thesis consist in:

• outlining the development of the teaching of French whose methodology "is more extensive than that of almost all other subjects";¹

• examining the factors which contribute to the learning of French;

• demonstrating that the body of facts now available is sufficiently advanced to effect significant improvements with regard to both course design and methodology;

• drafting a rationale for the teaching of French by bringing the literature heretofore scattered in scholarly treatises into relevant contact with much of the important work which has appeared in article form in journals.

There is a consensus of opinion that the rapid development of techniques and attitudes in Modern Language teaching demands a constant reappraisal. Professor Carroll has expressed the view that what is required "is a profound rethinking of current theories of foreign language teaching in the light of contemporary advances in psychological and psycholinguistic theory".² The search for a much needed theoretical framework has brought out results which have accelerated the retreat from Skinner's operant conditioning, whose "stimulus-response-reinforcement theory is woven into second language teaching everywhere".³ As a result the Flowden Committee made the plea that "any school embarking on French ought to scrutinise critically the course that it

¹ Donald C. Riddy, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 2944, 22.10.71, p. 38.
³ Marcelle Kellermann, in Aspects of Education, (Hull University), No. 6, 1967, p. 76.
proposes to use". 1 Besides, the aristocracy of theorists is now showing more concern with the learning process than with teaching techniques and teaching aids. Indeed, Professor Fries once decried that, "in spite of the fact that there has been more than a hundred years of vigorous linguistic investigation in accord with sound scientific methods, very little results of this investigation has actually got into the schools to affect the materials and methods of teaching". 2

The study has entailed extensive reading of a multidisciplinary nature. The relevant literature is scattered in diverse professional journals, scholarly treatises, and official documents largely, but not exclusively, published in English. PART I consists of an overview of the audio-lingual habit theory, which centers on the acquisition of mechanistic causal paradigms. We therefore probe the audio-visual method which, fundamentally, appears to be restricted to the teaching of form in language learning (chapter 1) and to impose a heavy burden onto the pupils in their attitudes towards their cognitive and emotional readjustments (chapter 2). In PART II, we undertake a searching investigation of both psychological theories and Applied Linguistics, with regard to their influence, or the lack of it, on the methodology of Modern Language teaching in general, and the contrasting teaching methods as practised at the various stages of Modern Language teaching in particular.

Considering that, in Modern Language teaching, the problems are


the most complex of all it is therefore appropriate to deal with several of the methodological issues which must be resolved. Among the vital issues, we shall examine successively the role of auditory discrimination in the audio-visual technique (chapter 3); the influence of the operant conditioning hypothesis on audio-visual courses (chapter 4); as well as the assumption that Applied Linguistics should shape audio-visual courses (chapter 5, subsection A). Moreover, a knowledge of the current trends in Linguistics is supposed to help the Modern Language teacher in his choice of an approach suited to the difficulties which pertain to the target language as and when they are encountered by the learners (subsection B).

After an emphasis on the teaching of form, meaning receives more attention. Looking into reading (chapter 6) leads naturally to mastering the symbolic notation, a problem which also underlies writing (chapter 7) when the learner seeks to discover the functional relationships (subsection A) whose intricacies are stimulating the educational psychologists in their search for a much needed theoretical framework (subsection B). PART II ends on a discussion of functional competence in French (chapter 8).

PART III opens on an investigation of teacher training in Modern Languages (chapter 9) and the effects of the successive changes in the official policy upon the output (subsection A) and the training of an adequate number of specialist Modern Language teachers (subsection B). Next, French for the majority of pupils is the object of a careful appraisal with regard to the pros and cons of the new challenge. The alternative route which is being slowly developed, is fraught with problems (chapter 10). As the tone of the thesis points to the fact that better prospects rest with radical changes, we look at the fragmentary efforts which have promoted the teaching of French to
thirty-five per cent. of the age-cohort at the pre-secondary stage (chapter 11). The final chapter attempts to map out language latency in Professor Chomsky's "critical period". It presupposes the understanding of how children learn a language and "to do this we must understand what goes on in their heads" in order to assess the debate which centres on the biological deadline in the prepubertal stage of development (chapter 12).


ABBREVIATIONS.

The following are the abbreviations used for the more commonly cited periodicals. The particulars of other works referred to in the text are set out in the relevant footnotes.


En Lg T : English Language Teaching, (London).


<table>
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<th>Journal Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lg</td>
<td>Language, (Baltimore, Md.: Journal of the Linguistic Society of America).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lg L</td>
<td>Language Learning, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mod Lg J</td>
<td>Modern Language Journal, (Menasha, Wis.: National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P M L A</td>
<td>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, (Menasha, Wis.).</td>
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INTRODUCTION.

"It is a bad thing for a subject when few people write on it at length but many in brief."

There are signs that the notion of research tends to shift from the concept of an accumulation of theoretical knowledge to a broader investigation based upon immediately identifiable technical and professional needs. So, a multidisciplinary perspective begins to supersede the single discipline-based technique. The mode of thinking of the research candidates, whose training frame consisted of "the typical English university single subject honours degree", explains to some extent that, even in recent years, a majority of educands have been reluctant to adopt an interdisciplinary framework. The analysis of problems requires a multidisciplinary outlook though. For example, the tendency of isolating every foreign language for special treatment has been decried by Professor Gatesby in the nineteen forties as being a hindrance to the spread of the information pertaining to foreign language teaching.

Moreover, if "the lack of communication among teachers of the same language is serious enough..., . . . in our field it is compounded by the almost desperate absence of communication among teachers of different languages or of related disciplines outside our specialization". Sadly, "no common meeting ground exists at present in our system for all the interests affected". Comments such as these revealed that routine


channels should be made available for the purpose of exchanging ideas for, in their absence, communication and change are hopelessly impeded.

Dr. Alexander King has remarked that "much lip service is paid to the need for multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary research and confrontation, but the reality is unimpressive and far below the critical threshold".¹

Allison David (Chicago University), who led a group of sociologists and anthropologists, made the first breakthrough in the late nineteen forties only to discover that the interdisciplinary communication was difficult because of the difference in the accepted level of analysis pertaining to particular disciplines. Nonetheless, Professor Lee (Surrey University) has pointed out that "demarcations are distasteful and inimical to progress",² but it should not be overlooked that, "when a new academic discipline is struggling for recognition, fraternization is a luxury it cannot afford and the pioneers must concentrate their energy on the central area of development".³

It has been asserted that French "will always be the foreign language that is of the most immediate concern for the English".⁴ While, strictly speaking, the scope of the present thesis is limited to French as a foreign language, the documented evidence is perforce inextricably bound up with the literature of Modern Languages. For example, the official committee chaired by Lord Annan, that was convened in order to investigate the teaching of Russian, produced the only comprehensive

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¹ Alexander King. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 161, 15.11.74, p. 5.)
² Terence R. Lee, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 130, 12.4.74, p. 10.
³ G.B. Milner, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 134, 10.5.74, p. 17.
⁴ Donald C. Riddy, in Med Langa., Vol. 43, 1962, p. 4.
report on the teaching of a Modern Language, albeit a minority one.

The characteristic of Modern Language teaching in the nineteen sixties has been a reappraisal of the relevance of theories on Applied Linguistics, as well as of methods of teaching, in spite of Professor Roeming's claim that the foreign language teacher "has traditionally confused individual opinion with objective scientific deduction". For several generations however, fashion in the teaching of a Modern Language has tended to reflect the views of the more vocal of its dedicated teachers, but a more rigorous professional training of Modern Language teachers should prevent them from being deceived and lulled into accepting methods solely brought about by fashionable trends. On the other hand, paraphrasing Clémenceau, the future of Modern Language teaching is too important a matter to be left entirely to teachers, lest they continue adopting techniques of Modern Language teaching deeply rooted in personal feelings, prejudices, and acts of faith.

Evolution in methods indicates unmistakably that the conventions have been changing. As is all too often the case, there is hardly any evidence showing that the reorientation is due to sound principles. This is of particular significance in the realm of language. For example, when Professor Bernstein found it necessary to reconsider the wider implications of his hypothesis, he readily conceded that, in this context, "to have an idea is not difficult, but the attempt to clarify it from a local intuition, to make it explicit, yet always to be aware of the ambiguity upon which its growth depends, is quite another matter". Common-sense half-truths and hunches could nonetheless be easily disproved by "an analysis of the variables involved in language learning".

Complacency has not set in. With the awareness that "it is only by bringing together psychology, linguistics and educational principles that the special problems of language learning can be profitably discussed", there is "much need for projects combining work in various disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, language and literature, education, and communication". There are promising avenues, for the interdisciplinary approach is spreading elsewhere (i.e., Denis Girard in France) and according to the linguist, ultimately, "foreign language teaching will be affected by any and all relevant developments in linguistics". It is becoming clear that "new and promising avenues of inquiry are being opened in the extremely complex phenomenon of human language by the growing interest of anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists". In the middle nineteen sixties, a U.S. writer expressed the opinion that "the directions the search has taken are complex because language teachers and scholars have accepted the challenge of new goals".

Such goals are based on the assumption that "the masters of the method . . . an internationally proved methodology . . . can teach almost any child to speak a foreign language via instruction in school", which suits the growing needs due to changing national circumstances. As "the main incentive to learn a language in Britain today is whether it can

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be put to use", the question had already been answered "in 1964 (for) Britain received more visitors from France alone than from the entire Commonwealth". In the early nineteen sixties, the Committee on Higher Education foretold that "modern languages have an increasingly important role in the conduct of affairs today and there should be much further experiment in this area of study especially in the application of modern techniques. Many more young people would like to be able to speak and read a language fluently and such knowledge is becoming essential in a growing number of occupations." If "many people have tried to learn a foreign language; none never give up trying; and nobody denies the national importance of efficiency in this field". In James Frith's words, "each passing year sees more people exposed to more languages". Consequently, "what is wanted is not an increase in the number of pupils specializing in modern languages in the sixth form but rather that all (emphasis in original) school leavers shall have a good knowledge of at least one modern language". Moreover, the growing interest in the significance of language in all aspects of education is calling for the formulation of a theory of language having linguistic, social and educational dimensions, considering that the new role assigned to Modern

1 Anon., in *The Times*, (London), No. 56640, 25.5.66, p. 12.
2 *Loc. cit.*
Languages is also dovetailing nicely with the ethical viewpoint which is promoting the teaching Modern Languages across the ability range.

The aims of the thesis are governed by the facts, first, that "research at the frontier of knowledge (is) uniquely difficult" and, secondly, that innovations have their roots in existing ideas. These existing ideas will be scrupulously acknowledged in the form of page footnotes whenever appropriate. This device has the added advantage of lending itself to making each chapter self-contained. Professor Northrop reminded us that "the achieving of true knowledge depends upon the investigation of things. When things are investigated, then true knowledge is achieved; when true knowledge is achieved, then the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, then the mind sees right".

In sum, the aims of the thesis consist in:

— examining the factors which contribute to the learning of French at the various stages with reference to theories and research data which pertain to related disciplines, Applied Linguistics and Psychology in particular;

— demonstrating that the body of facts now available is sufficiently advanced to effect significant improvements with regard to both course design and methodology;

— drafting a rationale for the teaching of French by bringing the literature heretofore scattered in scholarly treatises into relevant contact with much of the important work which has appeared in journals;

— outlining the development of the teaching of French whose
methodology "is more extensive than that of almost all other subjects".¹

The dissertation is conveniently divided into four major areas, which
may be summarized as (I) an overview of the audio-lingual habit theory;
(II) psycholinguistic hypotheses and Applied Linguistics as they
inter-relate with methodology and subject matter; (III) the supply of
Modern Language teachers who should have received an adequate training;
and (IV) general conclusions. Considering that the orchestration of
teaching aims, content, method, and time is so central to the education
process when, within a comparatively short period of time, the loosening
of the traditional bilingual grammar-translation system exhilarated the
bulk of our educationists, there was a general malaise in Modern Language
teaching in the face of criticism from a significant minority who, until
recently, saw changing ideas as a resource.

In the light of the experience we have gained over the last decade,
"we can now attempt a fair evaluation of the pedagogical effectiveness
and efficiency"² of the current practices in Modern Language teaching.
PART I is therefore devoted to the investigation of the audio-lingual
habit theory. It has been, and still is, the predominant mode of
Modern Language teaching to be found in schools ever since it made an
unprecedented impact on the British educational scene, after having been
acclaimed in the United States.

2 Albert Waldman, in Gustave Mathieu (ed.), op. cit., p. 78.
PART I - THE AUDIO-LINGUAL HABIT THEORY: AN APPRAISAL OF THE AUDIO-VISUAL APPROACH.

"C'est au niveau des méthodes que l'intervention pédagogique en faveur de l'amélioration des résultats dans l'enseignement du français langue étrangère peut être la plus efficace."
— Francis Debyser, October 1973.¹

Prefatory Note to PART I.

"You have to be confident before you can be critical."
— Kerlogue and Gibson, September 1975.²

Ever since the Renaissance when, in England, Roger Ascham expounded that "all languages, both learned and mother tongues, be gotten, and gotten onely by 'Imitation',"³ in the main, progressive Modern Language teaching has complied with the basic principle of "whone ye onely heare, of them ye onely learne".⁴ In essence, the Direct method was not different.

Professor Léon (Toronto University) stated in his thorough study that,

"en dépit de l'apparition progressive d'une nouvelle méthodologie des langues étrangères, l'oral remis en honneur ne garde qu'une place restreinte jusqu'à la dernière guerre mondiale".⁵

The turning point can be traced back to Pierre Delattre's experiment at Oklahoma University.

¹ Or: "The results of teaching French as a foreign language can perhaps be improved most substantially at the level of teaching techniques". (Francis Debyser, in Le Français dans le monde, No. 100, 1973, p. 64.)


³ Roger Ascham: The Scholemaster, (London: J. Daye, 1570), folio 46

⁴ Ibid.

Professor Delattre, who developed the aural-oral technique in the nineteen forties, laid out the basis from which Kamenev first, and then his followers, marketed audio-visual courses designed to teach French by means of a combination of tape-recorder and film-strip projector. While dogmatists who despise any experimental approach tried out at the grass roots, are prone to assert that empirically-tested data ought to form the basis of any reorientation in teaching, we shall see that, all too often, research in Linguistics appears alienated from the experience of the Modern Language teachers. For example, in a discussion of the structural-linguistic movement, Ruth Hirsch Weinstein deplored in the nineteen fifties that "linguists in their country were occupied with the theoretical problems in their field or with analyses of American Indian or other 'primitive' languages. If they taught at all, they conducted seminars on aspects of linguistics or on field techniques of American Languages".

Ruth Hirsch Weinstein was led to conclude that linguists "did not show any interest in the teaching of foreign languages until much later (so, for too long,) language teachers went on teaching in their traditional way". After two decades of experience resulting from intensive practice, when many a teacher attempted a fair evaluation of the pedagogical effectiveness and efficiency, the audio-visual technique was found wanting. It was perhaps overlooked that "the success of Intensive-type instruction might be due to external factors—student motivation, intensive contact, and the like—rather than to operational principles and models" (chapter 1).

Basically, the success of the method could only have been ensured by teachers possessing the know-how so necessary in handling the technological

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2 Loc. cit.

equipment, as well as the expertise in the form of fluency that so many of them lacked considering, on the one hand, that the traditional degree courses have not a teaching bias and, on the other, that in the former training colleges the professional aspects of French teaching have remained woefully inadequate (vid inf., chapter 9, subsection B). Yet, Professor Abercrombie has asserted that "detailed knowledge of particular languages is a necessity for the language teacher (and) he must have full command of the language he is teaching".  

Evidence gathered from widely varied sources will show that significant improvements could be effected in Modern Language teaching (chapter 2). A fundamental change in attitudes is necessary though, not least in official circles. Sceptics might argue that, to this day, the impact on Modern Language teaching of such theories as transformational grammar, has remained somewhat limited. New ideas take of course some time to fructuate. To quote the late Raymond Cartier, the lesson from History is that "tout commence dans la critique et le scepticisme". Whatever the outcome, a revolutionary approach whether it be Professor Delattre's aural-oral technique, or an audio-visual course, requires a modification of the traditional context. Problems of this magnitude must perforce take several chapters to elucidate. As they form the core of the dissertation, their investigation is spreading across most chapters.


"It is a commonplace that the characteristic virtue of Englishmen is their power of sustained practical activity, and their characteristic vice a reluctance to test the quality of that activity by reference to principles. They are incurious as to theory, take fundamentals for granted, and are more interested in the state of the roads than in their place on the map."
— Richard H. Tawney, 1921.

Recent accounts suggest that Tawney's assertion applies to a number of Modern Language teachers who are easily "bombinating at the dead-end of the road, refusing to take a close look at the map or confess that they have lost their way". Yet the lesson to be observed from the past is that no methods have resisted improvement. To name but two examples, the Series method originated by Francois Gouin in 1880 provided Dr. Palmer with the starting point from which he initiated his "oral extensive line of approach" in the middle nineteen twenties; and the Direct method put into practice by Frank Hedgecock in the early nineteen twenties, was developed further by Herbert Collins, a Staff Inspector, in his "French course for schools". So, any approach in Modern Language teaching demands a constant reappraisal, for the body of knowledge at our disposal cannot be final.

Considering that, "in a domain as unstable as education, a decade seems a very long time", it has been surmised that the "revolution in modern language teaching started long enough ago for its achievements to be clear and agreed". Under the linguists' influence, the audio-lingual movement had, by the late nineteen sixties, "succeeded admirably in


Table I showing the Inventory of Target Elements of a Foreign Language Course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Learning</th>
<th>Categories of Target Elements</th>
<th>List of Elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of skills</td>
<td>Phonology, graphemics, grammatical system, lexical stock, paralanguage, kinetics, culturally conditioned behaviour.</td>
<td>Phonemics, phonetics, writing system, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, tones of voice, gesture, etc.; eating habits, etiquette, et cetera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of information</td>
<td>Learning elements related to cultural information (literature, art, music, et cetera), area information (political structure, economy, social structure, history, geography, et cetera), culture patterns, information specific to the terminal behaviour.</td>
<td>Kinships, relation, work patterns rearing, marriage, age, status, groups, et cetera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of attitudes</td>
<td>Attitudes that speakers of the target language usually have toward their culture, social institutions, and values; attitudes expected from foreigners.</td>
<td>Elements of these attitudes to be specified in each instance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bringing an emphasis on the spoken language into the classroom. For example, Dr. Stern had propounded that "the various language skills and knowledge to be developed can be classified as follows: (i) auditory comprehension; (ii) accuracy of phonology; (iii) fluency in speaking; (iv) correctness of grammar; (v) silent reading comprehension; (vi) writing; (vii) cultural background and information; (viii) social conduct within the L₂ community; (ix) skill in translation into the native tongue; (x) skill in translation into the foreign language; (xi) understanding of the nature of language".\(^1\) \(L₁\) and \(L₂\) are abbreviations respectively for the learner's dominant mode of communication, normally but not necessarily his native language, and the second or foreign language to be learnt.) Classification of skills in Great Britain and detailed contents of categories of target elements in the United States had much in common, as shown in the "inventory of target elements of a foreign language course", compiled in the middle nineteen sixties by Bela Banathy and his associates (cf. Table I).

Even in the middle nineteen fifties, progressive Modern Language teachers could not yet turn to the Ministry of Education for enlightened advice, considering that their quaint viewpoint—i.e., Modern Languages "provide the artistic and aesthetic training which mark the truly educated and cultured person"\(^3\)—was still in keeping with Morant's avowed policy of 1902. Robert Morant upheld a curriculum based on that of the old grammar and public schools, at a time when Professor Jespersen, who influenced so much the teaching of Modern Languages throughout western Europe, suggested

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that "the highest purpose in the teaching of languages may perhaps be said to be the access to the best thoughts and institutions of a foreign nation, its literature, culture—in short, the spirit of the nation in the widest sense of the word".1

By the middle of the present century, the rapid encroachment of the new approach which was taking place, was the result of the belief, as the linguist averred, that "the ability to converse in a foreign language (is) surely the most important single benefit to be derived from language study".2 In the post-World War Two era, the linguistic theorists have seduced Modern Language teachers "into the belief that language is not only the prime variable in language teaching but the only variable".3 The short-term effect was that the innovators stimulated, prodded, and teased the traditionalists on the ranks of whom the aural-oral movement depended if it were to succeed. That the change became effective within the short span of a single decade is a measure of the innovators' undeniable success. In 1966, Dr. Riddy was able to acknowledge at the Modern Language Association conference held in Liverpool, that "the pace of change may be gauged by the fact that, within six years, some 5,000 audio-visual courses were being used in our schools and colleges".4 In the light of their experience, many practicing teachers honestly think that we have literally gone too far and too fast in throwing off a method whose results could be easily and clearly measured. It is a healthy aspect of the west-European educational tradition that the sceptics undermine a new approach which, in their estimation, does not match the

actual complexities of the teaching situation.

Disident views can be uncovered only by digging beneath the published record though. For example, the Schools Council had hardly had time to tabulate the opinions of teachers on the issue at stake, than they revealed unmistakably that scepticism had already begun to emerge in the late nineteen sixties. There has been a low rumble of discontent ever since. So, the forces of reaction have been set in motion. We shall show that the signs are there for those who care to see (vid inf., chapter 7, subsection B). If the importation of sophisticated technological hardware has revolutionized class-room practices, a staff inspector for Modern Languages conceded that, "over the past 20 years, there has been a considerable dehumanization of the subject"¹ (vid inf., chapter 4). The plea has therefore been made that practising teachers should be "more honest in voicing their opinions about modern techniques, in the light of their experience".² Sadly, "teachers, for some reason, are uncommonly prone to the belief that problems will disappear if only everybody would look the other way",³ but dissociation is not the answer. Besides, pounds and pence influence so much educational theories that "many practising teachers voice grave misgivings—in private for fear of hostile reactions from employers committed to heavy expenditure on elaborate equipment"⁴ Nonetheless, "teachers of languages are clearly worried".⁵

The issue can only be disentangled through a careful appraisal of documents which are riddled with emotional undertones. The thesis has

¹ Kenneth MacGowan, in Times Educational Supplement, No. 3097, 4.10.74, p. 28.
³ Jon Akass, in The Sun, (London), 28.9.73, p. 6.
involved, first, an in-depth investigation of a complex literature in the form of scholarly treatises as well as contributions to professional journals and, secondly, thorough sifting of a large quantity of well-attested information available in the press, such as opinions all too often culminating in heated debates in the educational weeklies and even in the best dailies. The task, which has proved to be a rewarding one, was undertaken with enthusiasm without any "a priori" one-sidedness, notwithstanding the historian's warning that "the mere selection, arrangement and presentation of facts is a technique belonging to the field of fiction".¹

To begin with, the impetus of the aural-oral approach has led to a proliferation of audio-visual courses. Initially, the intended objective consisted in providing "an intensive non-grammatical experience in everyday French".² In common with their predecessors, the designers "appear fully convinced that they have the answers and that if everyone would adopt their theories and procedures . . . there would be no further trouble".³ Their audio-visual courses opened new vistas in the teaching of French, at a time when the ability to produce the spoken language became the central aim of Modern Language teaching. Considering that the nineteen fifties have "been the decade in which the role of activity and environmental complexity has become clear to us",⁴ it is no coincidence if audio-visual courses comply with Professor Skinner's viewpoint that "you must arrange contingencies".⁵ The fast-growing market for

⁵ Burrhus F. Skinner, in Times Edal Suppl, No. 2965, 17.3.72, p. 120.
audio-visual courses developed in recent years on the assumption that an active approach exploiting simulated social situations reproduced the way we have all actually learnt our native language.

The proponents of the audio-visual technique state that children, the world over, learn a great deal of their mother tongue long before moving on to use a symbolic notation. The designers of audio-visual courses have constantly asserted that their approach approximated the acquisition of the mother tongue in which the word "come to him (sc. the child A.S.L.) is a verbal context". The fluency of the young child "is the result of his audio-visual experience of everyday life". Audio-visual courses that make use of a combination of recorded speech and projected still pictures, foster the assimilation of conversational-style sentences through mimicry-memorization. The materials writers have made theirs Professor Bloomfield's pronouncement that "you cannot be natural in a foreign language: you must mimic". For example, in a contemporary course, Robin and Bergeaud write that:

"Trois facteurs entrent en jeu dans l'acquisition d'une langue:
L'intuition • • •
L'imitation • • •
La répétition • • •"  

"Three factors interact in the acquisition of a language:
Intuition • • •
Imitation • • •
Repetition • • •"

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Again, Dr. Jeanes (Victoria University, Toronto) avers that "repetition is essential: it is better to repeat one thing twenty times than it is to have said twenty things once".  

The implications for Modern Language teaching are plain. The adoption of the audio-lingual approach stems from the assumption that "man as we know him is incapable of performing the complex operation of language at its normal speed without reducing most of it to habit", not only the productive repertoire, but also the receptive use (vid inf., chapter 5). For example, Belasco and Valdman warned their reader, i.e., the average college student, that "it would be impossible for you to isolate and identify the elements of French sentences as they are uttered by French speakers unless you have had extensive training in aural comprehension". Courses such as Belasco and Valdman's have gained popularity on the ground that they would promote the learning of a Modern Language, considering that "each language contains an arbitrary collection of 'patterns' learned through constant repetition" (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection B).  

"Mem-mem" as a procedure was inevitable then, it was fair, it was purposeful. Of course, a tremendous amount of memorization is inevitably involved in language learning. Conventional audio-visual courses lay stress on rote learning. A characteristic of commercial audio-visual courses has been the rigidity of rote dialogue. Although "much remains to be known about how we learn our native language", the investigation of  

1 Richard W. Jeanes, in Mod Lang. Vol. 40, 1959, p. 58  


5 Robert L. Lado, op. cit., p. 11.
epilepsy in relation to the functional anatomy of the human brain shows
that "imitation cannot play a big part in language learning".\(^1\)

Consequently, mimicry-memorization is a pedagogical approach emanating from
amateurs. The Modern Language teacher-sum-theorist suggests that "strange
sound-sequences in a foreign language gain meaning and significance only
when related to a particular aspect of experience".\(^2\)

At the primary level, an audio-visual course is intended to relate the
strange sound-sequences to particular aspects of experience by means of the
visual presentation of familiar situations. There is no evidence that
designers of courses succeed in coping with the psychological implications
underlying the intricate pattern involved, although experiments carried
out throughout the nineteen sixties led Pribram and Spinelli to surmise that
"what reaches the visual cortex is evoked by external world but is hardly
a direct or simple replica of it".\(^3\) If the extensive work of the
neurosurgeons has refined our knowledge, the psychologist still infers
that, "between the projection of this visual pattern on the brain, and our
full consciousness of the world of objects, a series of elaborate mental
processes takes place which converts the visual pattern into the perception
of the world as we know it".\(^4\)

In his discussion of perception, Dr. Lashley pointed out that he had
chosen his "illustrations from vision because perception in that modality
has been most thoroughly studied, but the same principles of organization
hold for other sensory systems (such as) in audition, particularly".\(^5\) The

p. 111.

\(^2\) Leo R. Cole: *Teaching French to Juniors*, (London: University of

\(^3\) Karl H. Pribram, in *Scientific American*, (New York), Vol. 220, No.1,
1969, p. 76.

\(^4\) Magdalen D. Vernon: *The Psychology of Perception*, (Harmondsworth:

\(^5\) Karl S. Lashley, in *Brain Mechanisms and Consciousness*, (Jean F.
neurophysiologist deduces that "there is simultaneous arrival of visual, auditory and somatic information in the form of nerve impulses...it is actually at the moment of projection that he (so, man.A.S.L.) is conscious of that sensory material," considering that "most (cell-) assemblies will have motor components: that is, they tend to produce overt behaviour, visual assemblies producing eye movements, somesthetic assemblies movements of hand or foot, and so forth." Again, Professor Miller's research on the span of immediate memory provided him with evidence that "the span of absolute judgment and the span of immediate memory impose severe limitations on the amount of information that we are able to receive, process and remember. By organizing the stimulus input simultaneously into several dimensions and successively into a sequence of chunks, we manage to break (or at least stretch) this informational bottleneck."

Marks and Miller have also reported that, when people were asked to memorize sentences by the technique of free recall, the normal grammatical sentences in their mother tongue were the easiest utterances to hear and remember, the haphazard strings of words were by far the most difficult of all. If Marks and Miller's findings on the memorization of English throw some light as to the way a child perceives the sentences in a foreign language, then it is imperative that—in repetition drills—the utterances should get progressively longer so that the learner's audio-memory can improve. The pupil's rate of progress depends directly, of course, on his audio-memorization, i.e., how much of what he has heard he can retain.

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3 Brackets in original.
in his mind and repeat, notwithstanding the fact that the less familiar
the materials to be memorized, the more important slow-increment learning
becomes.

Besides, while every sentence must be meaningful, whenever the
repetition is mediocre, the pupil has to listen again to the outside model,
after which his repetitions will establish the correct habit. In their
instructions to "Voix et images de France", the "C.R.E.D.I.P." team
stressed that,

"au cours de la répétition
d'un groupe par tous les
élèves de la classe, il faut
faire réentendre plusieurs
tois ce groupe au haut-parleur,
en particulier après ceux des
élèves qui ont eu de la
difficulté à imiter
correctement et qui ont eu à
s'y reprendre à plusieurs fois".¹

Dr. Van Abbé also insists that "the text should be played to the class as
often as is necessary to instil it into them".² Guberina and Rivens
however implied in the 1971 edition of their teacher's book, that
memorization of "the situation and the language which expresses it" is
achieved on hearing the tape five times, thus ignoring the well-known
principle that even in the acquisition of the mother tongue "imitation can
help a child to learn to speak only when he is already speaking".³

Modern Language teachers realize more and more that materials writers
have unwittingly overlooked problems which are causing serious concern.

¹ Peter Guberina et al.: Voix et images de France, (Paris: CREDIF,
1965 ed.), pp. XV-XVI.

² Translation from Teaching with "Voix et images de France" (Henri

(Brian Dutton, ed.), London: Cassell, 1965, p. 120.

⁴ Translation from Teaching with "Voix et images de France", op. cit.,
p. 156.

⁵ Morris K. Lewis: How Children Learn to Speak, (London: G. G.
For example, course designers have not convincingly coped with the premise that, when the learner depends on aural signals alone, "he is expected to hear clearly and retain every element of the material presented aurally in order to be able to reproduce it accurately". The aural-oral approach, however, presupposes that hearing a phrase is the first step towards imitating it. Even in the acquisition of the mother tongue, Professor Lewis asserts that "understanding of words precedes the use of them". This standpoint is substantiated by the French literature on how children learn their mother tongue. For example, Emile Egger, who observed his children in the nineteenth century, recorded that his twenty-month old son:

"Emile comprend des phrases assez complexes, entre autres des commandements qu'il sait exécuter ponctuellement; mais il ne peut encore reproduire ni la phrase, ni aucun des mots dont elle se compose".

Such evidence has prompted Professor Penfield to aver that "imitation of words comes only after months of hearing them".

The implications for Modern Language teaching are plain. Considering that "the pronunciation of a sentence in a normal manner is a skilled act, acquired after many years of practice", "a period of aural familiarity with the sounds of a language is an initial step in language learning". When Dr. Palmer expounded his "Oral extensive line of

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2 Morris M. Lewis, op. cit., p. 60.
approach", or "Psychological method", he made allowance for this problem by starting with imperative drills which create "the happy impression in the mind of the learner that he is making progress, because he is led to understand what is being said and to carry out orders into action without having to open his mouth". Similarly, Dr. Gauthier, Director of French Instruction in Ontario, holds the view that children will express themselves in a second language with a good accent only after they have assimilated its basic mechanisms during a considerable period of varied listening. Although "those who teach foreign languages have learned in recent years that listening is their most effective tool", as "the ear loosens the tongue", what is "important in the learning process is the factor of repetitious hearing before (emphasis in original) verbal imitation is attempted. Thus the language is absorbed and then spoken without inhibition or doubt of one's adequacy." Professor Koffka (Giessen University) drew attention to the fact that "a compulsion to imitate . . . exists, but this should be understood as something which arises from ability to imitate". In Professor Lewis's words, in the acquisition of the mother tongue, "he (sc. the child, A.S.L.) learns to imitate because (emphasis in original) he is already speaking". The significance for teaching is that this is a vicious circle considering that, "in practice, the greatest deficiency of the audio-lingual method,

4 Max Sherover, in Mod. L., Vol. 34, 1950, p. 444.
the method which is most closely based on behaviourist principles, is its failure to prepare the learner to use his language for communication"\(^1\) (vid inf., chapter 4).

Under the direct influence of the linguists who assumed that, in Modern Language teaching, "the best results are obtained through imitation of a native speaker under the guidance of a trained linguist",\(^2\) the designers of audio-visual courses assert that the learning of a Modern Language is enhanced by "mnemonics". It has been implicit, first, that the incipient learning is accelerated through repetition, on the ground that it is precisely this "activité idée-articulatoire",\(^3\) or thoughtful articulatory activity, which actually fosters fixation (cf. Table II) and, secondly, that "visual methods are equally effective in teaching language and 'content' subjects".\(^4\) Such assertions need the theoretical justification which the authors have constantly brushed aside as they have made no attempt to validate their assumptions with scientific principles. Had they done so, they might have considered the bearing on the teenage learner of Dr. Ichikawa's early work which led him to claim in his "Beobachtungen über die geistige Entwicklung" published in 1910 that the growth of association paths makes imitation harder.

The audio-lingual method is practised on the assumption that imitation or repetition will be sooner or later followed by spontaneous utterances, that is, recombinations of the material previously learnt. However, a progressive Modern Language teacher once averred that "the first aim of an audio-visual course are to assert the primacy of the spoken language, to penetrate simultaneously through ear and eye, and to produce the

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instinctive oral reaction of the child learning its native language by imitation, but in carefully controlled sequences and patterns, not haphazardly as in ordinary life.\(^1\) On the other hand, Ralph Walz's pioneer work led him to explain as early as 1931 that "the most important factors in the imitation of speech are acuity of hearing, intelligence, previous habits and repetition. \(\ldots\) It can be shown that persons with absolutely normal hearing actually do not hear certain unfamiliar speech sounds, or that they hear them as something else."\(^2\) In practice then, "mis-mem" is naive as a technique considering, first, that it is bound to be riddled by the intricate interplay resulting from the several variables involved and, secondly, as psychological investigation has shown, that "unconscious mastery of one grammatical form will not facilitate the mastery of other forms in the same language."\(^3\)

The point is that—under the influence of Professor Piaget "whose developmental approach to human intelligence was \(\ldots\) far removed from association theories of learning"\(^4\), as well as Professor Chomsky's insistence that "knowledge of a language cannot be adequately conceptualised in terms of mere word associations"\(^5\)—little credence would be sustained any longer in favour of rote learning through which "associations are formed by a process of gradual strengthening".\(^6\) An educational psychologist has remarked that "the most important


\(^5\) Loc. cit.

development, from the point of view of embattled learning theorists, has been the increasing realization that... learning is not a simple associational process; rather, in order to acquire the speech habits which are characteristic among the people who use the target language, the crux of the matter is time. So, if 'the factor of time is most important (,) to achieve mastery in audio-comprehension and speaking ability in a new language (would require) many more hours than the 90 to 120 hours of group instruction received by some twenty to thirty high school students during a normal academic year'. When Simon Belasco made this statement in the United States, in Britain, an official committee drew attention to the "responsibilities of the student (as) time will limit the amount of repetition and active use of language that he can undertake. If he is to advance at a good pace, he will have to put in work on his own." Realistically, the "G.R.E.D.I.F. team made the modest claim that,

"au bout de quelques (sic) soixante ou soixante-dix heures de cours, il (sc. l'élève.A.S.L.) pourra commencer à lire, à faire des dictées". Reading and writing are usually introduced after listening and repeating. With considerable insight, a writer deduced in the nineteenth century what is now the accepted sequence of learning.

1 Tony Cline, in Times Ednl Suppl, No. 3097, 4.10.74, p. 24.
Claude Marcel had described the four arts which follow a definite order in the acquisition of functional competence, as:

1° Comprendre la langue parlée;  
2° Parler;  
3° Comprendre la langue écrite;  
4° Ecrire.¹

"1° Understanding the spoken word;  
2° Speaking;  
3° Understanding the written word;  
4° Writing.¹"

Claude Marcel's substantial writing did not reverse the trend whose main strands have been popularized successively by such methods as Ollendorff's, the bilingual grammar-translation technique, and the Direct method. In practice then, a rational sequencing in Modern Language teaching retained little attention until the post-World War Two years, when our formal understanding for updating the methodology took its roots in Professor Delattre's experiments and the papers he had published in the nineteen forties. Modern Language teachers have been made aware that "the principles on which the experiment (at Oklahoma University) was conceived and the precepts that were derived from it are firmly established"² and that Pierre Delattre's work marked a turning point in the teaching of French as a second language both on psychological and physiological grounds.

In a symposium published in the nineteen sixties, Professor Delattre drew attention to habits. The "most important of all are the purely 'psychological' habits, which consist in relating sound to meaning without the interference of graphic symbols. During the initial stage of language learning the sound of a word and its concept must be directly connected."³ With the recognition that the symbolic notation of French

³ Ibid., p. 7.
(or of English) is harmful, "throughout this century methodologists have constantly reaffirmed the theory that the presence of the printed word has a detrimental effect on the efficient learning of a foreign language." In Bloomfield's words, "in nearly every case, written texts are composed in artificial, archaic, and peculiar language and offer little help toward understanding and speaking". Consequently, Pierre Delattre has rightly surmised that next in importance to the purely psychological habits "are the 'physiological' habits of good pronunciation. These habits can be acquired much better and faster if the student does not see or visualize graphic forms at the same time. For every graphic form that a student sees, he has to combat the reflex of the articulatory movement corresponding to this letter in his native language."3

The fact is that the student of French is confronted with the formidable task of handling, among other problems, the silent final consonants, as wide ranging as "hareng", "quand", "blame", "champ", "temps", "taon", "tant", "rang". We shall see (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection B) that, in French, "la définition du 'mot phonétique' ne recouvre pas celle du 'mot syntaxique';" Moreover, the reality of grammatical structure is masked by the spelling. So, Professor Delattre considers that, "finally, 'grammatical' habits—that is, habits of correct morphology and syntax—must be acquired absolutely audio-lingually. The teaching of morphology, especially, must be done on the basis of how it

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3 Pierre Delattre, in Gustave Mathieu (éd.), op. cit., p. 8.
sounds and not how it is written. Take, for example, /k/: "qui", "café", "cinq", "d'accord", "kilo". Clearly, "in French more than in any other language, spelling is a mask behind which most of the reality of grammatical structure hides. It is not the 'at' of the spelling that distinguishes 'il aime' from 'il aiment' but the alternation of /l/-/n/.
It is not the 'e' of the spelling that distinguishes 'la table' from 'les tables' but the alternation /a/-/e/; /latabl/-/letabl/" (Following the generally accepted convention, slant lines: / / enclose a phonetic symbol.)

While the new approach in Modern Language teaching initiated by Professor Delattre and his followers must rely heavily on audio-lingual aids, the rapidity with which it spread to over 5,000 British schools and colleges can be readily explained on terms of the limitations of teacher training, whose requirements had to fit within the framework of its two-year course until the late nineteen fifties. George Taylor, a Chief Education Officer, has deplored that, in secondary modern schools, Modern Language teaching is given by members of staff lacking the fluency to pursue oral methods (vid inf., chapter 9, subsection B). Indeed, "if the teacher has not himself acquired a near-native accent, the recording allows him (on the one hand) to present accurate models to his students in spite of his own personal deficiencies" and, on the other, "to control exposure to samples of the language and practice". Besides, it has been acknowledged in the nineteen sixties that "important steps towards educational innovation are resulting from initiative coming from outside the system itself".

1 Pierre Delattre, in Gustave Mathieu (éd.), op. cit., p. 9.
2 loc. cit.
Both the "Tavor" and "Voix et images de France" courses received much support from leading English educators whose interest was reinforced by the recommendations of several national bodies, such as the Ministry of Education, the Institute of Linguists, the Federation of British Industries, the University Grants Committee, and the Advisory Committee of Further Education for Commerce, all of whom published reports over the 1959-1962 period. Professor Mansell Jones could therefore write at that time that improvements "seem to have been due less to intrinsic developments within the disciplines themselves than to the results of changes happening in the world outside". Conversely, as more and more schools introduced a Modern Language—generally French—by means of an audio—visual course, the greater emphasis on oral skills was bound to exert an influence on examining boards.

In the first external examination for example, chief examiners subscribed to the premise that using a language is a skill and progressively conferred a larger share of the testing to the oral skills. One of the largest boards, Associated Examining Board, took the lead in the middle nineteen sixties by initiating changes which have met with the teachers' approval. First, the prose translation that at one time reigned supreme has been phased out on the "contention that the marking is meaningless". Secondly, the A.E.B. has been allotting twenty-five per cent. to a longer and more thorough oral examination. As other boards have followed suit, oral work and listening comprehension have been given more emphasis, first by the Cambridge and the Joint Matriculation Boards, then by the London Board. Such has been the influence of the proponents


of the audio-visual courses who affirmed that demonstration and imitation in the initial learning constituted the most suitable approach considering that "the ability to retain and recall language depends a great deal on the power of the original stimuli when initially presented to the learner and on the frequency of their repetition".\(^1\) The audio-lingual technique, whose main tenet is based on the half-truth that "imitation is essential",\(^2\) was backed in the nineteen sixties by many a theorist who assumed that repetition as practised by the learner would soon give way to spontaneous utterances. Professor Hawkins has openly decried much of the structure when he wrote that, "if we had set out to invent a pattern of language teaching in our schools which would give both pupil and teacher the maximum difficulty, we could scarcely have done better than the present system".\(^3\)

The implications deriving from the dominant teaching method, coupled to the contingencies of the subject matter, have led Modern Language teachers to take a firm stand with regard to the size of teaching groups as at present organised in British schools. At the end of World War One, a gathering of radical French teachers expressed the view that:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{"on n'apprend guere a parler autrement que par la methode directe (mais) les deves y seront toujours trop nombreux pour que la methode directe y soit efficace".} & \quad \text{"speaking is learnt but by the Direct method (however) pupils will always be too many to allow the Direct method to be efficacious".} \\
\end{align*}\]

This dogmatic statement did not provide a solution to Modern Language teachers. So much so that, two generations later, a committee appointed

\(^1\) Leo R. Cole, \textit{op. cit.}, (1969 ed.), p. 35.
\(^2\) Morris M. Lewis, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 48.
\(^3\) Professor Hawkins's phrase (cf. \textit{Times Edin. Suppl.}, 20.2.70, p. 44.)
by the French Ministry for Education reduced "the teaching of English to little more than 1,000 fairly simple words . . . . The committee is quick to point out that with language classes of 30 and 35, the teacher who covers the 'list' in the time is doing very well. Certainly, the child who can use (emphasis in original) those 1,000 words in spoken English at the end of two years will still be well ahead of the majority." \(^1\)

It appears that "the disconcerting truth seems to be that students can generally be taught together in large groups, but that effective learning takes place independently or in small groups." \(^2\) In the wake of the inter-war experience in the Direct method, Robin and Bergeaud asserted that:

"l'efficacité d'un enseignement est en raison inverse du nombre des élèves de la classe". \(^3\)

"the effectiveness of a teaching programme is in inverse ratio to the number of pupils in the form". \(^4\)

In a discussion on social structure, language and learning, Professor Bernstein remarked that "the very conditions of the classroom situation often make effective education impossible". \(^4\) Indeed, Dr. Thimann has wondered "whether children can profit from language-learning under the absurd conditions of 30 or 35 to one teacher". \(^5\)

The viewpoint had been clearly defined in the United States as far back as the nineteen forties. At the time of Professor Delattre's experiment (vid supra, this chapter), a contributor to "The French review" had no hesitation in stating that "it is pedagogically unsound to have

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1 Frances Berrigan, in *Times Edul Suppl.*, No. 3027, 1.6.73, p. 12.
2 Eric Newton, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 149, 23.8.74, p. 5.
5 Ivor C. Thimann, in *The Teacher*, (Kettering), 6.11.70, p. 16.
elementary language classes of more than 15 students or intermediate ones of more than 20".\textsuperscript{1} A working party of British headmasters stated unambiguously that "the relationship of the teacher with his pupils in the intimate exchanges involved in an oral, active attack of the language demands as an absolute necessity that \underline{classes be small} (emphasis in original). Even a maximum of 25 pupils in a language class is high."\textsuperscript{2} The size of the classes had in fact been decried in an official publication published in the nineteen fifties. In a discussion of Direct method instruction, it was conceded that "the course made the sternest demands on the pupils' powers, and (that) results were always impressive. The method failed in many schools because classes were too large and the instruction was seldom concentrated in the hands of specialist teachers."\textsuperscript{3} Considering that, "in the oral approach especially, mere casual conversation of the pure 'direct method' type causes a tremendous waste of time and effort",\textsuperscript{4} Dr. Hedgecock has explained that "the (Direct) method is perfectly sound; but it requires thinking out in detail and building up so carefully that every stone used in the foundation work supports the one above it".\textsuperscript{5}

Retrospectively, practising teachers have expressed their doubts. For example, Frank Dash, who contributed to a 1964 symposium in which

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Julian Harris, in \textit{Fr Rev}, Vol. 20, 1947, p. 441.
\end{itemize}
he recalled the hey-day of the Direct method, has explained how "as a student teacher, I grimaced and gesticulated in order to get over the idea of 'un moineau' to a class of normally rational and hopelessly bewildered children"¹. In the late nineteen sixties, the School Council considered that "in some hands (the pure Direct method) was devoid of method and led to chaos, gross inaccuracy and incomprehension".² In a way, this statement is reminiscent of François Gouin's definition of Heinrich Ollendorff's method. Gouin's comments are that:

"Son principe était le désordre, un désordre intentionnel, systématique. Sa logique consistait à se moquer de la logique. En cela il pensait être d'accord avec la nature."³

"Disorder was his principle, a deliberate, systematic disorder. His logic consisted in disregarding logic. In that manner he thought he was keeping in with nature." ³

On the other hand, considering that "enthusiasm for the Direct Method was usually accompanied by a passionate belief in phonetics", ⁴ it is hardly surprising that, when the Direct method was on the wane, Phonetics was no longer viewed as an element forming an integral part of language teaching. This accounts for the fact that Applied Phonetics has remained almost totally neglected (vid inf., conclusions to chapter 6).

With the disappearance of Phonetics, the learning of a Modern Language became "the preserve of the brighter pupil. If he could handle words, juggle with rules, and was prepared to collect vocabulary after vocabulary, a bright boy could pick up a foreign language fairly easily."⁵

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¹ Frank L. Dash, in Barnet Libbish (ed.), op. cit., p. 100.
³ François Gouin; Exposé d'une nouvelle méthode linguistique, (Paris: G. Fischbacher, 1880), p. 35.
⁴ Frank L. Dash, in Barnet Libbish (ed.), op. cit., p. 100.
⁵ J.B. Melia, in Times Ednl Suppl, No. 2946, 5.11.71, p. 18.
This then, was the procedure characteristic of the bilingual grammar-translation technique. Such a method could not withstand a rigorous appraisal, for the learning assumption underlying the bilingual grammar-translation system has nothing to say specifically about how the pupil "learns anything in particular". As the French would have it, to be sure, the bilingual grammar-translation approach "résultait en un français d'école inaudible". Considering that "you can't readily show off the effectiveness of the modern language program in your school; you can't easily display the pupils' increased skills and abilities; you can't always exhibit their reading proficiency, nor their genuine interest in the foreign culture", there has always been "a marked tendency to concentrate on written forms of the language, since these are tangible and are set down for all to see".3

Through "his tunnel vision of the teaching task (the rear-guard teacher) avoids any re-focus of it by his assumption that the traditional language of teaching covers all its realities".4 Indeed, although heads roll with each swing of the pendulum, the view that "a good textbook forms the best basis of instruction for the majority of learners"5 has out-lived the traditional method by a considerable margin. It is partly the result of the large organization in education, whose uniformity is institutionalized by the elephantine G.C.E. Ordinary-level examination which preserves the dominance of ageing textbooks. On the other hand, when

1 Robert L. Lado, op. cit., p. 18.
2 Max Zeldner, in Mod Lg J. Vol. 47, 1963, p. 252.
5 Frank L. Dash, in Barnet Libbish (ed.): op. cit., p. 104.
Ritchie and Moore published in the nineteen twenties their popular textbook, they proudly claimed at that time that certain parts of it were "intended for pupils with a good memory for words and anxious to extend their vocabulary". ¹ We shall see (vid inf., chapter 8) that the exponents of the textbook approach have implicitly condoned the bilingual grammar-translation system whose technique is decried on the grounds that "it tends to inhibit comprehension without translation, encourages thinking in terms of word for word equivalence, and allows the pupil's mind to slip away too quickly from the French phrase he should be learning".²

On the other hand, innovators have frequently asserted that the new element in their own method was promoting the acquisition of the target language. For example, the proponents of the audio-visual approach compared it to the acquisition of the mother tongue, notwithstanding the fact that "the assertion that a child learns his native language by merely imitating what he hears . . . has no solid foundations".³ The audio-visual enthusiasts overlooked that "most of us do not remember the immense effort we put in on learning by heart the functionals ('morphemes . . . which indicate the function of other elements') and contentives ('elements . . . which have specific dictionary-meaning') of our native language and their patterns in early childhood".⁴ Considering that "the

⁴ Robert A. Hall, Jr., op. cit., p. 15.
⁵ Ibid., p. 451.
patterns of language learning do not show the steady incremental convergence towards adult language predicted by the view that language learning proceeds by the steady mastery of individual constructions.\textsuperscript{1} "the child's progress towards the mastery of the mother tongue is a continued process of modification of the patterns of his linguistic behaviour.\textsuperscript{2} The nativists, whose viewpoint is challenged by empiricists, emphasize the innate characteristics. They "argue that the nature of language is such that it is impossible to explain it without postulating an innate mechanism of a fairly well-defined kind."\textsuperscript{3}

Consequently, Professor Saporta (Washington University, Seattle) is inclined to think that "a native language cannot, in a sense, be taught at all."\textsuperscript{4} For example, "the child cannot be taught to understand and use surface rules (prescriptive and proscriptive norms) unless he acquires a sense of social structure, a basis for assigning meaning to his environment."\textsuperscript{5} Studies such as that of the Russian twins by Luria and Yudovich have provided the students of language acquisition with the evidence that "children exposed to rather different samples of a given language develop very similar linguistic capacities (which) suggests that children are not taught their language but rather one could not prevent a normal child from acquiring the language of his environment."\textsuperscript{6} In Robert Lees's words, "the mechanism which we must attribute to human beings to account for their speech behaviour has all the characteristics of a sophisticated scientific theory."\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{2} Morris K. Lewis, op. cit., p. 48.
\textsuperscript{3} David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 169.
\textsuperscript{6} Sol Saporta, in Albert Valdman (ed.), op. cit., p. 85.
Piaget and his associates who have first mapped the path intuitively and tacitly followed by the child in his cognizance of the world around him, have then performed the extraordinary feat of placing this path within a scheme of developmental logic. Briefly, "in the Piagetian view of development, the child for his first two years of life has represented the world to himself through sensori-motor actions, and his 'prelinguistic thought' (for we can call it that from the Piagetian point of view) is characterized by sensori-motor intelligence. According to Piaget, the accomplishments of this period include a number of striking cognitive attainments." Piaget and Inhelder have been able to show that the child's responsive behaviour is complex, as behaviour "includes, in addition to his overt physical act, some cognition and some affect", for the child's "cognition is buried right in the effect." Indeed, "the theoretical interests of developmental psychologists that have allowed them to pull the research out of the doldrums of academic psychology of the 1960s can be traced back to the growing appreciation and elaboration of Piaget's work and the revival of interest in language acquisition following Chomsky's theories".

Professor Chomsky's work led him to beg a fundamental question, namely, how it is that "a highly specific, abstract, and tightly organized language comes by accident into the mind of every four-year-old child".

1 Brackets in original.
3 Morris M. Lewis: Language Thought and Personality, op. cit., p. 38.
Diagram I showing the various stages converging towards the child's expressive mastery of inflections on the verbs for two languages (English and French).

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<td><strong>Systematization</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Infinitive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Imitation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Acquisition of rule</strong></td>
<td><strong>Over-generalization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Acquisition of paradigms</strong></td>
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Main sources.


If "it is now well understood that children learn the language by using it",¹ "the infant's acquisition of the language is a unique event".² Martin Braine has explained that, "from the assumption that children learn both positional regularities and paired associations between morphemes, it is possible to deduce the conditions under which overgeneralization would be expected to occur in the course of learning declensions and conjugations. Such errors would depend on the relative rates of learning positional regularities and associations. If the positional regularities are learned more rapidly, children should pass through a stage where 'errors' such as 'singed' and 'broked' are common. The relative paucity of inflexions in English gives the English-speaking child less scope for errors of this nature than children learning some other languages."³ Nonetheless, Harvard University research workers have found that in the acquisition of the first language, "the imitation is not perfect; 'Adam' omits the inflection on the verb".⁴

Again, research work has shown that there "are progressions where the child first of all does something 'correctly' and then, with every appearance of systematicity, later proceeds to do it 'wrongly' (cf. Diagram I.A.S.D.). Clearly, this development cannot be explained by environmental factors, since there is no adult model for the wrong behaviour. Nor can it be considered simply as one of a series of approximations to the adult model, since the erroneous behaviour is preceded by a stage in which the child behaves correctly. Perhaps the best-known example of such a progression is the over-regularization of the

rule for past-tense inflection in English", which can be summarized as "the development of the child's expressive mastery of the past participle of English strong verbs goes through stages like:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a. Harry went
  \item b. Harry wented
  \item c. Harry went 
\end{itemize}

Paul Kiparsky has broken down the child's expressive mastery, whose normal stages can be represented in diagrammatic form. Diagram I shows that, as the child hits on a new rule for forming the past tense of English verbs, he over-generalizes, so that the known form "brought" is subsequently replaced by "brang".

This phenomenon which is not peculiar to English, had been recognized in the nineteenth century first by Gabriel Compayré in France as pertaining to French, then by Gustav Lindner and Wilhelm Ament in Germany with regard to German. The analysis of the data has led to the formulation of the general principle as "the child (who) is functioning as an implicit inductive scientist . . . collects data from his environment in the form of linguistic utterances he hears, classifies them into various grammatical categories, and constructs rules to account for the regularities he discovers. He then uses these rules in producing new utterances. The system the child develops is not static but subject to revision as new linguistic data become available" to him.

Moshe Anisfeld has simply and clearly stated that, "apparently, human beings are endowed with a program for analysing linguistic input

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to discover a system of underlying regularities. The amazing thing about
language acquisition is that out of a collection of random, unorganized,
and often ungrammatical linguistic utterances the child manages to form
a well-structured system of rules. Because such a phenomenal system is
mastered in a relatively short time, it is suspected that the language
analyser is largely innate."¹ "The term 'analyser' was introduced by
Favlov, . . . . analyser covers not only the peripheral receptor with all
its afferent nerves but also the nerve cells which lie at the central
termination of the nerve fibres, in the cortex."²) Professor Chomsky's
own work has largely contributed to dispel the idea that "children learn
language by progressively modelling their own speech to resemble the forms
which they hear other people using".³ Noam Chomsky remarked in the
nineteen sixties that, "as is evident from a study of the mature use of
language, what the child learns is the underlying ideal theory. This is
a remarkable fact. We must also bear in mind that the child constructs
this ideal theory without explicit instruction, that he acquires this
knowledge at a time when he is not capable of complex intellectual
achievements in many other domains, and that this achievement is relatively
independent of intelligence or the particular course of experience."⁴

Professor Chomsky had already surmised in the previous decade that
"the fact that all normal children acquire essentially comparable
grammars of great complexity with remarkable rapidity suggests that human
beings are somehow specially designed to do this, with data-handling or

¹ Ibid., pp. 115-16.
² Joan Simon's comment in A. R. Luria et al.: Speech and the
³ J.O. Wolff, op. cit., p. 111.
⁴ A. Noam Chomsky, in Psychology Today, (Del Mar, Calif.), Vol. 1,
No. 9, 1963, p. 66.
'hypothesis-formulating' ability of unknown character and complexity'.

As progressive Modern Language specialists are confident that, sooner or later, the viewpoint expounded by transformational generative-grammar theorists is bound to influence second language teaching, throughout the thesis, we shall endeavour to outline the implications which, for Modern Language teaching, derive from new hypotheses such as the "radically new psycholinguistic theory of language acquisition" according to which, Leon Jakobovits claims, "imitation, practice, reinforcement, and generalization are no longer considered theoretically productive conceptions in language acquisition", regardless of the chronological age of the learners.

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2 Here and infra, Leon Jakobovits's phrases. (cf. LG, Vol. 18, 1968, p. 89.)
Conclusions.

In the nineteen twenties, Dr. Palmer, a pioneer of the Direct method, had advocated to include irregular and idiomatic forms even in the earlier stages of Modern Language teaching (vid infra, chapter 3). The pupil was therefore confronted with a forbidding range of vocabulary items and of grammatical forms. This incongruous range both of lexical items and of grammatical structures extended far beyond the depth established by the scope of the learner's previous memory work and of his manipulative skill. We have seen that—in the following decades—audio-visual courses made up of recorded speech and of projected still pictures, provided for the first time teaching materials which—according to their designers' claim—complied with recent research of a linguistic nature, such as Professor Delattre's experiment conducted at Oklahoma University.

Under the impetus stemming from the novel theories expounded by linguists, the bilingual grammar-translation system whose practice encourages thinking in terms of word for word equivalence, has been gradually ousted at least in the middle years of schooling; that is, the eight-to-thirteen-year-old group, usually by means of a commercial audio-visual course. The relatively recent approach has been widely adopted owing to the growing likelihood of large numbers of people coming into contact with foreign cultures at first hand. This somewhat new phenomenon is fostering a motivation of the integrative type. We have seen that in Britain, some 5,000 schools and colleges were using audio-visual courses in the middle nineteen sixties. A thousand British schools had adopted "Tavor"; whose formulation caught the eyes of Modern Language teachers pursuing at that time their higher education at Birkbeck College.

The comparatively fast encroachment of the audio-lingual habit theory is a measure of the influence of structural linguists, whose
insistence on the primacy of speech has contributed to the dominance of
the audio-lingual method which tends to stress the learning of a Modern
Language in terms of aural practice. Structural linguists, who consider
that the primary medium of linguistic expression is speech, have upheld
the concomitant viewpoint that "the spoken language must be mastered before
the learning of the written system." 1 Considering that learning to speak
which leads to productive use requires more than passive hearing, at the
beginner's level of Modern Language learning, by and large, the "guiding
principle is that from the first the strictest care should be taken with
pronunciation to give pupils accurate models to imitate." 2

Although the leading language teachers in the United States are
agreed that more advanced teaching ought to provide "frequent opportunities
for maintaining the hearing and speaking skills thus early acquired", 3 it
is increasingly deplored that, as time goes on, the audio-lingual method is
failing to make a reasonable imprint on the higher stages of the curriculum.
Professor Willis (Bradford University) once observed that the examining
boards "ensure that aspiring linguists come forward . . . with nothing
more than vestiges of the oral skills developed in the audio-lingual
courses they (sc. the pupils, A.S.L.) followed enthusiastically in the
middle school". 4 Unlike the bilingual grammar-translation system which
"hampers real awareness of how the foreign language functions by imposing
stereotypes", 5 the proponents of the audio-lingual habit theory argued that

3 FL Steering Committee, in P.M.L.A. Vol. 71, 1956, p. XV.
complete avoidance of English would promote the ability of functioning within the target language, as well as eliminate interference from the native language.

With the Direct method, the audio-lingual approach shares the central principle that language instruction should produce the ability to function within it. Although the acquisition of a Modern Language consists in "a living and practical skill dependent on constant practice, primarily using the ears and vocal chords," even when post-Bloomfieldian Linguistics was at its apogee, Modern Language instructors were teaching almost exclusively "about" language. By the late nineteen sixties, the notion had become more precise. For example, Bruce Gaarder suggested to the audience gathered to the Indiana University conference, that the great teacher uses "a form of linguistic analysis in terms of interpersonal relationships and events based upon imitation, linguistic analogies, and inductive reasoning". Whatever the approach though, many are the progressive teachers of Modern Languages who consider it self-evident that learners will develop their audio-comprehension skill only through hearing fluent French (or German, et cetera). So, if the target language is not used, the pupils "are not likely to learn how to understand the spoken language".

Herbert Collings, a Staff Inspector who was drawing on the experience he had gained in the inter-war period, has visualized that the bulk of pupils of average intelligence would learn best if the teacher did "not

scorn to explain a real difficulty in lucid English”. This compromise method has retained considerable popularity among Modern Language teachers, on the ground that translation seems to be seen as the simplest and most objective way available to them for indicating meaning. An enquiry undertaken in the nineteen seventies by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement has revealed that, in England, there is a high “amount of speaking in the mother tongue that is done by the student”2 in his French class-room. Complete avoidance of English is still frowned upon by Modern Language teachers, though an approach—such as the audio-visual technique—is considered extremely helpful in promoting the acquisition of the target language, for it relies heavily, first, on mimicry and memorization and, secondly, on “mechanisms”, that is, non-analytic drills.

Both the principle and the method currently practised in Modern Language teaching therefore share the same objective, which takes into account the fact that pupils learn by doing. The fact remains however that, by adopting the audio-lingual method—a method which “views language as behavior and (which) is based on behaviorist psychology and structural linguistics”3—Modern Language teachers have been coerced into accepting such notions as basic conversational sentences for memorizing, pattern—practice exercises, and grammar by induction, but “these notions do not follow directly from any theory of linguistic structure and probably not from any but the most superficial learning theory”4 (vid. infra, pp. 540).


chapter 2). Considering that practice lingers behind theory, we shall see (vid. inf., chapter 5, subsection E) that "structuralism is still being advocated as the latest thing, (it) is almost twenty years out of date".1

Among linguists, new theories first crystallize, then prevail at least for a while. Even when they crumble, they die hard, but die they must. Meanwhile, the bulk of every generation of teachers is contented to practise the method of their own day. The result is that, all too often, many a teacher’s approach is out of joint, for he loves tradition and is suspicious of new ideas. To him, "the book is the thing".2

That the foreign language teacher is "a traditional isolationist by inclination"3 is reflected in one of Richard Corbin’s vehement exclamations. He once yelled out: "I suggest that we teachers . . . get a little thoroughminded and refuse to accept so benignly some of the orphans of the curriculum".4


Chapter 2. The Pupils' Attitudes towards their Cognitive and Emotional Readjustments.

"Language teaching ought to involve the teaching of meaning as well as the teaching of form."
— Dr. Stork, May 1979.

Structural Linguistics has brought about the present emphasis on oral work which, in its turn, fosters the teaching of pronunciation, for speech is "the front line of articulateness". Every Modern Language teacher knows nowadays that the acquisition of a good pronunciation constitutes an essential part of learning a Modern Language. In the audio-lingual approach however, the listener must be intent on the words.

To quote Professor Leon,

"L'emploi d'une technique essentiellement aural-oral oblige l'étudiant à plus d'attention. La moindre déficience auditive empêche la compréhension (c'est nous qui soulignons) d'un matériel qui n'a aucun support écrit." 3

"A largely aural-oral technique forces the student to pay increased attention. The slightest hearing defect prevents the comprehension (our emphasis) on a material that is not backed by the written word." 3

Success is dependent on an extremely high level of concentration, persistence, and sheer hard work in order to grasp the auditory signals in the absence of the visual components, which are part and parcel of everyday face-to-face encounters. If the author of "Tavor" proudly stated that "the pressure is constant", 4 Patrick Creber cited the

1 Francis G. Stork, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 107, 16.5.75, p. 20.

2 Michael Thomas's phrase. (cf. Times Edul Suppl., No. 3079, 31.5.74, p. 21.)


Table II showing the step-by-step learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Rôle of audio-visual aids</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Presentation Phase</td>
<td>Filmstrip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exploitation Phase</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Fixation Phase</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Integration Phase</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


2 Ibid.

Compiled from:
procedure by means of an audio-visual unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication processes</th>
<th>Participation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of teacher:</td>
<td>of pupil:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Silent.</td>
<td>— Exploration of language structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Synchronizes picture</td>
<td>— Identification of new sounds and sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and sound.</td>
<td>comprehension of sounds combinations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-teaching effort for retention of the semantic groups first "comprehended" through "repetition of the auditory experience". 1

Phonetic correction of isolated sounds.  
Self-teaching effort for imitation of rhythm and intonation: "the sound symbols must be produced and uttered". 2

— Asks pupils to provide the commentary.  
— Self-teaching effort for reproducing with semantic assurance the commentary adequately recognized.
— Answers questions.

— Creates a natural use-situation for each phrase.  
— Each phrase is grafted upon known elements so that the right associations are made.

— Tries to withdraw completely as pupils progress.  
— The lexical resources are adapted to a new linguistic situation so that the right analogies are drawn.
reactions of teachers of English who, in a seminar, quite unexpectedly faced a visiting lecturer speaking Urdu. Forced to communicate in that language, one of the teachers reported that "after an hour and a half we felt wrung out".\(^1\) ...

The current Modern Language teaching which relies largely on audio-visual courses and therefore practises the skills of listening, repeating, answering, and conversing, as exemplified in Table II, demands a concentrated, sustained mental effort. Yet, the relatively rapid encroachment of the audio-visual technique is due, first and foremost, to the importance of the visual components for the listener. This has been highlighted for example, in contributions such as those Sumbery and Pollock and Keith Neely have published respectively in 1954 and 1956 in "The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America". It follows that there are implications for the Modern Language learner who is normally taught by means of recorded speech. Pierre Léon has aptly described the task the learner is confronted with, in a statement which is reminiscent of Charles Bally's early claim that "les jeux de physionomie, les gestes, tous les mouvements du corps comportant une valeur conventionnelle et symbolique, en un mot la mimique (c'est Bally qui souligne), tout cela peut jouer un rôle dans l'identification".\(^2\)

Professor Léon wrote that:

-Un étranger qui apprend une langue nouvelle se trouve placé dans les conditions

"A foreigner learning a new language finds himself in unfavourable conditions"


défavorables d’un sujet dont l’audition serait déf ectueuse. S’il connait les mots, s’il sait les comprendre à la lecture, il a généralement de grandes difficultés à les retrouver à l’audition. Il essaie donc le plus tôt possible de détecter dans la mince de son interlocuteur des signes capables de l’aider. 1

Even in the initial steps of Modern Language learning, though limited as they are to the receptive repertoire, “communication is enhanced by watching the speaker”. 2 Later on, when the productive stage is reached, the learner should be aiming at “generating context-sensitive measurement sets consisting of identifiable normative lexical items, grunts, gestures, conversational chunks, body movements and intonational shifts which have indexical constraints”. 3 The Modern Language teacher who thinks he can ignore an element as important as this, does so at his own risk, for this aspect was taken particular care of by Professor Delattre. He specified that, in his French inception course, “new material was never presented on the record. It was always introduced first by the voice of the teacher”. 4 In fact, the new look in French soon prompted a U.S. teacher to claim that “I like to think I can do a bit better than a recorder or turntable, of whatever model”. 5

In the nineteen forties, linguists had surmised that the native 

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1 Pierre R. Léon, op. cit., p. 190
speaker was required "because not even the best grammar-book or dictionary can replace the native speaker's unique knowledge of what can be said in his language in any situation; and because students should be allowed to imitate only a native speaker's pronunciation". ¹ Considering that, in any event, a recorded voice proved to be an over-simplified substitute for the true-to-life presentation made by the Modern Language teacher himself, Pierre Delattre affirmed that "there is no doubt that the first acquaintance with a new sound must be given (a) 'live', so that the student can observe all that can be seen of the lips, tongue, jaws; (b) in slow motion". ² The challenge for the young minds is that, in a way, they must become "accustomed to get out of themselves, to get out of their normal environment, to come into contact with other forms of expression and thought". ³ Significantly, the pupils learning a Modern Language must go beyond merely observing and comprehending, they have to learn a new way of behaving.

The pupils' attitude is likely to be heavily influenced by their teacher's behaviour though. Marcelle Kellermann who tried out her first experiment at the Talbot Road School (Leeds), was able to report that she was "expecting them (sc. the children. A.S.L.) . . . to play their parts well and help me to think and believe they were French... . . Throughout the course, I watched the metamorphosis taking place; some of the children literally changed their personality." ⁴ So, if the learners

are to master another people's terms, they "must enter imaginatively into their culture and not simply acquire a list of words". Professor Fishman has however considered that "school-based second language learning may require difficult cognitive and emotional readjustments, which may be beyond the limits of some personalities". This has even wider implications, for recall may be hindered by the absence of motivation. Much of Freud's writing, as well as his followers', contributed to spread the belief that "it is often impossible to recall events associated with a sense of guilt or shame". The foregoing analysis leads to a statement "a posteriori", that current Modern Language teaching practices are marred by weaknesses and they are closely related to every area of conflict. Clive Crips, who discussed in January, 1973, Professor Halliday's "Sociolinguistic perspective on language learning", drew attention to the fact that "it is precisely conflict of one kind or another that we should be actually interested in".

One of the areas of conflict has been highlighted by ethnomethodological research. ("The term 'ethnomethodology' was coined by Harold Garfinkel to index the study of everyday practical reasoning as constitutive of all human activities."") Following experiments of an everyday kind related to the home environment, Harold Garfinkel reported

1 Harold Rosen, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3076, 10.5.74, p. 19.
5 Aaron V. Cicourel, op. cit., p. 98.
that the reactions of subjects to these experiments were often extreme. Out of forty-nine students who were asked to act as boarders in their own home, as many as nine "students either refused to do the assignment (five cases)" or the try was "unsuccessful" (four cases). Four of the 'no try' students said they were afraid to do it", another one decided to avoid the risk of exciting her mother, who sustained a heart condition. Besides, in the remaining four fifths of the cases, Harold Garfinkel described the reactions of the students' family members as "stupified" and in another procedure as exploding "with bewilderment and anger".

The important point is that, when the order of everyday interaction situations is disrupted, the findings of the ethnomethodological enquiry suggest that the roots "may be more deeply anchored than might at first appear to be the case". It may be that, when this situation is investigated with particular reference to the introduction of an audio-visual course, it will account for the phenomenon sometimes described as "diversionary activities at the back of the classroom". Not infrequently a few young pupils, reading the situation, adopt various survival strategies in an attempt to reorganize or make rationally accountable once more their everyday interaction situations. The majority, it is true, attempt to intuit the principles according to which

1 Here and infra, brackets in original.


3 Loc. cit.


their situations can be reorganized or, at least, can be made rationally accountable once more. However, if the "stimulus-response theory may be a fairly adequate account of the way learning takes place when the learner is operating with enactive representation ("the knowing of an object or event in terms of doing or constructing")—either as a small infant or rendered into the posture of the small infant", "at this level the pupil is accustomed to an altogether more analytical approach to learning".

Professor Osterrieth once wrote that:

"La perception évolue avec l'âge". 4 "perception does increase with age". 4

As, by this time, "much learning is achieved through the visual symbol (1) the pupil is eventually so conditioned by his training that he becomes almost incapable of learning save with a pencil in his hand or a book before his eyes". 5 George Taylor, the Chief Education Officer who sponsored the Leeds experiment, reported that the children soon found "the absence of books and written exercises very frustrating". 6

In current Modern Language teaching practices, the method of presentation consists of "passages (which) will have been recorded on tape by native-speakers and (which) will first of all be played (unseen7) to the

1 Hans Furth's phrase. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 138, 7.6.74, p. 15.)


7 Brackets in original.
pupils, so that they become accustomed to trying to make sense of unknown foreign sounds." An audio-visual approach is therefore contingent with the students of Psychology's avowed adherence to the new look in perceptions for, in the early nineteen fifties, psychologists proposed "a radical continuity between perception and conceptual activities . . . in perception, as illustrated in the seven papers of the first section, 'Perception' (in Jerome Bruner's 'Beyond the information given'), we always go 'beyond the information given', we focus, we plan, we categorize, we infer", we intuit.

So, by listening and repeating, it is deemed that pupils will intuit passive comprehension (vid infra, chapter 6). This is, of course, pre-requisite for re-using adequately the grammatical patterns and vocabulary in a meaningful context, for it has been discovered that learning is enhanced when "the child associates sound-sequences directly with his conceptual schemata of the objects, situations and events to which they refer", although any provisional discovery such as this may have to be refined in the light of new information. Audio-visual courses establish the first contact between live thinking and verbal formulation, by putting before the pupil in an interesting and lively way that part of the Modern Language—the only valid model— which contains the most necessary material of everyday speech, in correct French, (or German, et cetera).

It is through this meaningful context that pupils' participation is established (cf. Table II). Understandably, a working party of

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headmasters recommended "an oral approach at the beginning, and a great deal of learning by heart (emphasis in original)". The official standpoint, expressed in a publication released in the middle nineteen fifties, intimated that "learning by heart is the very root of the study of modern languages". This statement is in keeping with Dr. Palmer's assertion that "learning by heart is the basis of all linguistic study". The majority view is therefore that the basic sentence patterns must eventually be learnt by heart. Second language learning largely depends on rote memory then, for "the child's initial acquisition of interpretive procedures does not permit him to learn to make the necessary interpretations for linking general rules with particular cases except on a rote basis."

In spite of the widely-held belief in memorisation, it appears that response latencies have not really been investigated at the research level. Professor Suppes (Stanford University) has rightly deplored that "in view of the obvious relevance of response latencies to measures of second language mastery, the paucity of serious experimental studies in the literature is almost shocking". In other areas, the results of research work suggest "that people seek and enjoy stimuli which are different from those they are used to—but that these stimuli must not be too different. When stimuli are incongruous or very strange, the student develops anxiety instead of curiosity."
The lesson to be observed is that the material to which the learner is exposed, must not extend beyond the depth established by the scope of the pupil's previous memory work and of his manipulative skill. It is therefore a pre-requisite for intrinsic motivation which can be directly related to Professor Hobb's neuropsychological theory, according to which organisms tend to be pre-occupied with what is new but not too new in any situation for, as the old adage has it, "natura non facit saltus". In practice, the problem for Modern Language teachers consists in finding "ways of keeping each step in the learning 'new but not too new' and of challenging his pupils with incongruities that are at the same time not too dissimilar from previous experience". However, on the ground that "we learn best what we want to learn", it has been thought for some time that the acquisition of a Modern Language depended to a large extent on motivation as well as on linguistic aptitudes rather than on general ability.

Considering that whatever ability presumably innate—which, as we have seen (vid supra, chapter 1), enables the children to perform unconsciously the feat of grasping patterns of forms and rules and then, of extending them to words they have never heard before—is apparently lost by the time the human mind reaches adolescence (vid inf., chapters 11, 12), the results of investigation support the view that "concentration and tenacity . . . are . . . important factors" in Modern Language.


3 Peter S. Green, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 9, 10.12.71, p. 15.
learning. Moreover, "intensity of motivation to learn the other language (correlates with the) prediction of success in second-language acquisition". At a time when education has become positional in its attitude to the learner, hence the accepted ideal of teaching a Modern Language across the ability range (vid inf., chapter 10), it has been the privilege of an officially-sponsored team of research workers (York University) to propound that successful learning of a Modern Language by a method which relies on pattern drills and teaches grammar inductively presupposes linguistic aptitude.

Professor Carroll’s research enabled him to identify six factors. In a discussion published in the July, 1993, issue of "The journal of general psychology", John Carroll mentioned Factor A: Verbal Knowledge; Factor B: Linguistic Interest; Factor C: Associative Memory; Factor D: Sound-Symbol Association; Factor E: Inductive Language Learning Ability; and Factor F: Grammatical Sensitivity or Syntactical Fluency. In sum, Professor Carroll’s survey points to linguistic aptitude as being a combination of several skills. Aptitudes which, in the United States, have proved to be a far more significant variable than age, are:

- verbal intelligence, that is, "the ability to infer grammatical rules from examples of a language";
- the ability to memorize new words;
- auditory ability, that is, "the ability to cope with unfamiliar sounds".

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2 Peter S. Green, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 9, 10.12.71, p. 15.
3 Peter Green’s phrase. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, op. cit., p. 15.)
Audio-visual courses have been rapidly adopted by thousands of schools (vid supra, chapter 1), owing to the belief that they would promote an active learning situation in which children would acquire a Modern language much in the same way as they had learnt their mother tongue.

We have seen though (vid supra, chapter 1) that recent research in language acquisition by children has brought out that human beings do not learn their first language by "sim-sim" (simicry-ronoration). In the educational psychologist's words, "if one is to make sense of how infants behave, one has to assume some intervening cognitive constructs of a complexity that used to be overlooked" by the linguist who asserted that:

"la langue est un systeme complexe d'associations inconscientes de mouvements et de sensations". 2

"language is a complex system of unconscious associations of motor- and sensory-skills". 2

Briefly, "linguistic perceptual development involves the reformulation of perceptual rules rather than perceptual mastery of a gradually increasing number of different constructions". 3

The relevance for Modern Language teaching is that it is more and more apparent that much of the ineffective Modern Language teaching relies on an admixture of over-simplified psychological theories loosely connected with pronouncements such as language learning "requires direct experience of examples, or a teacher to serve as a model and to control exposure to samples of the language and practice". 4 The Direct method did not fulfil

1 Tony Cline, in Times Edin Suppl, No. 3097, 4.10.74, p. 24.


the hopes in the inter-war period. The following generation of Modern
language teachers has been disappointed with the audio-visual courses
whose results did not match the linguists' expectations. The materials
designers' complacency has provoked, and will continue to provoke,
vehement comments until they build into their courses a clear delineation
of the aim they pursue. From a practical angle, there is little doubt
that Modern Language teachers welcome advice of a hortatory nature from
designers of audio-visual material and textbooks whether for beginners or
for Advanced-level teaching.

Such cursory advice emanating from the textbook writers is not
prescriptive and is generally well received by the lower level of honest
but bewildered teachers, as they deplore and—indeed—react against the
considerable dehumanization of Modern Language teaching in recent decades
(vid supra, chapter 1). Many a teacher would therefore not support
Michael Smith's personal viewpoint that books that lack condescending
prefaces "credit the user (sc. the teacher. A.S.L.) with sufficient
intelligence to work out how it can best be of service to him".1 It is
almost standard practice for course book writers to publish a teacher's
book as a companion opus to the pupil's book, ever since Dr. Hedgecock's
"Teacher's book, first year" was published in 1926. Considering that
"it is the good teachers who are exercising caution in the way they depart
from the recommended instructions",2 Michael Smith's objection to
explanatory introductions is representative of the minority view.

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1 Michael J. Smith, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3046, 12.10.73, p. 25.
2 J. A. Jerman, in Aspects of Education, (Hull University), No. 6,
1967, p. 98.
Rather, the general view is reflected in the "Modern Languages" reviewer's comments about "Le français de tous les jours" whose "author's preface alone is worth (the price). It is most earnestly to be hoped that teachers using the book will take Dr. Astington's advice as to the way in which it can best be used; he lays the right emphasis on the right things."\(^1\) Again, in the United States, university presses are unwilling to go ahead with any work that has "no teachers' manuals, no guides for students, no work-books"\(^2\) No doubt, countless are the Modern Language teachers who appreciate the guidance of the type which is intended "to help teachers to adjust to the considerable demands of mixed ability teaching"\(^3\) in view of the daily strain imposed on Modern Language teachers who are "faced with up to eight classes a day all at different stages"\(^4\) Besides, few are the course designers who make a substantial attempt to devise an effective and sensitive evaluation whose result, be it success or failure, would stimulate the experienced teacher.

The courses themselves have been largely designed on the assumption that, if they complied with the operant conditioning hypothesis (vid inf., chapter 4), success would ensue. Although Professor Carroll acknowledged in the middle nineteen sixties that "we do not yet have . . . a good general theory concerning the conditions under which learning takes place",\(^5\) at that time, Robert Gagne produced his "The conditions of learning", a thorough study in which he provided considerable details

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4 Patricia Kealey's phrase. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 103, 5.10.73, p. 18.)
about eight different types of learning, i.e., signal learning, stimulus-response learning, chaining, verbal association, multiple discrimination, concept learning, principle learning, and problem solving.

It is a commonplace that learning is often fragmentary, intermittent, and even discontinuous. Characteristically then, "error curves show sharp drops without warning, and the kind of error that is made on one day may be quite changed on the next. The great disagreement that still continues in psychology does not concern the existence of some factors producing these effects, but its nature: how it operates, and how it is related to learning as such." ¹ Yet, while "of all the fields of psychology none is thought more central to our everyday affairs than the study of learning", ² even the most superficial investigation of any popular audio-visual course clearly reveals that its designers have not concerned themselves with the contemporary findings underlying the learning process and, perforce, they have not been able to relate such principles to the materials which purported to comply with the recent U.S. experiments. Consequently, when language courses combining auditory and visual elements were found wanting, the disappointment was the outcome of learning "with the ear only and not by the correlation of the ear and the eye" ³ (vid supra, chapter 1).

Not surprisingly, the shortcoming of the audio-visual materials was wrongly attributed to the up-and-coming linguistic theories, as a substantial number of users had taken for granted for some considerable time that, first, structural linguistics and, later, tagmemics,

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² A.D. Davy, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl*, No. 94, 3.8.73, p. 15.
stratificational grammar, systemic grammar, and even generative grammar outlined the formal inter-relationships making up the network of the numerous units which are generally found in commercial audio-visual courses marketed by publishers. While "the nature of linguistic rules has been described most completely in transformational grammar",¹ the particular schools of linguistics still have their exponents, but the latter have tended to apply their hypotheses in narrow zones. For example, proponents of systemic grammar see how meaning representations can be mapped, first, onto syntactic representations and, ultimately, onto phonetic representations as their primary concern. Modern Language teachers do not yet have a French equivalent to Professor Halliday's "Language in use", an extensively-tried collection of English materials published in 1964 under the auspices of the Nuffield Foundation. So, neo-Firthian Linguistics has hardly attracted any attention with regard to the possibilities it may afford in the teaching of French as a foreign language, in spite of the systemic linguists' pronouncement that "at the grammatical level the systemic nature of language is seen to be of paramount importance".²

In the main, this state of affairs illustrates Professor Chomsky's claim that "at present the field (of Linguistics) is in considerable ferment",³ hence the intractable task of the educationist in his attempt to reconcile mastering the pre-requisite knowledge in Linguistics with his pedagogical experience (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection B). In Professor Corder's words, "many teachers, when first introduced to linguistics, see

¹ Moshe Anisfeld, in Albert Waldman (ed.), op. cit., p. 115.


no relevance in it for their work and, conversely, (if) many linguists unacquainted with language teaching in practice disclaim any practical usefulness for their work (, ) the fact seems to be that only those who are familiar with both linguistics and (emphasis in original) teaching are in a position to discern the relation between the two". 1

Noam Chomsky who led the field in transformational generative-grammar theory, did not wish to claim any direct influence on linking his hypotheses to the teaching of language. Professor Chomsky's contributions have been more subtle, as their implications have been far reaching at the interdisciplinary level. For example, he asserted that language is, "in any event, relatively independent in its structure of any innate mental faculties". 2 Moreover, through numerous investigations in the field of Psycholinguistics, the evidence which has been adduced shows that "the ability to talk, and to listen, and of the neurological dominance underlying language all start out at age two . . . language-learning (therefore) depends on specific mental and physiological structures rather than on 'general intelligence'". 3

The commonly-held hunch then—shared even by official bodies such as the Central Advisory Council, whose view is that "the ability to learn a foreign language varies a good deal from pupil to pupil, and often not in accordance with general ability" 4—has now evolved into an empirically-tested concept under the influence of a radically new psycholinguistic

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theory of language acquisition, whose bearing on Modern Language teaching will be examined further in PART II (chapter 5, subsection B). To begin with, Professor Chomsky has explained that "man has a species-specific capacity, a unique type of intellectual organization which cannot be attributed to peripheral organs or related to general intelligence".\(^1\) It nevertheless remains true to assert that "we do not yet have . . . a general theory of language behavior that would enable us to select optimal components of a foreign language teaching system for any given case"\(^2\) although, as Developmental Psychology is "one of the most rapidly expanding areas in current psychology research",\(^3\) it is hoped that further advances will take place.

The crux of the matter lies in the complexity and uncertainty of minimally reliable theories. Great qualities of energy, of patience, and of ingenuity are indeed devoted to empirical investigation, but "what is needed even more than research is a profound rethinking of current theories".\(^4\) Considering that "there is nothing as practical as a good theory",\(^5\) an educational psychologist has rightly deplored that "there is little systematic attack on theoretical issues (with the result that) a great sand-castle of 'fact' is being erected and gently slipping into a sea of speculation".\(^6\) It is plain that the contribution made by the


\(^3\) Michael Rutter, in *New Scientist*, (London), Vol. 61, 1974, p. 672.


\(^5\) Joshua A. Fishman, in Albert Waldman (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 121.

\(^6\) Tony Cline, in *Times Educ Suppl*, No. 3097, 10.10.74, p. 24.
strand of Experimental Psychology has been minimal. The sceptics find that the gap seems great between the class-room and the guarded and tentative conclusion of the clinician reporting an experiment in Psycholinguistics. In the inter-war years a U.S. research worker admitted that, "time and again . . ., principals and teachers would complain that the methods which were being used were too formal and dry to be practically used".¹

The criticism emanating from the U.S. schools in the inter-war period might occasionally be levelled against contemporary researchers, thus highlighting the difficulty to undertake an enquiry within which the many variables are effectively neutralized. In Great Britain however, Richard Skeap's main concern has been "the need for a schematic theory".² He found that in twenty one years, that is, from 1940 till 1961, only five papers on the applications of learning theory had been published in the three main journals in the field of Educational Psychology ("The British Journal of Educational Psychology"—None; "Journal of Educational Psychology"—Three; "Journal of educational research"—Two). By and large, the situation has remained practically unchanged in the following decade. So much so that the publication of "The N.U.T. survey" embodying the research work undertaken at Ruskin College (Oxford) has led the general secretary to exclaim that, considering "the vast and growing amounts spent on education () it is extraordinary that such a big undertaking is run on such limited factual and statistical information"³ (vid inf., chapter 9, subsection A).

³ Edward Britton, in Times Educ. Suppl., No. 3049, 2.11.73, p. 5.
The evidence available leads to the conclusion that, at all levels,
that is, at the grass roots, at the theoretical level, and even at the
administrative echelon, research may or may not take place. In the
middle nineteen seventies, an influential body of senior academics have
acknowledged the need for research work connected with education. So, in
the interim report issued by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and
Principals, the members recommended that "the universities should
stimulate more research in education". Such a recommendation is bound
to be well received in various quarters, not least by the strand of
progressive teachers. They belong to a minority, albeit a substantial
one. The import is that, when "The N.U.T. survey" came out, the vice-
principal of Ruskin College who had headed the Unit, was reported to
have said that "we were astonished by the lack of education research in
this country". This shortcoming brings to light the weakness of a
teaching system which not only keeps apart methods from theory but also
puts a premium on abstract conceptualization to the point of reserving for
it the highest accolade.

The implications are obvious. In the Modern Language world, many
are the bewildered teachers who operate in a totally haphazard way (vid
infra, conclusions to subsection B, chapter 5). Meantime, neither of the
main sources susceptible of sponsoring the field of education is
contributing any substantial amount towards the production of knowledge.
On the one hand, it has been deprecated that "traditional learning
theories (have) very little to say on the subject of language acquisition" and,
on the other, Professor Saporta has intimated that, "in keeping with

2 John Hughes. (cf. The Sun, London, 30.10.75, p. 7.)
the narrowly behavioralistic tenor of the times, the learning theory which has served as the basis for the pronouncements about method has been the most inflexible form of stimulus-response formulation, which has suggested to language teachers that the probability of acquiring the unconscious control of a set of grammatical rules is merely a function of the frequency and reinforcement associated with sentences illustrating the rules"¹ (vid inf., chapter 4). Such is the basic principle, although the myth of stimulus-response is undoubtedly more complex. For example, it has been admitted that "the problem of specifying what constitutes a 'stimulus' for an organism has long been recognized to be more difficult than it appears on the surface".²

The extent of the inflexibility of the stimulus-response formulation can be gauged from one of Professor Politzer's analyses. In a statement in which Robert Politzer was extolling the behaviourist's approach to Modern Language teaching, he reminded practising teachers that they should keep "in mind that:

(1) a response can be learned only if it is performed;
(2) a response is learned if it is rewarded;
(3) rewarding of desired responses is by far more effective than the punishing of wrong ones;
(4) the rewarding of desired responses is usually effective only if the reward is immediate rather than delayed».³

The outcome is that Modern Language teachers in general, and teachers of French in particular, have been sensitive to the draw-backs of conventional

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¹ Sol Saporta, in Albert Valdman (ed.), op. cit., p. 32.
audio-visual courses. For example, the head of the German department in a grammar school, who published in 1967 a paper in the "Times educational supplement", explained that he had opted for an audio-lingual course because, bearing in mind the time factor, the audio-lingual course would lend itself to greater scope in the class-room and increased efficiency; notwithstanding the fact that "a number of the new audio-lingual texts—highly acclaimed—have proved unsatisfactory".

Shortcomings of Professor Skinner's operant conditioning have been known for some considerable time. Not only has it been made obvious that Skinnerian principles do not always work but also that other factors are operating. First, David Herman (Wichita University) who summarized the results of his research, contended that on the basis of the response time, error, and observational data, language events "may involve a variety of ways of interacting. To call them all language behavior would be careless use of referents for terms." Secondly, as, in practice it is the acquisition of the "abilities to make judgments about such matters as grammaticality, foreign accent, deviancy, synonymy and paraphrase which marks off a person with limited skills, and (as) the development of such abilities requires more than the use of existing stimulus-response or reinforcement drills in the classroom", the best of Professor Skinner's generation and of many psychologists have tried to get on board the big psychological wagon of the day, until the going got so rough that many of them would like to get off again. Lastly, as had been the case for association hypotheses (vid supra, chapter 1), the connexionist theorists' assertion that the acquisition of a Modern Language would be enhanced by

"making very precise movements of the skeletal muscles (until) the controlling stimulus also becomes more and more sure and precise", 1 has not been borne out by long-term results.

Professor Hebb's detailed study of the first stage of perception had already enabled him to conclude that "the fact of the unequal difficulty of associations is not stressed in the literature, probably because it does not fit into conditioned-reflex theory; but it is a fact". 2 The experienced teacher of French readily points out that, if learning consisted merely of "an automatic response to a single stimulus, or an aggregation of such responses, the educative process would be extremely slow and singularly unintelligent". 3 The eminent Linguist, Edward Sapir, has explained that "the elements of language, the symbols that ticket off experience, must therefore be associated with whole groups, delimited classes, of experience rather than with the single experiences themselves . . . of a convenient capsule of thought (i.e., a 'concept') that embraces thousands of distinct experiences and that is ready to take in thousands more." 4

The psychologist's viewpoint has been cogently expressed in 1960 by Dr. Anderson. The acquisition of the native language for the monoglot speakers or, indeed, of two languages for the bilingual children, "bears little resemblance to language learning in school. Penfield calls the former 'learning by the direct method or the mother's method' and the latter 'learning by the indirect or scholastic method'. The former may also be called conditioned learning or acculturation. Called by

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2 Donald O. Hebb, op. cit., p. 78.
whatever name, language learning by young children in a natural setting is widely recognized as something quite different from the kind of learning that takes place in school by older children or adolescents, usually called conceptual learning.

This difference, most writers on the subject agree is primarily a function of age." (vid inf., epigraph to chapter 11.)

The audio-lingual approach has been advocated by the British Modern Language Association on the ground that "every new word first enters the mind by way of the ear, the tongue and the senses". The audio-visual technique is not unquestionably received by adolescents whose mental stature is fully-grown in English, for "the intensive-direct method requires that relatively mature organisms return briefly to childish ways of talking, of thinking, of groping for words, of admitting helplessness."

Educationists are aware that "no one puts away childish things with quite the fervour of the adolescent who is not yet sure of having become a man or a woman. The overwhelming majority of Modern Language teachers is still eagerly waiting for a serious discussion, which could be perceived by them as a materials designer's attempt that may—or may not—succeed in meeting the very real challenge with which they are confronted in their class-rooms. Kamenev exhorted teachers to believe that "the class listens to the French dialogues for the first time.

... This will force the class to become detectives and to guess at the sense of the French sounds... image words occur again and again. The patterns, recurring two, three or four times, are designed to aid the process of communicating the meaning of entire phrases." In a similar

1 Modern Language Association, op. cit., p. 15.
2 Joshua A. Fishman, in Albert Waldman (ed.), op. cit., p. 130.
The designers of "Voix et images de France" claimed that their course would promote:

"une langue enseignée comme un moyen vivant de communication". 1

"a language taught as a live means of communication". 1

Although, for a long time to come, there is bound to be a discrepancy between what the learner seeks to express and his linguistic skill, the "C.R.E.D.I.F." team asserted in their introduction that,

"une fois que l’élève aura fait sien, d’un même mouvement, la situation et le langage qui l’exprime, la communication deviendra possible". 2

"once the student has assimilated the situation and the language which expresses it, communication becomes possible". 3

In the words of Professor Corder (Edinburgh University), "the picture, by careful design and taken in conjunction with previous pictures in the sequence is intended fully to contextualise the language heard with it". 4

The environmental set-up, through which pupils are led to practise the language with semantic assurance, is therefore provided by the audio-visual course whose every "utterance must be meaningful, of course, so that a concept is tied to the sounds", 5 for "our ideal must be the nearest possible approach to the native’s command of the language". 6

Recent work in Linguistics lends support to the audio-visual course designed in such a way that it prompts the pupil to generate new utterances in a situational context by attempting to integrate the cultural

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2 op. cit., p. xi.


elements to the linguistic contents. The audio-visual technique hastens the incipient learning of the simpler elements—vocabulary items and basic structures—and promotes semantic cognition. This skill is deemed desirable "so that the words and sentences may awaken the same ideas in us as in the native—and these ideas, as we well know, are not the same as those called forth by the corresponding words in our language". ¹

Considering that "the visuals serve to reinforce the meaning of what is being said over the tape", ² commercially-produced audio-visual courses are therefore supposed to be conducive to the learning of the Modern Language. In a French study however, research workers have readily conceded that:

"la mecanique verbale ('les tournures grammaticales et les habitudes de syntaxe les plus idiomatiques') est souvent difficile à traduire par l'image". ³

"the verbal construction ('the grammatical construction and the most idiomatic collocations') is often difficult to render visually". ³

Moreover, while "language learning takes place when the child associates sound-sequences directly with his conceptual schemata of the objects, situations and events to which they refer", ⁴ Dr. Lashley's investigation of the psychological studies concerned with the analysis of the items perceived when one looks at pictures in terms of organization prompted him to conclude that "no satisfactory theory to account for this type of organization has as yet been proposed". ⁵

¹ loc. cit.


³ Jean Guenot et al., in E.L.A. No. 1, 1962, p. 106.


To the experienced teacher, the shortcoming which is not peculiar to second language learning, arises from the fact that:

"Understanding what we see means perceiving relationships between the relevant features of the scene, and drawing conclusions from them. The ability to do this is clearly related to maturation and intelligence... Such reading of a picture does not come until eleven or twelve." 1

Professor Corder's statement recalls the study Rimat had carefully designed in the nineteen twenties. Rimat had concluded his research by asserting that "thought in concepts, emancipated from reception puts demands on the child that exceed his mental possibilities before the age of twelve". 2 In spite of the "C.R.E.D.I.P." team's experience gained in producing "Voix et images de France", the designers were grappling with this intractable problem in the planning of "Bonjour Lune".

Specialists have also expressed their concern in respect of a method whose emphasis consists in a precise visual scanning, and therefore distracts from the skills pertaining to language in general, i.e., anticipating or predicting what is likely to come next. Dr. Lashley has shown that such elements are more important than straightforward comprehension. In studies of memorization of nonsense syllables for example, Karl Lashley found that "each syllable in the series has associations, not only with adjacent words in the series, but also with more remote words". 3

The import for Modern Language teaching is that learning will be most effective when frequent and intense practice of new lexical items, is

1 S. Fit Corder, op. cit., p. 56.


organized in a way which ensures their fusion to well-known words through the natural activity of real-life conversation. That is not all though. Parallel inquiries conducted by neurophysiologists and psychologists have each, in turn, thrown light upon the nature of the perceptual process and the outcome of their work has made it clear that "the price of perceiving anything at all is that not everything is perceived that can potentially be perceived".¹ Scholars in the United States have also drawn attention to the fact that psychological studies and linguistic research on perception have not been particularly successful nor intensive.

First, according to Dr. Lashley,

"When one looks at pictures ..., there is a . . . . selection of the items perceived, in terms of organization which is somehow inherent in the neural processes. Psychological studies of perception have been chiefly concerned with analysis of such organization. No satisfactory theory to account for this type of organization has as yet been proposed."

Secondly, it is to be regretted that "research on language teaching films from a linguistic point of view is far behind the work of psychologists",³ for we have seen that success in learning French as a foreign language by means of an audio-visual approach depends on the reading skill (vid supra, this chapter).

The problem is not new. For example, Henry Sweet, a pioneer of the Direct method, was aware that pictures "are all limited in their application (and) are even more liable to be misunderstood".⁴


Sophisticated analyses have recently put on a different plane where the major difficulty lies. Conte has convincingly argued that, "if the designer of the visual message attempts to superimpose it on to the target language, the receiver is almost forced to look for semantic and syntactic equivalents in his own language". 1

Charles Bouton has freely admitted that, when a "structure verbale", or verbal construction, is tied to a given situation, "il faut bien reconnaître que la lecture d'une image est toujours (c'est nous qui soulignons) ambiguë dans de tels cas". 2

Modern Language teachers have become more sensitive to the fact, as social psychologists have it, that "it is not the situation which influences man's behaviour but his perception of that situation", 3 notwithstanding Leonard Bloomfield's authoritative statement that "une structure n'a de sens que par le fait qu'elle s'emploie dans une certaine situation". 4

Transformational grammar theorists are aware that, "at the levels of sound, meaning, and syntax, the significant structural features of sentences are highly abstract". 5 In any event, "the acquisition of meaning is a complex and little understood process, and it certainly involves more than just formation of associations between referents (sc. concepts. A.S.L.) and words", 6 considering that "the innovative element

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1 D. Conte, in "El A", No. 17, 1975, p. 3.
2 Charles F. Bouton, in "Le Français dans le monde", No. 42, 1966, p. 27.
4 Charles Bouton's translation. (cf. "Le Français dans le monde", op. cit., p. 27.)
6 Moshe Anisfeld, in Albert Waldman (ed.), op. cit., p. 112.
in normal use of language quickly exceeds the bounds of such marginal
principles as analogy or generalization"\(^1\) (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection
B). Early studies of linguistic development in children, for example,
have shown that even in the mother tongue "the child is always liable
to associate a word with a different characteristic from the one intended.
To one little girl, 'chair' meant not so much the article of furniture as
the act of sitting."\(^2\) Professor Lewis, who has listed the records of as
diverse observers as Darwin, Guillaumé, Jespersen, Stern, and Taine, has
commented that "extensions of meaning are among the most characteristic
features of children's speech".\(^3\)

In France, Emile Egger, who observed his own children in the
nineteenth century, tells how Emile (age 20 months) confuses the wound,
i.e., "un petit mal", with the bandage, "le linge blanc".\(^4\) The same
writer points out that the child's confusion springs from the complexity
of our language, for

"mêmes sous l'excitation
journalière d'une société
cultivée, l'esprit arriver
lentement à saisir les idées
qui répondent à des phénomènes
de notre vie intérieure; il
prend à chaque instant le signe
pour la chose signifiée.
Emile a trois ans et demi. Il
a observé que pour prier ou
pour réfléchir on a les mains
jointes: il joint ses deux
mains et il me dit: 'Je
réfléchis, c'est comme cela,
n'est-ce pas qu'on
réfléchit?' "\(^5\)

\(^1\) Noam Chomsky, in *Psychology Today*, op. cit., p. 50.

\(^2\) Edwin A. Kirkpatrick: *Fundamentals of Child Study*, (New York:

\(^3\) Morris M. Lewis: *Language Thought and Personality in Infancy and

\(^4\) Emile Egger: *Observations et réflexions sur le développement de

In a similar vein, George Romanes cited Charles Darwin, who had affirmed that, "when just beginning to speak," his son said "quack" first referring to a duck, then associated "quack" with the water in which the duck was seen, then extended quack to birds and insects on the one hand to liquids on the other. Lev Vygotsky, the eminent Soviet Psychologist, has explained that such examples illustrated "a typical chain complex: Each new object included has some attribute in common with another element, but the attributes undergo endless changes."  

The implications for Modern Language teaching are plain. While Psychology has not "achieved a level of theoretical understanding that might enable it to support a 'technology' of language teaching," hardly had the first audio-visual courses appeared on the market that a thorough study cast doubts upon them and even showed that the effective use of illustrations in second language learning was by no means unlimited.

In the nineteen fifties then, Geoffrey Richardson had systematically investigated the limitation of the use of visual aids in the teaching of French. The bearing upon Modern Language teaching is that his work led to the conclusion that, as "language is not primarily or even substantially visual; ... the greater part of a language does not lend itself at all to such an approach (eg. through pictures/filmstrips, A.S.L.) and must be taught by other means." Significantly, the novelist who writes a ciné-novel, considers that:

“The essential characteristic of the image is its present-necessity. One might say that on the screen verbs are always in the present tense. What are these images, actually? They are imaginings (emphasis in original): an imagining, if vivid enough, is always in the present.”

It is therefore likely that, in Modern Language teaching, “practice with tenses, for example, if based on the pictorial sequences, will be contrived, however ingenious the teacher.”

Empirical research undertaken on conventional audio-visual courses has certainly revealed disturbing facts. In the middle nineteen sixties, Charles Dodson, a Chief Examiner, summarized the data from Mrs. Price’s experiments he had personally supervised. Commenting on commercial audio-visual courses from the standpoint of comprehension he showed in his “Language teaching and the bilingual method” that, when these courses were presented in sequences of twenty frames to thirty university graduate linguists and university lecturers, their average performance per film did not reach forty per cent. (The scores ranged from ten to nearly forty per cent.) Yet, utterances are selected under the assumption that their situated meanings are obvious.

As Professor Oesterrigh has averred it in the course of a radio broadcast, considering that:

“l’enfant est un être beaucoup plus auditif, et beaucoup moins visuel que nous ne le pensions”,

the outcome is that “time-wasting, incomprehension and even distress are


caused by reliance on the film-strip and foreign language to elucidate meaning." The thorough testing of the Ministry’s Pilot Scheme, whose results have been published, provides ample evidence of dissatisfaction among pupils. This is well known to practising teachers. Briefly, “at the end of the primary stage, 75 per cent of those who disliked French reported that they did not always understand what they were saying when they spoke French, but simply repeated sounds which held no meaning for them. After two years in the secondary school, 74 per cent of those who dislike French report that they are still experiencing difficulties of a similar nature.”

When language instruction is geared towards visual experience, ideally for every language item there should be a different picture and in every picture, there should be something different and culturally significant. If Ingram and Mac’s favourable comments on “Tavor” have influenced many a school in its decision to opt for that teaching material, their support stemmed from their belief that, in this course, “the situations they (so. the pupils, A.S.L.) deal with (are) perfectly understood”.

Conventional audio-visual courses are rather disappointing though. For example, in 1971, John Daniel (Malvern College) explained how he tested film 11 of “Voix et images de France” with twenty two fourteen-year-old boys, whose I.Q. averaged 116.7. The thirty-three frames were shown twice and, without having heard the dialogues, the boys were asked to write the dialogue in English. Only twenty frames received a correct

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3 Stewart R. Ingram et al., in Mod Langs, Vol. 40, 1959, p. 139.
response from at least fifty per cent. of the boys. As Professor Corder expressed it, "the problems of designing an audio-visual course are most acute in the matter of making illustrations which can be rapidly 'read' without misunderstanding". 1

The analysis of "Voix et images de France" undertaken at Malvern College led its author to conclude that:

"The most successful pictures expressed ideas which are concrete rather than abstract, simple rather than complicated, physical rather than cerebral. Clearly they need virtually no help from the teacher... . . .
A class is liable to make the wildest of guesses as to the meaning of a picture. One realizes . . . . that one can never assume the class's comprehension." 2

Empirical evidence has therefore been conducive to a reappraisal of the views held by those entrenched in the practice of the audio-lingual habit approach. For example, a serious deficiency of the hypothesis propounded by connexionist psychologists as a theory of learning is precisely that "the original analysis of meaning itself seems very naive". 3

Considering that the conventional audio-visual courses have brought disappointment with regard to imparting meaning, many a teacher who hoped for a better alternative, has expressed his dissatisfaction with the current practices. Indeed, a linguist has contended that "mere presentation in meaningful situations will suffice (only for) the structurally analogous units between languages". 4 Clearly, a naive approach is not adequate for "those units and patterns that show structural differences between the first language and the second", 5 which must be

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1 S. Pit Corder, op. cit., pp. 80-82.
3 David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 167.
5 Loc. cit.
taught in order "to develop new habits in critical areas of interference from the native language of the learner".¹ In any event, James Ney (Michigan State University) has stated that a criticism levelled at the audio-lingual method is that it "does play down the importance of meaning in language learning".²

The import for the audio-visual approach has been the concomitant assumption that,

"pour tout fait de langage, comprendre est agir c'est-a-dire, ici, reproduire, imiter".³

Nonetheless, the proponents of the audio-lingual habit theory wrongly assumed that, once the pupils were able to produce the expected range of automatized responses, understanding would ensue. In the early nineteen-sixties, Robert Lado expounded the fundamental principle of the audio-lingual approach as "the student learns a form—a word or a construction—before learning its meaning".⁴ Although "la langue est une forme",⁵ "language is a form",⁶ in Professor Rivers’s words, "if this (audio-lingual) method is followed rigorously, it is possible for students to memorize, practice by rote, and be able to manipulate structures without being aware of the crucial element involved".⁷ Pupils need to know the meaning though. In spite

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² James W. Ney, in Lg L., Vol. 18, 1968, p. 5.
of the fact that our understanding "of the relationships between sounds 
and meaning is still one of the most difficult problems in psychology", 1 
the belief among Modern Language teachers is that "the more meaningful the 
material to be learned, the greater is the facility in learning and 
retention". 2 The strand of reactionary teachers have however expressed 
their concern as to the audio-visual approach, whose extensive reliance 
on the speaking skill hampers the acquisition of comprehension on the 
grounds first that "varied and effective utterance is not easily developed 
and (secondly that) the pupil's own active and discriminating choice is 
vital", 3 a concept which will be examined further in a subsequent chapter 
(chapter 7, subsection B).

3 Tony Burgess, in Times Educ. Suppl., No. 3077, 17.5.74, p. 17.
Conclusions.

By means of cryptic comments such as the mother tongue consists in a "phenomenal system (that) is mastered in a relatively short time" (vid supra, chapter 1), developmental psychologists have unwittingly provided the notion upon which developed a folk-lore whose tenet is that learning a Modern Language by "mim-mem" is child's play. By and large, the audio-visual materials writers purported that mimicry-memorization in Modern Language learning reproduced the environmental set-up akin to the one prevalent at the time when we learnt how to speak our native language. Clearly, the approach we adopt in the teaching of a Modern Language is likely to be influenced considerably by our understanding of language acquisition. For example, the systematic progression in the acquisition of the mother tongue has led contemporary psychologists to propose that, "although it is in such sequences that the existence of innate principles of organization is most clearly revealed, it seems to us that whenever we find that child's use of language is (a) systematic (that is, reasonably constant and predictable over a period) and (b) anomalous (that is, strikingly different from the adult usage), we have evidence of the workings of such innate principles. We can see this by asking why the child's communicative competence has developed in this particular way. It cannot be the direct result of external factors, because of the anomalies, so it must be the result of some sort of endogenous systematic change. The particular form of the anomalous usage then tells us something about the character of these endogenous processes."  

Considering that children are able to perform unconsciously the feat

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1 Here and infra, emphasis in original.
2 Here and infra, brackets in original.
of grasping patterns of forms and rules and of extending them to words they have never heard before, "recent experiments in child-language acquisition suggest that human beings . . . construct from their linguistic environment a model which can be projected beyond what has been heard in the past to form and recognize new combinations".¹ There are clear indications of "abrupt shifts in the manifest speech performance of the child, which imply drastic structural reorganizations of his linguistic knowledge",² such reorganizations are effected by the information processing device. As our knowledge keeps increasing, it is foreseeable that empirical research will, sooner or later, disentangle the intricacies peculiar to the interactions of the device and the peculiarities underlying language acquisition, but it is of course realised that research on bilingual education looks into "intricate and highly skilled processes . . . for which linguistics has not yet developed the requisite concepts or any adequate analytic descriptive apparatus".³

Our attention is turning to research workers whose interest is likely to add to the relatively neglected "body of literature covering what is learned, (so that) we know what the true subject matter for constructing an applied linguistic will be".⁴ The role of linguistics in contemporary research on bilingual education, for example, has become so important that the direct outcome of such studies as "the distribution of (language) failure is not random but follows certain known and sadly predictable patterns",⁵ may take the form of a decisive contribution

¹ Albert Valdman, in Mod Ls J, Vol. 48, 1964, p. 278.
towards the mapping out of the developmental sequence of language learning. It is therefore more and more widely believed that this working model will provide a framework whose contribution to the teaching of Modern Languages will prove to be invaluable considering that, for the first time, it will free the theory from commonly-held empirical hunches. Moreover, "while questioning traditions and classical methods, they (sc. educators A.S.L.) might well examine the findings of human neurophysiology. (In fact,) educators, like other specialists, are turning to science for new horizons."¹

As "the teacher-training échelons are increasingly geared to the inter-disciplinary outlook of applied linguistics", ² the interaction between the further advances in Psychology and the development of new linguistic theories leads to a clearer formulation of current methods and approaches in Modern Language teaching (vid inf., chapters 4, 5). For example, in the post-World War Two decades, young psychologists looked more sympathetically to the new metaphor of communication and grammar. Professor Miller, who was summing up the nineteen sixties, wrote that "the Communication metaphor which focuses attention on the set of alternative signals . . . called for a better theory of syntax, and generative grammar answered that call in an elegant and exciting way"³ (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection 5). The present reorientation indicates a "change of emphasis in linguistic studies which has come about as a result of Chomsky's work. The current centre of interest is not the


organization of language data so much as the nature of the organizing power that is capable of handling such data."^1

The implication is that this organization, that is, the underlying linguistic competence, demands that Modern Languages should be taught in a manner consistent with what we can infer, first, about "the language learner's perception, comprehension and memory"^2 (vid inf., chapter 7, subsection B) and, secondly, "about the nature of a native speaker's knowledge of his language"^3 (vid inf., chapter 3). We have seen (vid supra, chapter 1) that the audio-lingual movement had, by the late nineteen sixties, "succeeded admirably in . . . making teachers aware of the complexity of the language learning task". In the following years, teachers have become increasingly conscious of the problems facing them "as a result of the new methods, the earlier start, the increased numbers of pupils, the shortage of manpower".5

It has even been surmised that effectiveness in Modern Language learning may not so much depend on the curriculum than on ancillary factors (vid supra, chapter 1), such as pupil-teacher ratio, motivation, pupil aptitude, and time. The problems then have also arisen owing to factors as diverse as the introduction of new technology, the teaching of Modern Languages to a far wider ability range and, in particular, the tendency for mixed ability grouping. Considering that teachers find it difficult to accept changing their behaviour "even when the procedure is exceedingly


3 J. P. Allen et al., op. cit., p. 149.


simple", the success of an approach which concentrates on establishing the language as an instrument of communication, could only have been insured by an extensive in-service scheme (vid inf., chapter 9, subsection B). In the next chapter, we shall see that it has been claimed with some justification that the buoyant spirit of confidence still prevailing "at the beginning of the sixties no longer existed and had given way to a seriously shaken faith in the audio-lingual approach". Indeed, the validity of the prevalent technique in Modern Language teaching is questioned.

Critics have convincingly argued that many teachers are already too steeped in audio-visual courses to re-examine their basis. Among some of the principles currently challenged, Modern Language specialists depurate—on the one hand—course designers who fail to make explicit the content, the form, and alleged pedagogical function of their audio-visual courses and—on the other hand—materials writers who unnecessarily "introduce vocabulary and constructions of a variety and complexity far beyond the level" currently reached (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection A). In the main, course designers tacitly rely on the Modern Language teachers' intuition for developing their own technique in order to use successfully the commercial courses marketed by publishers.

Characteristically, the "Preface" of the conventional audio-visual courses consists of a few pages expressing platitudes so vague that no one would bother to disagree with them. Indeed, without even alluding to whether the "foundation" comprised any or all of the following:

2 Paul Pimsleur et al., op. cit., p. vii.
paradigms, syntactic structures, deep structures, et cetera, it is
nevertheless claimed that "Tavor" would constitute "an excellent foundation
for the solid grammatical work that followed". Such a statement is
made in defiance of the outcome resulting from the extensive research on
formal grammar which brought to light that "it was only possible to assert
a beneficial effect through ignorance (or defiance) of the evidence of
a large number of empirical studies". For example, Sidney Pressey whose
analysis had been undertaken in the inter-war years, had concluded that
"better written and oral English can be obtained only by patient and
consistent efforts to improve English expression, and not by the study of
formal grammar".

It is hoped that, when more emphasis is placed on basic principles
still ignored, yet known for some considerable time, the reappraisal will
in the long run prove to be a healthy one. It will not of course detract
from the consensus of opinion which, in up-to-date Modern Language teaching,
acknowledges that the elementary course "should concentrate at the
beginning upon the learner's hearing and speaking the foreign tongue". The
important points which will be scrutinized in the next chapter can
therefore be summarized as children will learn to speak French only if they
can imitate speakers of French, for "in speaking and thereby learning a
language the student needs constantly to pit his linguistic wits against
a sympathetic, co-operative and flexible model, which means in effect that
the teacher is indispensable to the learning situation".

1 V. V. Kamenew: Livre du professeur, (revised by Stewart Ingram),
2 Brackets in original.
3 Andrew M. Wilkinson: The Foundations of Language, (London: OUP,
1971), p. 32.
4 Sidney L. Pressey: Psychology and the New Education, (New York:
5 FL Steering Committee, in PMLA, Vol. 71, 1956, p. XV.
6 John A. Partington, in Mod Lang, Vol. 50, 1969, p. 120.
"For guidance in certain aspects of the problem, and for principles of general validity, we must, at times, turn to the disciplines which are concerned with the scientific study of learning on the one hand and of language on the other—to psychology and linguistics."
— J. C. Catford, 1959. 1

Prefatory Note to PART II.

"A subject becomes scientific not by beginning with facts, with hypothesis or with some pet method brought in 'a priori' but by beginning with the peculiar character of its particular problems."
— Professor Northrop, 1947. 2

The decline of the Direct method in the inter-war years coincided with the relative neglect of Phonetics. As a result, "it was largely language in non-linguistic terms that brought much of the older teaching to a confused end in the twenties." 3 However, considering that morphophonemic rules govern pronunciation, "linguistic theory . . . contains much that is of relevance to language teaching", 4 for "theory is transferable, extensible, extrapolable beyond its original integument". 5 Consequently, "the body of theory that resists substantial modification is fairly small", 6 and so are methods of teaching (vid supra, chapter 1). It can therefore be confidently foreseen that the improved techniques


derived from extended recordings made through an observational approach, will ultimately be shaped into scientifically established methods of teaching modern languages.

The present thesis attempts to find in general, and in this second part in particular, a middle ground in setting out how the interplay between Applied Linguistics and Psychology may influence the teaching of a Modern Language. Considering that even the most central concepts may undergo change, such an interplay can be at best but tentatively formulated. Otherwise one might beg the question whether the case for developing it would ever have arisen. We shall see that, in a pioneer study which Dr. Palmer undertook in the early nineteen twenties, he summarized a rational order of progression. The reorientation gathered strength in the nineteen sixties on the premise that "only a careful, well-programmed beginning in the audio-lingual method will guarantee a successful conclusion"¹ (chapter 3).

Once language drills loomed large it was deprecated that, as they absorbed much class-time, they made too heavy a demand on teachers who exhausted themselves in playing the part of a tape-recorder (chapter 4). Worse still, Robert Wolke (Pittsburgh University) pointed out that "the instructor who mechanizes or behaviourizes the methods of education in the belief that this accomplishes its goals has abdicated his as yet indefinable human function in favour of the role of drillmaster".² Besides, the notion has spread that some theoretical knowledge of Linguistics should be beneficial to materials writers and teachers alike.

It is deemed that it would equip them for their tasks which are complementary. Even a perfunctory glance at the popular language courses reveals that their designers have largely ignored the fundamental principles elucidated by the leading contemporary linguists (chapter 5, subsection A). As to Modern Language teachers, the view has gained ground that a linguistic element in their training would help them, first, in handling the difficulties pertaining to the foreign language in the day-to-day encounters and, secondly, in making an informed choice as to the selection of a suitable procedure for the presentation to the learners of the complexities underlying the target language (chapter 5, subsection B).

In the following chapter, the evidence gathered substantiates the truism that "by now many people are accustomed to admit that language and reading are central"\(^1\) to the acquisition of competence (chapter 6). Teachers who possess "an explicit understanding of the nature of spoken language",\(^2\) attempt to promote in the learner the mastery of the functional relationships (chapter 7). Moreover, "the ability to write a foreign language competently is a most difficult skill to acquire"\(^3\) and the audio-visual technique makes a sharper transition, considering that the connexion between oral lexicons "with written dictionaries is unknown and often remote or irrelevant"\(^4\) (subsection A). By the end of the nineteen sixties, "new problems had arisen (in foreign-language teaching)\(^5\)"


\(^3\) Brian Gomes da Costa et al.: *German Language Attainment*, Heidelberg: J. Gross. (Forthcoming.)

which needed a broader and stronger theoretical framework than audio-lingualism could provide;\(^1\) so the audio-lingual habit technique which is still prevalent in "foreign-language teaching was, perhaps, fifteen years ago (see in 1950. A.S.L.), in step with the state of psychological thinking at that time".\(^2\) Chapter 7 ends on a search for the theoretical framework that would enhance Modern Language teaching (subsection B). In the last chapter of PART II, an investigation is made as to "the ability of the majority of learners to function correctly and spontaneously in the language after five or more years of study".\(^3\) (chapter 8).


\(^3\) Frances M. Hodgson, in *Aspects of Education*, (Hull University), no. 6, 1967, p. 16.
Chapter 3. The Role of Auditory Discrimination in the Audio-Visual Technique.

"The identification of the phonetic form of a sentence presupposes at least a partial syntactic analysis, so that the rules of the generative grammar may be brought into play even in identifying the signal." — Professor Chomsky, 1966.

An Oxford don once declared that "no one but a native could impart the accent, the intonation, the true living voice of a language". 2

Jowett of Balliol's pronouncement made in the nineteenth century carries more force than ever before, now that "research into pronunciation structures has revealed the extent and depth of the embedding in the nervous system of the habits which dominate our speaking". 3 Some Modern Language teachers endowed with foresight were stressing in the nineteen twenties the intricacies of the oral-aural aspect. Indeed, Dr. Palmer proposed at that time that the learner of a Modern Language should "first, become proficient in recognizing and in producing foreign sounds and tones, both isolated and in combinations. Secondly, memorise (without analysis or synthesis) 4 a large number of complete sentences chosen specifically for the purpose by the teacher or by the composer of the course. Thirdly, learn to build up all types of sentences ... Lastly, learn how to convert 'dictionary words' (i.e. etymons) into 'working sentence-units' (i.e. ergos)." 5

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2 Benjamin Jowett. (cf. J Ed, No. 211, 1.2.1887, p. 114.)


4 Here and infra, brackets in original.

In his pioneer study, Dr. Palmer stated that "it is desirable, if not essential: (a) To learn to speak and to understand what is said before learning to read and write. (b) To start a language course with systematic ear-training and articulation exercises. (c) To make a most extensive use of the phonetic transcription, especially in the early stages. (d) To teach intonation at a very early stage. (e) To memorise sentences and to learn how to construct them, before memorising words and learning how to build either inflected forms or derivatives. (f) To include irregular and idiomatic forms even in the earlier stages. (g) To teach from the outset a rapid and fluent style of pronunciation, reserving more distinct utterance to a later stage." Dr. Palmer's views are still shared by contemporary linguists who readily assert that "it is more important to ensure the learning of the grammatical system" than to attempt teaching a large vocabulary (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection A).

Parallel to the recognition that "in learning a new language . . . the chief problem is not at first that of learning vocabulary items", the post-World War Two period has witnessed a revival of Applied Phonetics. What is wanted "is, first, the mastery of the sound system—to understand the stream of speech, to hear the distinctive sound features and to approximate their production". In the nineteen forties then, the immediate objectives became clearer as soon as Professor Delattre developed to a high degree of perfection, pronunciation exercises whose "object is to imitate a model utterance as closely as possible". In this context,

4 Loc. cit.
Modern Language teachers may ponder over Professor Leon’s assertion that “the control of sound production is probably much more auditory than articulatory”. Nonetheless, we have seen the importance of “repetitious learning” (vid supra, chapter 1), considering that “retention of the material . . . is achieved by a self-teaching effort based primarily on repetition—repetition of the auditory experience” (cf. Table II). Auditory experience enhances Modern Language learning, for Professor Mialaret has explained that, (grâce à un feedback extrêmement précis, l'oreille agit sur la voix et réciproquement).  

However, conditioned by reflexes peculiar to their native language, pupils have first a major perceptual task in discriminating and identifying the sounds of the Modern Language, for “das Wort ist nicht eine aneinandersetzungen einer bestimmten anzahl selbständiger laute”, or “a word is not a united compound of a definite number of independent sounds”. (4)

The import then is that, (de même que l’enfant qui apprend à parler commence toujours par écouter, — 7 — as the child learning how to speak always begins by listening, — 7 — then by)


2 Max Sherover’s phrase. (cf. Mod La J., Vol. 34, 1930, p. 444.)


7 Here and infra, emphasis in original.
puis par comprendre et
enfin par s'exprimer, de
même celui qui devra
assimiler une autre langue
devra franchir ces trois
estapes dans le même ordre". 1

Under the impact of the theories stemming from Acoustic Phonetics,
considering that:

"une langue consiste avant
tout dans (sic) un système
de sons émis par la bouche,
et perçus par l'oreille", 2

the teaching of auditory discrimination has become the initial step.

So, when Belasco and Waldman produced their course in the middle nineteen
sixties, they relied heavily on listening throughout "College French in
the New Key", in order to develop the auditory discrimination which
enhances the setting-up of both the phonetic and the phonemic areas.

The acquisition of auditory discrimination involves a complex
procedure. First, in an approach recalling Guitard and Marandet’s, on
the pattern of "une bûche brûle; Jules et Luce fument sur le mur; Lulu,
sur le mur, fait des bulles"; Professor Mueller (Akron University)
explains that "the student learns to hear the /y/ sound and to distinguish
it from all other French or English sounds that are usually substituted.
This is called ‘sound identification’. Once this discriminatory ability
has been acquired the student learns to produce the sound . . . . The
/y/ sound first appears surrounded by /s/ or /z/ sounds which forces the
student to place his tongue in the right position: 'Suzanne, suce,

2 Georges Gougenheim: *Système grammatical de la langue française,
4 Lucien Guitard et al.: *French Phonetics*, (Cambridge: University
Little by little the sound appears in other positions until the student can produce it without effort. In sum, as Professor Chomsky expressed it, “complex behavior can be produced by a process of successive approximation.” Secondly, as “the meanings of words depend upon the minimal contrast involving three vowels”, i.e., /i/, /u/, and /y/, “an aural conditioning (is) necessary to set up the phonemic area which will work finally in his (the learner’s) acoustic-neurological system like a series of narrow band filters passing appropriate sounds, rejecting others automatically.” Experience has shown that once phonematisation has set in “people can rely on their ear much more than they think they can”. In their contributions to the “Journal of the Acoustical Society of America”, Miller and Nicely in 1955, as well as Curry and his associates in 1960, have demonstrated that even in good listening conditions letters of the alphabet spoken at ordinary speech sound levels do indeed yield errors of perception. They have also stated that some letters are more intelligible than others.

Under the influence of Structural Linguistics, as “Linguistics pre-supposes phonetics”, the emphasis has shifted from the written language on to speech. The outcome is that “le rôle de l’audition est primordial”. However, “the revolution we are witnessing is not due

1 Theodore H. Mueller, in Mod Lg J. Vol. 52, 1968, p. 79.
3 Norman P. Sacks, in Mod Lg J. Vol. 48, 1964, p. 10.
5 Mabel A. Scoulthorp, in Mod Langes, Vol. 43, 1962, p. 8.
primarily to a change in the objectives of foreign language teachers, but rather to the (fact) that science of linguistics has set down the laws of spoken language.\(^1\) (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection B). Considering that "linguistics is concerned primarily with the living utterances",\(^2\) befittingly, Professor Fries who summarized the linguist's standpoint, wrote that "accuracy of sound, of rhythm, of intonation, of structural forms, and of arrangement, within a limited range of expression, must come first and become automatic habit".\(^3\)

By the middle nineteen fifties, the trend setters in Modern Language teaching had adopted the basic principles expounded by the structural linguists. Among others, the Modern Language Association advocated that, "to teach a language as a means of communication (,) it is essential that the initial approach should be made through the ear, evading the accustomed dominance of the eye until correct speech habits are established",\(^4\) a principle which would not be disavowed by the mathematical linguists who propose that "the placement of the article to the left of a noun, the placement of suffixes, and their changes at the end of nouns and of verbs are entirely mechanical processes, never requiring conscious activity".\(^5\)

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Summing up their own views, the Association of Assistant Mistresses affirmed that "the conscious aims in our teaching should be:

1. To make the ear hear unfamiliar sounds.
2. To train the mouth to make unfamiliar sounds."\(^1\) It is therefore rather disappointing that, so far, very few research workers have attempted in their treatment of variables, to separate perceptual and motor skills, that is, the skills related to the afferent or sensory side and to the efferent or motor flow. Yet, in several studies mentioned in the previous chapter, it is obvious that factors interact. It is explicit in most accounts related to Psycholinguistics. The point is that, as "pronunciation of a foreign language is a two-fold process (which) involves aural receptivity or the recognition of the sounds in a foreign language as well as the actual production of sounds",\(^2\)

"l'imitation dépend de la discrimination".\(^3\) "imitation depends upon (auditory) discrimination".\(^3\)

Not surprisingly, Professor Pimaleur and his associates who designed their language aptitude test in the early nineteen sixties, found ability in auditory discrimination to be pre-requisite for general language learning performance.

What concerns us here then is the overwhelming influence of auditory discrimination as a variable with all that that implies. Considering that, in second language learning, "habits and skills are most frequently acquired by imitation or verbal instruction from another person",\(^4\) it therefore follows that "one of the best ways of improving the

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3 Pierre R. Leon, op. cit., p. 133.
ability to comprehend the spoken word is to listen to the speech of native speakers."¹ On the other hand, as the purely oral approach is deemed necessary "until the auditory-cerebral link is firmly established",² it is implied that "the quality of an imitation can never be better than the elementary perceptual and motor skills from which it is built".³

The bearing upon Modern language teaching is, in Professor Léon's words, that—

"quel que soit le moyen par lequel l'oreille est amenée à entendre le son nouveau—si ce son n'est pas perçu correctement il ne sera jamais reproduit correctement (c'est nous qui soulignons), ou seulement par hasard".⁴

The lesson to be learnt is that the popular saying according to which "if the boy has a good ear, he will speak with a good accent"⁵ has little foundation. Rather, as "a good pronunciation of a language is a matter of motor skills (emphasis in original), coupled with ear training ... one cannot even hear (emphasis in original) a new language correctly until one has learned to pronounce it reasonably well oneself".⁶

The implications are plain. Progress in a French inception course will be greatly enhanced by the learning approach, which is conducive to the acquisition of phonetic, or physiological, habits. Considering that the French language "reveals a rich and varied system of vowels and

⁴ Pierre R. Léon, op. cit., p. 133.
⁵ Max Beerbohm, And Even Now, (London: W. Heinemann, 1921), p. 298.
consonants in which frontal resonance predominates; phonemicists agree that the foreign accent is caused by the interpretation of the speech sounds of one language through the phonemic pattern of another. In Professor Mueller’s words, “unless we have mastered the speech habits of the foreign country, we substitute in our hearing the sounds of our native tongue which come closest to the sound expressed by the foreigner. We make his sounds conform with the experience with which we are familiar.”

So, “the average student listens with a ‘foreign accent’ not only on the phonological but also the morphological and syntactical levels. His first impulse is to equate the foreign phonemes with his own.” The outcome is that, when he “hears a strange language he interprets its sounds in terms of English sounds and fails to notice the difference. Instead, he gets only a vague and general impression of oddness; in trying to repeat what he hears he is likely to ignore even this and to substitute English sounds for those of the foreign language.”

The result is that the learner behaves unconsciously to the reflexes peculiar to his native language, for “even the native speakers of a language are quite unable to describe these (articulatory) habits, most of which lie beyond their threshold of awareness” (vid inf., this chapter). For example, as “the vowel sound (/y/) in the French word

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*du* is part of an English speaker's repertoire (*a*) the novice speaker of French may at first substitute the nearest English equivalent, perhaps /u/ (as in *do*').

Father Rousselot who wrote extensively at the beginning of the century on experimental Phonology, had propounded however that:

"toute prononciation d'une langue, pour être parfaite doit en reproduire les sens et la mélodie". 3

"in order to be perfect, the pronunciation of a language must reproduce the sounds and the intonation".

For the record, it is interesting to quote the analysis John Palsgrave addressed to the weary English who wanted to cope with French, which shows that the English hearer's predicament has been known for some considerable time.

"Maister" Palsgrave explained in the sixteenth century that, after the French "have taken away the consonantes/as wel from the particular wordes by themselfe/ as from theyr last ende/ by reason of the wordes folowyng/ they joyne the vowels of the wordes that go before to the consonantes of the wordes folowyng in redyng and spekyng without (sic) any pausyng/ save only by kepyng of the accent: as though fyve or syx wordes or sometyme mo(re) made but one worde: whiche thyng though it make that tong more hard to be atteyned: yet it maketh it more pleasant to the eare". 4 Understandably, success in all other phases of foreign language learning depends, at least to a considerable extent, on learning to hear the new language correctly in order to acquire a good

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1 Brackets in original.

2 J. G. Wolff, op. cit., p. 113.


The language teacher acknowledges that "our biggest problem will therefore be how to break down habits of hearing and producing speech, even to alter fixed ways of thought, and to establish new systems in their place," considering that "no student can leave his knowledge of English, with all that that knowledge implies, outside the door of the foreign language classroom and pretend that it does not exist". At the turn of the century, Dr. Palmer saw that, even if he wished to, the pupil could not forget his native language whenever he entered the foreign language classroom. In a book which is contemporaneous with Harold Palmer's, Father Rousselot, the great French scholar, had some interesting and very sound things to say regarding this problem. He wrote that:

"Toutes les langues renferment des sons difficiles à reproduire pour ceux qui ne les ont pas parlées dès l'enfance ... Toutes les langues, en effet, apprises un peu tard s'accompagnent à l'idiome maternel, dont elles empruntent en grande partie le système phonétique (c'est nous qui soulignons); c'est pour cela que dans sa prononciation, se trahit, souvent dès la première syllabe, l'indigène de telle province ou de tel pays. L'oreille, reconnaissant dans les langues étrangères des sons voisins de ceux auxquels elle est accoutumée, n'est pas frappée de la différence ... Nais l'homme dont on parle la langue ne partage pas les mêmes illusions. Et, s'il est assez poli pour n'en pas rire, si ..."

"Every language contains sounds which are difficult to produce for those who have not spoken it from childhood ... In fact, every language learnt rather late adapts itself to the mother tongue, whose phonetic system is largely borrowed (our emphasis); that is the reason why the person born in a particular district or country is often given away by his first utterance. The ear, which perceives in foreign languages sounds closely related to familiar ones, is not struck by the difference ... But the man whose tongue is spoken does not share the same illusions. And if he is polite enough not to ..."

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Research has shown that "a person who is newly exposed to the sounds of a strange language finds it necessary to categorize familiar acoustic continua in unfamiliar ways".2

The widespread practice of the audio-visual approach has therefore definite psychological implications for Modern Language teaching. For example, Charles Bouton who expressed the researcher's standpoint, explained that:

"Un esprit plus formé se refuse à cette compréhension globale. Il analyse la texture de la chaîne verbale et devinant les complexités linguistiques que lui masque mal l'apparente simplicité de l'énoncé, il refuse d'admettre qu'il a compris intuitivement par référence à la situation." 3

In the early nineteen sixties, the "C.R.E.D.I.F." research workers tested their own course and, from the students' reactions, they reported that:

"On veut comprendre, ce n'est qu'à ce prix qu'on acceptera de répéter. On a mal entendu, dit-on (c'est nous qui soulignons)." 4

Dr. Jeanes surmised that "in repeating after a tape he (so the average student, A.S.L.) can be expected to reproduce what he thinks he has heard. In free speech, he will tend to superimpose his

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structural requirements on those of the second language. What other explanation can be given for the ability of some speakers to maintain most of their original speech habits for years, in the midst of a different dialect or foreign language area?\(^1\)

Linguists are aware that "it is easy to be snug about language".\(^2\) Much of the teaching still relies, as does indeed the teaching of the acoustic features, on a makeshift approach (vid inf., conclusions to chapter 6). Every aspect of language then—its rhythm, its pace, its sounds, its intonations—"deserves more serious attention than it gets".\(^3\) David Wilkins, whose view is that "incorrect intonation may seriously hamper communication at any levels",\(^4\) peremptively wrote that "most people probably think that all intonational features are universal. They are not on their guard for possible error and will not notice when one occurs. Instead they will put their usual interpretation on what they have heard and understand something quite different from what the speaker intended to convey."\(^5\) As, frequently, meaning can only be elucidated by the prosody, that is, stress and intonation, "the native speaker listening to the non-native speaker has been 'compensating' all along in the language he hears, he expects 'correct' forms, and he reacts more favorably to what he was taught and thinks 'proper'".\(^6\)

Indeed, an investigation undertaken at Stirling University has shown that students whose mother tongue was English "do not associate an

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4 Loc. cit.
5 Ibid., p. 45.
6 Ruth Hirsch Weinstein, in M S Lg Ling, No. 6, 1954, p. 29.
invariant pronunciation with a given spelling, but also make use of grammatical information (e.g. the part of speech of the word\(^1\)) and the detailed composition of the second word ('aconal' has a possible prefix 'a-' and a possible suffix '-nal').\(^2\) These comments were the result of an approach exemplified by Philip Smith as "we ask students to read the sentence 'They will aconal the table', they pronounce the nonsense word 'aconal' in a similar fashion to 'O'Connell'; if we ask students to read the sentence 'The table was completely aconal', they pronounce 'aconal' like 'atonal'; finally, if we ask them to read 'The table was made of aconal', they pronounce 'aconal' like 'acolyte'. (So,) English has a particularly complex system for assigning stress to words (compare for example 'monotone', 'monotonic', 'monotony' and 'monotonicity', where different syllables are stressed in each case).\(^3\)

In French, research work has brought to light that "le principe de syllabation ouverte est sans doute le plus important pour l'articulation"\(^4\) in that language. In accordance with a procedure whose anticipated success depended on a fundamental rationale, Professor Delattre's "first class immediately started with the practice of the covering features (emphasis in original) which took two-thirds of the first hour. They were taken up in the following order: 1. Intonation (with translation of the words). 2. Rhythm. 3. Stress. 4. Syllabication."\(^5\) Pierre Delattre has commented that, during the first week of his experimental

1 Here and infra, brackets in original.
3 Loc. cit.
4 Pierre R. Leon, op. cit., p. 81.
French course, it was "with the most simple segmental phonemes, that the suprasegmental (or prosodic) features were taught: correct habits of intonation, rhythm, stress, and syllabication." Such is the importance conferred by Professor Delattre on the prosodic side ("the melody, stress, rhythm, and general 'quality' of speech") of the language.

The upshot of such work as Dwight Bollinger's provides some indication that pitch and stress are phonemically dependent and, consequently, that "pitch is our main cue to stress... (Indeed,) the primary cue of what is usually termed 'stress' in the utterance is pitch prominence." Yet, when Dwight Bollinger discussed pitch, he ventured to state that "no other phenomenon in language... has more firmly resisted efforts to find out what it does"; inspite of the fact that "the nature of stress has been one of the most investigated problems of phonetics." Professor Chomsky has averred that five or more levels of phonemic stress must appear in accurate perceptual representations, but theories of pitch levels will not be examined here as the present thesis is not investigating a specific language but dealing with problems which arise across L1 and L2.

Suffice therefore to say that, unlike the pitch contrasts of certain languages, the contrasts in French are not phonemic in the sense that raising or lowering the pitch of one syllable in such words as /dreswar/ = /treswar/ will change their "meaning in the way that replacing /t/ by

1 Here and infra, brackets in original.
2 Pierre Delattre, in Gustave Mathieu (ed.), op. cit., p. 3.
3 David Crystal, op. cit., p. 59.
5 Ibid., p. 109.
/d/ will change it, causing it to point to something completely different in the world beyond language. Moreover, Professor Delattre's investigation enabled him to show that, although "the contrast between continuation and finality is not very pronounced in English," in French the contrast opposes a rise to a fall. Consequently these two intonation patterns differ markedly in L₁ and L₂. To sum up, first then, French has the stress "without exception on ultima (syllable)," while English tends to place the stress on the first syllable and, secondly, English is characterized by falling intonation, while French, German, and Spanish have a recurrence of rising intonation. It follows that "the major problems of the speaker of English is to unlearn his English stressing habits when he is speaking French," for the difference between the two languages results in interference, or negative transfer (vid supra, this chapter).

The nature of the difference has been examined by Professor Politzer who has explained that in French, by and large, all the syllables of an "utterance receive the same amount of stress, there are only two major exceptions to this rule. (1) The last syllable of a word or stress group is normally pronounced with greater stress than the rest. This stressing of the last syllable of a word like 'liberté' or a phrase like 'Est-il arrivé?' usually amounts to a lengthening of the syllable rather than a really more emphatic pronunciation. At any rate, it is clearly predictable (that is, always occurs in the last syllable) and therefore

2 Pierre Delattre, op. cit., chapter 14, p. 5.
3 Ibid., chapter 13, p. 3.
5 Brackets in original.
useless from the point of view of expressing differences in meaning.

(2) The other type of stress found in French expresses an emotional reaction of the speaker: it is the 'accent d'intensité', which can occur in a phrase like 'C'est impossible!' or 'quelle impertinence!' It usually appears on the first or second syllable of the noun or adjective and is produced by an emphatic lengthening of the consonant rather than the vowel. Summing up in Professor Delattre's words, French "reveals a rich and varied system of vowels and consonants in which frontal resonance predominates, open syllables that are proud of their vowels, oxytonic accentuation that emphasizes the last syllables of sense groups not by heavy marks of intensity but by restrained increases of length, an intonation capable of contrasting the lightest shades of syntactic meaning, a rhythm of equal syllables which recalls a string of pearls".  

Language use involves complex psycho-physiological processes (vid inf., chapter 7, subsection 3). Even when the dialogues do not present any difficulty, "there remains the vital question of how what is on the tape comes into the learner's possession as a tool for use", hence the importance of the teacher's role. His role is not free of constraints for it has been suggested that only "teachers who are fluent in French do not dominate classroom conversation, but rather use their fluency to encourage a high level of class participation and oral practice". In view of the complexity of the variables underlying the psychological implications which would throw some light on phonematization, an ideal

1 Robert L. Politzer, op. cit., pp. 76-79.
procedure based on research has been proposed. Norman Sacks's own investigation enabled him to present a particularly clear statement.

In his progression towards the mastery of French,

"The student must develop new articulatory habits through 'phonetic' drills and new meaningful distinctions through the contrasts provided by 'phonemic' drills (i.e., the change of a sound changes the meaning of a word or phrase). In French, the vowel series /i/, /y/, and /u/ have certain features in common and other features which differentiate them. All are high tense vowels; however, /i/ and /y/, which are front vowels differ in that /i/ is spread but /y/ is rounded, and in comparing /y/ with /u/ we find that while both vowels are rounded, /y/ is a front vowel but /u/ is a back vowel. Phonetic drills, therefore, are needed for all three vowel phonemes, but for different reasons. The vowels /i/ and /u/ require drill in order to avoid the English diphthongal off-slide that we give to our 'ee' and 'oo' sounds; the vowel phoneme /y/ requires a phonetic drill in order to develop a wholly new articulatory habit, namely that of producing a front vowel with lip rounding, something utterly foreign to contemporary English speech habits. And since the meanings of words depend upon the minimal contrast involving these three vowels, we must also construct a three-way 'phonemic' drill of the type: 'vie—voue—vous', 'mille—mulle—moule', etc.

Another vowel problem for the student of French involves nasalization. It is not that vowels are not nasalized in English, but rather that an important functional difference exists between nasalization in French and in English. In French, nasalization is contrastive, i.e., it makes for a difference in the meaning of words, or in other words, it is 'phonemic', whereas in English, nasalization is non-contrastive, non-significant, or 'sub-phonemic'. As a consequence of this distinction, we not only must design 'phonetic' drills to develop the necessary articulatory habits for the production of French nasal vowels, but in addition, we are obliged to prepare two kinds of 'phonemic' drills:

(1) drills in which nasal vowels are in contrast with oral vowels (e.g., 'chance' vs. 'chaase', 'mine' vs. 'messo', 'beau' vs. 'bou' —l—) and

1 Here and infra, brackets in original.
(2) drills in which nasal vowels are in contrast with one another (e.g., 'bain—blanc—bon').¹

Structure drills then "have an obvious contribution to make to the acquisition of a true feel for the language".²

The prevalent emphasis on the spoken language in the classroom requires new techniques. Charles Bally directed long ago that:

"le maître . . . doit pouvoir corriger les intonations fausses"³  
"the teacher . . . must be able to correct bad intonations".³

The change of strategy has meant that teachers are still grappling with the novel approach, for "the role of the teacher has to be modified, he must be less obtrusive, less formal, dealing with problems and queries as they arise".⁴

The new demands then are forcing the teacher to adopt a subtle open-ended teaching situation that Professor Bruner has termed the "hypothetical mode" in order to replace the "expository mode" in which "the decisions concerning the mode and pace and style of exposition are principally determined by the teacher as expositor".⁵ Dr. Riddy, an H.M.I., ventured to say in 1967 that, "for language teaching in the non-selective schools of the future, we shall be called on to make much greater use of group-teaching methods than we have in the past".⁶ Moreover, with the recognition of the principle that the learner discovers

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the outcome is reinforcing the need for guided practice as the principle business in the language classroom. Guidance in formulating a principle lends considerable support to Professor Bruner's claim. For example, the "Education" section of Jerome Bruner's "Beyond the information given" brings out that "the child's discovery of the process of applying and relating new information to the solving of old and new problems is not something that can be, strictly speaking, transmitted; it is something the child himself must actively initiate or 'discover'."

It remains to devise a concrete training scheme which will fit teachers for the task of constantly adjusting to different activities. The Modern Language Association holds the view that "the difficulties of working a group system are fully realized, but the results outweigh them". In group work, it is thought that advantages extend over a range of varied ethical viewpoints. With a group system, the classroom learning situations are expanded through novel interchanges, such as "the abler helping the less able"; thus benefiting both; mutual help even among those of equal ability; the shy being more forthcoming; particularly as mistakes are heard by fewer people; the variety of activities; group competition replacing individual competition with its invidious comparisons.

So, group work in Modern Languages has been investigated by the Modern Language Association:

Language Project team (York University) as an approach "for catching up on work missed through absence or late arrival in the course". ¹

The new ethos is superseding the traditional method which had forced countless generations of pupils to construct language sequences according to grammar rules, a technique which led to assert that, "if (a bright boy) missed a lesson, day-dreamed in class, or simply misunderstood an explanation, he could always make it up by reading about it in the text-book later". ² Furthermore, in the search for new techniques, the pattern-drill approach developed in the nineteen sixties (vid inf., chapter 5, subsection 2) has proved most valuable in meeting the need for teaching pupils to speak. Whatever the method, "pace is essential in language teaching, and it taxes the teacher's ingenuity and drains his energy". ³ A staff inspector once stated that "by its very nature (language teaching) presupposes a teacher of intense vitality, of robust health, and one endowed with real fluency in the modern language he teaches". ⁴

¹ Loc. cit.
Conclusions.

Had the linguist’s views been widely known when he propounded them, his influence on Modern Language teaching would have taken place much earlier than it did and it would have had a greater impact on two generations of Modern Language teachers (vid infra, chapter 5). Structural linguists “viewed language as a complex aggregate of various sets of sensory and motor habits (and) concluded that nothing short of relentless repetition leads to audio-lingual fluency.” We have also seen that, under the combined effect of the linguistic principles with the prevalent psychological theory (vid supra, chapter 2), the teachers’ tentative reactions consisted in paying lip service to the emerging creed. By the nineteen fifties, audio-visual courses were becoming available on the commercial market and their impact was such that the teachers were rapidly swirled in the movement.

They have first and foremost concerned themselves with the acquisition of the sensory-motor skills around which the learner developed the receptive repertoire. More important, the new approach was put into practice when, through advanced technology, reliable equipment was marketed at a cost most schools could afford. This technological equipment, which was developed in the nineteen forties, enabled Professor Delattre to experiment with the teaching of French at Oklahoma University. Although he opened new vistas for Modern Language teaching, decades later, much remains to be done in order to distinguish, in particular, “between a single sensory stimulus and a motor response”. For example, very few studies have as yet attempted

to separate perceptual and motor skills, that is, the skills related to the afferent and sensory side and to the efferent or motor outflow in spite of the fact, well known to the neuropsychologists, that most cell-assemblies tend to produce overt behaviour, such as visual assemblies producing eye movements, somesthetic assemblies movements of hand or foot, et cetera. So, "most (cell-) assemblies will have motor components".

In the olden days, whatever the method adopted, Phonetics was usually taught to the beginner before the course proper began, in spite of Dr. Palmer's pioneer study in which he advocated in the early nineteen twenties "to teach from the outset a rapid and fluent style of pronunciation, reserving more distinct utterance to a later stage" (vid supra, this chapter). Indeed, considering that "a linguistic system operates through the differences which exist between the minimal distinctive units", through their investigations, linguists have been able to bring to the fore the importance of the knowledge of the phonetic features as a pre-requisite for satisfactory progress in Modern Language learning.

The bearing upon Modern Language teaching is obvious. As "the phonemicist, unlike the phonetician who is concerned with gross acoustic features, deals with the distinctive features . . . which are important for the functioning of the language. . . . The student, in order to speak and understand the language must be able . . . to perceive the difference between these significant features (.) since the number of phonemes in any given language is limited." Moreover, U.S. linguists

2 Robert L. Politzer, in M S Lg Ling, No. 6, 1954, p. 19.
3 Loc. cit.
have convincingly argued that "oral fluency and listening comprehension require accurate description and thorough drill not only in those aspects of pronunciation which have been conventionally taught, but also in those aspects which have ordinarily been neglected, such as intonation and juncture".¹

Consequently, "in the learning process of aural comprehension such factors as the speaker's tone of voice, the intonation and rhythms of the sentence, and the brief pauses between syllables and words, play a vital role",² for Martin Braine has found that Trager and Smith's morphemic analysis of English shows that "segmentation of an utterance into parts is almost completely specified by features of intonation".³ Over the last decades, Professor Delattre's extensive pioneer work has undoubtedly boosted the major reorientation of Modern Language teaching. First, the proponents of the audio-lingual movement have claimed that "the teaching of morphology, especially, must be done on the basis of how it sounds and not how it is written".⁴ Secondly, as "le message oral utilise des éléments informateurs . . .; les intonations, les pauses, le débit, les accents d'intensité sont extrêmement importants pour la compréhension".⁵

Thirdly, learning must be seen as being more important than teaching.

Here too there are pointers towards change. Although "a recognition of the fact that teaching and learning are quite different

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processes which are not automatically related is not new,¹ what is novel is the attempt to realize the practical implication of this dichotomy for Modern Language class-room practices. For example, by intimating that "children are able to learn to speak because they possess a central nervous system of sufficient complexity and the necessary receptors to enable them to discriminate finely between different sounds and because they are able to imitate the speech sounds of others,"² psychologists whose predominant consideration is facility, that is, the readiness and rapidity of flow, have boosted the incipient belief that, by means of non-analytic drills, pupils would learn much more quickly to utter correct sentences with increased fluency.

Yet, while Ralph Waltz stated with considerable insight in 1951 that "to say that 40 percent of meaning lies in the intonation would not be quoting an excessive figure,"³ the teaching of intonation has remained somewhat intractable. On the one hand, it is largely due to the fact that "nine tenths of the problems which have to be faced in teaching a language to foreign students, or in teaching about style, cannot be answered by reference to the traditional literature."⁴ On the other hand, the thorough study known as the Pennsylvania Project led to the conclusion that "the teacher’s ability to produce French accurately does appear related to his student’s ability to discriminate among sounds and to understand spoken French".⁵ Findings such as this, provide considerable support to Ruth Hirsch Weinstein’s assertion that "it can be

¹ Eric Newton, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 149, 23.8.74, p. 5.
³ Ralph H. Waltz, in Mod Lg J, Vol. 16, 1951, p. 220.
readily agreed that the best model for the learner is a native speaker of the target language." \(^1\)

If, in the highly recommended book "Are you listening?", we are reminded that "listening is the best way known for improving language facility", \(^2\) i.e., the readiness and rapidity of flow, the Pennsylvania Project has confirmed the commonly-held view that, "in the vital matter of pronunciation, it must be remembered that it was not really possible for a teacher to hand on to his pupils a pronunciation that was better than his own". \(^3\) Yet, current Modern Language teaching practices are such that, as we shall see (vid inf., conclusions to chapter 6), "pronunciation is (still) acquired in shotgun fashion parallel with the memorization of the basic sentences of dialogues". \(^4\) To assert simply—as an apologist of the New Key technique has done—that, "by repeating the same speech on the tape, they (i.e., the students A.S.L.) unconsciously learn accent, pronunciation and intonation", \(^5\) has proved to be an over-optimistic viewpoint. There is evidence that recent developments of materials and techniques have been, in many ways, disappointing. The view has been spreading that better results depend on changes in the organization of Modern Language teaching, as well as in the training of Modern Language teachers (vid inf., chapter 9) for, "to be most effective, the foreign language teacher must, of course, have flawless command of the target

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1 Ruth Hirsch Weinstein, in M. S. L. Ling., No. 6, 1954, p. 28.


language, familiarity with the culture and institutions of the target language community, and detailed knowledge of the structure of the target language.¹

Chapter 4. Audio-visual Courses and Operant Conditioning.

"Empiricist theories of learning are quite inadequate... They fail because they are intrinsically incapable of giving rise to the system of rules that underlies the normal use of language."

— Professor Chomsky, February 1968.

As oral work has been proved to be vital in Modern Language learning largely because "all linguistic operations consist of a wide band of unconsciousness", likewise, the language laboratory has been advocated both on psychological and pedagogical grounds. First, considering that Professor Bloomfield (Wisconsin University) intimated to "practise everything until it becomes second nature", on psychological grounds, it is claimed that the control of the sound system and the mastery of the syntactic structures "must become automatic habits of the learner of a new language" for "language is a concrete embodiment of values, which operate for the most part without being consciously formulated".

Secondly, although Ralph Waltz's early work showed in the nineteen thirties that the language laboratory "saves classroom time", it "does not provide a soft option for teaching staff, whose imagination and resourcefulness are in greater demand than ever". It nonetheless

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2 John G. Weightman, in Times Lit Suppl, No. 3716, 25.5.73, p. 578.


"permits us to stop being drillmasters and to devote our time and efforts to true teaching—the interplay of thoughts and ideas and information".\(^1\)

The language laboratory has therefore been well received by teachers. On the one hand, structural linguists assured that the development of their theory led to the radical conclusions that, in Modern Language learning, "what mattered really in our teaching was less the product than the production itself"\(^2\) and, on the other hand, Professor Mathieu asserted that "today it is evident from many controlled experiments that machine-taught students in beginning foreign language courses are as good as, if not better than, the man-taught ones".\(^3\) Considering that "the tapes enable the astounding and essential amount of repetition to be done without wearing out the teacher",\(^4\) "basic language-drill, being mechanical, is best left to the machine".\(^5\)

Professor Corder (Edinburgh University) has explained that "the best results are often obtained when at least some part of the learning is done in the language laboratory",\(^6\) whose superiority "over all other aids is that it brings the advantages of private and native tuition to every pupil in the class".\(^7\) Besides, experience shows that "the peculiar conditions of the language-laboratory, providing what is felt to be a personal lesson,


\(^2\) Michel Gamin et al., in *Times Edal Suppl.*, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. XIV.


\(^4\) J. A. Jerman, in *Aspects of Education*, (Hull University), No. 6, 1967, p. 73.


\(^7\) L. Mona Thomas, in Barnet Libbish (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 164
in comparative privacy, with immediate reward and reinforcement by the correct answer, produce a concentration any teacher would be proud of obtaining by ordinary classroom techniques".1

It was thought that the language laboratory would enable the teacher to practise group teaching and would therefore become the "most important methodological adjunct".2 In the late nineteen sixties, teachers were well aware that "the greatest need of all is for material suited to the less able pupils in the second, third and fourth years".3 Disappointment has set in owing to the unavailability of appropriate commercial tapes. On the ground that "it would be impossible to devise systems of reinforcement which would be equally applicable to different individuals", teachers who had been hoping for "commercial tapes differentiated by ability group within a given lesson (found that) the lack of released time for the local preparation of such tapes have limited the activities of the language laboratory (whose) possibilities are seldom fully exploited".4

If language laboratories allow the learner to practise intensively the drills which foster a "true feel" (the "sentiment linguistique", or "Sprachgefühl") for the target language, the new technological equipment received also implicitly the support of the connexionist psychologist whose view has been that "groups stimuli . . . make possible the phenomenon of latent learning".5 Understandably, in the nineteen sixties,

a U.S. linguist made a plea that we should have "many more language laboratories than we now have, so that students may spend three or four hours a week there".\(^1\) Considering, first, that language is a skill whose acquisition depends on adequate practice and, secondly, that "most of the pupils approach the laboratory with excited anticipation and quickly master its routine uses",\(^2\) the thirteen-to-sixteen-year-old groups would benefit greatly from its regular use. In the language laboratory, the pupil is exposed to foreign language patterns until he soaks them up. Since the early nineteen sixties, the language laboratory has had its keen supporters, as they hold the view that it enables the pupils to "hear much language and speak much language, which is the best way to learn it".\(^3\) It is therefore hardly surprising that a working party of headmasters should have deprecated the fact that, by then, "very few schools have the basic audio-visual equipment which other countries began a decade ago to regard as essential".\(^4\) An article appearing in the May 25, 1966, issue of “The times” witnessed the impact made by the technological equipment in the comparatively short span of three years as it made it widely known that "language laboratories grow in their hundreds".\(^5\)

The impact on Modern Language teaching is twofold. First, the number of language laboratories provides an indication of the country’s position in relation to other, where the teaching of foreign languages has been institutionalized for some time. A D.E.S. survey of the

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1 Elton Hocking, in Mod Lg J, Vol. 48, 1964, p. 5.
3 Elton Hocking, in Mod Lg J, op. cit., p. 5.
Continental trends in the early nineteen seventies revealed that 800 schools in Sweden had been equipped with language laboratories and in France, schools and colleges had 271 language laboratories. Secondly, the type of equipment made available tends to reflect the ethos of the dominant theory of learning (vid supra, epigraph to this chapter). An analysis of the language laboratory approach leads to the comment that drills exemplify the connectionist model at its best for the tape complies with the Skinnerian principle of operant conditioning.

In Professor Skinner's own words, "we describe the contingency by saying that a 'stimulus' is the occasion upon which a 'response' is followed by 'reinforcement'." In the multiple-phase drill then, the pupil who has just heard the question (stimulus), first utters his answer (response), immediately hears the pre-recorded response, which prompts him to repeat the correct response (reinforcement). Although such drills cover as wide a range as transformation, substitution, completion, and directed dialogue on grammatical structures, when the exponents of operant conditioning illustrate Ss—R learning, they usually take a simple French word. They explain that "'gré' (as in 'à mon gré'), for example, may be quite unfamiliar to an English-speaking adult because of the (accent). In order for him to acquire an Ss—R that permits correct pronunciation, discrimination must take place of both aspects of stimulation, external and internal (kinesthetic). The former is provided by discriminating the sound of the word from similar-sounding words like ('grow') and ('grey'). The latter requires that he imitate the sound of the word,


2 Brackets in original.
that is, practice saying it, and thus discriminate the 'feel' of the word from that of other, incorrect utterances. Several repetitions may be required, involving differential reinforcement, in order for the correct pronunciation of the word to be properly 'shaped'. Moreover, as "the need for some kind of feedback channel in the description of behavior is well recognized by most reflex theorists... a reinforcing feedback is frequently considered to be valuable, or 'drive reducing'."

It must not be overlooked that the particular value of immediate knowledge of the correct response has been enhanced by psychological experiments whose outcome was taken to mean that, "for most efficient learning, knowledge of results should be administered as quickly and as specifically as possible".

In Great Britain, research published in the nineteen sixties brought out that both prompting, that is, information "supplied to learners before they make overt responses", and KCR, i.e., knowledge of correct response, enhanced learning, retention, and transfer. Such evidence indicates that, in Modern Language teaching, the organization of the material and the method of presentation are important. In the words of André Malécot (California University), the possibility of presentation in the language laboratory consists in organizing the items on tape on the basis that "each stimulus—usually a question or a directive—is recorded twice in succession, the first time at a normal speaking rate and observing the mute-e and liaison rules for the familiar style of educated speakers.


the second time (no pause between the two\(^1\)) slowly and in a deliberate, emphatic style. The fast version is meant to challenge the better students—which the student responds. Immediately after he speaks, he hears the correct response from the tape and knows right away whether his own was right or not. He keeps count of the number he gets wrong. A second silent interval follows during which he is required to repeat the correct response—this provides a double reinforcement. All of this work is exclusively aural-oral: no written text is given to the student. The following is a sample item:

a) Q. "Dites-moi de ne jamais les lui donner" (rapidly\(^2\)).

b) "Dites-moi de ne jamais les lui donner" (deliberately).

c) (silent interval—student answers)

d) A. 'Ne les lui donner jamais' (at an average rate).

e) (silent interval—student repeats correct response).\(^3\)

Professor Skinner’s once famous principles of immediate reinforcement can be summarized as

(1) The material should proceed at the individual’s own speed.

(2) The machine, that is, the playback, should drill the student on a given point until he knows it thoroughly.

(3) Good habits should be strengthened and bad ones discouraged by letting the student know immediately after each response whether he was right or wrong.

We have seen that, by reallocating the time for “more valuable and difficult work, such as explaining, verifying, correcting”, et cetera,

\(^1\) Brackets in original.

\(^2\) Here and infra, brackets in original.

\(^3\) André Malécot, in Fr Rev, Vol. 33, 1960, p. 493.

the language laboratory allows the teacher to recover his human function (vid supra, this chapter). Whether practised in the language laboratory or not, the structure drills should be based on the differences between the mother tongue and the Modern Language "rather than on the similarities".\(^1\) This relatively new approach, whose origin can be traced back to Pure Linguistics, has maintained the lead that the strand of progressive Modern Language teachers has secured for it ever since. This is reflected in an early statement emanating from the Modern Language Association, whose views were that "the linguist seeks to describe the acts of habitual patterned responses which characterize the target languages and those which are valid for the native language. Through an analysis of the points at which these conflict, he is able to predict the difficulties which students will encounter in learning the target language."\(^2\)

The import is, as it has been advanced at that time, that "problems are those units and patterns that show structure differences between the first language and the second . . . . The structurally analogous units between languages need not be taught: more presentation in meaningful situations will suffice . . . . Different emphases in teaching are required for the different language backgrounds."\(^3\)

Summing up, "the student of a foreign language is in need of at least three kinds of pronunciation drills:

1) 'phonetic' drills, in which a single phone is drilled in a series of words or phrases in order to develop a new articulatory habit;

2) 'phonetic' drills in which meaningful sound units within the target language are contrasted;


(3) Drills which may be either phonetic or phonemic in character, but which involve contrasts between the target language and English, and are designed to develop new habits in critical areas of interference from the native language of the learner. It follows that "it is convenient to separate the sound habits into two categories. a) The phonemic, or psychological, habits which concern the distinctive (meaningful) contrasts of a given language (English has five distinct fricatives: 'foal', 'thole', 'soul', 'shoal', 'hole'; French has only three: 'fauX', 'saut', 'chaud'). b) The phonetics, or physiological, habits without which the phonemic contrasts may not be intelligible."

Before long, the unprecedented vogue of the "Tavor" audio-visual course led its author to claim that its dialogues exclusively elaborated with everyday phrases constituted "an excellent foundation for the solid grammatical work that followed". This apparent success has been explained in terms of Professor Skinner's operant conditioning, whose stimulus-response associations are no longer tenable. First, Professor Strevens has argued that the variables in foreign language teaching point above all to the need "for a flexibility of approach that would take account of the (learner's) diverse characteristics". Moreover, "it would be impossible to devise systems of reinforcement which would be equally applicable to . . . the interacting behaviour patterns of the

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2 Here and infra, emphasis in original.
3 Here and infra, brackets in original.
6 Peter D. Strevens. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 103, 5.10.73, p. 5.)
same individual." Secondly, while Professor Skinner did "abandon such a mentalistic concept as meaning because of his view that any utterance is a conditioned response", students of Psychology became aware in the early nineteen fifties that "neurological discoveries discredited the model of a passive intake of outside information". Besides, psychologists who compared S-R connexion, or conditioned reflex, considered that "the functioning of such (S-R) connections is less reliable, presumably because they follow a longer, less anatomically direct path in the nervous system, (that is,) there is the possibility of some . . . delay at the 'synapses' on the pathway (junction points, where excitation passes from one fiber to the next")".

More important, physiologically, "it is difficult to establish simple conditioned responses in human beings, since there is no 'straight through' connection, as it were, between the incoming signals and outgoing responses: any response will be modified by the functioning of the cortex as a whole". Professor Bruner summarized the post-war research and warned that "we as psychologists have been operating until very recently with a 19th or early-20th century conception of the nervous system—an image of

1 Magdalen D. Vernon, in Times Edal Suppl. No. 3054, 7.12.73, p. 21.
4 Brackets in original.
a switching and transmission system made up of an afferent or sensory side, a central segment, and an efferent or motor outflow.\(^1\) In the middle nineteen fifties, the work of Granit, of Galambos, of Magoun and his associates and of Pribram has enhanced the neuron doctrine, summarized as "the nervous system is made up of discrete neural units that have the properties of nerve trunks; intercalated between these units are discontinuities which he (cf. Charles Sherrington, A.S.L.) christened 'synapses'."\(^2\) Indeed, Professor Glees (Göttingen University) has explained that as interneurones in association areas have scanty fibre connexions with the thalamus so that whatever influence on function they may have it cannot be exerted in the usual fashion via a single pathway connecting them with subcortical structures."\(^3\)

In any event, in the light of a growing understanding of what is involved when we use language, "the organising monitoring and self-instructing role of language ... gives human learning a range and flexibility far beyond anything encompassed by connectionist theorists,"\(^4\) whose limitations for Modern Language teaching are borne out by the fact that "these responses which are most deeply ingrained in the behavioural repertoire and which presumably have the greatest functional relevance for the organism will more readily be susceptible to environmental pressures and modification."\(^5\) If, on the one hand, Professor "Skinner's

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2 George A. Miller et al., op. cit., p. 24.


4 A. G. Davey, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 94, 3.8.73, p. 15.

intervention brought together more closely than had been achieved during
the previous fifty years the disciplines of psychology and linguistics".¹
on the other hand, the writings emanating from Noam Chomsky, Brown and
Bellugi, and Harold Rosen "offer little credence for behaviouristic
theories and classical conditioning".² Indeed, "the theory of learning
has limited itself to a narrow and surely inadequate concept of what is
learned—namely a system of stimulus-response connections, a network of
associations, a repertoire of behavioral items, a habit hierarchy, or a
system of dispositions to respond in a particular way under specifically
stimulus conditions".³

Nonetheless, the operant conditioning hypothesis performed the
useful function of firmly establishing a transient stage whose natural
outcome would ultimately lead to a new hypothesis in the methodology of
second language teaching. Henri Poincare proposed that, if a hypothesis
is not confirmed by scientific investigation,
"c'est qu'il y a quelque chose
d'imattendu, d'extraordinaire;
c'est qu'on va trouver de
l'inconnu et du nouveau (c'est
nous qui soulignons)". ⁴
"it is due to an unexpected,
extraordinary thing; it
means that something unknown,
something new is going to be
found (our emphasis)". ⁴

In his first canonical text, "Syntactic structures" published in 1957,
Professor Chomsky adumbrated the principles and described the demonstrative
which have necessarily influenced most subsequent thoughts in Linguistics.

¹ Michael A. Halliday et al.: The Linguistic Sciences and Language
³ A. Noam Chomsky: Language and Mind, (New York: Harcourt, Brace
It marks the turning point. Briefly, "the tradition in psychology has long been a search for the property of the stimulus which by itself determines the ensuing response, at any given stage of learning. This approach... is no longer satisfactory as a theory. Considering, first, that "how the nervous system converts a sequence of responses into an image or schema (i.e., 'the device that renders a sequence of action simultaneous') is simply not understood. Secondly, Noam Chomsky, "more than any other, has shown the shallowness, indeed the irrelevance of almost all behaviourist accounts of language acquisition". In a paper read to the 1973 conference organized on behalf of the British Psychological Society, Herbert urged "to see whether the psychology of the sixties has something to offer". A critic had commented in the post-World War Two years that "psychology is littered with references to unconscious inference, apperceptive mass, associative fusion, context theory, projection by inference and empathy, memory overlay, and the like. (As) all of these fine phrases have had their day and gone their way", similarly, the hey-day of passive behaviourism in psychology is over. Paraphrasing Dr. Ravetz, behaviourism "has done its bit, like Protestantism has done its bit—and there are still plenty of Protestants around 200 years later".

Assertions, such as that behaviour theory "in the broadest sense is...
made up of hunches (for) supposed events are generally not directly observable—they take place within a black box,"¹ are the outcome of the fact that "most psychological experiments have not been analyzed beyond a first-order approximation, where successive responses are assumed to be independent."² So, "the usual analysis in terms of particular responses assumes, often unjustifiably, independence of successive behavioral events and may ignore important sequential dependencies".³

The formal explanation is that, "just as the psychologist is always far beyond the neurophysiologist in the assumptions he must make about the nervous system, so is the social scientist far beyond the psychologist in the assumptions he must make about human behavior".⁴ In the United States however, behavioural science was reassessed in the early nineteen fifties, while at Oxford, Professor Tinbergen's observations were prompting him to state that, "first, we may now draw the conclusion that the causation of behaviour is immensely more complex than was assumed in the generalizations of the past. A number of internal and external factors act upon complex central nervous structures. Second, it will be obvious that the facts at our disposal are very fragmentary."⁵ Clearly then, a systematic theory which would unify and connect the various hitherto unrelated problems is needed in order to generate fruitful hypotheses about behaviour.

Progress has heretofore been hampered by the lack of cohesion.

² George A. Miller et al., in Psych Rev., Vol. 56, 1949, p. 316.
³ Frederick C. Frick, in Am J Psych, Vol. 64, 1951, p. 20.
Doctrinal dissension, which occurred between the connexionist theorists whose belief lies in the unlimited plasticity of behaviour and the purposivist school of psychology that argues for the existence of instincts can be perceived in the bewildering complexity characteristic of the experimental, as well as the clinical, approaches to Psychology. While theoretical psychologists on the one hand and clinicians on the other blamed each other for the threat of fission, their "pretence to infallibility...destroyed the prestige of psychology in education."

Clinicians though "are a tough-minded group who are hard at work proving that psychology can be an experimental science. They know what data look like, they have high standards for what they will accept as evidence, and one violates their prejudices at one's own risk." A discussion of motor skills and habits led Professor Miller and his associates to state that "rare are so vastly inferior to human beings in their ability to remember elaborate plans that it is difficult to see why psychologists have felt that valid generalizations about cognitive structure could be extended from rats to men. (Yet,) a behaviorist is willing to introspect on what he would do if he found himself in the predicament that his rats are in". Although "it is argued that a study of the sticklebacks can be relevant to an understanding of the behaviour of man", the complexity between stimulus and response constitutes a field which has not been investigated as fully as it should have by "the

1 John Vainey, in Times Edn Suppl, 2.7.71, p. 4.
3 Ibid., pp. 88, 213.
4 Edmund Leach, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3010, 2.2.73, p. 4.
psychologist, who can and often does close his eyes to the events between
the stimulating situation and the correlated behaviour".¹ Harry Harlow
has surmised that, in the middle of the twentieth century, "a strong case
can be made for the proposition that the importance of the psychological
problems studied during the last 15 years has decreased as a negatively
accelerated function approaching an asymptote of complete indifference".²

There is a need for undertaking further research in order to discover
the underlying process of chain reaction in the causation of behaviour,
which is unleashed by the predominant psychological approach to second
language teaching. For example, Fribram and Spinelli’s experiments have
provided evidence that "somewhere between the retina and the visual cortex
the inflowing signals are modified to provide information that is already
linked to a learned response".³ This line of thought seems to lead to
a renewed interest which would counter-balance the somewhat disproportio-
nate amount of discipline-maintaining research (vid supra, chapter 2), such
as carried out on insects. When discipline-maintaining research
dominates the field, there is a danger that sooner or later Psychology may
become more important than psychological enquiry. While zoologists have
concerned themselves largely with species-specific behaviour in Amniota,
the ethological approach "cannot deal with the more sophisticated levels
of thought and language".⁴ Yet, in contemporary chimpomorphic ethology,
animal conditioning evolving from laboratory work has led to the naive

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² Harry F. Barlow, in Psych Rev. Vol. 60, 1953, p. 27.
⁴ Tony Cline, in Times Ed in Suppl, No. 3097, 4.10.74, p. 24.
view of human behaviour which is used to interpret iron biological laws.

Summing up, "man has a species-specific capacity . . . which manifests itself in what we may refer to as the 'creative aspect' of ordinary language use—its property being both unbounded in scope and stimulus-free". In his later work, Professor Skinner ventured to write that "a person is not an originating agent; he is a locus, a point at which many genetic and environmental conditions come together in a joint effect". Indeed, language responses are not under the control of external stimuli, rather the individual is the locus of behaviour and not its cause. The learning theory propounded by connexionist theorists was based on the most inflexible form of stimulus-response formulation which, when applied to language learning, was supposed to foster an "unconscious control of a set of grammatical rules" that, at best, might promote what a novelist termed "un françois coulant, comme appris par cœur". Arthur Koestler commented that operant conditioning reduced "the human condition to that of a conditioned automaton". Indeed, Professor Luria, the psychologist of distinction, rejected the connexionist model which reduces speech to the level of motor habits precisely because it is a "retreat from study of the full complexity of the formation of higher mental processes".

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3 Sol Saporta, in Albert Valdman (ed.), op. cit., p. 82.

4 Arthur Koestler's phrase. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 76, 30.3.73, p. 15.)

Conclusions.

The attempt made in the post-World War Two era to apply a systematic approach to education in general, and Modern Language teaching in particular, has led to disappointment. In the early nineteen sixties, Professor Miller showed that a stimulus-response interpretation is not an adequate frame for language learning, considering that "it treats only the simplest 1% of the psycholinguistic problems". Besides, there is even evidence that the stimulus can impede learning. In a study of the evolution of behaviour for example, Konrad Lorenz has declared that in many instances "the mounting intensity of a stimulus increases the fixity of the motor coordination". Basically, Professor Skinner's hypothesis was developed in order to apply system theory to language when the systems approach had reached the crest of the wave. In the education world, the system theory's "defining requirements were to specify learning objectives in behavioural terms, to programme the sequences leading to those objectives, and to test the students' achievements in a more scientific manner".

We have seen that the results of recent research work emanating from specialists in the field of Modern Language teaching have highlighted, on the one hand, the shortcomings in one-to-one stimulus-response models of effects and, on the other, they have brought about evidence of differential effects processes in second language learning that reflect the inter-relationships of a host of mediating factors and influences (vid supra, chapter 2). Clinical psychologists rarely "mention any of the serious


criticisms of the Skinnerian approach which have been appearing in
increasing numbers over the past 15 years" and, so far, linguists'
critiques of clinicians' psychological experimentation have not carried
much weight with psychologists. Neither have linguists been very
impressed with the psychologists' assertions such as "it is assumed (as
it was but is no longer) that sentences are made up of a kernel string
in the declarative mode", nor with their hypotheses, whose "idea that
language use must be considered outside of social interactions in order
to qualify as abstract, as involving 'cognition', is almost certainly a
psychologist's fiction". It has therefore been deeply felt that
Professor Skinner's operant conditioning was, first, simplistic considering
that it equated learning with motor habits and, secondly, out-of-date in
the light of empirical research.

Summing up, as Professor Chomsky once pointed out, "there is very
little in psychology or linguistics that he (sc. the teacher A.G.L.) can
accept on faith". Nonetheless, "the forging of metaphoric hunch into
testable hypothesis goes on all the time . . . this process is the
more evident in psychology where the theoretical apparatus is not so well
developed that it lends itself readily to generating interesting
hypotheses". However, a hypothesis cannot be correctly evaluated unless

1 John Rowan, in Times Edu. Suppl, No. 3103, 15.11.74, p. 29.
2 Brackets in original.
3 Jerome S. Bruner, in Problems of Language Learning, (Alan Davies,
4 Michael Cole et al., in American Psychologist, (Washington, D.C.),
5 Noam Chomsky, in Language Teaching, (Robert G. Ned, Jr., ed.),
6 Jerome S. Bruner: On Knowing, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
it is precisely formulated. From his numerous experiments confined to extremely narrow limits, Burrhus Skinner did not provide a statement which would have covered comprehensively the several skills involved in the acquisition of language. Professor Skinner’s description of his S-R model should have articulated "not only how we learn words but how we learn the set of rules that stipulates the ways in which the words may be combined".\(^1\) Professor Chomsky, who has aptly summarized operant conditioning, wrote that "the theory of learning has limited itself to a narrow and surely inadequate concept of what is learned—namely a system of stimulus-response connections, a network of associations, a repertoire of behavioral items, a habit hierarchy, or a system of dispositions to respond in a particular way under specifiable stimulus conditions".\(^2\)

Yet, the time was ripe when Professor Skinner convincingly argued that "people learned the way that pigeons did: you had only to make them take one small step, reward them to reinforce the habit, and lead them on to the next small step".\(^3\) Understandably then, the stimulus-response associations, which formed the basis of the Psychology of second language learning, were readily adopted by Modern Language teachers. To begin with, the S-R hypothesis was acceptable to them, considering that teachers have a propensity to provide the model whose presence is essential for language work. Moreover, "teachers are more influenced by good (or bad for that matter\(^4\)) theory than they sometimes imagine".\(^5\) Unfortunately,

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1 Tony Cline, in *Times Edul Suppl*, No. 3147, 26.9.75, p. 28.
4 Brackets in original.
the connexionist psychologists' "attempts to establish learning of the (signal-responding type) by means of a sequence of events similar to that described for stimulus-response learning have generally been quite unsuccessful". A new concept, such as the connexionist theorists' hypothesis, tends to be applied in narrow zones—e.g., the teaching of Modern Languages—and is quickest to have effect when dominated by a particular technology. Professor Delattre promoted the aural-oral approach (vid supra, chapter 1) precisely when it became technologically feasible for the first time to bring into every classroom a surrogate of the foreign model by means of the newly-developed tape recorder. In so improving some dimension of Modern Language teaching, it does not necessarily follow that Modern Language teaching is improved throughout the education system; in fact, it may well be so distorted by the new methodology that it is not as effective, taken as a whole, as it was prior to the new imbalance.

Notes of caution were sounded in the late nineteen fifties. For example, Professor Hebb affirmed that "the S-R formula is a fundamental tool for theoretical analysis". Albert Valdman questioned the validity of the developing methodology when he drew attention to the fact that "New key techniques and teaching materials . . . rest on very shaky psycho-pedagogical grounds". In 1973, a participant who was addressing the British Psychological Society, quoted Moore in order to remind Conference that, "when we seek examples of ways in which psychology can be applied, we often seem to discover only "the gap between present-day

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psychological knowledge and its concrete implications for techniques in education. The influence of operant conditioning upon the psychology of second language is on the wane in the wake of the body of work emanating from Noam Chomsky, Brown and Bellugi, and Harold Rosen, but also because the neuropsychologists' theory which "does not deny the importance of the immediate stimulus; . . . does deny that sensory stimulation is everything in behavior." 

Professor Chomsky's seminal work was timely in view of the prevailing influence of the operant conditioning hypothesis. The research conducted in the nineteen sixties by Charles Dodson (University College of Wales, Aberystwyth) leaves us in no doubt that "the corpus of modern language teaching lies fairly and squarely on the teacher himself", notwithstanding increased equipment and audio-visual aids for, only where behaviour is relatively primitive, as in the young child, is it susceptible to the kind of analysis traditionally associated with S-R formula. As the sceptics whose pioneer work has been ignored for too long are still "endeavoring to find new theoretical concepts and practical methods with which the problems (of conceptual thought and rule-regulated behavior) can be effectively tackled" and considering that neuropsychologists have acknowledged that "responses are determined by something else besides the immediately preceding sensory stimulation", a good many (connexionist)

4 K. Patricia Healey, in Times Higher Ed. Suppl, No. 103, 5.10.73, p.18.
6 Donald O. Hebb, op. cit., p. 5.
psychologists would like to get out from under if they could".\(^1\)

It is of course the acquisition of the "abilities to make judgments about such matters as grammaticality, foreign accent, deviancy, synonymy and paraphrase . . . which marks off a person thoroughly competent in a new language from a person with limited skills, and the development of such abilities requires more than the use of existing stimulus-response or reinforcement drills in the classroom".\(^2\) As might be expected then, it will be demonstrated in the next chapter that the Modern Language teacher must turn to the professional linguist who has all kinds of esoteric skills and a battery of resources beyond the reach of fumbling amateurs.

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"The science of linguistics is helping us to present the structures and the morphology of the language in a more efficient way." — Professor Marty, January 1960. 1

Subsection A - Teaching Materials and Linguistics.

"The modern criticism of the language courses of the last three or four decades is largely the result of developments in linguistics." — Dr. Stern, February 1964. 2

French as a subject which has to fit in with the present organization of compulsory education has heavily influenced the designers of teaching materials. For example, we have seen that the shortcoming which most modern courses have in common, is the underlying assumption that the pupils will intuit passive comprehension through listening and repeating the syntactic structures in spite of the inadequate visual support (vid supra, chapter 2). Yet, the guiding principle is supposed to emanate from experiments such as Pierre Delattre’s at Oklahoma University. It overlooks however that, when he tested his technique, Professor Delattre kept a daily record which conveys the importance he attached to sound-meaning association. At that time, Pierre Delattre wrote that, above all, the students “had well begun to acquire the habit of associating sound directly with meaning”. 3

Research confirms that the learners need to know what they are talking about but, presumably, most audio-visual course designers hold

the view that the pupils are supposed to master "the background linguistic system",¹ that is, the grammar of the Modern Language solely by judicious performance of carefully selected and ordered examples. Textbook writers have acknowledged that difficulties "deliberately minimised in the first enthusiasm for a new idea, have proved real".² Allen and Valette averred that a "type of interference arises within the foreign language itself. Here the textbooks often fail to contrast similar patterns explicitly."³ The linguist readily points out that "there is usually no mention of these problems at all in the books".⁴

Ideally, in an audio-visual course, "a minimum of vocabulary is used; new structures are introduced with known vocabulary, and new vocabulary is taught with known structures".⁵ At the programming level, experts express the view that, "in a course as a whole, the linguistic content that is needed is relatively independent of the age, occupation or special interests of the prospective students".⁶ While we have seen (vid supra, chapter 2) that linguistic aptitude includes such factors as "associative memory" (Factor C), "inductive language learning ability" (Factor E), and "grammatical sensitivity", or "syntactical fluency", (Factor F), course designers will not receive the teachers' blessings for recommending audio-visual materials whose alleged pedagogical function is only faintly adumbrated (vid supra, conclusions to chapter 2).

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⁵ J.A. Jerman, in Aspects of Education, (Hull University), No. 6, 1967, p. 70.

Diagram II showing the transformational rule of French adjectives such as "petite" — "petit", in accordance with Leonard Bloomfield's hypothesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>masculine, prevowel</th>
<th>masculine, general</th>
<th>plural, general</th>
<th>plural, prevowel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>/pEtît/</td>
<td>- - - - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>/pEtît/</td>
<td>- - - - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>/pEtît/</td>
<td>- - - - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>/pEtît/</td>
<td>- - - - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2 Following the generally accepted convention slant lines, / /, enclose a phonemic symbol.

"Voix et images de France", a course that, as Professor Corder discovered, had been widely adopted in British schools by the middle nineteen sixties, affords an example of a naive approach. Considering that unless pupils learn "the correct forms of an adjective . . . they will be unable to use that . . . adjective accurately in a sentence", it is surprising that Professor Cuberina and his associates introduce in the drills ("mecanismes") of "Leçon 1" the masculine and feminine forms of an adjective. Indeed Leonard Bloomfield demonstrated in the nineteen thirties that a much more general statement is possible when "the feminine form (of the adjective) is taken as our basis" (cf. Diagram II).

In view of the well-known complexity of French adjective gender then, it is obvious that the "C.R.E.D.I.F." designers have not adequately planned the presentation of "grand" and "petit" considering that:

"il est très souvent possible de dériver le masculin du féminin (cf. Diagram II), contrairement à l'usage établi par les grammaires."3

"it is very often possible to derive the masculine form from the feminine (cf. Diagram II), as opposed to the traditional fashion pertaining to grammar books."3

After a transitory appearance on page three, adjectives do not form a part of the lesson material until page sixteen (this pitfall has been avoided in some French courses such as "Tavor" and "En Avant"). David Wilkins concluded a discussion on French adjective gender by stating that "there are powerful arguments against a purely oral approach to the teaching of French", the validity of which has been questioned in the

1 Edward D. Allen et al., op. cit., p. 114.
nineteen fifties. At that time, Postman and Rosenzweig submitted evidence which could be interpreted for demonstrating the superiority of visual before oral presentation. Their findings were in keeping with earlier research work, such as Solomon and Hovcs's. In this investigation, they had brought to light that, in any experiment, "it is theoretically possible to distinguish between these two frequency variables", i.e., the frequency of visual exposure of a stimulus and the frequency of occurrence of a response.

Postman and Rosenzweig reported that, "in conformity with earlier studies, our experiment has shown that frequency of prior exercise is a significant determinant of the recognition-thresholds for verbal stimuli. The generality of this finding has been extended by the demonstration of parallel effects in visual and auditory discrimination and of transfer across modalities. These transfer-effects . . . are not symmetrical—there is more transfer from visual training to auditory discrimination than conversely."

Moreover, Marcelle Kellermann states that "first-step teaching tactics can be successful only if the linguistic material presented to the child is such that it will reappear on innumerable occasions in different contexts". In view of Conrad's findings, when the acoustic confusability is high, as would be the case for, say, "il est", "elle a", and "il y a", to introduce such items successively in the first two lessons of "Voix et images de France" (pp. 2, 6) is not consistent with the mainstream of psychological theories of learning.

Conrad's research led him to surmise that, when an error of recall is made, as the substitution is "likely to be one which sounds (emphasis in original) like the (original,) the more chance there is of acoustic confusion with the stimulus set, the poorer recall will be". The point is that the presentation of such items as "y a-t-il", "il y en a", and "il y a" occurs in two consecutive chapters of "Tavor" (chapters 2, 3), a course which is in many ways similar to "Voix et images de France". Yet, the consensus of opinion is that, "in the beginning, a choice must be made, and . . . the order of presentation of the elements of the language is in itself important".

Dr. Stern, who was appraising the audio-visual courses, warned that "the air of modernity of the new aid may deceive and lull us into accepting inadequate material". Significantly, it has been deplored that "language teachers, materials writers and academicians, . . . seem unconcerned that their pedagogy and learning theory is fifty or more years out of date". In spite of the popular belief, the linguist has reminded us that, although "the oral approach eliminates memorization of rules and of paradigms, 'grammar' . . . in the sense of an accurate description of the structure of the target language, as contrasted with that of the learner's language, has become not less, but more important than ever before". Grammatical rules take a central position in the process of speech production. Indeed, Benjamin Whorf stated unambiguously

that "grammar constitutes the background linguistic system"¹ (vid inf., chapter 7, subsection B).

Grammatical rules are generative of words, phrases, and meaning. There remains however a fair amount of freedom within the range of possible choices. For example, when we speak a language, by and large, we follow grammatical rules, but these rules are implicit and unstated for most speakers. Professor Miller (Harvard University), who tried an experiment in which he used a grammar generating strings of letters, reported that "subjects in my experiment were somehow able to explicit rules of formation they had never studied before and presumably were unable to verbalize explicitly".² This phenomenon, which both linguists and psychologists conveniently call rule-governed behaviour (vid inf., chapter 7, subsection B), has led Professor Chomsky to surmise that grammar is part of our behaviour. The principles expounded by the transformational generative-grammar theorists are being substituted for the once-popular Skinnerian hypothesis whose stimulus-response formulation was supposed to ensure the acquisition of grammar rules.

On the other hand, Estacio's own experiment led him to advocate a cognitive-based programme which would take into account that:

--- modern "language learning is a problem-solving activity . . . .

--- (lexical items) selected on the basis of usefulness (are), for second language beginners, to be preferred to words chosen from frequency lists."³


the course material should bring out the patterns of the Modern Language.

Modern Language learning largely consists in the study of meaning (vid infra, chapters 6, 7, subsection A).

It has nonetheless been stated that:

"The methods employed in the foreign-language classroom have been heavily influenced by a combination of associative learning theory and taxonomic linguistics (i.e. the classification into phonemes, morphemes, and sentences). As a result there has been a tendency to treat language as an inventory of elements or a collection of learned patterns." 1

Happily, the survival of this approach in new courses is the exception rather than the rule. Such is "Pas à pas", whose publishers have no qualms about boasting that, in Francis Huss's course, "the development of language skills as behaviour is regarded from the outset as a prime objective... . . Grammar is presented and practised as structure, by means of a wide variety of pattern drills based on the now famous principles of immediate reinforcement outlined by Skinner." 2 The view can be summarized as good habits should be strengthened and bad ones discouraged by letting the student know immediately after each response whether he was right or wrong (vid supra, chapter 4).

The teaching of Modern Languages in general, and the teaching of French in particular, is still riddled to a large extent with the textbook writers following their own bent. Indeed, a reviewer of Huss's second book made the stern comment that "the claim that regard has been had to

the findings of C.R.S.D.I.F., as set out in the vocabulary of 'Le Français Fondamental', is hardly substantiated. The vocabulary of the dialogues goes beyond these limits.¹ Rarely are the fundamental principles expounded at all. For example, in a single advertisement, which appeared in an educational journal on several occasions in the early nineteen seventies, the publishers of Peter Downes, Mark Gilbert, and Francis Hsu, hailed all the diverging paths adopted by these individual writers as the best way to learn French.

Moreover, the textbook writers who pull in different directions from each other; many of them, such as Francis Hsu, whose tenuous foundations consist of nothing more than hopelessly outdated hypotheses, receive the continuous support of practising teachers. Yet, when—in the learning of a Modern Language—listening was preferred to reading, the need for developing a native audio-comprehension ranked high (vid supra, chapter 3), although "how this skill is acquired is still poorly understood".² The complexity is implicit in Bertil halluca's claim that "any act of perception is intimately tied up with the perceiver's background, i.e. his anterior experiences, his memory, and his attitudes".³ Karl Dunker (Swarthmore College), who attempted to reappraise the influence of anterior experiences, affirmed that "past experience is definitely capable of altering certain 'configurational' features of the percept".⁴ Professor McGeech's study which is contemporaneous with Karl Dunker's statement, deserves extended quotation. John McGeech (Iowa State University) has asserted that.

1 Anon., in Mod Langa., Vol. 49, 1968, p. 178.
"After small amounts of learning early in the life of the individual, every instance of learning is a function of the already existent learned organization of the subject; that is, all learning is influenced by transfer... 2

The learning of complex, abstract, meaningful materials and the solution of problems by means of ideas (reasoning) are to a great extent functions of transfer. Where the subject "sees into" the fundamental relations of a problem or has insight, transfer seems to be a major contributing condition. It is, likewise, a basic factor in originality, the original and creative person having, among other things, unusual sensitivity to the applicability of the already known to new problem situations. Perceiving, at whatever level, is probably never free of its influence; and there is no complex psychological event which is not a function of it."

More recently, Harlan Lane's research work led him to conclude that the objects' "prior history of reinforcement is certain to play a major role in the course of learning... 2 There seem to be few, if any, auditory continua that do not sample, at least in part the S's prior discriminative repertory. 3

This is in keeping with Dr. Lashley's viewpoint that "the perceived items are always the product of preceding and complex integrative processes". 4 Already in the early nineteen fifties then, "behavioural determinants, such as personality dynamics, need states, expectation, attitudes, were found to influence perception". 5 Audio-comprehension therefore depends on the perceiver's background. Considering that past "impressions form organisations called 'schemata' which modify

1 Brackets in original.


all future impressions produced by incoming sensory data, all perception and learning are affected by what has gone before, so that "at the moment of projection that he (sc. the perceiver, A.S.L.) is conscious of that sensory material . he is rationalizing it and comparing it with past similar material. He is comparing this present neurone pattern, that he is forming at the moment, with the older patterns of past experience." 

Professor Penfield’s explanation is that, in the adult brain, there is a "complete record of his (the adult’s) auditory and visual experience (which) is not subject to conscious recall, but is evidently used in the subconscious brain transaction that results in perception. By means of it, a man in normal life compares each succeeding experience with his own past experience. He knows at once whether it is familiar or not. If it is familiar, he interprets the present stream of consciousness in the light of the past." Clearly, Neurophysiology affords the Modern Language teacher with an insight which could be complementary—and should add a further dimension—to the psychologist’s standpoint, much in the same way as in a relatively recent past, Linguistics has contributed—all too often indirectly—to his knowledge.

Although we would no longer claim, as Leonard Bloomfield did some decades ago, that in "foreign-language teaching, there are few schoolmen who realize that there is a large linguistic literature on this subject", the forward-looking Modern Language teachers enrolling on short courses


4 Leonard Bloomfield, in Lg., Vol. 1, 1925, p. 5.
often report that they have been "disappointed because the lecturer gave them a potted history of the subject, a glossary of its abstract terminology and possibly an exposition of the major schools of thought; and the teacher did not see the relevance to his problems". The overwhelming majority of earnest Modern Language teachers though are nonplussed owing to the gap between the conclusions of the transformational generative-grammar theorists and the inadequate dissemination of their knowledge to the frequently bewildered linguist who is actually responsible for Modern Language teaching. As early as 1967 however, many a teacher of French has been hoping for "something less structural and more situational in its approach" than the conventional audio-visual courses.

While the concomitant viewpoint of Structural Linguistics "considers listening comprehension and speaking proficiency to be the primary language skills", the strand of progressive Modern Language teachers feels that a discussion linked to a micro-situation would foster audio-comprehension further. The dissatisfaction has crept in when it was no longer possible to ignore the fact that "parroting basic sentences and performing mechanical pattern drill is not communication, i.e., the natural use of language in an authentic cultural context". Although before the audio-lingual approach reached the crest of the wave, the British Modern Language Association warned that "it is not enough to rely on imitation", only in the late nineteen sixties did it become

obvious in this country that mimicry–memorization "does not make one perfect at anything save the thing itself and that transfer to other things depends upon whether the other things contain elements identical to those that existed in the first task".\(^1\) Moreover, traditionally, course designers emphasized multiple reintroduction of items to be learnt and remembered. In the nineteen seventies, increased attention was paid to devising a kind of material whose characteristic was "to make the student remember by requiring him to memorize".\(^2\)

The reorientation has been boosted further by a developing awareness that a Modern Language ought to "be taught in a manner consistent with what we can infer about the nature of a native speaker's knowledge of his language".\(^3\) The outcome of the new psycholinguistic theory is a move in order "to concentrate upon giving meaning... This was a consideration too often neglected in the early years of audio-lingual and audio–visual courses, which relied more on habit and the inculcating of automatisms and less on the ability to understand",\(^4\) in view of the fact that—in Modern Language learning—the first step can be defined as an "effort at comprehension".\(^5\) For example when, in the late nineteen sixties, further teaching aids were developed by the "C.R.E.D.I.F." team as an extension to the existing courses—such as "C.R.E.D.I.F., Leçons de

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transition"—they have presented micro-situations through pictures that were not only fewer in number, but also fuller—as well as more codified—in content.

The result is that Modern Language teachers are invited to make use of the new—or revised—materials consisting of lexis and grammatical patterns through which the learners are exposed to language experience, whose semantic content is supposed to be re-used easily in the meaningful context peculiar to the educational environmental set-up. So, the effects of the new psycholinguistic theory are therefore visible in the teaching materials for, in contemporary practice, the terms shift to cue-utterance, thus weakening the former stimulus-response school whose over-powering influence led to "'skinnerize' our language field".

Moreover if, in the early years of audio-lingual and audio-visual courses, material designers wanted to promote habit and the inculcating of automatisms, the impetus provided by the work of transformational grammar theorists has generated some rethinking in Modern Language methodological prejudices.

Professor Chomsky decried the faith put "in repetition of fixed phrases (on the ground that) it is only under exceptional and quite uninteresting circumstances that one can seriously consider how 'situational context' determines what is said". Although, in the commercial audio-visual courses, the lock step of the operant conditioning hypothesis in this country has been broken considering that, in the new scripts, the writers pass with very little repetition or explanation into...

1 Herbert B. Hyron, Jr., in Fr Rev, Vol. 37, 1963, p. 179.
a discussion situation, as many a school will go on using the materials it has bought on trust, paraphrasing Professor Bruner’s metaphor for some time to come operant conditioning “is still the standard village dance”.  

As in Modern Language learning, “each step must be so small that it can always be taken”, “devising new materials for learning is an arduous and time consuming process, which provides powerful competition for the energies and attention of the potential researcher”.  

Once the findings of educational research have been formulated in the abstract, a team of skilful educationists can act and build the ideas and principles into substantive materials like books and films.

The complexity of the task is nonetheless reflected in the main objectives which might retain the attention of the compiler of teaching materials for the aural-oral method. The designer has “to isolate the basic structures of a language; to match these with lexis suitable to the age and interests of the learner; to teach these at native speed, using material that can be seen to be useful in any context, without recourse to formal grammar; to avoid the mother tongue as much as possible in order to teach accurate pronunciation and intonation free of any interference or negative transfer; to provide such interesting fare that motivation will be stimulated; to teach with an economy of time and effort”.  

Clearly, the range of notions is such that nobody can master by solitary study the calculus by which the graded steps become an incline. This requirement, whose principle has been adumbrated for some

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considerable time, constitutes a realistic appraisal of Modern Language
learning in accordance with the ethical views underlying the Heuristic
method of teaching.

Considering that "it is a scientific platitude that there can be
neither precise control nor prediction of phenomena without measurement", ¹
in the final analysis "sheer empirical, trial-and-error methods of
determining the optimal rates at which new material is to be introduced
and then reviewed (and revised if necessary) ² are not enough because the
different combinations of possibilities are large in number, only a
mathematical analysis has any real promise of disclosing the true
optima". ³ Besides, the outcome of the incredible proliferation of
linguistic theories (vid supra, chapter 2) is revealed by fundamental
divergencies, whose interplay baffles both the textbook writer and the
Modern Language teacher alike.

Many a Modern Language teacher nevertheless believes that "a good
audio-visual course, recorded on film-strip and tape will have been
programmed and devised according to the most appropriate findings of the
expert in linguistics". ⁴ Moreover, there is a consensus of opinion among
the progressive teachers of Modern Languages that the results of research
work might profitably be applied to teaching materials. On the other
hand, "the fruits of research that are easiest to apply in the classroom
are of course the texts, films teaching machine programs, and other
materials that already incorporate and embody the findings of research". ⁵

¹ Diana Scott et al., in Readings in Mathematical Psychology,
² Brackets in original.
⁵ John B. Carroll, in Mod Lang J., op. cit., p. 274.
The French linguist asserts that:

"la notion de structure
implique un caractère de
nécessité dans l’organisation
(c’est nous qui soulignons)
des éléments d’une unité à un
niveau quelconque". 1

"the notion of structure
implies a characteristic
of obligation in the
organisation (our
emphasis) of the elements
in a unit at any level". 1

Sadly, in Modern Language materials in general, and the conventional audio-visual courses in particular, "the sequencing is founded on established traditions of language learning not on any systematic studies of progression or pacing". 2

We had been assured in the nineteen fifties that, while "general linguistics is a very theoretical study, important practical consequences for teaching can follow from its speculations". 3 It is therefore disappointing to discover that linguistic theories as applied, on the one hand, by Professor Delattre in his "Cours d’exercices structuraux et de linguistique appliquée" and, on the other, by Albert Waldman in his treatise on the teaching of French, have had so far little practical impact on the structure of commercial audio-visual courses, such as "Tavor" and "Voix et images de France". Indeed, a study of the "Livre du professeur" for "Tavor", and Henri Lauer’s analysis of grammatical elements in "Voix et images de France", indicates that the occurrence of a pattern as outlined in the theories, is likely to be purely accidental.

Although the lexis and grammar of the conventional audio-visual courses are not based on any definite principles stemming from elaborate linguistic theories, there is now an unequivocal consensus of opinion emerging from the faction of progressive Modern Language teachers, as the

2 Hans H. Stern, in Mod Langs, Vol. 6, 1964, p. 90.
Council of Europe has made the plea that "modern theoretical linguistics should form the basis of modern language teaching". This assertion is easily validated by referring to the extensive literature on the subject. For example, "le VIe Congrès International des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes qui a eu lieu en 1966 à Amsterdam a reconnu la nécessité de limiter le nombre des types de phrases (c'est Fries qui souligne) enseignés aux étudiants, et de les présenter d'une façon graduelle". One of the principles is that "the pupils proceed from the simple to the complex by easy steps", for which the developments in linguistic science have provided the material writers with the tools they required. Considering that the teaching of phonetic features and grammatical patterns should "be organized and presented in a carefully designed sequence of minimal steps", the course designers may take into account such a notion as "a linguistic unit on the phonemic, morphological or syntactic level can be identified by its being the only difference between two utterances". The publishers of Mark Gilbert's "Cours illustré de français" claimed that it is "so well graded that the children learn the grammar without realising it".

This somewhat superficial statement has been put into perspective by Mark Gilbert when he explained to the teachers who had gathered in 1973 at

5 F. Bann Morton, in J. J. Am. Ling. Vol. 26, No. 4, Part 2, 1960, p.120
Birmingham University that, as he disapproved of conjugating verbs and gap exercises, the grammatical elements in his textbooks consist of a hidden factor. On the other hand, "a large vocabulary load in the early stages of learning is usually a hindrance". For example, Professor Delattre whose experimental work contributed so much to the development of the audio-lingual approach, stated that in his inception French course "the learning sequences concentrated on grammatical structures of morphology and syntax rather than on vocabulary. The acquisition of vocabulary was left for the very last stage, in the second semester, when reading out of a book was permitted."^2

In the light of the inter-war development, Robin and Bergeaud admitted in their discussion of the Direct method that,

"dans la conquête d'une langue, le vocabulaire importe beaucoup moins que le mécanisme des phrases... Apprendre de longues listes de mots, c'est s'encombrer l'esprit de matériaux sans organisation." 3

Again, "at lower levels opinion seems to agree that three hours a week of language instruction is a minimum, and in this initial stage of learning the pupil should be expected to master at least 100 grammatical patterns and 1000 lexical items". While Dr. Grootwood had made a similar statement, he cautiously surmised that "at the end of the introductory audio-visual course the more able boys and girls might have at their command some 1,000—1,500 words". 5

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1 David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 133.
4 Wilfred D. Halle, op. cit., p. 49.
It is a commonplace to write that error is often caused by trying to teach a number of different items at the same time. The reappraisal of teaching methods and materials in "the last three of four decades is largely the result of developments in linguistics". ¹ Much remains to be done, yet some progress has been effected in the past every time the validity of traditional textbook techniques was questioned. An obvious example is the time-honoured notion that "only one thing should be taught at one time". ² It remains however true to assert that "the textbook writer who is careful to seek out the answers to such questions (as raised by the linguist) and then applies them competently in developing his material is rare indeed". ³ A notable exception is the approach adopted by Downes and Griffith for their "Le français d'aujourd'hui", whose verbs comply with Albert Waldman's morphophonological classification. It is to the application of such linguistic principles that we are turning our attention in the next subsection.

Conclusions.

The dissertation brings out that, in the past and up to the present time, teaching materials have often proliferated. This is no indication of the wisdom of the authors. When a French speaker addressed in the nineteenth century the "Société nationale des professeurs de français en Angleterre", he "inveighed against the plague of French grammars, which swarmed like lice in all their dwellings . . . ., of this tribe of authors not one in ten could pass his B.A. degree in the University of France."¹

Would "even those who most strongly dispute the value of the subjects taught . . . . allow that the methods of teaching them—the text-books, grammars, and class-books in use—are fairly satisfactory"²? The answer is unequivocally simple:

"Ranging widely over the whole battlefield are the textbook writers, all trying to keep up with the leaders but all going in different directions from each other; some of them, with hopelessly outdated weapons, continue firing wildly and even retain some support. Skirmishes unrelated to the main battle are common.

In between, trying hard to make some sense of all that is going on, are the teachers. Just like the peasantry of any war-torn country, they are not, as individuals, in a position to control events. But they would find it much easier to do their jobs if some semblance of order were to be created out of the chaos."

The fact that this metaphor, which rings true with regard to the teaching of French, was actually aimed at "muzzling the big guns of maths"³ does not weaken the argument. That this state of affairs pertains to two disciplines as different as French and Mathematics does not condone complacency.

¹ G. Petilleau, in J. Ed., No. 211, 1.2.1887, p. 113.
² F. Storr, in J. Ed., No. 182, 1.9.1884, p. 347.
³ J. M. Leonard's phrase. (cf. Times Edn Suppl, No. 3048, 26.10.73, p. 18.)
Professor Stevens has stated that "even the best classroom teachers were handicapped by the rudimentary linguistics which underlay much of the teaching material used".\(^1\) Linguists know that they "can weave theories and publish researches to their heart's content, and these can accumulate over decades, without affecting practice one iota or causing a ripple in staffroom discussion".\(^2\) So, while "there has been more than a hundred years of vigorous linguistic investigation in accord with sound scientific methods, very little of the results of this investigation has actually got into the schools to affect the materials and methods of teaching".\(^3\)

Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point. First, in 1966, Professor Mathieu reminded us that "thousands of teachers go merrily on asserting that most nouns in English form their plurals by 'adding an s or es', whereas linguists long ago told us that plurals are formed by adding either an unvoiced sibilant /s/ as in 'lambs' or a voiced sibilant /z/ as in 'bees'".\(^4\) Secondly, at the turn of the century, Professor O'Shea has shown the way linguistic studies should develop when he published his "Linguistic development and education". Some decades later, Leonard Bloomfield studied language scientifically thus marking a turning point. In the nineteen thirties, he demonstrated that Modern Language teaching should be made more rational by restructuring the order of presentation of, say, adjective forms.

Although Bloomfield's work was well known in France, the "C.R.E.D.I.F." team who designed "Voix et images de France" in the post-World War Two

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period, completely ignored Leonard Bloomfield’s hypotheses. But then
Professor Chomsky has claimed that an “oversimplified view (is the
characteristic) that is typical of much recent work on language in
psychology and linguistics”. The failure to react positively to a
refined description of the grammar is less surprising than may appear at
first glance. To name but one example, Edward Sapir’s work took nearly
twenty years to have an effect, as the sound patterns he advocated in 1925
were embodied for the first time by Professor Fries in the courses he
designed in the nineteen forties at the English Institute of Michigan
University. We shall nonetheless see presently that “the small body of
linguistic theory and related attitudes and techniques contains much that
is of relevance to language teaching”.

1 A. Noam Chomsky, in Monographs of the Society for Research in

2 Charles A. Ferguson, in Language Teaching, (Robert G. Head, Jr.,
Subsection E - Classroom Practice and Applied Linguistics.

"Only those who are familiar with both linguistics and teaching are in a position to discern the relation between the two."

— Professor Corder, 1973.1

When the members of the Committee on Research and Development in Modern Languages issued their second report, they were agreed upon "the need for language teachers to be well informed about new advances in general and applied linguistics, methodology and technological aids".2 Contemporary linguistic theories may indeed constitute rather a promising field for the Modern Language teacher, considering that:

"l'enseignement d'une langue, A.S.L., dépend surtout d'une étude approfondie de certains aspects linguistiques sans la connaissance desquels le professeur se comporte en amateur et n'obtient que des résultats médiocres".

"it (sc. language teaching, A.S.L.) depends above all on an in-depth study of selected linguistic aspects without whose knowledge the teacher behaves as an amateur and only obtains poor results".

Consequently, "applied linguistics is exerting influence not only on the composing of courses but also on the very methodology of classroom".4

As "it is now widely agreed that a thorough course in linguistics should form part of the training of every language teacher",5 the view is spreading that student teachers must therefore be coached in linguistics, for:


"il est paradoxal pour un pédagogue de devoir enseigner la langue française sans connaître les rudiments de son système phonologique et prosodique".1

Clearly then, "linguistics is one of the prime sources of raw material for language teaching but it is necessary for language teachers to develop processes of scrutiny of this raw material so that the raw material may be used functionally to facilitate the acquisition of language communication skills".2 A working party of headmasters has drawn attention to the fact that "work done in the Institute of Linguistics Studies, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A., leaves no doubt that Britain is falling rapidly behind for a lack of a linguistic research centre or language Institute. St. Cloud in France, Ann Arbor, and on a smaller scale, Stockholm, put British inertia and lack of provision to shame."3

Yet, as "language teaching is probably the most widespread application linguistics has these days",4 many a forward-looking teacher of French is convinced that the rate of progress towards achieving functional competence in his subject depends largely on extensive research, as well as suitably-designed audio-visual courses, better audio-lingual aids, brighter textbooks and readers. We have seen (vid supra, subsection A, this chapter) that materials writers often give scant attention to the way in which their textbooks are designed. Considering that their textbooks do not exhibit an understanding of rationale and methodology, in the main, course designers have badly neglected curriculum


development, a particularly important factor in the nineteen seventies in view of our awareness that Modern Languages do not fit in with the momentous reorganizations initiated by the educationists and fostered by the bureaucrats (such reorganizations are taking the shape of the integrated day in primary education, of the comprehensive school in secondary education, of the fast growth in the colleges of further education). One of the shortcomings, as a language adviser showed, is the unsuitability of language courses. Norman White, who looked critically at the Nuffield French course for primary school children, wrote that with "En Avant" "the teacher is constantly conscious of the amount of ground still to be covered (,) those responsible for the scheme and its implementation must shoulder much of the blame for what will now be seen by many as its failure".  

Whether it be "En Avant" then, or any other commercial audio-visual course, in the final analysis it is up to the teacher what he selects, but select he must. With the relatively new awareness that "there is more to fluent speech than mere learned responses", materials designers, language teachers, and research workers must devote more attention to the learning and teaching processes. This reorientation is timely, considering that the complexity of second language acquisition did not deter the designers of conventional courses from making sweeping claims. For example, Michel Ausonon affirmed that this course "will enable you to speak good basic French (for) once you understand, you can speak".  

Again, in the nineteen sixties, the author of "Tavor" asserted that his audio-visual course provided "an excellent foundation for the solid

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1 Norman White, in Times Educational Supplement, No. 3114, 31.1.75, p. 23.
2 Christopher K. Candlin, in Times Higher Education Supplement, No. 65, 12.1.73, p. 5.
grammatical work that followed". 1

Although Stewart Ingram contributed directly to "Tavor" by revising the 1964 edition of the "Livre du professeur", at that time he reported that, on the contrary, at the 1962 seminar of the Council of Europe, the delegates were agreed that "pupils must have constant practice in . . . grammar". 2 Such ambiguous statements as to what might or might not form the basis of an inception course in French highlight the methodological prejudices. The outcome is that the teachers have frequently taken for granted what they thought were common-sense half-truths and they have traded implicitly on these subjective attitudes in their everyday class-room situation. Although "research has indicated that the student's mastery of requisite knowledge is a greater factor in successful language learning than length and type of practice or the teacher's method of presentation", 3 the Bullock report has rightly suggested that there needs to be less "uncertain relationship between theory and practice". 4

Professor Delattre's own pioneer work led him to explain that, "instead of learning grammar . . . by rules and written exercises, they (sc. the students, A.S.L.) learned it by addition, substitution, and transformation. (Sc.) the students learned first from the voice of the teacher . . . . This forced them to make oral responses to aural stimuli. Instead of learning passively and partially, knowing that they could refer back to a book at any time, the students of the . . . audio-lingual class had to learn actively and completely whatever they heard before going on to something new. Forming the habit of relying

1 V. V. Kamesaw: Livre du professeur, (revised by Stewart Ingram), Forest Hills, N.Y.: Tavor Aids, 1964, p. 4.
2 Stewart R. Ingram, in Mod. Lang., Vol. 43, 1962, p. 74.
exclusively on aural stimuli was a struggle for them." In developing the audio-lingual technique, Pierre Delattre wanted his students to absorb the new grammar through functioning within the Modern Language. In so doing Professor Delattre elicited the principles which form the basis of the new outlook and have opened unprecedented vistas for Modern Language teaching. Again, in the wake of "Syntactic structures", Noam Chomsky's pivotal book, it has been averred that "the transformation of linguistics is perhaps the most remarkable event in the human studies of this century".

In the words of Professor Chomsky, "there are by now very few linguists who believe that it is possible to arrive at the phonological or syntactic structure of a language by systematic application of 'analytic procedures' of segmentation and classification".

Ideals are, of course, excellent but putting them into practice requires much thought and co-operation. We have seen (vid supra, chapter 4) that this is as true of the ideal procedure based on the psychological notion that "the techniques of the laboratory analysis and control of . . . (the) terminal behaviors" as specified systematically by linguists. For example, structuralists come up with a set of notions which, if it describes the production of verbal meaning through verbal combinations of the linguistic sign, is arbitrarily divided into "signifiant" (verbal material, both phonic and graphic) and "signifie" (conceptual distinction between groups of verbal material). A discussion of the auto-didactic phase (cf. Table II) in the early stages of Modern Language learning, such as Charles Hutton's, reveals unmistakably how arbitrary the division into "signifiant" - "signifie" can be. He wrote that:

"(La compréhension) est une prise de conscience des données perçevives globales, qui entraîne de la part du sujet voyant-entendant une synthèse comparative du donne visuel et du donné auditif. Elle le conduit ainsi à un montage schématique de ce dernier qui équivaut à un acte intellectuel de compréhension et d'identification: signifié = signifiant. ¹

The modern structuralists' hypotheses do not resolve the challenge set by the linguistic analysis of speech which, in view of the fact that "la définition du 'mot phonétique' ne recouvre pas celle du 'mot syntaxique'," presents the linguist with procedural problems.

Professor Chomsky has drawn attention to the fact that "there are basic unsolved problems concerning even the phonetic representations used as a basis for analysis of form in structural linguistics". ² For example, the linguist avers that "anyone who has done field research with children and adults in his own and foreign communities will recognize the difficulties of locating phonetic representations for many sounds". ³

Robert Kalbach, Director of the "Institut d'études françaises" (La Rochelle), explains that,

"en français, la phonétique est mal définie du fait de l'enchaînement vocalique et consonantique", ⁴

"Phonetics is ill-defined in French owing to the vocalic and consonant interlocking", ⁴

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² Kristoffer Nyrop: Manuel de phonétique du français parlé, (Emmanuel Philpott's translation), New York: Stoehert, 1929, p. 36.


which is reminiscent of Maurice Grammont's assertion that:

"les mots (sont) si étroitement unis l'un à l'autre qu'il n'est pas rare qu'une syllabe soit constituée par la fin d'un mot et le commencement d'un autre". 1

"the words (are) so intimately bound to each other that it is not unusual for a syllable to be made up by the ending of a word and the beginning of another". 1

For his lectures, Robert Kalbach selected /éle-metropol/ to illustrate this point:

"Virginie: 
Paris: 
L'ouest polaire: 

Elle aimait trop Paul.
Elle est métropole.
Elle est maître au pôle."

Robert Kalbach concluded that,

"En français, l'unité syntaxique n'existe pas.
La notion de mot est peu précise et pour ainsi dire indéterminée."

Professor Politzer has surmised that, "in French, syllables tend to end with vowels; thus syllable boundaries and word boundaries do not coincide". 2

There are therefore important implications for the Modern Language teacher. For example, Albert Valdman has asserted that "it is difficult for the instructor to locate the exact source of the student's difficulties since they may arise from faulty discrimination, improper differentiation, or simply short memory span; in sentences that may contain several points of phonologic interference correction becomes anecdotic and inconsistent". 3

Besides, David Wilkins who expressed the linguist's viewpoint with regard to word versus morpheme, argued that,

by postulating the morpheme as a unit smaller than the word, and by applying a pedagogic principle of 'one thing at a time', each contrast is seen to reveal the presence of a different 'thing' and therefore a different point of language to be acquired. A paradigm is not now one learning point, but contains as many learning points as there are morphemes in the paradigm. An older book will often cover in half the time what is now expected from a whole year's language learning.¹

In the nineteen thirties, it was known that "many teachers find in practice that they cannot get through first year courses in one year and wonder if the explanation lies in the textbook itself."² At that time, Milton and Benn's investigation of thirty first-year courses in common use in English schools provided a first appraisal that, while "the limitation of vocabulary and the inclusion of common words are regarded as primary considerations by the authors of courses",³ there was no correlation between the number of words in the courses and their popularity in the teachers' choices. Moreover, the disparity in the vocabularies of French textbooks ranging from as many as 2,363 to as few as 320 words may come as a surprise, considering that "the noun is perhaps the most important constituent of vocabulary".⁴ Winifred Robson's and Milton and Benn's findings in Britain and Ralph Waltz's pioneer study in the acquisition of phonetic habits in the United States (vid supra, chapter 1) are a clear indication of the search for the sound principles which would sooner or later lead to an improved approach in the teaching of Modern

Languages.

Such principles formed the core of Pierre Delattre’s experiment at Oklahoma University in the nineteen forties (vid supra, chapter 1). In the course of his experimental work, Professor Delattre deplored that "our error is that we go against the facts of language". 1 If in the United States, to this day "most classes are paced too fast for the average student", 2 in England, Whitmarsh set out in unequivocal terms the pace of his French course. In the introduction to his "Second French book", at one time a popular course "par excellence", he explained that "the knowledge of a language and the power to use it are cumulative, and the constant revision and drill of even the most elementary things is essential. At the beginning of the second year no class is in a state to break new ground; the majority of the pupils did not grasp or have failed to retain much of what was done in the first year . . . as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned, our 'Second French Book' is the 'First French Book' revised and enlarged." 3

In his prose, Whitmarsh provides evidence that much that has been written for Modern Language teachers about methodology is out-of-date, blithely ignores the complexity of second language learning and is ill-conceptualized. New vistas came about after some attempts had been tentatively made to bring together Psychology, Linguistics, and educational studies. The bearing on Modern Language teaching was twofold. First, the influence of the transformational generative-grammar strand has begun to permeate the field of Modern Language teaching (vid supra, subsection A, this chapter). Secondly, linguistic investigation has led

2 Edward D. Allen et al., op. cit., p. 5.
to the discovery and the analysis of the habits involved in the control of any given language, so that we have started to understand "the developmental nature of the language acquisition process". We have seen that the turning point has been traced back to the research whose results led to "a radically new psycholinguistic theory of language acquisition".

To begin with, recent developments in Linguistics have influenced our conception of the structure of language, hence the nature of the knowledge that the child has to acquire. With the recognition that "there is a productive and flexible element in language which distinguishes it from other behavioural habits", linguists consider that "it would be grossly uneconomical for the child, at least after mastering the first few words, to try and learn each new combination of words". Leonard Newmark (California University, San Diego) goes as far as saying that, if each structural item had to be learnt separately, "the child learner would be old before he could say a single appropriate thing and the adult learner would be dead". The learner does not have "to hear all possible transformations to use them". In Professor Miller's words, "we have learned... 'rules' for generating admissible strings of words".

Among the diverse aspects of imitation which have been looked into from a psychological standpoint over the past hundred years, oral imitation

1 Here and infra, Leon Jakobovits's phrases. (cf. La J., Vol. 18, 1968, p. 89.)

2 Christopher N. Candlin, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 69, 12.1.73, p. 5.


Professor Paul perceived in the nineteenth century that, "Very few of the verbal and noun forms that we pronounce are due to reproduction by a mere effort of memory". 

Professor Chomsky, the influential American Linguist, has claimed that "it is a mistake to assume that—past the very earliest stages—much of what the child acquires is acquired by imitation". 

Werner Leopold's searching study had led him to assert in 1956 that "pronunciation is the only part of language that is chiefly imitative" and Percival Symonds's early experiment showed that, in the acquisition of the native language, "mere repetition of correct forms cause small gains on the test". Recent work has yielded more sophisticated results. On the one hand, Homer Reed's own research prompted him to state that "As instructed to learn names and their meanings search more frequently for logical relationships than do those instructed to learn names only" and, on the other, Jerome Bruner and his associates found evidence that: "The search for the defining attributes of a class of objects—the search for a generic code in terms of which a class of objects may be rendered

1 Paul Guillaume: L'Imitation chez l'enfant, (Paris: F. Alcan, 1925), p. VI.
5 Werner F. Leopold, in Foreign Language Bulletin, (Modern Language Association of America), No. 49, August 1956, p. 5.
7 Homer B. Reed, in J Ex Psych, Vol. 36, 1946, p. 86.
equivalent—leads to certain forms of behavior strategies of learning sets that are absent when the task is seen as one of rote memorization.

In short, an induced set can guide the person to proceed as if what was to be learned was a principle or a generic method of coding events."¹

In the late nineteen sixties, Leon Jakobovits (Hawaii University) was able to state that "a radically new psycholinguistic theory of language acquisition has been proposed which emphasizes the developmental nature of the language acquisition process and attributes to the child specific innate competencies which guide his discovery of the rules of the natural language to which he is exposed".²

The bearing upon Modern Language teaching is that, first, "authorities have come to consider the inventive (as opposed to the imitative) aspects as the more important"³ and, secondly, the new psycholinguistic theory has been conducive to a reorientation which, as we shall see presently, is in keeping with Werner Leopold’s extensive empirical work. In brief, "mim-mem" provides a perfect illustration of the irrelevance of "idées reçues" in Modern Language teaching. A belief in imitation gathered impetus in the United States (vid supra, chapter 1), in spite of the publication of Werner Leopold’s findings which showed in the late nineteen thirties that for a certain percentage of children, as exemplified by "Hildegard’s case, the phase of mechanical imitation was completely lacking; meanings were always developed before sound-forms. The impulse for any kind of imitation was strikingly weak in this child."⁴

Ultimately, the "im-mem" technique came under criticism for, in the words of a staff inspector for Modern Languages, the "indoctrinated beings (are) being unable to answer any question except those on the tape".¹

Nonetheless, the proponents of the fundamental skills method have succeeded both in developing the use of the spoken language into the class-room and in initiating a mood of change in the attestation of the aims and methods which, in Modern Language teaching, has become prevalent by the late nineteen sixties. The reorientation is, moreover, largely due to the growing awareness that "interference from the mother tongue occurs on all linguistic levels of phonology, morphology and syntax, and also on the semantic plane",² notwithstanding the fact that cognitive psychologists have gathered and published "evidence that when children acquire a new cognitive category, they acquire both the syntactic structures for it and associated lexical items simultaneously".³ Besides, the recognition of such a principle as the learner's "mastery of morphological rules comes later than his command of syntax"⁴ influences, on the one hand, the expectation with regard to the long-term results of the audio-lingual technique and, on the other, the shape the latter will be taking ultimately.

Clearly, the interplay of the linguistic components is so wide ranging that any device designed to promote the audio-comprehension process must perforce remain tentative for some time to come, although research workers have attempted to construct an ideal procedure. O'Connor and Twaddell

¹ Kenneth MacGowan, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3100, 25.10.74, p. 57.


⁴ "The Bullock Report", op. cit., para. 5.3.
have provided a particularly clear statement of the audio-lingual method. In their analysis of the intensive training for an oral approach in language teaching, they have explained that "through imitation of a model the learner produces what he has adequately recognized with semantic assurance. To begin the formation of a habit, he repeats; this repetition of a meaningful utterance is now guided by his own memory rather than as an echo of an outside model. Whenever his repetition (i.e. his memory\(^1\)) is imperfect, he must revert to direct imitation of the outside model before he resumes confirming the habit by repetition. After repetition has begun to establish the habit, the learner is led to vary this or that component of the model utterance to produce other expressions, which are partly similar to and partly different from the model he has been imitating and repeating.\(^2\)

Considering that "much of contemporary linguistics operates within a theory of grammar characterized by three components—the phonological, syntactic, and semantic",\(^3\) it is becoming increasingly clear that Noam "Chomsky's work in the field of psychology and linguistics has far-reaching implications for both L\(_1\) and L\(_2\) teaching",\(^4\) especially his insistence that linguistic behaviour is stimulus-free and innovative (vid inf., chapter 8). As the transformational grammar theorist convincingly argued that "the percepts contains phonetic and semantic information related through the medium of syntactic structure",\(^5\) sooner

\(^{1}\) Brackets in original.

\(^{2}\) Patricia O'Conner et al., in Mod. Lg. J., Vol. 44, 1960, p. 5.

\(^{3}\) Aaron V. Cicourel, op. cit., pp. 107-108.


or later new—or revised—audio-visual courses will be prepared to a
greater or a lesser extent on a well-balanced selection of syntactic
structures.

In view of the fact that "the syntactic structure of the stimulus
sentence obviously provides valuable information to the child",¹ in the
new—or revised—audio-visual courses, the structural approach will be
largely superseded by the syntactic component of generative grammar; that
is, "phrase-structure rules, lexical-subcategorisation rules,
transformational rules, and morphophonemic (i.e., morphophonological)
rules. (Indeed, as) morphophonemic rules govern pronunciation and relate
the syntactic and phonological parts of the grammar",² these elements
built in new courses will weaken the position of the structural movement,
whose influence imposed the view that language was a structured
phenomenon, a system of systems or a macro-structure, consisting of a
systematized set of micro-structures. Sadly, "linguists have had their
share in perpetuating the myth that linguistic behavior is 'habitual' and
that a fixed stock of 'patterns' is acquired through practice".³

Structural linguistics, which lays stress on "the careful selection and
grading of grammatical items",⁴ was developed in the nineteen forties on
the assumption that from a limited corpus, i.e., "a few samples, we would
set up hypotheses about the structure of the data".⁵

The implications of a closed system of this type are twofold. If,

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¹ Aaron V. Cicourel, op. cit., p. 126.
² Courtney B. Camden, in Child Development, (Lafayette, Ind.),
³ A. Noam Chomsky, in Roger G. Head, Jr. (ed.), op. cit., p. 44.
⁴ J. Catford's phrase. (cf. The Teaching of English, C. Randolph
Quirk et al., eds., London: M. Secker and Warburg, 1959, p. 171.)
⁵ David Crystal, op. cit., p. 102.
on the one hand, "the student learns a finite stock of basic sentences which he can parrot if the proper circumstances present themselves; (on the other,) obsessed with the structure of language, linguists never pondered the nature of the process which takes place in the FL classroom: Language learning (emphasis in original)". Structural Linguistics has shaped "our dominant conception of languages as structures and our growing sophistication in the complex analysis of these structures", but "the study of the structure of language, grounded solidly on data, has turned out in practice to be less straightforward than our fathers appear to have assumed, for it seems to be far from clear just what it means to describe the structure of a language".

The fact is that "neither psychological nor linguistic theory has progressed to that firm ground which would enable one to formulate the relation between language structure and behavior". Although structural linguists laboured the idea that Modern Language teaching should be restricted to a limited corpus of selected examples, their principle was doomed, as transformational generative-grammar theorists explained, precisely because "the ability to master a language like a native, which children possess to an extraordinary degree, is almost completely lacking in the adult . . . due to deterioration or loss in the adult of the ability to construct optimal (simplest) grammars on the basis of a restricted corpus of examples". So, "in view of the time-gap which

1 Albert Waldman, in Mod Lg J, Vol. 48, 1964, pp. 277-78.
5 Brackets in original.
inevitably separates research and pedagogy, this kind of structuralism is still being advocated as the latest thing, (it) is almost twenty years out of date.¹

The slow retreat from the structural approach has resulted in relegating it to the place it really deserves. For several reasons, the overwhelming influence of modern linguists who held that "language is a matter of training and habit",² has not been unequivocally beneficial at the interdisciplinary level. First, in Professor Chomsky's words, such a "conception of grammatical structure is inadequate at every level, semantic, phonetic, and syntactic".³ Secondly, a serious shortcoming of Bloomfieldian Linguistics has been its concomitant principle that "analogy provides a better foundation for foreign-language learning than analysis",⁴ Leonard Bloomfield having asserted that "analogy permits a speaker to utter speech-forms which he has not heard; we say that he utters them on the analogy (emphasis in original) of similar forms which he has heard".⁵

The transformational generative-grammar theorist claims that "to attribute the creative aspect of language use to 'analogy' or 'grammatical patterns' is to use these terms in a completely metaphorical way, with no clear sense and with no relation to the technical usage of linguistic theory".⁶

In the post-Firthian period, course designers have been obsessed with the structure of language. Among the influential linguists for example, Professor Fries averred that "speech acts that are language

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¹ David Crystal, op. cit., p. 208.
⁵ Leonard Bloomfield, op. cit., p. 275.
always consist of lexical items in some kind of structure". It has not however been generally appreciated by either materials writers or Modern Language teachers that "the word 'structure' denotes an emphasis slightly different from the grammar concept in that those who make this distinction insist that the students master the structure of the language as a conditioned response, while the grammarians are more inclined to lead the student (sic) to reason out their answers according to the 'rules'." Furthermore, the influence of the S-R theorists' overwhelming position has not only highlighted that practice does not enable the learner "to choose correctly those patterns of sound that are adequate to express what the situation calls for", but it has stimulated the applied linguist in his search for "a description of process (for language teaching) particularly when it is unlikely the learner will ever achieve the final knowledge of the native speaker". Such a description, it is thought, might clarify some of the problems which must be handled by the Modern Language teacher, if the development of audio-comprehension is to ensue.

While "linguistics has obviously given a great deal to language teaching" already, "many versions of linguistics purveyed to the intending teacher, . . . present the current version of received opinion without any satisfactory account of the line of reasoning leading up to it". It is largely due to the fact that "theoretical linguistics is a rather esoteric subject, which few people had even heard of and still fewer know

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3 Frances M. Hodgson, in Aspects of Education. (Hull University), No. 6, 1967, p. 19.


5 Brian Harrison, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 137, 21.5.74, p. 16.

anything about until very recently\textsuperscript{1} but also, however, because:

"la linguistique est une science jeune, et ce fait explique pour une large part sa faible diffusion". 2

"Linguistics is a new science, and its limited impact is largely explained by this fact". 2

Nonetheless, an early appraisal of the powerful new trend in Linguistics led, in the middle nineteen sixties, to the conclusion that "one of the strengths of generative grammar is expressed in the half-truth that it contains 'nothing really new'; it confirms what we felt all along". 3

This does not preclude the fact that Professor "Chomsky's work is difficult". 4

In the final analysis, statements such as Dr. Greene's (now Professor of Psychology in the Open University) who averred that "increasing complications reflect a more accurate picture of the complexity of language behaviour", 5 does not alleviate the teacher's perplexity when he is confronted with "the revolutionary nature of psycholinguistics" 6 (vid supra, chapter 2). Indeed, present practice which, all too often, consists simply in "introducing a quick course in general linguistics to an already over-extended syllabus" 7 does not impart to the teacher the working knowledge which is deemed to be necessary. Understandably then,

\begin{itemize}
  \item[6] \textit{Lec. cit.}
\end{itemize}
a great many teachers still look at Linguistics with bewilderment. Nonetheless, the view expressed "by Chomsky that language acquisition by a child may best be pictured as a process of constructing the simplest (optimal1) grammar capable of generating the set of utterances, of which the utterances heard by the child are a representative sample... was once almost commonplace among linguists"2 in western Europe. Among others, Professor Paul stated at the end of the nineteenth century that:

"So gestaltet sich die sprache jedes individuums... nach den..." 3

Thus the language of each individual shapes itself... according to the influences of the languages of the several companions with whom he holds commerce, which, from our point of view, we may regard as the progenitors of his own."4

In France, this standpoint has been elaborated by Antoine Haillet in two of his major works. In 1938 he affirmed that:

"Chaque enfant doit acquérir par lui-même la capacité de comprendre le parler des gens de son groupe social et de l'employeur. La langue ne lui est pas livrée en bloc, tout d'une pièce. Il n'entend jamais autre chose que des phrases particulières, et ce n'est qu'en comparant ces phrases entre elles qu'il..." 5

"Every child has to acquire for himself the competence of understanding and using the language of the members of his social group. The language is not delivered 'en bloc', 'in toto' to him. He never hears anything else but individual sentences, and it is only by comparing these sentences in relation to one another that he manages to grasp the..." 6

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1 Brackets in original.

2 Morris Halle, in Word, Vol. 18, 1962, p. 64.


arrive à saisir le sens des paroles qu'il entend et à parler à son tour. Pour chaque individu, le langage est ainsi une recreation totale faite sous l'influence du milieu qui l'entoure."

The same writer had attempted a comprehensive analysis of language acquisition when he explained that

"(le) système d'associations ne se transmet pas directement d'individu à individu; comme on l'a dit, le langage n'est pas une oeuvre... c'est une activité... lorsqu'il apprend à parler, chaque enfant doit se constituer à lui-même un système d'associations de mouvements et de sensations pareil à celui des personnes qui l'entourent; il ne reçoit pas des autres des procédures d'articulation: il parvient à articuler comme eux après des tâtonnements qui durent de longs mois; il ne reçoit pas des paradigmes grammaticaux: il recreé chaque forme sur le modèle de celles qu'on emploie autour de lui, et c'est pour avoir longtemps entendu: 'nous mangeons, vous mangez; nous jetons, vous jetez' que l'enfant saura dire au besoin 'vous levez' s'il a entendu dire 'nous levons'; et ainsi pour toutes les formes". 2

meaning of the utterances he hears and in turn he manages to speak. For every individual, language is therefore a complete elaboration undertaken within the set-up of the environment that surrounds him." 1

"(the) system of association which cannot be transmitted directly from an individual to another; as it has been said, a language is not a work... it is an activity... when he learns how to speak, every child has to build up for himself a system associating movements and feelings identical to the one which is characteristic of the people who surround him; he does not borrow from others some processes of utterance: he manages to utter as they do after trial and error which take months and months; he does not borrow grammatical paradigms: he produces each form from the model of those used around him, and having frequently heard: 'we eat, you eat; we throw, you throw' the child will be able to say whenever required 'you raise' providing he heard 'we raise'; similarly for all forms". 2 (cf. Diagram I.)


In Modern Language teaching, the presentation of models is also substantiated because, if the pupils were left guessing and applied a trial-and-error approach, their chances of selecting a grammatical utterance would be so low as to be out of practical consideration. In Professor Hebb’s words, “the ‘naïve’ theory of learning by trial and error . . . is no longer maintained, largely because of the work of Hobhouse, Yerkes, Köhler, Lashley, and Krechevsky, together with an important analysis by Adams (1929) and the later work of Thorndike (1931)”. However, considering that “attempts to imitate and produce language patterns help receptive language learning”, audio-visual courses have become the accepted approach in the early stages of Modern Language teaching (vid inf., chapter 7, subsection B).

The added advantage of commercially-produced audio-visual materials consists in presenting speech by means of a recording which “lends itself to identical repetitions of material with no change in tone, pitch, or intonation”. Behavioural psychologists have developed a hypothesis embodying the principle that “imitation can hasten the process of learning by forcing the subject to respond correctly to the proper cue more quickly than he otherwise would”. Repetition, it was thought, would speed up the development of the learner’s linguistic skill at the incipient stage of Modern Language teaching. The mood of the nineteen sixties is adequately reflected by Robert Lado’s assertion that “the quality and permanence of

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1 Here and infra, brackets in original.


4 Edward D. Allen et al., op. cit., p. 27.

5 Neal E. Miller et al.: Social Learning and Imitation, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 203.
learning are in direct proportion to the amount of practice". Besides, whether the audio-visual material designers state it or not, their courses succeed in imparting idiomatic patterns, which are therefore unmistakably present in the speech of learners.

Repetition then would help the pupil to reach the stage at which he can utter the correct collocation in the absence of the model (cf. Table II). Considering that the physiological basis of the audio-lingual habit theory consists in "memorization and manipulation of patterns which bring out partial resemblances, or similarities of structure, beneath surface variations of vocabulary", the audio-lingual approach fosters the practice of "exercises structuraux", or structural drills. Until recently however, the pattern-practice remained comparatively unknown and was therefore a relatively little used technique. In the bilingual grammar-translation system, bearing in mind that "the actual learning is thought to have taken place, firstly in the explanations of grammar and idiom, secondly in the passive reading of the text; the exercises are then tests of the knowledge so acquired". Moreover, unlike most adults, the child relies largely "on a certain instinctive and intuitive capacity for assimilating speech-patterns". Consequently, it was thought that the pattern-drill practice would enable pupils "to memorize, practice by rote, and be able to manipulate structures without being aware of the crucial element involved", for "the ability to converse in a foreign language . . .

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2 Wilga M. Rivers, *op. cit.* p. 117.
comes only through long laborious drill".¹

It has been asserted indeed that "it is precisely this primary
neuro-physiological activity which actually fosters"² the fixation phase
(cf. Table II). On the ground that "conditioning plays a very
important part (in the acquisition of a language) whether that language is
learned as the native language or as a foreign language",³ the contribution
pattern drills could make to the learning process did not escape the
attention of linguists. The result is that the pattern-drill practice
"is rapidly becoming accepted as the (emphasis in original) device",⁴ which
is adopted for improving the learner's linguistic skill. For example,
the publishers of Jean-Albert Bedé's "Progressive audio-lingual grammar
units in French" explain that "thorough drilling of newly learned
structures is vital to the success of any oral method".⁵ The criticism
levelled at the materials writers is that the pattern-drill technique has
no justification either as to a particular psychological theory of
learning or a linguistic interpretation (vid supra, conclusions to chapter
1). Yet, structural linguists go on asserting that "pattern drill and
concentration on single structures are necessary for automatic control
of speech-units".⁶

In their language courses which have a linguistic bias, the designers
have implied that the inherent characteristics of their materials are that
"transformation and substitution drills lead the student to an awareness

² Charles P. Bouton: *Les Mécanismes d'acquisition du français*,
⁵ European Schoolbooks' catalogue for French, Cheltenham, (n.d.),
p. 9.
of structures and patterns, and (that) these are carefully graded in order of complexity". 1 Moreover, "the content of good drill is material learned in other phases of the lesson", 2 but few audio-visual courses in French offer fully integrated drills of structures as a relevant follow up for class-work. Ideally, in the words of Jerman (now in the City of Leicester College of Education), "the exercises of the audio-visual-lingual courses are based on the notion of the basic 'patterns' and 'structures' of the spoken language. These are incorporated in meaningful sentences ... which have to be repeated", 3 for experience has shown the need for developing a "subconscious feeling for basic speech patterns by methodological repetition (emphasis in original)". 4 "Ecouter et parler", produced by Dominique Coté and his associates and published in 1962 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, is the only course at this level offering "structure drills which are entirely aimed at enabling the student to transfer the basic sentences to other (linguistic) situations" 5 (cf. Table II).

Considering that the production of imitated sentences may be mechanical, in order "to offset the rigidity of rote dialogues, the recombination of patterns memorized (tagnemic recombination), constitutes an important step in establishing flexibility in speech", 7 "if he (or, the child, A.S.L.) is to do more than glibly reel off mechanical sequences". 8 So, with the recognition that the pupil "must be able to

2 Joseph V. Thomas, in Mod Lg J. Vol. 41, 1957, p. 115.
6 Brackets in original.
7 Edward Diller, in Mod Lg J. Vol. 46, 1962, p. 259.
listen again and again to recombinations of (the) material, as often as he wishes, pattern drills which enable pupils to practise by rote should progressively give way to a type of pattern practice that, in the light of the new psycholinguistic theory, is conductive to the acquisition of a specific aspect of the learning process.

Moreover, in 1961, Albert Valdman has demonstrated in his treatise that verbs like "sauter" and "ouvrir" (as well as "assaillir", "courir", "couvrir", "cueillir", "défaillir", "offrir", "souffrir", et cetera, and their compounds) which, hitherto, have been classified in different groups, belong to the same morphophonological category since they share endings as well as stem behaviour, e.g.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>compare:</th>
<th>je saute</th>
<th>with j'ouvre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tu saute</td>
<td>tu ouvres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il saute</td>
<td>il ouvre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elle saute</td>
<td>elle ouvre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ils sautent</td>
<td>ils ouvrent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elles sautent</td>
<td>elles ouvrent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nous, on saute</td>
<td>nous, on ouvre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vous sautez</td>
<td>with vous ouvres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and compare: j'atte with j'ouvres.

Considering that the transformational generative linguists have promoted the view that "the syntactic component is the fundamental link between the phonological and semantic components", it is hardly surprising that "pattern drills are rejected in favor of 'transformation exercises' at the phonological, syntactic and semantic levels". Jerman has pointed out that the basic patterns and structures "are incorporated in meaningful sentences, usually already met in the text, which have to be repeated in various ways, variations being introduced gradually according to strict rules. Each utterance is short and can be held in the 'memory span'."

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2 Aaron V. Cicoirel, op. cit., p. 122.
In Modern Language teaching, the iron law is that the material to be taught must be carefully graded, so that one step leads without too much anguish to another, and the class is always working at the edge of its knowledge. As René Descartes expressed it in the seventeenth century,

"diviser chacune des difficultés ... en autant de parcelles qu'il se pourrait." 1

"to divide each of the difficulties ... into as many portions as were possible." 2

So, "in the initial stages of learning, ... gradual linguistic progression is important: when mastery over the more basic differences between English and French grammar is achieved, then the powers of analogy, deduction and induction are not so likely to err and progress becomes swift." 3

With the recognition of the learning theorist's dictum that "the less familiar the situation or the task to be performed, the more important slow-increment learning becomes", 4 psychologists recommended "paired associates" as a basis for Modern Language learning. In a similar vein, Charles Fries, the structural Linguist, advocated the presentation of minimal pairs, or "paires minima", that is words which are opposed, consisting of similar phonemic structure differing only by one significant sound. He applied this principle in his "Intensive course in English for Latin-American Students", a textbook published in 1943 by Michigan university English Language Institute.

In view of the fact that, in Modern Language learning, oral fluency is the ultimate goal, "the main demand made on the student is that he

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should constantly repeat those sentences where the structure contrasts most with its semantic parallel in the mother tongue.\footnote{1} Clearly, "the points of contrast are points of acquisition",\footnote{2} notwithstanding that identical graphemic representation (i.e., words such as "nation" and "pain" are graphemically the same but phonetically different in French and English), "may be deceptive and may increase the chances of confusion".\footnote{3} On the grounds that "the learning of all linguistic elements, categories and features shared between L₁ and L₂ is greatly facilitated, whilst that of those which are divergent is greatly impeded",\footnote{4} differences "have to be studied and learned, not ignored".\footnote{5} It must not be overlooked however, that:

"plus une opposition est minime, plus elle demande de précision articulatoire".  \footnote{6} "the more minimal the opposition is, the more precise its pronunciation should be".  \footnote{6}

Although the number of points of contrast is large, two examples will suffice to illustrate the practical application deriving from this phonemic theory.

Considering that the plural of French nouns does not involve any morphophonological distinction in the speech form (e.g., the additional /s/ is not sounded), but simply a vowel change in an unaccented prefixed marker, it would be rational then to introduce French nouns as minimal pairs. An approach on these lines affords the added advantage of showing

\footnote{2} David A. Wilkins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100.
\footnote{5} David Crystal, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 21.
the students how the Modern Language, i.e., French, works on the paradigmatic level. Secondly, /i/ - /o/ in "il" - "elle" constitute oral oppositions, e.g.:

- \( \text{il rit} \) - /ilri/  
- \( \text{il part} \) - /ilpar/  
- \( \text{il écrit} \) - /ilekri/  

- \( \text{elle rit} \) - /elri/  
- \( \text{elle part} \) - /elpar/  
- \( \text{elle écrit} \) - /elekri/  

To sum up, we have seen that such a notion as the learner's "mastery of morphological rules comes later than his command of syntax"¹ should guide the choice Modern Language teachers make as to the teaching method they may select (vid supra, this subsection).

First then, once the audio-visual lesson has been activated (cf. Table II), ideally the learners "practice points of syntax and phonology arising from the strip; they do structure drills, distinguish minimal pairs, and repeat sentences with particular intonation patterns"² for, if the class-room provides the "prosthetic"³ environmental set-up and the audio-visual course is the starting point, the combination of both elements constitutes the signal which is deemed to elicit the pupil's response. Professor Esper's study of mentalism in linguistics led him to surmise that the effectiveness of the signal in generating the response of the speaker is dependent upon an appropriate history of the speaker's nervous system. When the material is presented initially, a technique which consists in projecting "the film-strip pictures, without the sound, enables us (sc. the teachers.A.S.L.) to add many useful words

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¹ "The Bullock Report", op. cit., para. 5.3.

² Vivian J. Cook, in The Communicative Teaching of English, Christopher S. Candlin, ed., London: Longman. (Forthcoming.)

³ Professor Skinner's term. (cf. Times Edn Suppl, No. 2965, 17.3.72, p. 120.)
and phrases which can be built almost subconsciously into the experience of the pupils".\(^1\)

Whatever the teaching technique which is preferred, notwithstanding the linguistic notions that may guide the selection, "the ideal with young children is to slip each new little verbal structure into their minds unnoticed, by creating a natural use-situation for each phrase, grafting it upon known elements and recalling it in use until it is firmly lodged in their memory".\(^2\) Charles Bouton has intimated that:

"c'est justement cette activité neuro-physiologique primaire (sc. une activité idéo-articulatoire, A.S.L.) qui constitue réellement l'intégration dans la mesure où pour tout fait de langage, comprendre est agir c'est-à-dire, ici, reprendre, imiter".\(^3\)

Secondly, there is evidence that, beyond the primary stage so described by Charles Bouton, the secondary neurophysiological activity should consist of ensuring the integration of newly acquired lexical items, which takes place most effectively where the teaching mode enables the learner to contextualize them by means of frequent and intense practice so that, as the right associations are made, semantic assurance is established.

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Conclusions.

Dr. Palmer and his contemporaries laid the foundations for the emerging Direct method at a time when the study of Linguistics was divorced from language teaching not only in Britain but also in the United States. For example, Leonard Bloomfield deplored that, in the nineteen twenties, "our schools are conducted by persons who, from professors of education down to teachers in the classroom, know nothing of the results of linguistic science, not even the relation of writing to speech or of standard language to dialect. In short, they do not know what language is, and yet must teach it, and in consequence waste years of every child's life and reach a poor result." The import is that "virtually the entire educational process is mediated through language and yet for years teachers have begun their careers with no understanding of the nature of language structure, its psychological and social functions or of the ways in which their own specialisation depends upon language." Assertions such as these may, to a certain extent, explain Professor Skinner's claim that "it is probably because traditional methods are so inefficient that we have been led to suppose that education requires such a prodigious part of a young person's day", hence the importance of the syllabus and the methods of teaching in Modern Languages.

There are presently pointers to change which are, in fact, encouraging. The view that, "for the student, the development of competence must take priority over the acquisition of a body of knowledge" is beginning to

influence the forward-looking Modern Language teachers, who deplore that "much theory has been concerned with the speaker and with the words but little attention has been paid to the listener and to the things spoken of." ¹ In the nineteen seventies, there are clear indications that we need to develop a "body of literature covering what is learned, and how it is learned, (only then) will we know what the true subject matter for constructing an applied linguistics will be".² Indeed, Dr. Howe (Exeter University) has called upon the need to change from "what the teachers do", to "look directly at learning where it is happening, that is in the learner. After all, learning takes place in learners, not their teachers."³ The magnitude of the implications is revealed by Professor Cicourel's assertion that "the child's interpretation of what he is expected to do remain somewhat foreign (even) to the researcher's conception of language acquisition".⁴

To sum up, there is a sub-group of well-informed teachers of languages, in particular those who make the analysis and evaluation of curriculum change integral to their work, that regard for example the "mis-mem" approach as senile, but they are often forced to pay lip-service to it, if they want to get on in their professional careers and that become in varying degrees infected in the process (vid supra, chapter 1). It remains doubtful however whether there is, in the long run, any "point in changing the pattern of language teaching every four or five years if the changes are not based on evidence about second language learning but

³ Michael Howe, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 98, 31.8.73, p. 12.
⁴ Aaron V. Cicourel: Cognitive Sociology, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 120.
on hypotheses adopted because of their currency in psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics or linguistics itself. While we have seen that judicious Modern Language teachers can frequently be lured on to practising a prejudiced approach, on the other hand, the small but persistent voices being raised express disquieting thoughts about empirical and haphazard techniques in Modern Language teaching (vid supra, PART I). Although "most of our educationists still assume good progress at all levels", experience of the exclusively audio-visual approach which, "when put into operation gives rise to the most complex of practical problems", "has left many teachers in doubt as to its validity". The unhappy outcome is that, in the Modern Language world, "the problems are being tackled with as many degrees of dismay, misgiving, determination or optimism as there are teachers concerned".

1 Vivian J. Cook, in The Communicative Teaching of English, Christopher N. Candlin, ed., London: Longman. (Forthcoming.)


Chapter 6. Reading: An Introduction to the Symbolic Notation of the Target Language.

"Fluent readers are likely to become fluent writers."
— Stuart Froome, 1974.

It has been stated that "linguists imply that the same mechanisms govern both the production and comprehension of speech". So do audio-visual course designers. Consequently, it is deemed that an audio-visual course provides the environmental set-up which is conducive to the practice of the first two monolingual skills of comprehension and speaking (vid supra, chapter 2). Reading constitutes the stage that normally follows the audio-lingual skills of understanding and speaking. Charles Dodson's own extensive experience led him to claim that oral reading—
— gives the pupil an opportunity to speak in the foreign language without having to work out the content of the sentences spoken;
— gives the teacher an opportunity to correct the pupils' pronunciation and intonation;
— builds up the pupils' confidence in oral expression.

As, at first, reading should consist of the oral rendering of well-known patterns, ideally, "reading, when introduced, should be strictly co-ordinated with work in the language laboratory. There, the material to be read is first heard."

A simple reader profusely illustrated, such as Geoffrey Richardson's "Salut, les jeunes!", which provides the initial reading material bridging

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the gap between the audio-visual course and the textbook proper, i.e., Peter Downes's "Le français d'aujourd'hui, 1ère partie", affords the added advantage of lending itself to the catechetical approach. The bearing upon Modern Language learning is so important that Leo Cole did not hesitate to affirm that "rapid progress results from having carefully prepared and graded sets of questions, each of which demands one specific answer". Yet, the reviewer for "Modern Languages" could still deplore in the nineteen fifties that "there is no clear indication in the (Ministry of Education) pamphlet that the fundamental idea behind 'The Oral Method' is that a systematic build-up of mastery of the basic structures at work may be established by oral techniques, mainly in the form of question and answer work... in which questions are so devised as to force the pupils to use the new form or structure in their answers".

A complementary device to reading, judicious questioning has largely superseded the exercises of a right and wrong type. In Olaf Anderson's words, the new "exercises... can only be answered if the text has been read and appreciated, not just as to actual content, but as to meaning and interpretation". The new approach bears witness to a relatively recent trend which ought to be welcomed considering that "comprehension has been too much neglected in the past both in teaching and in examining". Besides, the Assistant Masters have suggested that, providing the reading material has been carefully selected, reading fosters...
the acquisition of new grammar rules by the Heuristic method. For example, as Lucy phrased the point when discussing the "Découvrons la France" series, "most of it (sc. the text. A.S.L.) is within the linguistic capability of fourth and fifth-year readers, who will find that they absorb much information".¹

If reading is of the utmost importance for developing the "sentiment linguistique" (vid supra, chapter 4) in speeding up both the comprehension process and the learning of paradigms, it also introduces the pupil to the decoding task. So, leading linguists have strongly recommended throughout the nineteen sixties, the selection and orderly presentation for beginners, then they advocated short natural texts as and when a suitable selection is available in print. Some "readers" lend themselves to rapid reading in the second or third year. In Mary Glasgow's words, if the young reader is to succeed, "it is essential that there should be no hold-ups which impede fairly rapid reading".² for "only in that way may the sense of the rhythmic groups in the language be developed".³

At the turn of the century, Professor Jespersen (Copenhagen University) surmised that "we may perhaps formulate the positive requirements for those reading selections which are to be the foundation for instruction in languages, namely that as far as possible they must

(1) be connected with a sensible meaning,
(2) be interesting, lively, varied,
(3) contain the most necessary material of the language first, especially the material of everyday language,

¹ F. M. Lucy, in Times Edal Suppl., No. 3041, 7.9.73, p. 25.
² Mary Glasgow, in Times Edal Suppl., 20.2.70, p. 46.
³ Barnet Libbish, op. cit., p. ix.
(4) be correct French (German, etc.);
(5) pass gradually from that which is easy to that which is more
difficult,
(6) yet without too much consideration for what is merely
grammatically easy or difficult.

This order does not indicate the relative importance or value of the
requirements, which might be difficult to determine. If there should be
any disagreement between them, I suppose it is generally best to try to
find some practical compromise. ²

While it has been acknowledged that the Direct method stemmed from
Otto Jespersen's pioneer work, it is obvious that Professor Jespersen
relied extensively on reading selections as being "the foundation for
instruction in languages".³ Nowadays, it is increasingly recognized both
by linguists and psychologists that pupils learning a Modern Language will
benefit greatly from using a reader at the appropriate points of their
study. First, according to the linguists, there is no doubt that "one
of the important contributions that the science of linguistics has made
to the teaching of foreign languages has been the emphasis on the 'natural'
sequence of language-learning—listening, speaking, reading, and
writing (for) the sequence of progression does not move automatically".⁴
As the psychologists explain that "complex skills of recognition and
production are built from sub-skills",⁵ "each step must be developed as

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1 Brackets in original.
2 J. Otto Jespersen: How to Teach a Foreign Language, (Sophia
Yhler-Olsen Bertelsen's translation), London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1904,
p. 23.
3 Loc. cit.
5 J. G. Wolff: Language, Brain and Hearing, (London: Methuen,
a separate and complex skill; reading follows listening and speaking as a secondary order of symbolization reminiscent of the sound system (written symbols only stand for sounds¹); writing should have the spoken language as its basis in order to be meaningful and effective."²

Audio-visual courses, by "bringing an emphasis on the spoken language into the classroom",³ attempt to teach the grammar of the Modern Language by induction. When grammar is taught inductively, it is deemed that formal explanation will be useful only after the mastery of a pattern has been acquired. For example, a teacher of German currently advises his pupils that "as you read watch for the genders of nouns and the irregularities of their plurals and for the irregular verbs till you identify them unconsciously. Read enough, too, and the sheer pressure of words and phrases in your head will come out in sensible, fluent speech."⁴

Considering that "teachers rarely have perfect accents, and even if they had, it would be difficult to give the children enough practice",⁵ "in our circumstances, where opportunities for conversation outside lessons are inevitably rather few and far between, books must play a large part".⁶ Reading will increase "the learner's stock of lexical items and his acquaintance with the more complex clause and sentence structures of the language".⁷ Indeed, the Assistant Masters have claimed in their symposium that

¹ Brackets in original.
⁴ Cited by John Buist, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3024, 23.7.73, p. VI.
⁵ Elisabeth Ingram, in Barnet Libbsh (ed.), on cit., pp. 20-21.
⁶ E.A. Greatwood, in Mod Langs, Vol. 43, 1967, p. 159.
"(a reader) tackles the grammar difficulty in several ways at once:
1. It provides a constant revision of grammar already known.
2. It enables the master to find out what grammar is imperfectly understood and to make it clear.
3. It enables the pupils to induce new grammar rules for themselves from the examples which occur in the text.
Experience will show that this inductive method can be of great value." 1

If, according to the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters, this inductive method can be of great value, it follows that how the background linguistic system is taught must be important.

Traditionally, the explanatory method equated the acquisition of a foreign language with rote-learning. François Gouin has vividly depicted this strenuous technique. He wrote that:

"Je me donnai résolument à l'étude de la grammaire, adverbes, préfixes et prépositions, syntaxe et méthodologie, tout passa dans mon ceil, sur ma langue et dans ma mémoire: tout" 1 2

"With determination I undertook studying the grammar—adverbs, prefixes and prepositions, syntax and methodology—everything moved from eye to tongue and into my memory: everything" 1 2

The bearing upon Modern Language learning is that "items that have once been presented or exposed to a learner for a short time quickly fade from memory, particularly when many more items are immediately presented", 3 considering that "remembering or recollecting literally implies a reconstructive process—the assembly of dismembered mnemonic events". 4

Moreover, a review of Irvin Rock's research—published in the March,

1959 issue of "The American journal of Psychology"—has led to the conclusion that "it is not storage but retrieval, that is the real bottleneck in verbal learning". It is certainly not yet known "by what process the child's mind extracts pieces of . . . prose from his mind and brings them into spontaneous active use in everyday speech". In order to promote "the language revolution, so glily announced in the 1960s", as a result of "years of eclectic experiment in modern-language teaching", we have seen (vid supra, chapter 1) that the trend-setters claimed that the audio-visual approach reproduced the way we have all actually learnt our native language. Besides, on the one hand, we know of the implications of the "radically new psycholinguistic theory of language acquisition" (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection A) and, on the other, we are also aware of the successive processes which characterize the progressive mastery of verbs for the child learning his native language (cf. Diagram 1).

We have found that the French experience at the pre-school stage was similar (vid supra, chapter 1). In the United Kingdom the "elimination (of grammar) from the teaching of English, almost universal in junior schools, is the rule rather than the exception even in secondary schools". So far, the teaching of grammar has been ignored, considering that the thesis consists of a detailed study of French teaching in an English-speaking community where grammar is frowned upon (vid infra, chapter 7).

2 B. N. Parker, in Mod Langs, Vol. 37, 1956, p. 159.
3 Michael J. Smith, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3015, 9-3-73, p. 58.
4 Denis H. Stott, in Times Edn Suppl, 22.2.63.
5 Leon Jakobovits's phrase. (cf. LG L, Vol. 18, 1968, p. 89.)
subsection B). Robert Béar, who discussed whether or not taking grammar seriously, stated that "'grammar' has long been a dirty word over here". However, although "the French, traditionally grammar addicts", have trodden a cautious path, Professor Chevalier has pointed out that the approach characterized by the learning of paradigms was heavily decried at the time when traditional education fell into disrepute as the "chahut anomique"—Testanière’s analysis published in the "Revue française de sociologie"—showed in 1967.

The problem is not specific to French. Maurice Druon, who was Minister for Cultural Affairs in 1974, declared at that time in a radio broadcast that:

"Il sèvit dans le monde que l'on appelle la crise de la langue maternelle." "What has been termed the crisis of the mother tongue is a world-wide phenomenon."

Gone are the days when the learning of a Modern Language was equated with the tedious memorization of grammatical paradigms. We have seen however (vid supra, chapter 2) that "much of language learning depends initially upon memorization", the corollary leads to questioning "what should be taught? in what order? by what method?"

Indeed, "the problems of language teaching overwhelm the beginner". The part learning method, according to which one works piecemeal over a limited amount of materials, still has its keen supporters who value it in particular for the learning of vocabulary items. Empirical research

1 Loc. cit.

2 Loc. cit.


5 Loc. cit.
has not established that the part learning approach enhances the learner's ability "to convert 'dictionary words' (i.e. etymons) into 'working sentence-units' (i.e. ergons)." The whole-part method of learning, whose controversy reached a climax in the late nineteen thirties, led research workers to aver that "it cannot be stated positively that either the whole method or any form of the part method is superior for either learning or retention purposes."  

Theorists have worked out mathematical models of learning though. Professor Suppes (Stanford University), who attempted to apply their work to second language learning, has drawn attention to the implications that, if we believe that "learning is faster than forgetting", the number of items to be learnt should be as large as possible but if, on the contrary, we assume that "learning is slower than forgetting", then the amount selected for learning should be as small as possible. While "linguists have not given the problem of memory much attention", Patrick "Suppes has adduced evidence to show that if learning occurs at a faster rate than forgetting then the main emphasis in teaching should always be on new materials. If this hypothesis is accepted, then in language teaching the 'whole method', in which a body of new material is worked through completely, may be better than the 'part method'."  

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1 Here and infra, brackets in original.


5 Loc. cit.


Alternatively, if the rear-guard still maintains that lexical items must be committed to memory (and let us remember Professor Victor's warning that "no foreign language will ever be learned simply by committing to memory long lists of disconnected words"), systematic organization is to be preferred on the ground that words should be grouped within a broad topic for, from the linguistic standpoint, equating language acquisition with the learning of lexical items is a considerable naïvety, the memorization of a list of words jotted down at random being increasingly considered frivolous. An H.M.I. has asserted that, in the United Kingdom, "in theory, all the sentences required at a particular time would have been learnt, but pupils forget". The point is that, when the mistakes made by hundreds of students on French examinations at Michigan University were looked into, the statistical analysis revealed that "60 per cent. were traceable to students having 'learned' some French-English correspondence which was then extended into an area where it does not exist. (In brief, as) French and English constructions correspond under specific circumstances (,) the student, consciously or subconsciously, remembers this correspondence and applies it in another situation where it does not exist."

Moreover, it has been observed that "mastery of a language, for which a thorough grasp of grammar, syntax and idiom is the prerequisite, results from an intimate and exact knowledge of the varying meanings of words in current use and of their particular suitability in any given

1 Wilhelm Victor: Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren!, Leipzig: Reisland, 1882, p. 6. (Translation from Aspects of Education, op. cit.)


context". In plain terms, it is lucidly perceived that "the words we use, though they have a central core of meaning which is relatively fixed, have a fringe of uncertainty when applied to the infinitely variable facts of experience". In sum, "noscitur a sociis", that is, "a word may be known by the company it keeps". To this, French linguists and others have paid attention. Indeed, "Saussure, Martinet, and Wittgenstein stressed the importance of word use in a particular context". While "the study of structural meanings is in its infancy", transformational grammar theorists are nonetheless, not only aware that "structural and lexical meanings can interact", but also that "the deep structure expresses those grammatical functions that play a role in determining the semantic interpretation".

The faction favouring the "status quo" have no qualms to put all the ills on the irrational swing towards modern trends considering that, to them, grammar is the "fundamental method of words". There is no doubt that the grammatical formulae learnt in connexion with a Modern Language, generally French, "enable one to recognize the regularities of linguistic use and provide a recognizable transferable framework of organization as a

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1 Pierre Watter, in *Times Edul Suppl.*, No. 2993, 10.11.72, p. 27.
3 Ibid., p. 92.
4 Aaron V. Cicourel, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
6 Ibid., p. 79.
8 Professor Shepherd's phrase. (cf. *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 130, 12.4.74, p. 4.)
pupil moves from one language to another". Test results provide of course a clear indication of how well students have mastered the formal rules of French grammar. In any case, it is frequently acknowledged in conversation among teachers of a subsequent Modern Language, that pupils or students reach the standard required by examining boards on the completion of a short, intensive course in German, Spanish, et cetera, largely on the strength of the rigorous training they had experienced in their learning of the first Modern Language, through which they acquainted themselves with the universal meta-language of grammar.

With the recognition that "language is basically audio-lingual communication", in Britain, the audio-lingual method which fosters communication has, by and large, replaced the tedious learning of grammatical rules. Studies probing into the competence of native speaker of English have also encouraged reading, as opposed to the learning of formal grammar. Among others, Dorothy Bagley acknowledged that "an experiment very carefully conducted . . . shows that boys who received instruction in literature over a period of 33 weeks wrote better and more accurate compositions than those instructed in grammar". Again, Heath's account brought out in 1962 that, after ten months, the control groups of boys and girls whose work consisted of class-room English had fallen behind the experimental groups of pupils. The latter whose work in English was library-centred "made significantly greater gains" in reading, spelling, and composition, that is, on sentences score.

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1 David Martin, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 143, 12.7.74, p. 5.
Moreover, the extensive use of audio-visual courses in Modern Language teaching has contributed to a reappraisal of reading following evidence that the audio-lingual habit theory fostered the acquisition of a true feel, or "sentiment linguistique", for the target language by means of pattern drills (vid supra, chapter 4). It is widely believed that, "if the pupil becomes familiar with the sounds of words and says them correctly almost by habit, if the sounds are impressed on his auditory system and he has said them accurately many times, he will progress rapidly with his reading and will be less likely to mispronounce words; indeed the link must be forged between the sound of a word and its written form, but the pupil will not have to tackle two things at the same time (i.e. the learning of a new sound and the learning of its graphic form^), for he will already have mastered pronunciation when he is confronted with a printed sentence." The audio-lingual habit theory is therefore conducive not only to efficient reading, but also to effective reading.

The developing interest in reading is a reaction against the recurring complaint that "far too little reading is done in the middle school". When an official commission investigated the teaching of Russian they stated that, in elementary readers, "it is desirable to introduce the student to authentic texts when practicable". As linguists promoted a fundamental belief in natural texts, "the linguists' positivist inheritance and their preoccupation with 'grammaticality' have tended to relegate fictive utterances to a limbo of ontological and

1 Brackets in original.
2 Leo R. Cole, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
3 Nancy R. Ewing, in Barnet Libbish (ed.), op. cit., p. 121.
syntactic deviance". Natural texts have been recommended for some time by the strand of forward-looking teachers, whose attacks crystallized against the textbook simplifier. The tradition, which the structuralists were not likely to disavow (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection B), had set in on the basis that "there is need of a vocabulary within which reading material may be rewritten and simplified. The exponent of this standpoint (i.e., Edward L. Thorndike, himself a member of the Carnegie Commission) demands adequate words of precision, stylistic variants, and words of emotional connotation, in order to enrich his stories."  

The views of the inter-war committee have been challenged on the ground that the language is "thought up" by its author. The linguistic and cultural content is based on hunches and not on any specific studies of language, culture or society nor is it sufficiently related to the level of development of the user."  

The growing influence of the linguists has fostered a critical appraisal of elaborated reading materials, the prevalent practice found in textbooks and readers. Elaborated reading materials had been adopted owing to the belief that, as so much complexity was immediately encountered when the pupil began learning a Modern Language, it was essential to simplify by selecting certain grammatical structures of the language as the things to study first.

The outcome was twofold. First, it was realized that any selection was, of necessity, artificial. Second, elaborated reading materials designed to meet the principles of building vocabulary and providing repetition have been heavily criticized for producing "uncharacteristically

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1 Trevor Eaton, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 199, 15.8.75, p. 11.
stilted pseudo-colloquial language".

Pseudo-colloquial forms, such as "comment allez-vous?", "comment ça va?", are of little use for the erection of grammatical superstructure". Worse still, they are unpredictable so that "reading schemes which use contrived and unnatural language prevent children from developing the ability to detect sequential probability in linguistic structure" (vid supra, chapter 2).

This is a serious matter indeed. For example, the psycholinguist who supports a cognitive theory upholds the concept that meaning derives from the inter-relationship of the three components—the semantic, phonological, and syntactic—which underlie an utterance. Moreover, "the acquisition of meaning is a complex and little understood process", for "the study of meaning and its relation to grammar have been woefully confused by the widespread confounding of reference, meaning," et cetera.

In the inter-war period, Charles Serrus had begged the question:

"pourquoi enfin nous arrivons-t-il si souvent de ne pas savoir dire tout ce que nous voulons, ou d'avoir l'impression que nous avons très mal dit ce que nous pensions?" 6

"why is it indeed that we are so often unable to express all we want, or we sense we have rather badly phrased our thoughts?" 6

As Anouilh's "Comte" expresses it, "nous parlons tous par phrases inachevées, avec trois petits points sous-entendus, parce que nous ne

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2 Loc. cit.


trouvons jamais le mot juste".¹ Such is the quest for the "convenient capsule of thought",² the elusive "mot juste" which would convey the full meaning.

Saint-Exupéry's fox could sigh that "words are the source of misunderstanding".³ When, in the nineteenth century, the neo-grammarians made meaning "the basis of the chief organizing process of language",⁴ Professor Paul expounded that the words of a language are associatively organized into entire sentences. So,

"nicht bloß die einzelnen wörter, sondern größere lautreihen, ganze sätze
assoziieren sich unmittelbar mit dem gedankeninhalt, der in
sie gelegt worden ist. Diese
wenigstens ursprünglich durch
die ausserwelt gegebenen
gruppen organisieren sich nun
in der seele jedes individuums
zu weit reicheren und
verwickelteren verbindungen,
die sich nur zum kleinsten
teile bewusst vollziehen und
dann auch unbewusst weiter
wirken, zum bei weiten
grösseren teile niemals
wenigstens zu klaren bewusstsein
gelangen und nichts
destoweniger wirksam sind."⁵

In the following decades, the exponents of the Direct method purported that:

¹ Jean Anouilh: "La Répétition ou l'amour puni", in Pièces brillantes, (Paris: La Table ronde, 1951), p. 387.
"la progression est rigoureusement méthodique. Elle va du concret à l'abstrait, du simple au complexe, des éléments aux combinaisons, des mots aux phrases et des phrases aux règles." 1

"the progression is strictly planned. It moves from the concrete to the abstract, from the simple to the complex, from elements to structures, from words to sentences and from sentences to the rules." 1

Their method was shortlived, for those trend setters who had taken as a starting point a sound principle, ignored the results of the fundamental research undertaken in their own days.

In fact, Dr. Decroly's detailed work on "la psychologie de l'enfant normal" in the early years of the century testifies that:

"l'enfant assimile mieux les mots que les syllabes et les phrases que les mots parce que c'est la marche naturelle de son esprit de saisir l'ensemble avant les éléments". 2

"children absorb words more easily than syllables, and sentences more easily than words, for the natural functioning of their minds is such that they will grasp the whole before its elements". 2

The formal explanation is that, "in young children,... accidental association takes the place of logical or causal connection" and this type of thinking has been termed "syncretisme", or syncretism. So, the nature of the sentence as a unit is borne out from the psychological—as well as the linguistic—standpoint, although the linguists' formulation remains tentative pending the development of a more "adequate analytic descriptive apparatus". 4

Considering that, in the words of Roland Barthes,

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"la notion de 'not' est l'une des plus discutées en linguistique", 1

"in Linguistics, the 'word' is one of the more debated concepts", 1

the focus of interest has significantly altered from the word to the sentence. Nonetheless, "linguistic theory is currently in ferment due to the efforts of Harris, Chomsky, and others". 2 So much so that Quillian has intimated that, "even if we honor the transformational linguists' model for the production of utterances, we will need a more complex model to study the understanding of sentences". 3 Moreover, the dominant view is that, on the syntagmatic level, "la phrase est un assemblage logiquement et grammaticalement organisé en vue d'exprimer un sens complet". 4 The philologist's description is that:

"Les mots qui entrent dans une phrase y composent une famille intimente unie. Ne les martelez pas ni ne les séparez trop. Ils sont faits pour vivre en étroite compagnie, tous ceux que le sens apparente et rapproche étant unis par des glissements insensibles ou par de douces liaisons. Les yeux mentent, lorsqu'ils vous font décomposer en douze maigres syllabes: 'Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur', un groupe que l'oreille perçoit comme une ligne sonore continue." 5

"The words found in a sentence form a closely-knit sequence. Neither should you stress nor divide them. Their lot is to come into contact, all those akin in meaning are drawn together, and either moves or gentle 'liaisons' bind them. If our perception consists of twelve soft syllables: 'Le jour n'est pas plus pur que le fond de mon coeur' (Daylight is not purer than my very heart), then our sight is misleading us, for the verse is perceived by the ear as a continuous sonant sequence." 5

More relevant to the Modern Language teacher is Professor Vendryes's


3 Aaron V. Cicourel, op. cit., p. 122.


statement, which he made in the light of his scholarly studies. He wrote that:

"La phrase est l'élément fondamental du langage. . . . la phrase a exactement la dimension de l'image verbale. . . . toutes deux n'ont de limites que la faculté de combinaison de l'esprit." 1

"The sentence is a basic element in language. . . . The sentence has exactly the same dimensions as the verbal image. . . . both are limited only by the power of the mind to form combinations." 2

Miller and Chomsky, who asserted that "sentences have a compelling power to control both thought and action", 3 "have inspired vigorous research activity by psychologists", 4 for "the psycholinguistic problem does not appear until one tries to deal with sentences". 5

On the one hand, Professor Paul's study of the historical perspective had prompted him to affirm in the nineteenth century that:

"alle sprachtätigkeit besteht in der bildung von sätzen" 6

"all linguistic activity consists in the formation of sentences" 7

and, on the other, Professor Victor has "stressed the importance of learning a language by means of speech patterns, of sentences that mean something". 8 Philosophers deplore however, that "there is not a sentence

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4 Tony Cline, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3079, 31.5.74, p. 22.


8 J. Darlington, in Mod Langs, Vol. 43, 1962, p. 152.
which adequately states its own meaning”.\(^1\) Although we shall see that
the more traditional semantic criteria are still receiving attention (vid
inf., chapter 7, subsection A), “in the competition for least understood
aspects of language acquisition, semantic development is surely the
winner”.\(^2\)

Meaning, it is thought, is pervaded by the “restriction du sens”
chiefly because:

> “nos langues . . . sont
> condamnées à un perpétuel
> manque de proportion entre
> le mot et la chose”.

Nowadays, the cognitive sociologists hold the view that deep structure
“always implies more information than is displayed”.\(^3\)

François Gouin, who was grappling with the problem in the nineteenth
century, exclaimed that:

> “c'est un feu qui couve sous
> la cendre, me disais-je, et
> qui s'animerà peu à peu.
> Lisons, lisons toujours;
> traduisons, traduisons sans
> casse; chassons, chassons
> cent fois après le même mot
> dans le dictionnaire; prênon-
> le cent fois, relissons-le cent
> fois; nous finirons par
> l'apprivoiser.”\(^4\)

> “it is a smouldering fire, I
> thought, which will slowly
> get going. Let us read, let
> us keep on reading; let us
> translate; let us translate
> ceaselessly; let us search,
> let us search the same word
> a hundred times in the
> dictionary; let us have it
> a hundred times, let us
> release it a hundred times;
> we shall end up by taming it.”\(^6\)

\(^1\) Alfred N. Whitehead: *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, (London:
Rider, 1948), p. 73.

\(^2\) Philip S. Dale: *Language Development*, (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden,

\(^3\) Michel J. Bréal: *Essai de sémantique*, (Paris: Hachette, 1897),
p. 118.

\(^4\) Michel J. Bréal: *Semantics*, (Mrs. Henry Cуст’s translation),
London: W. Heinemann, 1900, p. 106.

\(^5\) Aaron V. Cicourel, *op. cit.* , p. 107.

\(^6\) François Gouin: *Exposé d’une nouvelle méthode linguistique*, (Paris:
The reading skill therefore depends upon extensive practice. In the "Anzeigung und Verarbeitung des Wortschatzes" published in 1907, Walter could claim in the light of his own experience that the practice of as many contexts of a word as possible often served the purpose of building up the full connotation of that word. Moreover, "reading is by far the most efficient means of learning (a language), because it has the additional use of formulating in the reader's mind the principles of the arrangement of words in an orderly sequence to convey their intended meaning".1

Edward Sapir averred that "the mere phonetic framework of speech does not constitute the inner fact of language".2 While "understanding is only one step along the long road to oral competence"; 3 "what distinguished each of (the) elements is that it is the outward sign of a specific idea".4 The notion that "all meaning is cultural"5 "embodies a conception of 'meaning' which runs as follows: We know what a word means, when we have learned how to apply it in the various contexts in which it occurs. Learning how to apply a word is simply the process of learning language."6

In sum, "meaning is subtle, fluctuating, and elusive".7 Dr. Lashley illustrated this point in the celebrated Nixon Symposium paper. He wrote: "The mill-wright on my right thinks it right that some conventional

4 Edward Sapir, op. cit., p. 25.
rite should symbolize the right of every man to write as he pleases", \(^1\) which led him to comment that, as the word /ray/ has four spellings and at least ten meanings, "the word can take its position only when the particular one of its ten meanings becomes dominant". \(^2\)

Professor Halliday has observed that, "for the linguist, all study and description of language, whether formal or contextual, is concerned with meaning, since language is meaningful behaviour". \(^3\)

The point is that, even "in the natural process of acquiring our mother-tongue, we need countless context situations to identify meaning". \(^4\) The semantic value is often elucidated by the context, that is the cognitive domain.

In view of Charles Bally's early statement that, "among the elements of identification, the context always is in the forefront", \(^5\) linguists think that "meaning can only be brought about by integrating words into a linguistic context so that the complex interrelationships can be allowed to operate". \(^6\) As "knowing some 'ad hoc' definition of a

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\(^2\) Ibid.


word is not equivalent to knowing its meaning",¹ the psychologist-philosopher asserts that "meanings are formed and had through an interaction between experiencing and symbols or things".² The complexity is probably best revealed by Dr. Leech's treatment of "Seven types of meaning"³ (conceptual, connotative, stylistic, effective, reflected, collocative, and thematic).

It is therefore hardly surprising that, in the nineteen seventies, there is a growing acceptance of the value of reading stemming from the claims that:

* carefully graded readers help to absorb naturally the Modern Language and foster vocabulary acquisition;
* as good stories are fun, they promote reading for pleasure;
* extensive varied reading reinforces audio-visual class work;

and

* if the audio-visual courses "exploit ostension as a way of introducing the meaning of words",⁴ the extension of meaning depends upon the inter-relationship between a particular word and its context, whose elements enhance identification. The new direction toward such goals is slowly percolating through the material becoming available. In some school-books, for example, abundant and lively material is "meant to be used and enjoyed, mimed, dramatised and adapted to modern

¹ Dennis Hayes, in The Guardian, (London), 3.9.74, p. 22.
⁴ David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 126.
recording techniques".¹ Denis Grayson, the author of "A la page", qualified this statement by acknowledging that "these objects are only achieved at a price—in this case a wider range of vocabulary and the freer use of colourful idiom".²

Considering that "knowledge of new words and of new meanings keeps increasing as we grow older",³ "it is naive to believe that any pupil at an early stage of language learning 'has learnt' the meaning of a word... Through reading the learner is led to recognize the non-equivalence of L₁ and L₂ items. He is exposed to the lexical items embedded in natural linguistic contexts, and as a result they begin slowly to have the same meaningfulness for him that they have for the native speaker. His exposure to language written in a variety of styles for a variety of purposes will also develop his sensitivity to the collocations that native speakers prefer."⁴ Clearly, as Dr. Jeanes ingeniously expressed it, "for the French there is nothing difficult about the imperfect and the partitive. Basically, the use of the imperfect or the partitive implies a choice of one particular speech pattern from those which the French consider important in interpreting reality. If a Frenchman hears another say 'hier j'allais en ville', it implies that, for a reason he is about to hear, his companion preferred not to say 'hier je suis allé en ville'. If he hears 'je voudrais du pain', he subconsciously realizes that the speaker does not wish 'le pain' or 'un

2 Loc. cit.
4 David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 132.
And if the pattern chosen does not fit the situation as the listener interprets it, he objects or at least feels uncomfortable."¹

The point is that, with the emerging evidence that pupils can make use of their implicit knowledge of grammar in learning to read, the verbal context, that is, "the extent to which the choice of a particular word depends upon the words that precede it", ² has gained an increased importance in early reading materials.

The reappraisal of reading materials is the normal outcome of new teaching methods stemming from the audio-lingual habit theory through which, "once the elements of a language have been mastered, a reading-readiness naturally arises of which the pedagogues themselves will tell you. Thus the child will wish to read more books and read them in a very much more intelligent way."³ This begs the question of competence which is fundamental to language learning. In Professor Oakeshott’s words, "to have command over the language of our civilization is, not to know the rules of their grammar, but to have the opportunity of a syntax and a vocabulary, rich in fine distinctions, in which to think for oneself. (Modern Language) learning, then, is acquiring the ability to feel and think, and the pupil will never acquire these abilities unless he has learned to listen for them and to recognize them in the conduct and utterances of others."⁴

Conclusions.

The linguistic scientists’ influential pronouncements have brought to the fore that the essence of language learning consists in the spontaneous acquisition, on the one hand, of the phonetic features and, on the other, of rhythms and patterns. Professor Fries’s pioneer work done in the Institute of Linguistics Studies (Michigan University) led him to state in 1947 that “in learning a new language . . . the chief problem is not at first that of learning vocabulary items. It is, first, the mastery of the sound system.”¹ There is therefore evidence that teachers and course designers have begun to pay increased attention to Applied Phonetics. However, the teaching of Phonetics “to the beginner in (emphasis in original) the material of the course and not before”² could only evolve once the technological equipments had been developed.

In Fernand Marty’s words, “the revolution we are witnessing is not due primarily to a change in the objectives of foreign language teachers, but rather to the (fact) that satisfactory equipment has been developed.”³ So, when the pupil repeats the script of a tape, he is “learning to control a new sound system within the context of phrases and sentences.”⁴ Consequently, the learner practises the acoustic features at first in the course of audio-visual lessons and later, through his reading sessions. The reorientation has been disappointingly slow, in spite of the fact that the movement “Vers la méthode phonétique intégrale pour les débutants” was initiated by Professor Delattre in the nineteen forties.

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² Pierre Delattre, in Mod Lg J., Vol. 32, 1948, p. 373.
So far, it is at the theoretical level that linguistics has been most influential. Paul Rivenc rightly pointed out that:

"La linguistique du XXe siècle, en soulignant l'importance de l'expression orale, a grandement valorisé l'orthophonie." 1

"By stressing the value of the oral aspect, twentieth-century Linguistics has conferred more importance upon Orthophony." 1

It is well known that "the student, in order to speak and understand the language must be able to reproduce the significant features in the distribution in which they occur"2 (vid supra, chapter 3).

Current Modern Language teaching practices are such that the learner is supposed to master the prosody in a purely casual way. The British Modern Language Association pronounced in a publication issued in the early nineteen fifties, that "it is not enough to rely on imitation".3 We have therefore been warned that, in so doing, we would certainly not foster language acquisition for a very large number of pupils, as "the average students and those with a poor ear . . . are in the majority and it is for them that our greatest efforts are needed".4 Considering that "la démarche phonologique est analytique",5 the fact is that the audio-lingual method has succeeded admirably in making teachers aware of the complexity of the language learning task (vid supra, conclusions to chapter 2).

The import is that, as most pupils are not able to concentrate simultaneously on speaking and listening, specific help is needed. At the grass roots, it is still being currently asserted that "today we know


2 Robert L. Politzer, in M S Lg Ling, No. 6, 1954, p. 19.


a great deal more about articulatory and acoustic phonetics, but these sciences have not provided the teachers with better means of teaching a correct pronunciation. The magnitude of the Modern Language teacher's routine work is reflected in a performance which befits the description that the student "speaks haltingly, with long pauses at places where normally there should be none (, ) for many students of foreign language this stage is the highest ever attained." It is of course well known that success depends on integrating everyone of the many aspects of Modern Language teaching into a coherent step-by-step programme.

It is rather unfortunate that, for this task which is vital if the majority of learners are to succeed, Modern Language teachers are still, to a large extent, left to their own devices. Quoting Professor Léon, "on a fait trop longtemps de l'enseignement de la prononciation un domaine a part, il est temps de l'inscrire a sa véritable place, qui est la base même de la structure linguistique." To sum up, the lesson to be learnt is that in Modern Language teaching, every component part of a course must be planned, not least Orthophony, as Professor Léon showed in the early nineteen sixties. Failing that, first, university teachers will go on deploiring that, "almost without exception, they (sic. the students. A. S. L.) speak with an unmitigated English accent" and, secondly, it will remain true to aver that pronunciation is acquired in spite of the surviving outmoded teaching technique.

3 Pierre R. Léon, in Le Français dans le monde, No. 41, 1966, p. 36.
4 John G. Weightman, in Times Lit Suppl, No. 3716, 25.5.73, p. 577.
Chapter 7. The Transition: Writing.

“Gestaltung, Umgestaltung, Des ew'gen Sinnes ew'ge Unterhaltung.”
— Wolfgang Goethe.

Subsection A — Discovering Functional Relationships.

Storr: —“How do you teach your girls to write French prose?
Schoolmistress: —My plan is a very simple one. I take some standard English author . . . and make my girls read it off into French, correcting them as they go along.
Storr: —You take my breath away”

The practice reported by Storr makes one’s mind boggle. It illustrates an age-old problem which has not been eased off in recent decades, first, by the spreading of the audio-lingual method and, secondly, "given that our society places such high value on writing as a social instrument it is surprising that the topic has so far attracted relatively little interest from the research community". However, understanding and reading—which are the parts forming the receptive repertoire—and speaking and writing—both characteristic of productive use—constitute the four basic monolingual skills to which, as Professor Willis stated it in 1972, must be added at one stage those of a bilingual nature, that is, translating and interpreting.

Nevertheless, in the eighteen sixties, Claude Marcel warned against formal training in translation. Again, at that time Professor Viktor ventured to say that:

“das Übersetzen in fremde Sprache ist eine Kunst, welche die Schule nichts angeht”. 4 "translation into foreign languages is an art that is no concern of the school". 5


2 F. Storr. (cf. J. Ed. No. 182, 1.9.1884, p. 349.)


While Dr. Greatwood considers that translation into English "tends to inhibit comprehension without translation (and) encourages thinking in terms of word for word equivalence", Professor Healey has pointed out that "prose translation has, of necessity, to be an all purpose tool, one which will provide constant exercise in grammar, syntax, usage, vocabulary, and style".

The linguists have no difficulty in showing that translations are fraught with problems which are insuperable at the secondary school stage. Vinay and Darbelnet single out one sentence for comparison in French and English:

"Il traverse la rivière à la nage." 3

"He swam across the river." 3

At the syntactic level, linguists observe that, in Vinay and Darbelnet's sentence,

"le verbe français est rendu en anglais par la préposition, et le groupe nominal 'à la nage' par le verbe 'swam'; les deux systèmes linguistiques fonctionnent de manière différentes". 4

"in English, the French verb is translated by a preposition, and the adjectival phrase 'à la nage' by the verb 'swam'; the two linguistic systems operate differently". 4

Yet, in the main, prose translation perpetuates the notion that the foreign language must be linked to the mother tongue. Besides, prose translation "prevents the spontaneous acquisition of rhythms and patterns which is the essence of language learning. It constantly brings to the fore the distractor of the native language, it constantly tempts the

1 E. A. Greatwood, in Mod Langs, Vol. 48, 1967, p. 158.


wrong response, not the right one, it sets traps, encourages anglicisms."¹

It is nonetheless well known that "for most boys and girls the way from passive acquaintance to active use is arduous and needs concentrated efforts",² for "words are so weighted with associations, they are linked to each other in so complex a fashion inside each language, that they never correspond exactly from one language to another".³ By adopting an oral approach in the teaching of a Modern Language, "we are dealing with oral lexicons whose connection with written dictionaries is unknown and often remote or irrelevant".⁴ Whatever the method, teaching to write French calls "for teachers with real mastery of the language and considerable skill in classroom techniques for exploiting the memorised matter",⁵ as the ability to write a Modern Language competently is a difficult skill to acquire.

Moreover, the learner has to gain control of both the phonetic form and the symbolic use of a word, and those differ in kind rather than in degree. For example, the linguist is aware that, "in speech, unlike in writing, the word is not conveniently marked off by pauses on either side"⁶ and Professor Paul has ingeniously expressed in the nineteenth century that:

² E. A. Greatwood, in Mod. Lang., op. cit., p. 158.
"a real analysis of the word into its proper elements is not merely extremely difficult, but is actually impossible. A word is not a united compound of a definite number of independent sounds, of which each can be expressed by an alphabetical sign; but it is essentially a continuous series of infinitely numerous sounds, and alphabetical symbols do no more than bring out certain characteristic points of this series in an imperfect way." 2

In his account based on Sievers's writing, Hermann Paul has therefore shown that the symbolic representation cannot but convey a very crude written record of the word. On the other hand, it has been surmised in the nineteen sixties, that the concept of bilingualism should be extended to include not only performance but also passive knowledge of the written language or any "contact with possible models in a second language and the ability to use these in the environment of the native language". 3

The implication is that, "because in functional terms the learning load is so big", 4 sooner or later, the Modern Language teacher has to deal with the problem of the sheer volume of materials to be learnt, which is characteristic of Modern Language learning. In France, a committee appointed by the Ministry for National Education reduced "the teaching of English to little more than 1,000 fairly simple words (claiming that)

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1 Hermann Paul: Principien der Sprachgeschichte, (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1880), p. 43.


4 Elizabedh Ingram, in Times Edul Suppl. No. 3014, 2.3.75, p. XII.
the child who can use (emphasis in original) those 1,000 words in spoken English at the end of two years will still be way ahead of the majority.\(^1\)

In Great Britain, as the problem has to be dealt with on a freelance basis, it has not yet been handled effectively.

Some course designers are more sensitive to the problem than others (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection A). When Mark Gilbert addressed the teachers who had gathered in 1973 at Birmingham University, he explained that he had restricted to ten words the number of new items presented in any single lesson of his "Cours illustré de français", the reviewer of the Modern Language Association still found that"the vocabulary (of Book 5) is demanding".\(^2\) Nonetheless, Professor Pattison (Minnesota University) is convinced that "one of the reasons for failure to attain the objective of speaking (emphasis in original) another language is lack of vocabulary",\(^3\) a shortcoming that was already familiar in the nineteenth century. For example, Henry Sweet held the view that, as "the languages commonly learnt by Europeans belong mostly to the same Aryan stock, and have besides a large vocabulary in common of borrowed Latin, French, and Greek words, (it) is apt to blind them to a recognition of the fact that the real intrinsic difficulty of learning a foreign language lies in that of having to master its vocabulary".\(^4\)

Contemporary research confirms that the decision made in the early nineteen seventies by the French committee is sound. The validity of such limitations had been highlighted in 1933 by Milton's early investigation of French textbooks. For example, at that time, Winifred Robson (Leeds

\(^1\) Frances Berrigan, in Times Edin Suppl, No. 3027, 1.6.73, p. 12.


University) who was commenting on her own work, could write that "children in classes with an average age of about twelve and who spent at least two hours weekly at French are able to deal with a vocabulary which ranges from 450 to 812 words during the first year".\(^1\) The same writer observed that the greater the number of words presented in the first year, the poorer recall is when testing takes place at the end of the school year, it is therefore obvious that the acquisition of language ultimately depends on the selection of a successful learning procedure. That the Plowden Commission could make the plea that "any school embarking on French ought to scrutinise critically the course that it proposes to use"\(^2\) reflects the present state of language teaching as opposed to the relatively simple methodology prevalent in sixteenth-century England when Roger Ascham was satisfied that "the daily use of writing . . . is the ony thing that breedseth deepse roots, both in the witte, for good understanding, and in the memorie, for sure keeping of all that is learned".\(^3\)

On the other hand, the importance of writing is still obvious. For example, David Caute, an academic turned political novelist and playwright, has affirmed that "life is transformed by every word you write".\(^4\) The designers of recent school-books attempt to promote writing through a diversified approach. Among others, the authors of Longman’s "Audio-visual French" claim that:

"The many photographs in the Pupil’s Book also play an important part in presenting picture of aspects of the French way of life, and act as a basis for"


\(^4\) David Caute, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.* No. 75, 23.3.73, p. 7.
development work, both oral and written.
The aim of course is to develop active use of the oral and written language, to enable the pupil to deal with everyday situations and to write simple narratives and letters in French.\(^1\)

Although the learning process has only just become central, it has casually been examined in the past in relation to various aspects, such as the kinetic memory of action. In 1909, for example, Frederick Kirkman asserted that "those who favour the use of action and dramatic gesture will find this method of interpretation fully dealt with in M. Ch. Schweitzer's 'Méthodologie des langues vivantes'.\(^2\)"

Again, Professor Léon has expressed the view that:

\[
\text{"l'association entre le mouvement de la main pour écrire le son et la production du son agit comme un moyen de renforcement".} \quad \text{\textsuperscript{3}}
\]

More recently, the Schools Council survey has brought out that teachers increasingly support the view that pupils "should have opportunities for acquiring and consolidating knowledge of language by exploiting the memories of ear, tongue, eye, hand, understanding, and the kinetic memory of action".\(^4\)

The neuropsychologist propounds that, as motor associations are linked to the cell assembly process and develop into "phase sequence(s)\(^5\)" the processus consists in "simultaneous incoming sensory activity, or rather afferent stimulation from many parts of the body, from postural

\begin{itemize}
    
    \item \textsuperscript{1} S. Moore et al.: \textit{Audio-Visual French. Stage B3. Teacher's Book.} (London: Longmans, Green, 1969), p. 9.
    \item \textsuperscript{2} Frederick S. Kirkman: \textit{The Teaching of Foreign Languages.} (London: University Tutorial Press, 1909), p. 33.
    \item \textsuperscript{5} Donald O. Hebb: \textit{The Organization of Behavior.} (New York: J. Wiley, 1949), p. 98.
\end{itemize}
stimulation, auditory, olfactory, and other sense avenues; likewise there will be numerous afferent neural reactions involving body position, vocalization, and so on. Most of these will have nothing to do with the cell assemblies that are specifically aroused by the particular visual stimulus, and because they will vary from time to time they will not be incorporated into any of the assemblies that result from fixation on any one of the 'corners of the triangle'. Any fibers or cells that do participate for a time, but which are not of any consistent and reliable status, will drop out or, more properly, will not be incorporated into the assembly. At the same time, other cells which at first may not participate at all because they are subliminally stimulated may eventually come into participation in the cell assembly.¹

Psychologically, in the words of Professor Hebb, these ideas presuppose "the apparent necessity of supposing that there would be a 'growth', or fractionation and recruitment, in the cell-assembly underlying perception means that there might be significant differences in the properties of perception at different stages of integration. One cannot guess how great the changes of growth would be; but it is conceivable, even probable, that if one knew where to look for the evidence one would find marked differences of identity in the perceptions of child and adult."² When Bergen Bugelski summed up Donald Hebb's line of reasoning, he stated that, "according to Hebb, this line of reasoning accounts for the fact that we come to see some things differently with additional experience and that our 'perceptions' are always changing."³

² Donald O. Hebb, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
This constitutes an interesting area of research but the other aspects of the learning process must not be overlooked. To a large extent, the reappraisal of our teaching approach stems from linguistic implications. Traditionally, the selection of vocabulary for teaching purposes depended upon a number of criteria (in the nineteen thirties, the seven-point classification of general criteria selected by the 1934 Carnegie Committee consisted in a/ frequency, b/ structural value, c/ universality, d/ subject range, e/ definition words, f/ word-building, and g/ style). The complexity lies in the fact that the graphological words and the lexical items are not equivalent in different languages. For example, the French items "feuille" and "plume" are cases of polysemy. Their single form, or graphological word, represents at least two different lexical items in that language, i.e., "leaf" and "sheet" for "feuille", "feather" and "pen" for "plume".

Not surprisingly, in the words of the psychologist, "if fluency in expressing one's own meaning is to be developed, practice must also be given in this skill. The student must have much practice in selecting structures and vocabulary (i.e., selecting words according to their meaning and in structuring syntactic patterns) which will enable him to enter into communication with another person as he would wish to do. This he will have difficulty in doing if he has not been trained to recognize the crucial element in material on which he has been drilled and to see the functional relationship of a new element to the other elements in the whole pattern. If he has been trained in this more analytic way, however, he will be able to use these structures independently of the specific context in which he first learned them." Consequently the pervading

influence of the transformational generative-grammar theorists and their syntactic structures has led to ever that "experience shows that to learn numbers of words without learning to construct sentences is of little practical value".1

The import is that, by producing "Le français d'aujourd'hui, 4ème partie", Downes and Griffith have offered a serious improvement on diverse grounds in comparison with the traditional technique, their significant changes are reflected in the presentation of the vocabulary in its syntactic context made up of the immediate constituents. The linguistic insight from which the new approach developed is supported by research. First, Martin Braine has shown that "se form paired associates whose foa are closed-class morphemes, i.e., articles, auxiliaries, affixes, etc.".2

Secondly, after twenty years spent in the United States, Patrick Wall, Professor of Neurobiology (University College, London), has discovered that, "if you stop searching the nervous system for the transmission of sensations in terms of modalities, but look for it in terms of information which has already been grouped together, you can show that the nervous system is collecting information in context".3 Besides, it has been averred that "Le verbe est la partie essentielle et capitale de nos langues",4 or "the verb is the essential and capital part of our languages". When Michel Breal made this statement, he remarked further that:

"le verbe, par nature, a une signification générale, puisqu'il marque une action prise en elle-même, sans "by nature, the verb has a general meaning, since it marks an action taken in itself, with no other

1 David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 110.
3 Patrick Wall, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 109, 16.11.73, p. 6.
Considering that "the way in which the vocabulary of a language is organized to deal with the outside world may conveniently be called its 'lexical structure' (,) if it is not imposed by nature, there is no reason to expect that languages will be identical in lexical structures."

Yet, "we are all inclined to look on the categories of our own language as inevitable, but a comparison of even closely related languages reveals surprising differences". Eric Lenneberg pointed out in the nineteen sixties that "it was particularly the descriptivist school initiated by Franz Boas that has been most active during the last thirty years in demonstrating the truly amazing variety of phonological, grammatical, and semantic systems in the language of the world."

On the one hand, "since languages provide us with different classifications, linguistic and visual contrasts are essential to the learning of referential meaning" and, on the other, as the meaning structure of all languages is not identical either, that is, the manner in which the semantic components combine in a given language is not the same as in any other language, it follows that, while the transformational grammar theorists' model may elucidate the production of speech, a fuller understanding of sentences does require a more elaborate model. Professor Chomsky depreciated the fact that "far too little care has been taken in the discussion of these

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1 Loc. cit.
4 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
6 David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 131.
questions in modern linguistics". The semantic perspective has however boosted the position of Semantics, whose level has been raised above the importance traditionally conferred upon grammar and lexis. In Professor Chomsky's words, "recent linguistic concerns with semantics are rather extensive". Considering that the function which words have in the sentence is attracting increased attention, the new very broadly based Semantics covers many topics formerly regarded as belonging to Syntax.

Here again, the transformational generative grammarians' viewpoint, shared by such contemporary semanticists as Minsky, Quillian, and others, is that the syntactic component forms the fundamental link between the semantic and phonological components. So, "most linguists who accept the validity of the distinction between deep grammatical structure . . . assume that there is some particularly intimate connexion between deep syntax and semantics" (vid inf., subsection B, this chapter). The renewed interest in Semantics, or Semasiology, has however been stimulated also by the semantic research emanating from investigations into mental processes initiated by linguistic psychologists. Clearly, "when the linguist thus raises the question of meaning he is led directly into the field of psychology, for he finds that meaning must be explained in terms of the situation in which the word is used" (vid supra, chapter 6), in spite of the fact that "to focus on the semantic functions of language—as is increasingly fashionable in linguistics as well as psychology—still


2 Aaron V. Clicurel, op. cit., p. 74.


leaves unsolved the problem of how meanings are expressed through a code of arbitrary linguistic signs.¹

The bearing on Modern Language teaching is that "learning how to communicate in written French comes first from having been exposed to language experience, to specific structures and areas of lexis of particular register, and from having understood their semantic content (in other words from passive comprehension²), and then being able to re-use them appropriately in a meaningful context".³ This presupposes an ability to connect the foreign word with its meaning but, in his analysis, David Wilkins stated that, "given the complexity of relations involved, the acquisition of meaning is neither a simple process nor one that is ever complete... . . . So vast is the network of intralinguistic and extralinguistic relations involved that the acquisition of meaning can only be a gradual process of progressive discrimination."⁴ Moreover, "the ability or inclination to formulate the rules apparently interferes with the performance which is supposed to lead to making the application of the rules automatic".⁵ we shall see (vid inf., subsection B, this chapter) that, paradoxically, linguists and psychologists are agreed that second language learning is rule-governed behaviour. The pupils who were immersed in the bilingual grammar-translation method, didilely constructed language according to pedagogic

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¹ Judith Greene, in Times Lit Suppl. No. 3779, 9.6.74, p. 853.
² Brackets in original.
³ Geoffrey E. Harro, in Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 102, 28.9.73, p. 12
⁴ David A. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 132.
grammar rules by means of the deductive, expository type of language teaching. The traditional bilingual grammar-translation system, which assumed that a synthetic approach would enhance the learning of a Modern Language, presupposed "that the written word was the fundamental unit of language, that a language was therefore fixed immutably, that a pupil could learn it by dissecting it and reassembling the pieces". The change-over to the audio-lingual method is sometimes grossly misinterpreted by academics. Robert Niklaus, Professor of French (Exeter University), did not hesitate to affirm that "people (so. teachers. A.S.L.) don't like teaching grammar. Students come to us saying 'what is a verb?'". When teachers often complain of children's not knowing such definitions as 'a verb is a word which expresses action, being or condition'. Such disquieting remarks draw attention to the shortcoming of a system which fosters "doing one prose and translation a week in a rather dispirited way, absent-mindedly listening to tapes or vaguely chatting with a native assistant". On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that "Universities do not teach languages: they assume a knowledge of them". First, an official commission has stated that "elementary language instruction is not considered to fall within the province of the universities" and, secondly, Professor Weightman (Westfield College, London) has deplored that "the average university course does not take

1 Mark Gilbert, in Research Review, (London), No. 4, 1953, p. 3.

2 Robert Niklaus. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 53, 20.10.72, p. 4.)


4 John G. Weightman, in Times Lit Suppl, No. 3716, 25.5.73, p. 978.


into account the general difficulties of language-learning as much as it might do".\(^1\) Lessing, at that time vice-president of the Institute of Linguists, proposed that "one of the results of a thorough study of the language should be that the student can think in the foreign language as fluently and naturally as possible".\(^2\) Clearly then, the mastery of the language is a pre-requisite for succeeding in the study of the component parts of the French course (cf. Table I). The task is however at once subtle and complex for, according to the linguist, "if we were to take the conventional organisation of language teaching, with its early concentration on the step-by-step introduction of grammatical structures, realized through a vocabulary chosen largely for its pedagogic usefulness, we would not be providing our pupils with what they need".\(^3\)

Be that as it may, traditional "methods for learning a foreign language are inadequate because most people are not equipped to solve the problems that inevitably arise".\(^4\) For example, it is well known that, "as soon as attention shifts to how he (e.g. the child A.S.L.) is going to say it, as soon as his consciousness turns to the form of his sentences and his powers of intellectual analysis begin to operate on them, his speech falters and becomes slow and disjointed, as though the spontaneous powers are thwarted".\(^5\) Besides, in a downright statement, Professor Weightman has lamented that "it is as if they (e.g. the University candidates A.S.L.) took a lax, amateurish approach to be the normal

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2 W. B. Lessing, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 105, 19.10.73, p. 23.
3 David A. Wilkins, op. cit., pp. 111-12.
4 Mary R. Haas, in Jg, Vol. 19, 1943, p. 203.
thing . . . almost without exception, they . . . are not unduly concerned about mistakes in grammar and gender". ¹

A lax attitude on the part of the learner is, to say the least, disquieting. It is true that, with the disappearance of the bilingual grammar-translation system, many a Modern Language teacher held the view that grammar rules, "if presented at all, should be 'ad hoc', derived inductively by the students from their own recent experiences with the language". ² Modern Language learning presupposes "understanding of how the grammar involved at any given stage works". ³ This principle is of course in keeping with contemporary thoughts in Linguistics, for "'Cartesian' linguistics reduces competence to knowledge of grammar". ⁴ So, after the mastery of the sound system (vid supra, chapter 3), ranking next in importance is "the mastery of the features of arrangement that constitute the structure of the language". ⁵ Considering that "the linguist relies heavily on a conception of meaning based on syntax", ⁶ "feeling for word order is stronger than any other feeling" ⁷ in English. Similarly syntax in French is an important grammatical signal. In Edward Sapir's words, "every language can and must express the fundamental

⁴ Dell Hymes, in M & Lg Ling, No. 23, 1970, p. 72.
⁶ Aaron V. Cissurrel, op. cit., pp. 99-100.
syntactic relations".\(^1\) As "without an internalised set of rules, or syntax, they (e.g. the teachers A.S.L.) are told, no one can understand or use a language",\(^2\) it is often deplored that, in the conventional audio-visual courses, theory is alluded to, rather than specified, leaving the individual teacher the task of disentangling assertion from argument. For example, the author of "Tavor" asserted that "the everyday phrases and dialogues (of the audio-visual course constitute) an excellent foundation for the solid grammatical work that followed".\(^3\)

As distinct from mere mimicry and memorisation, which loom large at the beginners' level, experience has proved that, at the next stage, the Modern Language teacher cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that "a sound knowledge of the grammar of a foreign language is very important",\(^4\) for "linguistic science has made teachers very conscious of the fact that grammar is the core of language".\(^5\) For example, Robert Pooley saw that the chief reason for the teaching of grammar was that "the building of sentences and the manipulation of sentence materials for improved style are at the very centre of grammar instruction".\(^6\) Consequently, in the course of study, "the learner extends and refines his knowledge of grammar throughout his career". In sum, "every man is his own unaware grammarian".\(^7\) The complexity which underlies the process leading to the

5 Wilga M. River, in Mod Lang J. op. cit., p. 206.
7 Peter S. Green, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 9, 10.12.71, p. 15.
8 Tony Cline, in Times Edul Suppl., No. 3079, 31.5.74, p. 22.
assimilation of the background linguistic system has not escaped the
Modern Language teachers. While "in the field of perception the
history of psychology is littered with references to unconscious inference"\textsuperscript{1},
the Assistant Masters have affirmed that "nearly all teachers agree that
grammar . . . cannot be inferred or 'picked up'. The knowledge must
be inculcated, and this is an arduous task."\textsuperscript{2}

Recent reassessments tend to confirm this earlier standpoint. A
U.S. writer has explained that, not infrequently in contemporary textbooks,
grammar notes, which are scattered throughout their contents, sometimes
"were brilliantly written, but they were never easy for the student to
relate to one another".\textsuperscript{3} Again, Peter Downes, who addressed the teachers
when they met in 1973 at Birmingham University, commented critically his
own course by saying that it contained too much material, that the
exercises were too uniform and too difficult, and that the course demanded
good ability to infer grammatical rules.\textsuperscript{4} The ethnomethodologist
views meaning as situated, self-organizing and reflexive interaction
between the organization of memory, practical reasoning, and talk\textsuperscript{5} and,
on the other hand, transformational generative grammarians have begun to
look into the interaction of, say, the syntax of sentences and their
phonology whose particular problems were left unsolved by the descriptive
linguists of the nineteen fifties.

Summing up, we have seen throughout the thesis that "the problems
which have to be faced in teaching a language to foreign students . . .

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Carroll Pratt, in \textit{J Psych}, Vol. 30, 1950, p. 106.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters: \textit{The Teaching of
\item \textsuperscript{3} Earl W. Stevick, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 230.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Aaron V. Cicourel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100.
\end{itemize}
cannot be answered by reference to the traditional literature.\footnote{David Crystal: \textit{Linguistics}, (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1971), p. 59.} A definition of what ought to be taught, not to mention how it must be taught, is still dependent on the formulation of a suitably-elaborated theoretical framework. This constitutes the backbone of the following subsection.
Conclusions.

In the early nineteen sixties, audio-visual courses were beginning to confer their imprint on the methodology of Modern Language teaching, in the wake of "the important contributions (of) the science of linguistics . . . that language is basically audio-lingual communication(s)"; with the concomitant implications for Modern Language teaching in general, and bilingualism as an ideal in particular. If, say, am bilingualism could be the ultimate aim, the study of the Psychology of Modern Language learning confirms that, as we have seen (vid supra, chapter 2), "learning a foreign language is an 'artificial' process; it can never be the same as the 'natural' process by which a child learns its mother tongue." 2

It has been averred that am bilingual "speakers must use a 'turbulent' system, when both languages enjoy equal or nearly equal prestige, until one or other language is definitely absorbed; the (am bilingual) speaker has a conception of the pattern of both languages which differs from that of the monolingual speaker of either". 3 Professor Fishman has remarked that "not only does the bilingual master two different codes, but he masters two different selves, two different orders of sensitivity to the wonders of the world. These are the very reasons why bilingualism has been treasured by social and intellectual elites." 4 Indeed, "the linguistic skills in a second language, extending to the point of bilingualism, are controlled by family-shared attitudes toward the other

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1 Edward Miller, in Mod Lg J. Vol. 46, 1962, p. 259. (Brackets in original.)


linguistic-cultural community",\(^1\) as we shall see in PART III (vid inf., chapter II).

Considering that the language of childhood continuously evolves and changes, it points to the fact that human beings are endowed with a program for analyzing linguistic input to discover a system of underlying regularities (vid supra, chapter 1). We shall see (vid inf., chapter 8) that "the learner extends and refines his knowledge of grammar throughout his career"\(^2\) in his progression towards the mastery of a Modern Language, whose ultimate objective consists in generating all and only grammatically correct and stylistically congruent sentences in the Modern Language. The acquisition of grammar is largely tied up with:

\begin{itemize}
  \item the abstruse system which constitutes language;
  \item the sum total of habits pertaining to language; and
  \item negative transfer, or interlingual interference, or the native language but also, conversely, positive transfer.
\end{itemize}

All factors interact then. We are presently looking critically at two major schools of thought, summing up the behaviourists' outlook (vid supra, chapter 4) and examining the cognitive psychologists' claim, for current practices do not meet the Modern Language teachers' foremost concern with the notion that "control of grammar is involved in all use of language".\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Peter S. Green, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.* No. 9, 10.12.71, p. 15.
\(^3\) Loc. cit.
Subsection B - The Search for a Much Needed Theoretical Framework.

"A generative grammar and an associated theory of speech perception provide a concrete example of the rules that operate... neither physiology nor psychology provides evidence that calls this account into question or that suggests an alternative."

--- Professor Chomsky, February 1968.

While, in the nineteen seventies, it is fair to say that, in the schools where enlightened Modern Language teaching is dispensed, the first two years on average are usually the preserve of the audio-visual method, Professor Rivers has asserted that "a place must be found for both habit formation and the understanding of a complex system with its infinite possibilities of expression". Indeed, "it is evident that higher-level choices cannot be put into operation with ease if facility has not been developed in the production of the interdependent lower-level elements, and so learning by induction, drill, and analogy will be the commonest features of the early stages". On the other hand, Pimsleur and Quinn have stressed the limitations of the audio-lingual approach when they stated that "the audio-lingual movement had succeeded admirably in bringing an emphasis on the spoken language into the classroom, and in making teachers aware of the complexity of the language learning task; yet, precisely because of these achievements, new problems had arisen which needed a broader and stronger theoretical framework than audio-lingualism could provide".

The thorough investigation of first language acquisition has largely contributed to the understanding of language learning so necessary to the

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1 A. Noam Chomsky, in Psychology Today, (Del Mar, Calif.), Vol. 1, No. 9, 1968, p. 68.


Modern Language teacher. For example, when Dorothy Bagley reviewed in the nineteen thirties the extensive literature on how young adolescents acquired their native language, she wrote that, "with pupils of 13-16 years, we infer that understanding of the significance of what they are doing is more important than sheer repetition."\(^1\) Although the extreme behaviourist "has no use for consciousness or conscious process,"\(^2\) in recent years, "the shift away from mechanistic causal paradigms of learning towards more complex perceptual cognitive explanations"\(^3\) has become more pronounced. If, in 1960, Ingram and Hace were satisfied that, with "Taver", the pupils were "practising meaningful sounds in the foreign tongue before thinking and reasoning about them",\(^4\) we have seen (vid supra, chapter 2) that the distinction in learning between the beginner's phase and the subsequent one is crucial.

Briefly, the consensus of opinion that emerged at the U.N.E.S.C.O. conference of 1962 is that, according to Dr. Anderson's hypothesis, from the age of ten, the mode of learning becomes predominantly conceptual rather than conditioned; that is, the boy or girl begins to work through logic and ideas rather than through the formation of habits and the acquisition of skills. Of this change, the teachers are well aware (vid supra, chapter 2). For example, Harry Levy reports that, at Blackwell County Secondary School, after "two years of my method, (the boys) in the top stream were eager to try what they called 'real French,...grammar and all that stuff'."\(^5\)

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3 A. C. Davie, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.* No. 94, 3.8.73, p. 15.
4 Stewart R. Ingram et al., in *Mod Langa.* Vol. 41, 1960, p. 128.
Understandably then, in Modern Language teaching, when the stage of bilingual grammar translation is reached or even before, the cognitive code-learning theory often obtains the preference of teachers, not on the grounds of "the organization of language data so much as the nature of the organizing power that is capable of handling such data". As the influence of the psychologists who support a cognitive theory makes a headway in behavioural sciences, linguists look more sympathetically to the claim that:

— modern "language learning is a problem-solving activity" and that
— modern language learning largely consists in the study of meaning

(vid supra, chapters 6, and 7, subsection A).

On the one hand, although "the forging of metaphoric hunch into testable hypothesis goes on all the time (,) . . . this process is the more evident in psychology where the theoretical apparatus is not so well developed that it lends itself readily to generating interesting hypotheses" and, on the other hand, "our crucially important human skill in arranging symbols in novel and useful combinations is largely ignored by the successive reduction of language to meaning to reference to conditioning".

The outcome is that an increasing number of Modern Language teachers support more eagerly than ever before the view that equates learning a Modern Language with a process in which the learner "integrates information with existing knowledge, codes it, forms new constructions,

selects and sorts, organizes and in short, deals with whatever is presented to him in a highly active manner.\textsuperscript{1} Professor Miller has surmised that "our combinational power, which is so characteristically human, provides the psychological foundation for something that linguists usually call 'grammar'."\textsuperscript{2} Indeed, while the capacity of behaving in accordance with the grammatical prescriptions does not necessarily mean an ability to elicit the grammatical rules (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection 3), "control of grammar is involved in all use of language, spoken or written, receptive or productive."\textsuperscript{3} In sum, it is the background linguistic system, or grammar, that is "so significantly human, so specific to our species, so important for psychologists (and others!) to understand more clearly."\textsuperscript{4}

In their 1968 report, the N.L.A. Standing Consultative Committee reiterated their belief that "there is a case for . . . bringing into play the learner's capacity to think about language in terms of grammatical concepts, as and when appropriate,"\textsuperscript{5} for "cognitive processes merely facilitate the learning of a manipulative sequence".\textsuperscript{6} The psychologist's viewpoint is that the "failure to appreciate this . . . has been partially responsible for many children spending their schooldays

\begin{itemize}
\item[3] Peter S. Green, in Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 9, 10.12.71, p. 15.
\end{itemize}
'bored out of their minds'.

Nowadays however, few Modern Language theorists reject wholesale recent practices, as Kenneth MacGowan did when he referred to them as the "lunacies of contemporary language teaching". Unlike the operant conditioning hypothesis which assumes that "analogy provides a better foundation for foreign-language learning than analysis, (the cognitive code-learning theory) admits the role of habit formation but sees learning as more than that:" it makes "more allowance for the power and flexibility of man's intellectual processes and the ways in which he deals with complex problems". Tolerance for varied theories and techniques is reflected in Earl Stevick's statement that "procedures and systems and approaches supplement one another more than they supersede one another".

Whatever the teaching approach, pupils need to know what they are doing. Through their own creative ability, the learners "perceive and detect relationships, appreciate patterns and configurations, recognize analogies and contrasts". A growing proportion of Modern Language advisers and lecturers in teaching methods, such as Kenneth MacGowan and Dr. Trudie Berger (York University), consider that "they (as the pupils. A.S.L.) learn quickly because they understand the construction of a sentence". Indeed, "many experiments have shown that

2 Kenneth MacGowan's phrase. (cf. Times Edul Suppl., No. 310C, 25.10.74, p. 57.)
5 Earl W. Stevick, op. cit., p. 37.
memory is aided by an understanding of what one is doing." ¹ David Ausubel has developed in the nineteen sixties a model of meaningful learning through which he was able to demonstrate that new learning can be related to, and assimilated into, existing cognitive structures.

In a similar vein, Professor Miller, who was discussing one of his experiments, has stated that "the well known fact that meaningful verbal material is easier to memorize than nonsense material is usually explained by saying that meaningful material permits more positive transfer from previous learning: S has already learned a great deal about the meaningful material before the experiment begins. Exactly what (emphasis in original) the S had already learned that he can transfer to the memorization of meaningful material is usually not specified, however. . . . Miller and Selfridge . . . came to the conclusion that familiarity with the rules which govern the sequential properties of meaningful passages is probably much more important in facilitating recall than is S's understanding of the passage."²

If the audio-lingual movement assumes that as "foreign-language learning is the acquiring of a skill . . . our students need long and intensive practice until they are able to associate without hesitation or reflection the many linguistic elements which are inter-related",³ the cognitive code-learning theory makes more allowance for "the exceptional capacity of men for receiving, communicating, storing, and, above all, processing information".⁴ First, in Professor Carroll's words, "learning

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¹ Wilga N. Rivers, op. cit., p. 152.
a language is a process of acquiring conscious control of the phonological, grammatical and lexical patterns of a second language, largely through study and analysis of these patterns as a body of knowledge. Secondly, the psychological interpretation of Modern Language teaching based on the cognitive code-learning theory, is supported by the study of disorders of language, whose new "well-known division of aphasia into 'nominal' (or 'lexical') aphasia and agrammatism indicates that grammatical planning and lexical selection are distinct processes requiring skilled integration. Moreover, exchanging significant inter-communications "is a highly conscious affair". Such overt phonogenic activity is a "sphere in which ontology, ethics and epistemology become entangled with each other, for in symbolic exchanges at the everyday level, man tells tales that at one stroke account for reality, suggest how one may know it, and place a value on it". Symbolic exchanges consist of an overt phonogenic activity involving complex psycho-physiological processes. They imply:

- taking into account extra-linguistic factors;
- structuring sentences;
- selecting lexical items according to their semantic feature content;
- avoiding repetitions; and
- deleting redundant elements.

1 John B. Carroll, in Mod Lang J. Vol. 49, 1969, p. 278.
2 Brackets in original.
4 Loc. cit.
In Modern Language learning, any overt activity might be profitably based on the dictum that "instruction should proceed from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to abstract notions, from analysis to synthesis". ¹

There is evidence that "method has moved away from analysis towards synthesis or 'global learning' . . . aimed at a build-up of mastery", ² for the acquisition of language depends on "perceptual coherence", ³ or Gestalt. It needs to be plainly stated that "a totality does not consist of things but of relationships". ⁴ Consequently, "gestalt psychology deals with perceptual wholes as they assume a significance which is different from their component parts, and, contrary to popular view, insists equally on an understanding of the structure, i.e. the components of the whole". ⁵ Professor Piaget, the main contributor to Cognitive Psychology until the nineteen sixties, propounded that,

"dans le langage comme dans la perception, la pensée va de l'ensemble au détail". ⁶

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“Gestalt” theory is based on the assumption that there is a natural tendency for incoming sensory stimuli to organize themselves into patterns of Gestalten at the physiological level, before they reach consciousness. Thus, for an aural Gestalt, we have:

1. stimulus pattern;
2. physiological Gestalt;
3. percept (i.e., an utterance is heard).

The exponents of Gestalt, or "Configuration" theory, maintain that this tendency to organize is unlearnt and that the organization always takes place in such a way that the Principle or Law of Good Pattern holds. By this, it is meant that the pupil always forms as good a pattern as possible. When a pupil hears utterances then, he will tend to hear them in such a way that the resulting aural pattern is as stable, simple, regular, and unified as possible.

The relevance is that the cognitive code-learning "theory attaches more importance to the learner's understanding of the structure of the foreign language than to his facility in using that structure, since it is believed that, provided the student has a proper degree of cognitive control over the structures of the language, facility will develop automatically with use of the language in meaningful situations". While "most psychologists espouse either an S-R theory or a cognitive theory", whatever the hypothesis, the ultimate aim consists in productive speech, which is achieved when the pupil "freely and creatively adapts the lexical and grammatical resources of the foreign language to an entirely new

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1 John B. Carroll, in Mod Lang J. Vol. 49, 1963, p. 278.
linguistic situation"¹ (cf. Table II).

A methodological study conducted by research workers at Purdue University has brought to light that the cognitive code-learning approach was superior to the audio-lingual habit technique. Chastain and Woederhoff's summary of their results is:

"(1) that deductive presentation of material was superior to inductive,
(2) that analysis was superior to analogy,
(3) that drills stressing understanding were superior to pattern practice, and
(4) that using all the senses in assimilating material being studied was superior to the natural order of presentation".²

Considering that "the sentences of a language constitute a complex infinite set"³ however, "the learner has to learn to work in a field in which responses are virtually infinite in number"⁴ (vid inf., chapter 8).

Clearly then, the acquisition of language which is tied to rule learning, presupposes "an information-processing device".⁵ It therefore follows that "we recognize a new item as a sentence not because it matches some familiar item in any simple way, but because . . . we are somehow capable of determining the process by which this sentence is derived in this grammar".⁶ The outcome, which is complex, has implications for Modern Language teaching. Moreover, once the theoretician of Applied Linguistics, Leonard Bloomfield, had intimated that "a

² Kenneth D. Chastain et al., in Mod Lg J. Vol. 52, 1968, p. 279.
⁶ A. Noam Chomsky, in Lg J. Vol. 35, 1959, p. 56.
language is what that speakers do and not what someone thinks they ought to do"; sooner or later, it was going to be recognized that a descriptive grammar, then, would consist of a finite system of rules generating this infinite set of paired structures (its semantic content and a surface structure) and thus showing how the speaker-hearer can make infinite use of finite means (vid infra, chapter 8).

Indeed, Professor Rivers has asserted that "methods of linguistic description do not 'per se' provide any guidance as to how a student may be taught to communicate in a foreign language". Nor are linguists any longer perpetuating the myth that Modern Language learning should be restricted to a limited corpus of selected examples (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection B). However, "a generative grammar is not a model for a speaker or a hearer". Although "no complete generative grammar has ever been written for any language", "a linguistic description of language such as Chomsky's involves an extremely bulky and complicated body of rules in spite of the fact that the principle of transformation is basically a very simple idea". In the words of Professor Chomsky, the "theory of transformational generative grammar . . . is concerned precisely with the rules that specify deep structures and relate them to


3 Wilga M. Rivers, in Mod Le J. op. cit., p. 207.


surface structures and with the rules of semantic and phonological interpretation that apply to deep and surface structures respectively.\(^1\) Whilst a fuller understanding of second language learning "requires a kind of linguistics not yet fully constituted",\(^2\) meantime linguists make a useful contribution in "breaking down the language so as to make it much more easily assimilable for the non-native learner".\(^3\)

The linguists' expectations are of course not mandatory. Considering that "neither physiology nor psychology . . . suggests an alternative"\(^4\) (vid supra, epigraph to this subsection), it begs the question whether practising teachers can afford to ignore transformational generative grammar theory. At the 1967 conference of the Modern Language Association, Professor Rivers warned that if, on the one hand, generative grammarians affirmed that language is rule-governed behaviour, on the other, "many (teachers) are ready to seize upon a new slogan and begin to inculcate rules in the hope of establishing 'rule-governed behavior', even though they have a very vague concept of what this phrase can mean as it has been used by linguists or psychologists".\(^5\) The strand of mathematical logicians have however surmised that, once rule-governed behaviour is achieved, "the person who knows the rules knows whether he is proceeding correctly or incorrectly".\(^6\)

We have also seen (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection B) that "the


\(^2\) Dell Hymes, in *MLA Ling*, No. 23, 1970, p. 70.

\(^3\) John C. Weightman, in *Times Lit Suppl*, No. 3716, 25.5.73, p. 577.

\(^4\) A. Noam Chomsky, in *Psychology Today*, (Del Mar, Calif.), Vol. 1, No. 9, 1968, p. 68.


grammarians are more inclined to lead the student to reason out their answers according to the 'rules'.\(^1\) For example, Edgar Mayer (Colorado University) discovered that transformational grammar helped his pupils in their use of such structures as French verbal clauses. He reported that,

"When the pupil attempts to write such sentences (that is, those ending with an infinitive or a verbal syntagma \(-2\)), the crucial point to remember is as follows: if the subject 'il' is impersonal (that is, not standing in the place of a noun), as the real subject is in fact the verbal syntagma found at the end of the sentence, then 'de' introduces the verbal syntagma. But if the subject has a referent (that is, if the subject is a noun syntagma, or is a pronoun standing in the place of a noun syntagma or a noun clause in the sentence, then 'a' introduces the infinitive..."

"Quand l'élève essaie de croire de telles phrases (c'est-à-dire celles qui se terminent par un infinitif ou un syntagme infinitival \(-2\)), le point capital à se rappeler est le suivant: si le sujet 'il' est un sujet vide (c'est-à-dire un mot sans référent), le vrai sujet étant le syntagme infinitival qui s'est déplacé à la fin de la phrase, alors c'est 'de' qui introduit le syntagme infinitival. Mais si le sujet a un vrai référent (c'est-à-dire si le sujet est un syntagme nominal, ou bien est un pronom qui remplace un syntagme nominal ou une proposition dans le contexte), alors c'est 'a' qui introduit l'infinitif.

Dans mon expérience,... les élèves saisissent bien plus rapidement l'explication transformationnelle.\(^3\)"

Professor Chomsky, whose work has been instrumental in the development of transformational generative grammar, has explained that "a generative

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2 See and infra, brackets in original.
grammar, ideally, specifies a pairing of phonetic and semantic representations over an infinite range; it thus constitutes a hypothesis as to how the speaker-hearer interprets utterances, abstracting away from many factors that interweave with tacit competence to determine actual performance,¹ without overlooking that "a theory of language performance has yet to be developed".²

In the main then, "the new grammar differs by being descriptive rather than prescriptive; it offers to the student, not rules and bookmarks, but a repertoire of the structural resources of his (the linguist's) language".³ Following the lead of Gottlob Frege, the position which evolved in the nineteen sixties consisted of a difference in kind rather than degree, considering that "a linguistic grammar, as Chomsky sees it, aims to discover and exhibit the mechanisms that make it possible for 'a speaker to understand an arbitrary sentence on a given occasion'."⁴

Although Linguistics does not advocate imposing or preventing the awareness of the grammatical structures a student is learning, linguistic description has made a valuable contribution for our understanding. For example, the reappraisal of materials has progressed by leaps and bounds in the nineteen sixties, first in France, then in Great Britain. In France, Guy Capelle has asserted that:

"La plupart des méthodes modernes proposent en fait un effort plus considérable pour l'acquisition de la grammaire que les méthodes moderne afford un effort plus considérable pour l'acquisition de la grammaire que les méthodes modernes proposent en fait."⁵


traditionnelles qui se contentent d'expliquer des faits d'une façon bien souvent superficielles". 1

methods which do not go beyond explaining the facts all too often in a superficial way".

We shall see presently that the passive voice reveals that sentences can differ from each other not only on the semantic plane but also at the underlying level of deep structures.

In recent years, much insight has been gained as soon as it was realized that, "in order to understand language presented in its surface form, we have to recover the deep structure because it is in the deep structure that the essential relations are displayed" for, in Professor Chomsky's words, "the surface structure determines the phonetic interpretation completely and . . . the deep structure expresses those grammatical functions that play a role in determining the semantic interpretation" 3 so that, in order "to determine this ('unified and undifferentiated') thought, the mind must first discover the relations among the words of the sentence, that is, its syntax; it must then determine the meaning, given a full account of this deep structure". 4

Noam Chomsky has asserted that "both the form and meaning of a sentence are determined by syntactic structures that are not represented directly in the signal only at a distance, through a long sequence of interpretive rules". 5

Indeed, standard school grammars would construe and parse in the same way Professor Chomsky's famous sentences "I expected the doctor

1 Guy Capelle, in Mod Langs, Vol. 45, 1964, p. 60.
5 A. Noam Chomsky in Psychology Today, (Del Mar, Calif.), Vol. 1, No. 9, 1968, p. 66.
to examine John", and "I persuaded the doctor to examine John". In these sentences, considering that the word order, that is, surface structure, is the same, the real syntax becomes apparent when one tries putting them into the passive voice. Noam Chomsky has proposed that, "if we replace the embedded proposition 'the doctor to examine John' with its passive form 'John to be examined by the doctor', the change to the passive does not, in itself, change the meaning. We can accept as paraphrases 'I expected the doctor to examine John' and 'I expected John to be examined by the doctor'. But we cannot accept as paraphrases 'I persuaded the doctor to examine John' and 'I persuaded John to be examined by the doctor'."1

Both the transformational generative-grammar theorists and the strand of cognitive psychologists have opened new vistas for Modern Language teaching. The result is that, in Britain for example, there is evidence of the current reappraisal in "A grammar of contemporary English", edited by Professor Quirk and his associates and published in the early nineteen seventies. When viewed in connexion with the developments that scientific research has yielded, the reappraisal is consistent with a fundamental reorientation of Psychology in its quest for elucidating language acquisition. First, in the post-World War Two years, a majority of behavioural psychologists supported an S-R hypothesis which, as we have seen (vid supra, chapter 4), "may be a fairly adequate account of the way learning takes place when the learner is operating with enactive representation",2 that is, "in a kind of magical world".3 Secondly, as

1 Noam Chomsky, in Psychology Today, op. cit., p. 31.


3 John Davy's phrase. (cf. The Observer Review, 27.4.69, p. 25.)
"there is a younger generation of neuropsychologists and communication theorists who regard orthodox S-R psychology as senile,\(^1\) from their search developed a promising cognitive theory.

The bearing on Modern Language teaching is that, in their "A grammar of contemporary English" published in 1972 by Longman, Quirk and Greenbaum (together with Leech and Svartvik, their associates) not only go beyond mere description, but the main emphasis of their book consists in showing on the one hand, as Stork and Widdowson have also demonstrated in "Learning about Linguistics", that syntax is related to other areas of language such as, to name but one, Dialectology, and on the other, why and how English works as a language in the society who uses it. The implications are considerable for experimental work in the United States, as evidenced by Jack Kittell's in the nineteen fifties, suggests that when pupils are guided in formulating a principle, in this case grammar rules, after a lapse of time, the ability to transfer and the power of recalling the principles are greater than when the child is left to discover and formulate intuitively entirely for himself.

Other factors of course interact. It has been noted for example, that Dorothy Bagley's research in the nineteen thirties led her to conclude that, in the acquisition of the mother tongue, "pupils show little interest in acquiring knowledge of grammar rules, which appear to lead nowhere and to be connected with nothing interesting, until they are old enough to realize that the rules form a certain logical structure and they 'see what it is all about'. In the teaching of language, therefore, the principle of the perceived whole could be more fully applied than it

is at present, in accordance with the findings of observational and classification studies.\textsuperscript{1} It must be added, as rules define the prescriptive norms, that is, they only tell negatively what may not be written, their limitations are well known. Indeed, it transpires from William Macaulay's investigation undertaken in the post-World War Two years and published in "The British journal of Educational Psychology", that "recognition of the parts of the speech as presented seriatim in the old formal grammar is beyond the capacity of any but the brighter and older children".\textsuperscript{2} As the bilingual grammar-translation system's assumption was that "the student learns by memorizing rules of correct grammar and by translating from one language to the other",\textsuperscript{3} it invariably led to what Robert Lado described as the student was "slowly putting together each word, phrase clause, and sentence by parts".\textsuperscript{4} Applied Linguistics, whose increasing influence in foreign language teaching is most promising, has gained the support of grammarians over the last decades in the wake of Bloomfieldian Linguistics.

Briefly, it is deemed that grammatical rules and explanations should be restricted to the description of the student's own performance.

Professor Bloomfield affirmed in 1942 that "nothing is gained by speculation or by fussing with terminology; when the facts are known, it will be convenient to state them".\textsuperscript{5} So, while the oral approach goes on,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Dorothy Bagley, in \textit{B J Edul Psych}, Vol. 7, 1937, p. 153.
\item \textsuperscript{2} W. H. Rittins, in C. Randolph Quirk et al. (eds.), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 124.
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Loc. cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Leonard Bloomfield, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 12.
\end{itemize}
and is fundamental, we begin to "form rules on the basis of previously mastered examples",\(^1\) after the paradigms have been induced, conscious knowledge of a grammatical rule provides the learner with some codification of oral syntax, notwithstanding the fact that "knowledge of grammaticality does not mean ability to verbalize about it"\(^2\) (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection B). Conscious knowledge then "can give increased confidence as the learner gradually extends his power of self-expression in the language"\(^3\) he is learning.

Besides, transformational generative grammarians have asserted that "the belief that exposure to pedagogical 'rules of grammar' can only hinder the acquisition of fluent language skills is almost certainly based on an oversimplified view of language structure and of the language learning process".\(^4\) The bilingual grammar-translation system ensured that the learners dealt with "the pedagogic 'grammar rules' (often of doubtful linguistic validity\(^5\)) of the traditional deductive, expository type of language teaching according to which students docilely constructed language sequences".\(^6\) When the well-established teaching technique came increasingly under attack, it was realized that, sooner or later, the method accepted by bright pupils could no longer do for the new generations of school children passing through the secondary modern schools.

The shortcomings were not only psychological but also sociological.

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1 Stewart R. Ingram et al., in Mod Langs, Vol. 44, 1963, p. 25.
4 J. P. Allen et al., op. cit., p. 149.
5 Brackets in original.
6 Wilga M. Rivers, in Mod Lg J, op. cit., p. 207.
The research undertaken in Scotland by William Macaulay in the post-World War Two period, whose results appeared in "The British journal of Educational Psychology", substantiated the claim made by the strand of progressive language teachers, in the wake of Percival Symonds's early work. His findings had led him to conclude that, as the ability to make any use of grammatical concepts in real language situations was tied up with intelligence, "the brighter children profited by more than the duller children".\(^1\) From the sociological standpoint, the assumption underlying the "conventional methods of language teaching would . . . almost without exception presume . . . either the students' ability to memorize verbal utterances or his ability to think 'grammatically' (i.e., to abstract and re-concretize\(^2\))".\(^3\) As enlarged cohorts remained in school longer in order to prepare outside examinations in the nineteen fifties, the limitations of all known methods became obvious. Once the established techniques were no longer tenable, we shall see (vid inf., chapter 10) that it was then realized that, sooner or later, further attempts to devise other methods would have to be made.

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2 Brackets in original.
Conclusions.

Audio-visual courses have been readily adopted by teachers who believed that, by immersing children in a language, "they would absorb it. Naturally, effortlessly, joyously, they would increase their vocabulary, vary their sentence structure, acquire style. Through sheer familiarity correct spelling would arise as a gratuitous incidental." However, as "there is a tremendous gap which has to be bridged between the mere utterance of the phonetic form of a word and the symbolic or representational use of that word in an appropriate situation," it is abundantly clear that the upsurge of the audio-visual approach has not rallied round the Modern Language teachers in a "consensus omnium". The faction of Modern Language teachers holding the "status quo" feels that we have rather been over-anxious in discarding a method whose results could be easily and clearly measured. So, with the continuing support of the examining boards, many are the rear-guard teachers who maintain that only practice in prose composition, translation, essay writing and plenty of literature can teach a student to write a Modern Language proficiently.

Not infrequently, the traditional outlook is entrenched in the stolid, yellowed buildings of the old universities. To name but one example, at Uppsala (Sweden), it is lamented that "with foreign languages students now have more problems than they once did". Although we have seen (vid supra, chapter 2) that recent findings would call for cautious statements, Professor Delattre whose experimental work pursued at Oklahoma University influenced so much the audio-lingual movement, has

1 Maurice Jones, in The Teacher, (Kettering), Vol. 25, 16.8.74, p. 9.
3 Uppsala Faculty Deans. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 59, 1.12.72, p. 11.)
acknowledged "the problem of right spelling (...) The weakness of the audio-visual students was in spelling. Apparently, their memory of words was related only to sound images (emphasis in original) and the difficulty they had in establishing a logical relation between the French sounds and the graphic images (emphasis in original) that characterize them presented an obstacle to retention. Just as, during the first week of instruction, the audio-lingual students resisted giving up the writing habit, so, at the beginning of the second semester, they were upset upon discovering how French was spelled, and they could not readily adjust to the graphic form."

The audio-lingual habit theory evidently plays down the importance of the written word, as does "le linguiste, pour qui la réalité essentielle d'une langue est la parole (et qui) ne s'intéresse que très médiocrement aux problèmes de l'orthographe". Consequently, the shortcoming of the commercial audio-visual courses has prompted a staff inspector for Modern Languages to suggest that "these indoctrinated beings (in secondary schools) are usually incapable of a single accurate sentence of written French". This is a matter for concern, considering that the formulation—which was unanimously endorsed at the Council of Europe conference held in Ankara in 1966—specified, among other aims, "to enable them (sc. the pupils, A.S.L.) to express themselves in writing". It has been acknowledged that, "after all, communication does include the written word" and that—although the Ministry's Pilot Scheme has succeeded insofar

3 Kenneth MacGowan, in Times Edul Suppl., No. 3100, 25.10.74, p. 57.
4 E. A. Greatwood, in Mod Langa., Vol. 48, 1967, p. 156.
5 Ian MacIntosh, in Times Edul Suppl., No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. V.
as the comprehension of the pupils who arrive at the secondary school is extremely good—"their level of achievement in written work, on the other hand, is almost universally regarded as unsatisfactory".¹

Experience then shows that, "unless the skills of reading and writing are acquired, both the learner's stock of lexical items and his acquaintance with the more complex clause and sentence structures of the language will be extremely restricted",² in spite of the blind optimists' claim that "the approach to any new material should be by way of the spoken word, not only in the early stages but at every stage"³ of Modern Language teaching. It is inevitable however that, in periods of transition, reactions should sometimes be extreme. At Uppsala, the dean of the Theological School has decried such popular views as "the spoken language must be mastered before the learning of the written system",⁴ whose pernicious influence has resulted in "the stress in state schools upon the direct method of foreign language instruction, and a de-emphasis upon grammar (which) has meant that students cannot write in foreign languages very well".⁵ The outcome was that, among the new directives coming into force in the autumn of 1970, the instructions enjoined the "realisation of the active relationship between the spoken and written forms of the foreign language".⁶

³ Loc. cit.
⁵ The Dean of the Uppsala Theological School. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 59, 1.12.73, p. 11.)
The Swedish experience is in keeping with the trends outlined at
the 1966 conference of the Council of Europe. It is in Ankara that
the foundation stone for expansion was laid when in September, 1966, the
representatives of the countries associated with the Council of Europe
endorsed unanimously that "the aims of modern language courses in secondary
schools are both general and specific. The general aim, which is shared
with other subjects of the curriculum, is to contribute to the development
of the pupils' personality, and here the study of modern languages has a
vital and distinctive role to play. The specific aims are practical and
cultural and are

1. to enable pupils to understand speech at normal speed,
2. to enable them to speak the language intelligibly,
3. to enable them to read with ease and understanding,
4. to enable them to express themselves in writing, and
5. to give them a knowledge of the foreign country and an insight
   into its civilisation and culture."^1

The aims are clear. However, while "much thought has been given in recent
years to methods of teaching a modern language to beginners and a variety
of courses have been published,... for the teacher of the subsequent
phase little support has been forthcoming".2

Dr. Greatwood's standpoint was implicitly endorsed by another H.M.I.
whose contribution, "The eleven-plus and thirteen-plus age groups in
Modern Language teaching", also appeared in 1967 in "Modern Languages".
With regard to the teaching of French as a second language, Francis
Debyser, Director of B.E.L.C., holds a similar view, which he expresses

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1 Council of Europe, in Mod. Langu., Vol. 48, 1967, p. 156.
2 Loc. Cit.
thus:

"La question la plus urgente qui se pose actuellement ..." 1

"The most urgent problem which must be met now ..." 1

Consequently, it is not surprising that, in their search for a much needed theoretical framework, psycholinguists have turned towards a more complex perceptual cognitive alternative.

Summing up, psycholinguists have persuasively argued that the cognitive code-learning theory allows the learner to acquire conscious control of all three levels of a Modern Language—that is "the phonological, grammatical, and lexical patterns of a second language, largely through study and analysis of these patterns as a body of knowledge". 2

1 Francis Debyser, in Le Français dans le monde, No. 73, 1970, p. 6.
Chapter 8. The Acquisition of Functional Competence in French.

"The trouble is that it is the arrival not the journey that matters."
— Ivor Crewe, October 1975.

The post-World War Two system of external examination has been a bone of contention with regard to the testing of foreign language learning. In the early nineteen sixties, a working party of headmasters deprecated "the present unsatisfactory situation criticized strongly in 1959 by the Crother Committee". Such criticisms highlight "the position taken by the Department (of Education and Science, which) has been one of not involving themselves in curriculum and methods, of asserting that these are the concerns of the school and the local authorities". If the D.E.S. will not and the teacher cannot, then the examiner must: as "for all but the genius at language, the learning of a foreign language is a long process", examiners consider that the success of a course depends on "the ability of the majority of learners to function correctly and spontaneously in the language after five or more years of study".

The audio-lingual habit theory has been conducive to the belief that "the ability to speak a foreign language is without doubt the most highly priced language skill". Moreover, a growing body of knowledge of the Psychology of language learning suggests, first, that mastery in audio-comprehension and, secondly, that "the ability to speak a language

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1 Ivor Crewe, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 207, 10.10.75, p. 5.
3 Alan Little, in *Times Edul Suppl.*, No. 3117, 21.2.75, p. 17.
5 Frances M. Hodgson, in *Aspects of Education*, (Hull University), No. 6, 1967, p. 16.
will greatly expedite and facilitate learning to write it".\footnote{1} Considering that "the difference between merely paying lip service to the oral objective and actually achieving it resides in making clear to the student that their grades will depend to a considerable extent upon their speaking performance"\footnote{2}, sooner or later, there comes a stage when testing can provide the incentive deemed necessary in order to maintain the rate of learning.

In sum, "speech is the foundation of all other linguistic skills".\footnote{3} This statement puts into perspective Professor Pimsleur's comment that "little need be said, at the present juncture in foreign language teaching, about why it is necessary to test the speaking skill. Indeed, a great deal depends on such tests."\footnote{4} Although, as the French express it, 

"Pratiquer une profession de jour en jour, c'est une question de routine basée sur l'obligation de moyens; le professeur doit faire tout son possible pour obtenir les résultats, sans avoir à souscrire à l'obligation de résultats; le professeur n'est nullement tenu d'obtenir les résultats qui sont pourtant souhaitables", \footnote{5}

the cognitive problem in learning consists in understanding "systematically what it is that an organism has learned".\footnote{6}

The issue is therefore a complex one. Professor Flew (Reading

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\footnote{1} Loc. cit.
\footnote{4} Paul Pimsleur, in Albert Valdman (ed.), op. cit., p. 194.
\footnote{5} Edited version of a debate broadcast in France.
University) has cogently argued that to say that "teaching, in this primary sense, must involve trying to get the pupil to master something; (and) to say, in the corresponding sense, that someone is studying must imply that he is himself making some effort to achieve that intended mastery. You cannot, in general, be sincerely trying to do something unless you want to know how far you are succeeding; and unless too you want to use that knowledge as a guide to the making of further progress."¹ Besides, it has been deprecated that "many of our courses lead to inexpertly devised examinations".² In practice, further difficulty arises from the fact that testing is dependent upon the definition of the steps forming the basis of the subject matter which must be learnt, i.e., a Modern Language.

This, in turn, sets problems owing to the state of our knowledge with regard to the processes of language acquisition. Moreover, as the examining boards "still are the great dictators",³ their influence at the lower levels results in a "grapeshot approach to modern language testing".⁴ Considering that "no one would deny the enormous influence exerted on teaching at all levels by public examinations",⁵ "to be valid, examinations must reflect the best current thinking about teaching objectives and methods".⁶ Consequently, the faction of progressive

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² Keith A. Edmunds, in *Times Edn Suppl*, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. XVI.
⁴ Keith Edmunds’s phrase. (cf. *Times Edn Suppl*, op. cit., p. XVI.)
Modern Language teachers strongly criticise prose-translation because, as Dr. Riddy pointed out, "being a difficult exercise, it is the most consistently practised of all in school courses". Such comments, which reflect the influence of the linguistic scientists, illustrate the present malaise of the discipline.

If "language teaching . . . suffers because its aims are ill-defined", it was left to George Perren, Director of C.I.L.T., to describe the nature of the problem. He wrote that, "in spite of some changes in modes and methods of testing, a clear linguistic definition of exactly what should be taught and therefore examined sometimes seems further away than ever". For example, as translation requires from the pupil "to find precise equivalents in the foreign language for the English that he is translating, the prose test searches out the extent of the linguistic experience of the candidate, of the reading he has done, the extent to which he has internalised the semantics and the structure of the language. (As) the prose translation starts from a passage of English and asks the pupil continually to guess at the collocation of words (that is,) the company they keep (,) it is searching as a test but less useful as a learning technique." A senior lecturer once commented that "the all-devouring prose has choked and backfired".

Yet, as might have been expected, entrenched old guarders reacted violently to the climate of change. Although Modern Language teaching in

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3 George E. Perren, in Times Educational Suppl., No. 2996, 27.10.72, p. 43.
higher education makes extensive use of "prose composition—without which garment the average university don feels so naked", an academic averred in 1972 that "all this fuss about prose composition comes from the laziness of teachers who do not want and do not know how, to mark prose". The writer is Professor Niklaus, caught in one of his unguarded moments.

In secondary education, the idea has been spreading for some time that "translation must at all costs be avoided; it is, in fact, a dirty word" (vid supra, chapter 1).

The turning point can be traced back to the middle nineteen sixties, when the delegates of the Council of Europe unanimously expressed the opinion that "la traduction vers la langue étrangère est un exercice à proscrire des examens du 2e degré", thus supporting the radicals' viewpoint that "prose translation as a teaching method is wrong in principle at any level". A working party of headmasters truncates translation on the ground that "to render in another language the meaning of a word or phrase in English is a mature exercise requiring a process of selection (emphasis in original) by the translator of the 'mot juste' among his sufficient stock of linguistic material and guided by his experience of the exact force and nuance (emphasis in original) of the foreign idiom. Selection is the essential thing guided by a high degree of

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1 Ivor C. Thimann, in The Teacher, (Kettering), Vol. 15, 1.5.70, p. 19.
2 Robert Niklaus. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 53, 20.10.72, p. 4.)
of what (Hermann Paul and) Otto Jespersen called 'Sprachgefühl'. If there is no selection, if the pupil imagines that he is required to go through a process of remembering 'equivalents' in a vocabulary list, then 'translation' becomes merely a business of word to word, one to one, 'transliteration'. This fosters a false notion of what language is and of how ideas are formed and are expressed in speech.\(^1\)

The result of "its (the prose translation's) predominance is one of the major obstacles to satisfactory achievement in foreign languages",\(^2\) for the constraints of the bilingual grammar-translation system are such that

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- the learning tasks revolve around the written language, usually restricted to the literary style, and therefore play down the acoustic aspect of the language;
- the practice promotes the receptive repertoire, e.g., reading, rather than the productive use, i.e., speaking and writing;
- the learning of isolated linguistic paradigms does not lead to an overview of the language system as a whole.

Consequently, it has been urged that "reform of G.C.E. is the most important immediate step to be taken to improve the present unsatisfactory situation",\(^3\) considering that the prose translation has been decried on the grounds, first, that it gives distorted results and, secondly, that "a difficult prose is always well beyond the range of an undergraduate".\(^4\)

At a practical level though, the introduction of a Modern Language by

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\(^3\) "The Headmasters' Report", op. cit., p. 25.

\(^4\) John G. Weightman, in Times Lit Suppl, No. 3716, 25.5.73, p. 577.
means of the audio-lingual approach has been characterized by a paucity of assessment and testing material. In 1971, the Materials Development Unit team (York University) made available a set of tests "to be used at the end of each individual unit of the course (whose main aim) is to see whether the important structures and vocabulary of the courses have been mastered".¹

With regard to the Advanced level of the General Certificate of Education, Professor Healey has ventured to say that, in the nineteen sixties, "it is possible to define this (so. the language element A.S.L.) in practice as consisting of a thorough knowledge of basic grammar plus a fairly wide active vocabulary, with sufficient ability in the use of these to satisfy the examiners in translation of passages of reasonably straightforward character, although not without either grammatical or semantic difficulties which do not need highly specialized knowledge or experience to be overcome".² The fact remains that, at the Ordinary level of the G.C.E., it is perhaps the prose test that is most often openly attacked. Dr. Thimann who quoted as an example, "when she had got up, her husband had already been working for an hour and a half", called it "the ghastly artificial translation into French"³!

Criticisms come from all levels, as "examiners of long experience, at widespread centres of examination, bear witness to the appalling weakness of the English-into-the-foreign-language section of the papers".⁴ To name but one examiner, Charles Dodson has deplored that "it is no

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³ Ivor C. Thimann, in The Teacher, (Kettering), 8.11.68, p. 16.
exaggeration to state that the average candidate tends to make up to one hundred errors in one translation paper consisting of two prose passages and a small essay."  

Colin Evans (University College, Cardiff), who has looked back over the results of his own survey, concluded that "passages for translation are no longer wildly inappropriate as they were in the past, that the validity of the exercise is being questioned at the early stage of each curriculum, and that new methods are being developed”.  

Although the Associated Examining Board, the first board that phased out the prose paper in the G.C.E. Ordinary-level examination (cf. Chapter 1), justifies the value of prose as a test in the G.C.E. Advanced-level course by "choosing passages which concentrate on the structure of the foreign language and its correct use, and which avoid over-sophisticated idioms and rarefied vocabulary", more radical changes have been considered necessary for some time owing to the peculiar requirements of the prevalent aural-oral system of instruction. Again, in spite of twenty years of direct contact between structural linguistics and language teaching, the possibilities of Applied Linguistics proper in connexion with testing, as well as teaching, have remained largely unexplored.

Nonetheless, under the impetus of the transformational generative-grammar theory, there has been in recent years a trend to depart from the accepted views of linguistic skills in terms of words and structures controlled by the language student. Professor Chomsky and others have

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shown the capacity for generating an infinite variety of new linguistic combinations on the ground that language users behave lawfully even when they may not be able to formulate the rules explicitly (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection 3). One of the general properties of human language is its creativity or open-endedness. The creativity of language, which "is the most striking aspect of linguistic competence, (consists in) the speaker's ability to produce new sentences, sentences that are immediately understood by other speakers although they bear no physical resemblance to sentences which are 'familiar'."¹

One of the main results of Noam Chomsky's writing in the field of Psychology and Linguistics was epitomized in the convincing view that human language is "stimulus-free and innovative".² The nineteenth-century philologist had perceived that:

"Sehr bedeutend ist die schopferische tatigkeit des individuums aber auch auf dem gebiete der wortbildung und noch mehr auf den der flexion, bei den wenigsten nomina- und verbalformen, die wir aussprechen, findet eine rein gedachtnissmassige reproduction statt, manche haben wir nie vorher gesprochen oder gehört, andere so selten, dass wir sie ohne hülfe der gruppen, an die sie sich angeschlossen haben, niemals wieder in das bewusstsein würden zurückrufen können."³

"The creative activity of the individual is very marked in the area of word-formation, and still more in that of inflexion. Very few of the verbal and noun forms that we pronounce are due to reproduction by a mere effort of memory; there are many which we have never before spoken nor heard; others so seldom, that without the aid of the groups with which they have connected themselves, they could never be recalled into consciousness."⁴


Eighty years later, Professor Chomsky explained that "we constantly read and hear new sequences of words, recognize them as sentences, and understand them. It is easy to show that the new events that we accept and understand as sentences are not related to those with which we are familiar by any simple notion of formal (or semantic or statistical\(^1\)) similarity or identity of grammatical frame. Talk of generalization in this case is entirely pointless and empty. It appears that we recognize a new item as a sentence not because it matches some familiar item in any simple way, but because it is generated by the grammar that each individual has somehow and in some form internalized."\(^2\)

Considering that we would "not credit a person with mastery of a foreign language if he is only able to understand those sentences which he has been previously taught (,) the test of fluency is whether he can understand sentences that he has not been taught".\(^3\) The pupil's "linguistic competence extends far beyond this sum total of sentences"\(^4\) which he has been taught. Even so, we shall see (vid inf., chapter 10) that "the teacher cannot always expect, and should not expect, the pupil of average intelligence to say things which he has not been taught",\(^5\) although "an astronomical variety of sentences can be made simply from permutations of elements within the constraints imposed by morpheme,

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1 Brackets in original.
word and phrase classes". Martin Braine has argued that "the grammar of a language can be hierarchized" for, as Zellig Harris defined it, "the kernel is the set of elementary sentences and combiners, . . . all sentences of the language are obtained from one or more kernel sentences".

In sum, generative-grammar theorists present an analysis of the entire system of a language which shows that the entire grammar of the language is derived from a limited number of structures chosen as a starting point, four kernel sentences, "by means of optional (emphasis in original) transformational rules". As the child "learns the rules for making them (sc. the transformations A S L)", he has internalized the knowledge of the entire set of rules of a language. Professor Jespersen wisely determined that "a language would be a difficult thing to handle if its speakers had burden imposed on them of remembering every little item separately". Ideally then, the speaker of a language is deemed to have learnt the rules governing the grammatical, lexical, and phonological patterns of the language, which are the elements that constitute the three levels of a language. So, "a fluent speaker is able to use and understand any sentence drawn from the infinite (emphasis in original) set of sentences of his language, and since, at any time, he has only encountered a finite (emphasis in original) set of sentences, it follows

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that the speaker's knowledge of (the target) language takes the form of rules which project the finite set of sentences he has fortuitously encountered to the infinite set of sentences of the language. ¹

Professor Miller has illustrated how rules are learnt by showing the relative magnitude of the productive component for "there is no known limit to the number of unique sentences which can be constructed in a language."² Georges Miller has explained that, as "a simple English sentence can easily run to a length of twenty words, so elementary arithmetic tells us ('presupposing that grammatical and meaningful continuations work out of about ten words on an average') that there must be at least $10^{20}$ such sentences that a person who knows English must know how to deal with. Compare this productive potential with the $10^4$ or $10^5$ individual words we know—the reproductive component of our theory—and the discrepancy is dramatically illustrated. Putting it differently, it would take $100,000,000,000$ centuries (one thousand times the estimated age of the earth³) to utter all the admissible twenty-word sentences of English. Thus, the probability that you might have heard any particular twenty-word sentence before is negligible."⁴ On the strength of their vigorous research activity then, the transformational generative grammarians have shown that the speaker of a language "will generate all and only the grammatical sentences of (that language)."⁵

³ Brackets in original.
Professor Chomsky summed up elsewhere that "we understand a new sentence, in part, because we are somehow capable of determining the process by which this sentence is derived in this grammar". So, if the theory of the language acquisition device holds good, when functional competence is reached, ideally,

"l'enfant a des lors pouvoir d'engendrer', et cela a l'infini, des phrases, non seulement celles qui ont été préalablement entendues, mais aussi celles qu'il n'a jamais perdues". 2

"the child will be able to 'create' sentences indefinitely, not only those which have been heard previously, but also those which he has never heard". 2

The implications for second language learning are that the designers of a course might well have to set their aim in such a way that pupils are led "to produce automatically sentences which are grammatically and semantically correct", for "a person who knows a specific language has control of a grammar that 'generates' (that is, characterizes) the infinite set of potential deep structures, maps them onto associated surface structures, and determines the semantic and phonetic interpretations of these abstract objects". 5

In the final analysis, we may intimate that, if the learner has not acquired the rules of the language well enough to be able to construct new sentences he has not yet learnt the background linguistic system of that language. Elizabeth Ingram once surmised that "when people complain, as they do from time to time, that the teaching of languages in schools is

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4 Brackets in original.

unsuccessful, it is because the learners do not reliably learn to function at the intended level." However when Leonard Bloomfield wrote his influential book in the nineteen forties, he already set the learner the aim of attaining the ability to speak the language fluently and accurately, thus stressing the importance of the spoken forms in Modern Language learning. The aim consists in exchanging significant inter-communications. Indeed, "if the words understanding and speaking a foreign language have any important meaning at all, they must mean participating more than casually in live interactions with representatives of the foreign culture".

The new objective highlights the advances made in comparison with the more humble attainments which were characteristic of the bilingual grammar-translation era. For example, a Modern Language teacher thought it reasonable in the nineteen fifties "to expect that a five-year course of study shall result in the acquisition of a body of sound knowledge with respect to a fairly wide field of vocabulary, accidence and syntax". When the Confederation of British Industry postulated an average student, they defined their intermediate grade. They were agreed that:

"Candidates should have the conversational ability to get about in a foreign country without difficulty and sufficient confidence in the language to take their place socially. Candidates must be capable of holding a conversation on everyday topics. They must be able to follow non-specialised conversation between foreign nationals of the country concerned sufficiently well to inject

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1 Elizabeth Ingram, in *Times Edul Suppl*, No. 3014, 2.5.75, p. XII.
2 Alfred S. Bayes, in Albert Waldman (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. vi.
comment and to indicate objection, contradiction or approval.
They must be able to read aloud with assurance and in a manner immediately understandable to the examiner.
They must be able to translate orally with reasonable speed and accuracy from written texts of the foreign language into English. This assumes non-specialised material and the use of a dictionary.¹

More relevant to the Modern Language teacher in secondary school, the Schools Council specified that the four "skills required by most pupils studying a Modern Language in the Sixth Form are:

— a. The ability to understand speech at normal speed on non-specialist topics.
— b. The ability to speak the language intelligibly to a native speaker.
— c. The ability to read with reasonable ease (except on highly specialist topics²).
— d. The ability to write freely on topics within the pupil's experience. (Indeed,) the teaching process reveals that they (sc. all four skills A.S.L.) are in fact closely interrelated and interdependent and all have a role in the language learning process".³

Clearly, "for the ultimate mature use of a language ability in all four skills is necessary".⁴ The use of reading and writing as a method of recording, conveying, and abstracting information which could have been used:

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² Brackets in original.
been at one time a description of Modern Language teaching would obviously not constitute a simple definition of functional competence. On the other hand, the City of York Modern Language adviser has decried "the adhocery which passes for effective testing of students' performance in the various areas of language activity and the lack of clearly defined objectives and syllabuses, are difficulties which language teachers have lived with for so long as to accept them as normal". ¹

The pattern which is emerging shows that the need for a consensus of opinion remains with regard to both functional competence in, and testing of, Modern Language learning. Although the linguist asserted in the nineteen forties that "the exercises of dictation are intended to improve the student's ability to hear, not his ability to spell", ² with the growing awareness that each test must measure only one aspect of language learning, the formal dictation is seen as a test involving two different skills, "the reading aloud by an examiner of a text in the foreign language (oral comprehension) ³ to be reproduced in writing in the foreign language by the candidate (manipulation of the written word)". ⁴ Yet, such leading principles have been, for too long, implicitly disavowed by influential linguists in their writings. Dr. Presswood, a former honorary Secretary of the Modern Language Association, was still claiming in the nineteen sixties that, "under the rubric of oral stimulus with written response, pride of place is taken by dictation, (as) there is nothing inhibiting here". ⁵ In the same decade, Dr. Coulthard (Birmingham

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¹ Keith A. Emmans, in Times Ednt Suppl, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. XVI.
² Mary R. Haas, in Lg, Vol. 19, 1943, p. 207.
³ Here and infra, brackets in original.
⁵ W. L. Presswood, in Mod Langa, Vol. 43, 1962, p. 70.
University) expressed the viewpoint that "dictation is the most
comprehensive single test, at any level, of a student's understanding of
spoken French and of his knowledge of its pronunciation." The
traditional approach to testing displayed by the active rear-guard among
the Modern Language teachers, runs contrary to the examining boards'
reforms (vid supra, chapter 1) in their attempt to test objectively what
was already known in the nineteen forties, as the "three essential aspects
of oral skill: (1) the ability to report a single, simple act or
situation in precise words, (2) the ability to express a sequence of
ideas, (3) the ability to converse." The psycholinguists'
definition implies procedural co-operation. For example, at a C.R.D.M.L.
debate, Conference resolved in 1969 that "co-operation between a language
expert and a test technician was necessary to design and construct
effective tests".

Without "a linguistic definition of objectives" though, the
procedure is marred by methodological constraints. Most forms of
examination have been criticized following protracted discussions, not
always fruitful, in the course of which attempts had been made to define
to what degree a particular form tested, on the one hand, knowledge and,
on the other, a combination of skills, such as oral comprehension,
manipulation of the written word, et cetera. As John Reynolds viewed it,
"mystique is attributed to curriculum processes considered to be esoteric
preserves, for instance syllabus construction and assessment. Evidence

1 Margaret Coulthard: "A" Level French Dictation, (London:

2 Frederick B. Agard et al.: An Investigation of Second-Language

3 A. E. Filliner, in CILT Reports and Papers 2, (London: CILT,

4 George Perron's phrase. (cf. CILT Reports and Papers 2,
op. cit., p. 10.)
that teachers acquire the necessary skills when they have the opportunity, incentive and in-service support to develop them passes unnoticed."

While the Modern Language teacher could acquire the technical know-how by means of an in-service course, Professor Pimsleur (New York State University) has surmised that "we try of course to be as objective as possible. Yet we are impaled upon a paradox. The effort to test the speaking skill objectively is fated always to fall short of complete success, for we are dependent upon the judgement of a listener, and he, however well trained he may be, is a subjective and not an objective scoring machine." So, the Modern Language Association once reported that individual markers are prone to occasional lapses of judgement and, in the early nineteen seventies, the Association thought that examiners should work in teams. Sadly, to date, little attention has been paid to the headmasters' recommendation. In 1961, they had felt that "the G.C.E. Boards must show a lot more imagination, in using the new tape-recorder techniques, in bringing the schools into partnership with the examiners". Whatever the outcome in the long run, here again the transformational generative-grammar researchers' "pioneer work demonstrates how 'blunt' are the usual instruments of assessment, including casual listening".

To the knowledge versus skill debate is superimposed the problem of testing competence as opposed to performance, for performance—the knowledge which enables the speaker to use an utterance appropriately in linguistic communication—"is not determined solely by linguistic

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Transformational generative-grammar theorists point out that linguistic competence consists of the combination of competence with the interaction of diverse factors as memory, motivation, and even the nature of the situation. Moreover, sociolinguists are aware that "the 'correct' use of a word does not by itself tell us much about the reality which lies behind it for the speaker, nor how it is located in his semantic system".

The evaluation of performance in a Modern Language will take a different slant depending whether the test is primarily designed by psychologists, linguists, or teachers. Psychologists, for example, are inclined to measure the automaticity and the rapidity of response. From their point of view, facility, that is, the readiness and rapidity of flow, is the predominant consideration. On the other hand, as linguists are particularly interested in terms of absence of interlingual interference and negative transfer between languages, the degree of performance is related to the "comprehension and production at the levels of phonemics, grammar, and basic vocabulary, with special tests of the vocabulary for technical gaps and frequency distortions, and of skill in written language and levels of style".

Teachers, who have traditionally been concerned with the extent of vocabulary and correctness of response, set a premium on a quick, confident and unhesitating delivery of the utterance. Considering that "we should cover the different types of skill, and (that) we may be misled by tests which do not", in the main, teachers attempt to select tests in

2 Harold Rosen, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3076, 10.5.74, p. 19.
acquately with such criteria as specified by psychologists and linguists. As "there is no test on the market which covers all facets adequately", on the one hand, the problem of tests is acute and, on the other, new examinations have been hoped for. Indeed, in the late nineteen fifties, the members of the Crowther Committee have deprecated that "the present examinations ... in English and French do not offer satisfactory safeguards of linguistic teaching in the lower school". Furthermore, the assessment of communicative competence is largely determined by the aim of the course.

In the early nineteen seventies, the D.S.E. summed up that "our need is to produce ... a large number of people in various occupations with a fluent working command of at least one foreign language". Vaughan James (now Deputy Director of C.I.L.T.) had stated that, in the middle nineteen sixties, there was a consensus among Modern Language teachers that "at the end of a course leading to G.C.E. Ordinary level the pupil should properly be expected:

(a) to understand spoken Russian (or French, et cetera);
(b) to understand the printed word in Russian (or French, et cetera);
(c) to make himself understood in Russian (or French, et cetera) both in speech and on paper".

The task is far from being a simple one. To quote Robert Lado, "when we use language even in an ordinary conversation we are wielding a...

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1 Loc. cit.
4 C. Vaughan James, in Barnet Libbish (ed.), op. cit., pp. 135-36.
most complicated tool with amazing dexterity and ease", considering that the overt phonetic activity is a "highly conscious affair" (vid supra, chapter 7, subsection 8). Next then, we shall turn our attention to the problem of performance, for it has been argued elsewhere that it was necessary to define the criteria of acceptable performance. It is a known fact that "people speak fast. In order to understand, one must know the forms extremely well." Belasco and Valdman have explained that "it would be impossible ... to isolate and identify the elements of French sentences as they are uttered by French speakers unless you have had extensive training in aural comprehension." Speed then, poses a difficulty which is peculiar to French, as a Frenchman uses 350 syllables a minute, an American uses 150. These statistics throw light on the objectives Fernand Marty has set in the early nineteen sixties in his "Programming a basic foreign language course". He suggested that successful students should be able:

--- to phonate at a rate found acceptable by natives, namely 150 syllables per minute;
--- to reply with a maximum latency of three seconds;
--- to show a terminal auditory comprehension performance specified as identifying 200 syllables per minute against background noise.

To sum up, "genuine mastery of a foreign language is demonstrated when, both in the perception and understanding of someone else's speech

1 Robert L. Lado, op. cit., p. 4.
2 John Trim's phrase. (cf. CILT Reports and Papers 2, op. cit., pp. 17-18.)
4 Simon Belasco et al., op. cit., p. V.
(i.e. in listening and reading\(^1\)) and in the expression of our own thoughts
(i.e. in speaking and writing) our consciousness is concentrated
primarily on the semantic aspects of language—that is, on the thoughts
which are expressed by means of speech—and the linguistic medium is not
subject to conscious analysis. The extent to which unconscious use is
developed is, therefore, the first of several criteria for assessing
linguistic proficiency.\(^2\)

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1 Here and infra, brackets in original.

Conclusions.

Twenty years ago, Dr. Thimann asserted that "nobody denies the national importance of efficiency" in modern language teaching. In the early nineteen sixties, the belief that empirical research would promote efficiency began to spread. On the one hand, the Central Advisory Council for Education deplored that "there is too little experience nationally of trying to teach a foreign language over the whole, or most, of the ability range" and, on the other hand, the Committee on Higher Education commented that as "modern languages have an increasingly important role in the conduct of affairs today that there should be much further experiment in this area of study".

It is undoubtedly in assessing what the pupil learnt that we have largely remained conservative in our outlook. Tony Becher, who commented on innovative teaching and major shifts in curricular pattern, suggested that "it is as if those involved in change can only tolerate a limited amount of uncertainty: if they move a significant way along one dimension, they have to stay where they are on the other". The task of testing what the learner knows is marred by an insuperable problem, for "both language and learning must be handled simultaneously". Even if a procedure existed to sort out the effect of one factor among many, when the factors are interconnected the outcome would be meaningless.

Such implications, which also pertain to experiments in education,

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have been stressed in the inter-war period. In the nineteen thirties, for example, Percival Symonds concluded his own study by stating that "every true experiment in education presents an artificial educational situation. . . . The actual educational situation is too complex to be used in experiment. When one has compared one actual classroom method with another, one does not know to what specific factor to attribute the results. In true experimental work a single factor must be pulled out of its setting and alone be allowed to vary. Only in this way is it possible to build up educative procedures that are based on correct principles." However, Becquerel, who was writing his thesis for the "Agregation" in the nineteenth century, warned that:

"(alors que) le but de l'experimentation est d'isoler un fait des circonstances accessoires qui l'entourent et qui gènent ou dénaturent sa libre manifestation; mais par cela même que vous isolez un fait, vous le dénaturez". 2

Besides, Professor Chevalier (University of Paris-Vincennes) soberly reminded us that "on doit être scrupuleux quand il s'agit des enfants". 3

The human element also interacts then. On the one hand, in any comparison, there needs "to be a sufficient number of teachers involved to neutralize the teacher variable". 4 On the other hand, even when parallel groups are taught separately by two significantly different methods, as

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2 Becquerel's "These d'agregation", (1844).


they were in the early nineteen sixties for the "Scherer-Wertheimer experiment" in Colorado University, the results can be disappointing simply because "it is almost impossible to control the technique that the student himself (emphasis in original) will adopt to acquire a given skill".¹ Hence the students affect the outcome of the experiment.

Although writers who draw their facts and figures from empirical data usually express reservations considering that the very multiplicity of factors involved in learning makes it difficult for research to be effectively carried out, the body of facts now available ought to lead to significant improvements in the teaching of French. It may however be that major advances will ultimately be made in the acquisition of a second language when experiment is no longer concentrated on discovering why the performance, and even competence, vary in teaching Modern Languages across the ability range, but when research is reorientated positively by being concentrated on successful learners in order to discover the characteristics which foster fluency in a Modern Language.

PART III - FRENCH FOR ALL AND THE SUPPLY OF PROFICIENT TEACHERS.

"The teachers' training stage is probably the most promising plane in which to attempt to break the vicious circle of perpetuating obsolescence."
— Dr. Alexander King, September 1966.

Prefatory Note to PART III.

"Can the administrators, who rarely have any special interest or expertise in our field, arrive at wise administrative policies without our advice?"
— Julian Harris, May 1947.

In the nineteen seventies, it has been deplored in Great Britain that "the cut back in teacher production was a policy choice (as) the Government has decided that it must buy other things instead". While "research at the frontier of knowledge (is) especially prone to raise questions which may not be welcome to politicians, bureaucrats", and others, Professor Eggleston (Keele University) pointed out that "researchers still have to recognize that their role in decision making is a secondary one". Considering that "our educational bosses in the D.E.S. and L.E.A.s are the new Bourbons of our time—they learn nothing and forget everything", we shall see (chapter 9) that on recent experience there seems little evidence that sheer presentation of information—spotlighting the naughty bits of the body politics—will lead

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3 Gordon McGregor, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 73, 13.4.73, p. 12.
5 S. John Eggleston, in Times Ednl Suppl, No. 3076, 10.5.74, p. 2.
governments to redistribute resources"¹ (subsection A). The import is that the study of functional competence in French is perforce closely related to the availability of suitably-qualified Modern Language teachers or the lack of them (subsection B).

The General Certificate of Education promoted in the post-World War Two decades by the 1944 (Butler) Act, reached a peak which, in relative terms, levelled at a time when, both a growing proportion of pupils transferred to colleges of further education and a shrinking number of Sixth formers leaving the comprehensive schools qualified in French. The G.C.E. "O" level is loosing ground as the G.C.E. expands. Teaching a Modern Language across the ability range is one of the objectives which is in keeping with those brought out by our scrutiny of current practices in Modern Language teaching. However, "the aims, content and techniques derived from past experience with a selected minority will not do"² any longer for the enlarged cohorts passing through the secondary modern schools. The new aim which consists in teaching Modern Languages across the ability range is making it necessary to discover new teaching techniques (chapter 10).

By the nineteen sixties, a minority of well-informed Modern Language teachers had become aware through the evidence gathered by neurophysiologists that there was a marked "distinction between early and late learning".³ The tone of the dissertation has been enhanced by the frequent references of a "transdisciplinary"⁴ character which have

¹ Dennis Maraden, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 132, 26.4.74, p. 19.
⁴ Dr. Alexander King's term. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 161, 15.11.74, p. 5.)
lavishly illustrated the debate. Befittingly, as "each time there is a new idea in psychology, it suggests a corresponding insight in neurophysiology, and vice versa",¹ the outcome of the thesis is unambiguous. Better prospects rest with radical changes, i.e., curriculum innovation. Such is the principle embodied in the Primary School Pilot Scheme (chapter 11). The closing chapter centres on the vigorous research activity in Neurophysiology that provides the understanding which is pre-requisite in order to assess the biological deadline for mapping-out language in the prepubertal stage of development (chapter 12).

This brief introduction to the concluding chapters of the dissertation outlines once more that, in Modern Language teaching, "tout se tient". The nineteen sixties "have seen a veritable revolution in the world of modern language teaching"² in secondary education and, at that time, the Schools Council conceded that "modern language teaching is entirely dependent on the provision of staff who are fluent in their languages and competent in the methods they use",³ hence the paramount importance of training teachers with adequate language proficiency. As we shall see presently, speakers in the House of Lords have expressed claims that those who train the teachers "should encourage their young students to go away with at least one language at the end of their course",⁴ asking "whether the Government will aim for the introduction of the direct method in all modern language classes".⁵

⁵ Lord Strabolgi, in Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) House of Lords, op. cit., col. 388.

"Training is of paramount importance."

Subsection A - Reducing the Colleges' Output.

"In the Greater London area, for every student at a teachers' training college who is being trained in modern languages, four are being trained in sociology and five in drama."

In the House of Lords, both Baroness Emnet of Amberley's intervention and Lord Strabolgi's question (vid supra, prefatory note to PART III) are not atypical of the demands which emanate from the conventional wisdom. They are in sharp contrast with the degree of sophistication that is deemed necessary to promote communicative competence in French. For example, neither linguists nor methodologists support any longer "the direct method, which should be rejected as being too rigorous and uncompromising". The Department of Education and Science could claim in 1966 that "a record number of about 29,000 students entered the colleges of education in the autumn of 1965, swelling the total student population to nearly 73,000. This outstanding achievement by the college marks another advance in the drive to produce a greatly enlarged teaching force in the schools." The result of the expansion of teacher training, in Great Britain, is that the teaching force has reached 474,000, a figure which formed in 1966 over 28 per cent. of the economically active

qualified manpower. These figures reflect the fact that "teaching is by far the largest profession in Britain". If, on the one hand, "teachers are easily the most important of all educational resources", on the other, the tuition costs for their training increased from £10.6 million in 1960-1961 to £57.8 million in 1970-1971. These statistical returns published by the D.E.S. showed an annual increase of 18.5 per cent., which represents the largest increase for any type of service in education.

The sociological explanation is that "the schooling industry is unique in late industrial society in that it is the only one which is becoming more labour-intensive (emphasis in original)". The decision to cutback teacher training provoked an outcry from the teachers' unions, not least the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education. The criticism which has been raised by this vocal strand of the further education sector is that "successive governments have manipulated this most convenient and tractable group of institutions with brisk efficiency turning them on and off like taps to regulate the flow, not merely of numbers, but of different kinds of teachers", a policy which has been thoroughly despised by the A.T.C.D.E.

The profession has stressed the alacrity with which, over a ten-year period, colleges of education "have introduced the three-year course and the Bachelor of Education degree, started Box and Cox schemes to train more teachers, fostered the revolution in primary schools, and by trebling their student population in a decade achieved the fastest rate of

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1 Brian MacArthur, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 77, 6.4.73, p. 14.
2 ATCEO. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 122, 15.2.74, p. 2.)
expansion of any sector of higher education". They intimated that "regulating input to the profession must be done by adjusting the number of re-entrants and the number of postgraduates rather than by constantly tampering with numbers on concurrent courses".

Their case was easily substantiated for, in spite of the tremendous expansion, even the most urgent needs have not been met. In the late nineteen sixties, the demand for Modern Language teachers well versed in modern methods of teaching was bound to be increased by "the invasion from the Primary French Project in the primary schools begun in September 1967". Although "the number of students starting a main French course (in the colleges of education) has more than doubled" over the 1962-1963 period, in the House of Lords, Lord Orr-Ewing deprecated the fact that, "in the Greater London area, for every student at a teachers' training college who is being trained in modern languages, four are being trained in sociology and five in drama" (vid supra, epigraph to this subsection). The shortage is so considerable that, as a result, "if French ever becomes a general subject for all pupils over eight, a considerable increase in students of main French will be necessary for colleges to be able to fill vacancies caused by natural wastages... . . . This increase could be achieved only by seriously upsetting the balance of subjects of college curricula—and so for many years junior schools would have to rely on

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1 Brian MacArthur, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 77, 6.4.73, p. 14.
2 ATCDE. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 122, 15.2.74, p. 2.)
semi-specialists for French teaching\textsuperscript{1}, considering that the "majority of those who study foreign languages are non-specialists". \textsuperscript{2}

Clearly, the problem is as much qualitative as it is quantitative. At a 1972 conference, the participants feared that "the present shortage of foreign language teachers in both primary and secondary schools is likely to increase". \textsuperscript{3} This disturbing situation has been reflected in Lord Orr-Ewing's question in the House of Lords, whose objective was "to ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are satisfied that an adequate expansion is planned for the teaching of modern languages in teacher training colleges to meet the need of modern language teachers in primary, middle and secondary schools". \textsuperscript{4} The administrators of the colleges of education hold the view that their institutions are particularly well suited to train teachers. For example, Gordon MacGregor, Principal of Bishop Otter College of Education (Chichester), has claimed that "the colleges can draw confidence from 130 years' responsibility for educating the country's teachers... nobody else in this country... knows anything like as much (as the colleges do) and planners must be continually reminded of that." \textsuperscript{5}

Although the colleges were "in fact committed over the next few years to become more like a college of higher education than they have ever been before", \textsuperscript{6} the prospects for French in secondary schools, as well as in

\begin{itemize}
\item[1] Arthur Spicer et al.: The Initial Training of Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages in Colleges and Departments of Education, (York University, 1972), Part I, Section V, pp. 103 ff.
\item[6] Lord Redcliffe-Maud. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 117, 11.1.74, p. 5.)
\end{itemize}
primary education, will remain bleak for several years considering that, so far, there has been precious little planning in teacher training even for the most glaring short-term requirements. Hence projection numbers of pupils and students must be based on sociological facts and statistical figures. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point. First, the upper secondary school sets problems throughout western Europe in general and in Great Britain in particular. At the 1973 Council of Europe standing conference of ministers of education, Henri Janne (now Professor of Sociology at Brussels University) has commented that as, in the United Kingdom, forty per cent of young people between fifteen and nineteen receive no regular education after they leave school at the end of the compulsory period, "a great deal remains to be done here".¹ Roy Hattersley, then Labour Spokesman on education who saw the need for redressing the balance of education, stated that "day-release must be transformed from a little-used disappointment to a universally applied success".² The Labour Party have in fact pledged themselves to shift the balance of educational spending where, in Geoffrey Rhodes's words, "the greatest class inequalities still exist".³ Following Lord Crowther-Hunt's appointment in 1974, the new Minister of State for Higher Education asked Conference at the Royal Festival Hall (London), whether we should not "be giving priority to allocating funds for further education for those who left school at 15 or 16".⁴ Yet, the implementation of the Labour Party's policy for education on the lines defined in their "Programme for Britain"

¹ Henri Janne, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3028, 8.6.73, p. 8.
³ Geoffrey Rhodes. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 85, 1.6.73, p.3)
⁴ Lord Crowther-Hunt. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 163, 29.11.74, p. 1.)
published in 1973, could only accelerate a trend which was already retaining the attention of academics. The expanding enrolments in the fifteen-to-twenty-year-old group have reached such a level that a special comparative research unit has been set up at King's College (London) under the directorship of Professor King.

The educational and social implications are multifarious. First, over the last decade, the numbers of students on full-time Advanced-level courses for the General Certificate of Education have been increasing at the rate of 11 or 12 per cent. a year. Between 1964 and 1970 the number of pupils studying in schools for G.C.E. A levels rose from 107,000 to 133,000. More significant still was the rise in the number of young people embarking on the first year of their G.C.E. A levels in colleges of further education. This has been clearly brought out, on the one hand, by the statistical returns compiled yearly by the Department of Education and Science (showing a gradual increase from 25.5 per cent. or 24,800 in 1968 to 27.9 per cent. or 34,800 in 1971) and, on the other hand, by the students' results which have been summarized as, in 1961, "10 per cent of A-level successes were in colleges; now those successes are 20 per cent of a greatly increased A level total".1

Secondly, within the 1960-1970 period, the percentage of the sixteen-to-nineteen-year-old students had almost doubled (Norman St. John-Stevas, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the D.E.S., had provided the House of Commons in 1974 with an estimation of 286,000) and even if progression slowed down, as the birth-rate reached its peak in 1964, the sixteen-to-nineteen-year-old group will be largest in the early nineteen eighties, the number of students in that age group will top the

1 Edmund J. King, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 150, 30.8.74, p. II.
one-million mark in 1981. According to the D.E.S., the figure was 495,000 but it has been conceded that "no maximum or minimum estimates have been made". In fact, "a reform of the methods of presenting statistics to the public is being considered by the Department of Education and Science as a result of the growing controversy over the lack of information". Indeed, Neil Marten and his colleagues on the Commons Expenditure Committee found it "difficult to comprehend how policy decisions can be taken without the basic data (as) DES round... figures are useless for public expenditure scrutiny and control".

Examples abound. In a report, the National Union of Teachers had deplored that "assumptions made in the past regarding the over-16 age group have proved to be particularly wide of the mark". In 1972, Maureen Woodhall’s warning had been that "the main criticism that can be made of British forecasts of the demand and supply of teachers is, again, not that they have been inaccurate—which they have—but that they have given the impression that they were intended to be accurate". Ultimately "the biggest and most tragic failure, however, has been in the production of teachers, where all the experts have been hopelessly confounded over quite a short period, and where confident ministerial estimates have proved inaccurate by factors of 50 per cent or more". Considering that

2 David Hencke, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 93, 27.7.73, p. 20.
4 Norman Morris et al.: How Many Teachers?, (NUT Typescript, 27.7.73).
"the statistical incompetence of the Ministry of Education in the late 1950s which led the Government to extend the certificated teacher's course to three years early in the 1960s in order to avoid the over-production of teachers. . . . turned out to be a misjudgment",¹ the ultimate result was that "the Council's recommendation helped to increase the shortage of teachers, and caused a worsening of the staffing position".²

On the strength of such facts and figures, Sam Fisher, a member of the N.U.T. Executive, claimed that "the White Paper estimates on future teacher numbers would be at least 50,000 short on the number required to achieve even the mild reforms envisaged by Mrs. Thatcher".³ In the same year, Professor Morris's interim estimate had set a target of 565,727 teachers, a figure "which exceeds Mrs. Thatcher's proposals by more than 10 per cent."⁴ The N.U.T. Executive had already drawn attention to the fact that the "failure was the White Paper's silence on the growing demand for teachers in two neglected areas of education—provision for the 16 to 19 age group and adult education".⁵ At that time, the Committee of Inquiry was investigating Britain's fragmented adult education services and, soon after the report had been published, Paul Fordham (Southampton University) reflected that adult education "is still marginal in Britain".⁶ First, the Committee of Inquiry did not hesitate to claim that, in the early nineteen seventies, "adult education is already a mass

³ Anon., in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3022, 27.4.73, p. 6.
⁴ Norman Morris. (cf. The Sunday Times, 1.7.73, p.5.)
⁵ Anon., in The Teacher, (Kettering), Vol. 22, 12.1.73, p. 1.
activity, with some two million adults purposefully engaged each year"¹ and, secondly, in their initial statement they were agreed that a "target of four million students—one in nine of the adult population—is realistic"².

Such are the facts. The prospects over a decade are however more hopeful quantitatively as well as qualitatively both from the points of view of teachers and their trainers considering that higher education institutions, not only the colleges of education, but even the universities will only be "able to appoint new staff in the next ten years as compared with the last ten".³ It has been estimated that, in the universities alone, the controlled growth could mean a twenty-six per cent. cut in new Arts lecturers, thus imposing a reorientation for newly qualified teachers in their search for a first appointment, regardless of their academic success. Nevertheless, with regard to secondary education, "the Government seems to have made some risky assumptions"⁴ for "all the four different projections for the birth rate from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys predicted that the birth rate would be rising in the early 1980s".⁵

The N.U.T.'s uneasiness was therefore justified. The Government was hopefully assuming that "the output of trained graduates going into teaching will increase to about 10,000 in that year (sc. 1981. A.S.L.)";

² Ibid., p. 2.
³ Roy Millett, in Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 56, 10.11.72, p. 13.
⁴ Brian MacArthur, in Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 78, 13.4.73, p. 12.
⁵ Keith Hampson. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 229, 12.5.76, p. 24.)
and that there will be a similar increase in the number of trained teachers returning to schools—from 14,000 this year (i.e., in 1973) to 18,000 at the end of the decade.1 While 37,070 students entered the non-graduate courses for initial training in colleges of education in 1972, it was in that year that, in accordance with the White Paper, the D.E.S. had planned an expanded graduate entry of about 14,000 a year.

On the one hand, the D.E.S.'s intention was to reduce further by several thousands the yearly intake for initial training in colleges of education. On the other hand, as the complexity of training for Modern Language teaching gains wider recognition outside the specialized circles, ultimately, it will no longer be tenable to accept the validity of the one-year training given as an appendage to the three-year degree courses.

In recent years, student teachers have been getting more "A" levels. While the official requirement at most of the colleges of education still consisted of five G.C.S. "O" levels in the early nineteen seventies, as the number of entrants holding two G.C.S. "A" levels was already reaching up to 62 per cent., i.e., Coventry, (the national average passed from 39.3 per cent. in 1971 to 40.5 per cent. in 1972), Didsbury and Bershire (the latter having been subsequently renamed Sulmershe College of Higher Education) "decided to concentrate solely on degree level work from October"2 1974, whose normal entry requirements have been two "A" levels. Trinity and All Saints (Leeds) became an all undergraduate institution in October 1974 when Leeds University "agreed in principle to validate

1 Brian MacArthur, in Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 78, 13.4.73, p. 12.
2 David Hencke, in Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 94, 3.6.73, p. 1.
general degree courses for the college”.¹

By making entrance to colleges of education dependent upon advanced-
level results, the signs were that pressure from the D.E.S. may prove
unnecessary. Indeed the general secretary of the A.T.C.O.D.E. pointed out
that "there is a considerable evidence, and it is mounting daily, that
teaching is a very difficult and very badly paid job. It will not, as it
now stands, attract the ablest—or even for much longer the moderately
able—school leavers”,² applications for places in colleges for 1974 were
down 12.7 per cent. on 1973 (8.6 per cent. for women and 23.1 per cent.
for men). It could be argued that the D.E.S.'s decision appeared to be
based on the "widely held belief that most student teachers were university
rejects (until) research last year (sc. 1972.A.S.L.) after A level,
showed this to be untrue—30 per cent. chose to train as teachers as a
first choice of career".³

² Stanley Hewett, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3077, 17.5.74, p. 6.
³ Bruce Choppin, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3021, 20.4.73, p. 7.
Conclusions.

The distinction attached to the graduate as opposed to the trained teacher disguises the fact that, in Professor Kilmister’s estimation, “as many as one-quarter graduate after a third year of pathetic struggle”,\(^1\) which is the culmination of university studies “little short of disastrous”.\(^2\) In view of the size of the literature that constitutes the educational studies, “there is scepticism about the value of the existing model of leisurely degree followed by a quick dip into education from Plato to Piaget”.\(^3\) The quick dip is an alternative hardly in keeping with Whitehead’s dictum, rehashed by Sir Toby Weaver as an “intellectual safari connecting the past with the present from Aristotle, through Ascham and the Arnoldes, to Ayer; from Comenius through Caldwell, Cooke and Clarke (Sir Fred), to Crowther; from Froebel, through Forster, Freud and Flexner, to Fulton; from Jefferson, through Jowett and James to Jensen and Jencks; from Newman, through Nunn, Norwood and Newsom, to Suffield; from Plato (of course), through Pestalozzi (and . . . Payne), to Piaget”.\(^5\)

To be sure, the one-year Post-graduate Certification in education which is “only one of the seven major routes of entry to the profession envisaged for the seventies”,\(^6\) is the most flexible part of the

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2 Jennifer Thompson’s phrase. (cf. *Times Edin Suppl.*, No. 3020, 13.4.73, p.10.)
3 Ian Kane, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 72, 2.3.73, p.14.
4 Here and infra, brackets in original.
5 Sir Toby Weaver. (cf. *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 107, 2.11.73, p.4.)
Government's provision. However, with "only nine months in which to study . . . students on these courses revealed a generally high level of dissatisfaction". A Perthshire post-graduate reported the principal of his college of education as saying that "there is no economic gain to be had in the running of such a course". Post-graduate students have been voicing their dissatisfaction with the one-year training course regardless of their particular disciplines. A survey carried out in the early nineteen seventies among the one-year trained practising Modern Language teachers enabled Spicer and Riddy to highlight the professional areas which are proving intractable in contemporary class-rooms. Such areas are of particular interest to those post-graduates who intend to teach a foreign language. More than forty per cent. of the respondents listed:

- "Meeting the needs of mixed-ability groups (51 per cent.)
- Encouraging pupils to read on their own in the foreign language (49 per cent.)
- Teaching pupils of lower ability (46 per cent.)
- Sustaining pupils' enthusiasm (42 per cent.)

The principal of Bishop Otter College of Education (Chichester) stated that he was deeply sceptical of the "assumption that one year of teacher education can be as good as three or four". Considering that, in Modern Language learning, the teacher is the limiting factor (for "what

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1 P. R. Grainge, (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 123, 22.2.74, p. 7.)


4 Gordon MacGregor, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 81, 4.5.73, p. 24.
the teacher presents is limited. What the pupil learns goes far beyond what he is taught\(^1\), "ultimately nothing less than a full four-year training for everybody will suffice",\(^2\) "because for all its faults the BEd has shown itself to be a starter".\(^3\)

The B.Ed. degree has been sanctioned by the D.E.S. in their Circular 5/73. By 1972, the long-term plans were unequivocal for it was stated in the White Paper that "the Government propose to work towards the achievement of a graduate profession as the ultimate aim".\(^4\) Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State for Education and Science, provided some insight as to how a graduate teaching profession could be achieved when she declared in the Commons that "increasing numbers of students with two or more GCE passes at A level were being admitted to colleges of education and this would be the normal minimum qualification for entrance to the new DipHE and BEd courses, which should start by 1975. The existing certificate courses with their lower entry qualifications would be phased out as soon as the teacher supply situation permitted".\(^5\) It has been surmised that "a good Honours degree and prolonged residence abroad are essential not only for the Advanced Sixth Form work, but also for the work throughout the school",\(^6\) bearing in mind that "a high level

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3 Lord Redcliffe-Maud. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 117, 11.1.74, p. 5.)


5 Margaret Thatcher. (cf. Times Edin Suppl, No. 3027, 1.6.73, p. 9.)

of professional competence is needed to teach pupils in their fourth year or more of French.¹

Subsection B - Training in order to Promote Language Acquisition.

"Foreign language teachers feel themselves suddenly involved in a technological revolution, suddenly chin-deep in a tide of new demands upon their competencies, and they seek, some almost frantically, enlightenment and practical help."

--- Professor Parker, January 1960.

The reorientation in the teaching of Modern Languages has brought to the fore that, more than ever, a first degree is an inadequate preparation for facing today's classes. With the growing awareness that the Direct "Method requires a highly trained staff" and that "in our schools since the War there has been a revolution in methods, in apparatus and so on", the Modern Language teacher's success depends on his expertise in the handling of the hardware in his workaday instructional practice. In the main, the challenge is the result of the gradual change in teaching methods and, as it pervades the environment, the new ethos which has not only been influenced by the theory behind who shall learn a Modern Language but also by the increasing recognition of the individuality of each pupil. However, when the evaluation of the Ministry's Pilot Scheme in the three main types of secondary school was published, the writer conceded that the "French test results had revealed marked differences in pupils' level of achievement in the different types of secondary school (that is, in) secondary modern, grammar, and comprehensive" schools.

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The implications must be seen in the perspective of the encroaching audio-lingual approach (vid supra, chapter 1), as the ten-year N.F.E.R. survey has shown. In the words of Blanc and Rollinex, "the secondary schools have difficulty in handling children with different experiences of French and grammar schools are dubious about the quality of the French learnt". The chief education officer who sponsored the Leeds experiment in the nineteen sixties, has aptly described the problems that beset the staffing of Modern Language departments in secondary schools. He wrote that,

"In the Grammar School, the specialist has the fluency to pursue the same aims and methods used in the Primary School, but he is unlikely to change his traditional methods fundamentally until the G.C.E. at 'O' level is modified. . . .

In Secondary Modern Schools, little effective modern language teaching is being provided at present. . . . In the absence of modern languages graduates, teaching is given by members of staff, who, lacking the fluency to pursue oral methods, adopt the academic approach with which they are familiar."  

The teacher’s "ability to mediate will be a function of his own linguistic competence and of his grasp of the basic principles involved".  

In the United States, "it is evident that the great majority of language teachers whose native language is English do not possess near-native fluency in the second language". Although Professor Weightman asserted that he has "never yet come across a fully English person who could handle French with absolute perfection", Leo Cole has found that

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1 Michel Blanc et al., in Times Edul Suppl. No. 3107, 13.12.74, p. 22
5 John G. Weightman, in Times Lit Suppl, No. 3716, 29.5.73, p. 577.
"sometimes the teacher has an excellent command of the spoken language; his oral fluency is admirable". For many a Modern Language teacher then, "even though he speaks the language quite well, it is not his own language, his mother tongue in which he was sung to sleep when he was a baby". Such teachers "must make every effort to rely as much as possible on tape-recordings by a native French speaker". However, "audio-visual materials are highly sophisticated tools that require skill and effort". The members of the 1970 conference convened in London by C.I.L.T. deplored "the shortage of schools adequately equipped and staffed to act as teaching practice centres where technical aids can be fully exploited".

Understandably, throughout the nineteen sixties, many head teachers have been reluctant to introduce French in their secondary modern schools unless, and until, they could appoint teacher of French not only fluent in the language but also trained in the use of modern methods and materials. Clearly, "the ideal teacher would, then, be a trained linguistic scientist perfectly bilingual (the student’s language, the language to be learned) with pedagogical training", considering that "it is of course a prerequisite of success ... that the methods they (sc. the teachers, A.S.L.) adopt should be up-to-date", as "research ..."

6 Anon., in Fortune, (New York), Vol. 30, 1944, p. 239.
showed that method was less important than the teacher's competence,\textsuperscript{1} owing to the fact that "the talent (to learn foreign languages) is rare; those who have it should be able to teach the rest of us, for talent is at bottom successful technique".\textsuperscript{2}

The official standpoint has been expressed in a D.E.S. report which acknowledged approvingly that some local education authorities insisted on adequately qualified staff without whom "it seems better to leave the subject alone".\textsuperscript{3} Meanwhile, in response to the lack "of teachers who are sufficiently qualified to teach a modern language... courses which make use of audio-visual equipment have come to dominate the scene".\textsuperscript{4} It was anticipated however that "the class teacher, given appropriate in-service training, would be capable of assuming responsibility for the teaching of French".\textsuperscript{5} Professor Crystal (Reading University) wrote that "amateur language teaching is rarely useful and regularly detrimental",\textsuperscript{6} an assertion which has been borne out by the groundwork H.M.I.'s have carried out in the schools, in connexion with their supervision of the Ministry's Pilot Scheme. They concluded that their survey on the "employment of teachers who had received no special preparation for language teaching served once again to confirm how detrimental this can be".\textsuperscript{7}

\begin{enumerate}
\item DES, in Reports on Education, (London), No. 75, 1972, p. 1.
\item Leo R. Cole, op. cit., (1964 ed.), p. 5.
\end{enumerate}
Summing up, in view of the importance of fluency and appropriate training, no Modern Language teacher should be allowed into a secondary school until he is acquainted both with the teaching methods and the challenging equipment for, as a staff inspector for Modern Languages expressed it, a non-linguist cannot, even "with classy ironmongery, teach something he does not know". Such overtones of mild incompetence contribute to the furtherance in the advocacy of the numerate, specialist professional as a replacement for the gifted amateur. The Modern Language Association had much to say about the training of Modern Language teachers in a publication issued in the early nineteen fifties. They contended that, "though the possession of a university degree in the modern language to be taught is not considered necessary, there are certain minimum qualifications without which successful teaching is impossible. These are:

(a) A sound practical knowledge of the language, both oral and written, and a good pronunciation.
(b) Intimate acquaintance with the foreign country and its people.
(c) Enthusiasm for the subject, an understanding of the child mind and the power to adapt 'method' to 'circumstance', with some gift for dramatisation in the classroom.
(d) Adequate training in the teaching of the language to the child normally to be found in the Secondary Modern School. This training is of paramount importance."  

Admittedly, the situation began to ease off as soon as teachers increasingly became "not only well qualified but also suitably trained to

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1 Kenneth MacGowan, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3097, 4.10.74, p. 28.
be 'au fait' with the practical applications of languages and everyday life in other countries.\(^1\) There is still a long way to go though. In their report, Spicer and Riddy have embodied recommendations covering the content, the range, the quality, and the aims of language teaching

"offered by 101 Colleges of Education in England and Wales and by the nine Colleges in Scotland"\(^2\) for, in their French courses, "the colleges have not only to teach the French language, deal with its literature, and give a general introduction to the culture and institutions of France but also to provide for the professional aspects of French teaching, either as part of the main course or in an associated course".\(^3\) In a significant number of colleges of education, heads of departments have acknowledged that they "were unable to provide as much training and instruction in the methodology of language teaching as was really necessary"\(^4\) in terms of timetable hours and staffing. Moreover, in view of the fact that "language teaching was labour-intensive staff were one of the factors of production",\(^5\) but "the supply of gifted teachers who understand the problem is necessarily limited".\(^6\) However, Dr. Riddy, who delivered his presidential address to the N.L.A. in 1968, reminded Conference that, in 1961 and 1962, the European ministers of education had "stressed the importance of giving future teachers a proper training in methodology".\(^7\)

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1 W. A. Bentley, in *Times Edn Suppl*, no. 3014, 2.3.73, p. I.

2 Arthur Spicer et al.: *The Initial Training of Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages in Colleges and Departments of Education*, (York University, 1972), Part I, para. 1.01.


4 Arthur Spicer et al., op. cit., para. 1.54.

5 Frank G. Bealey, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl*, No. 80, 27.4.73, p. IV.


It is this latter component that has been objectively desired by Spicer and Riddy, owing to the woefully inadequate time available for method work. From the respondents' answers questionnaire, the compilers were able to report that the time available for method work "varied in length from half a term (10 hours)\(^2\) to nine terms (315 hours)\(^2\) in main courses, whose range extended from 200 to 860 hours. Few would probably dispute the importance of this document. There is, however, evidence—even if on a somewhat limited scale—that the colleges training non-specialist teachers have looked upon the recommendations of this report with contempt. To name but one, the Principal of St. Geayth's College (Clacton-on-Sea) dismissed Spicer and Riddy's comments on methodology as irrelevant to her college. In a personal communication made in October, 1973, Miss Pilmer expressed the view that for trainee teachers primarily concerned with the junior school, an entirely different set of recommendations was virtually needed. From time to time, dissident views have been hinted at, though rarely have they been cogently argued.

The problems are not restricted to the initial training phase, for "a teacher who is confined to his subject as it was when he qualified will stagnate and his lectures will be valueless",\(^3\) notwithstanding the fact that:

"il faut avoir, avec une singulière fraîcheur d'esprit, une grande force de volonté, et n'être pas trop tourmenté par le besoin d'argent, pour continuer à se cultiver quand on est professeur". \(^4\)

"in order to pursue his own culture, a teacher must have with a peculiarly fresh mind, a tremendous will-power without suffering too much from the urge of money". \(^4\)

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1 Here and infra, brackets in original.

2 Arthur Spicer et al., op. cit., para. 1.45.


Although the production of knowledge emanates from a tiny elite, teachers are potential users of the stock of knowledge. In order to apply the knowledge as and when it becomes available to the solution of problems relevant to their respective fields, teachers have to get accustomed to organize it by reference to their subject matter. It is the scientific and technological revolution which has led to the reappraisal summed up as "without a substantial research effort teaching . . . will lack the spirit which informs the best teaching." 1

It has moreover been acknowledged that teachers who are "concerned with linguistic aspects of education and with sociolinguistic theory must thank Chomsky for making competence and creativity central to linguistic theory, but (they) must reconstruct the concepts for themselves". 2 On the other hand, "research methods have become more sophisticated and results are published in forms which, to the teacher with little or no background knowledge of research methods, can be at least misleading and at worst utterly incomprehensible". 3 As things stand then, the teacher "will require a considerable degree of ingenuity if he is to apply them (see the 'classical' theories A.S.L.) to the problems of the classroom". 4

Significantly, Professor Strevens (Essex University) who looked at what we could learn from America in the nineteen sixties, deplored that "the psychological aspects of language learning and language teaching . . . is a field much neglected in Britain". 5

2 Dell Hymes, in N.S. Le Ling, No. 23, 1970, p. 72.
4 A. G. Davey, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 94, 3.8.73, p. 15.
5 Peter D. Strevens, in Mod Lang, Vol. 47, 1966, p. 27.
The paucity of applied data stemming from professional research is probably accounted for by the fact that "experimental psychology tends to be rather a sober discipline, tough-minded not only in its procedures, but in its choice of topics as well (for) they must be scientifically manageable".\(^1\) The potential consumers often are contemptuous of any type of research. They frequently despise even professional research, which they look upon as being irrelevant or impertinent, owing to the alarming disparities between the experience of those professionally involved in the teaching of Modern Languages and the smooth methodological accounts that are written for them. Considering that "all too often it is (the) non-starters—who direct, integrate, informalise and emasculate our efforts as teachers",\(^2\) this fact coupled to the training of teachers have a cumulative effect on their performance. It has therefore been deplored that, to this day, "the training of teachers has been marked by an absence of attempts to train them to think logically, observe objectively and analyse scientifically (and, as they) have been taught a number of ideological prescriptions disguised as scientific truths (,) this means that when research uncovers facts which conflict with the oughts they have learnt they get very upset."\(^3\) Research being received with mixed feelings anyhow (vid supra, chapter 2), the result is that the teacher "has learnt to insulate himself from the abstract and highly theoretical views of the arm-chair educationist when he distrusts more than anybody else in society".\(^4\)

Many teachers in the schools suggest that "the theorists,

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experimentalists and dogmatists have done a great deal of harm", 1 on the grounds that "there may be a good deal of general discussion about practice but no sound theoretical base". 2 Others readily agree with the sociologist's viewpoint that "most high theory is inadequate, apparently unconnected to the world of experience, whether encountered as personal reality or in the course of professional research, and often runs counter to our experience of that world". 3 Not infrequently, potential consumers dismiss research "as motivated by personal or professional reasons only vaguely related to actual educational practice", 4 of which "the practicing teacher often knows more about than the experimental psychologist in the laboratory". 5 Many psychological theorists are therefore perceived by the layman as distancing "themselves from the real-life activities of human beings" 6 (vid supra, chapter 4).

At the professional level, the Bullock Committee has recommended an "emphasis on a flexible interaction between practice and theory" 7 as a suitable provision for in-service education. The difficulty for those who intend to launch a course of this type is compounded by the fact that educational research "has a meagre record of performance on the central issue, i.e. the teaching and learning process in the classroom itself". 8

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1 R. W. Hill, in The Daily Telegraph, (London), 15.3.74, p. 16.
4 Martin D. Shipman, in Times Educational Supplement, No. 3051, 16.11.73, p. 25.
First, considering that "the problem is not so much to collect the data as it is to know what to do with them" and, secondly, as research workers value theory much more than practical educational problems, the outcome is a situation which, even if prevalent, is nevertheless deemed undesirable. When a course in methods of educational enquiry was designed by the Open University in order to bridge the gap between those studying education and those practising it, its planners asserted once more in the middle nineteen seventies that "the important implications of the research are often not appreciated by the teachers, psychologists and administrators who work in education".

It has nonetheless been made abundantly clear in the White Paper that the teacher "must be adequately equipped for the professional tasks that await him in the schools". Modern Language teachers therefore need, among other things, an explicit understanding of the operation of language, as well as some insight of Linguistics (vid supra, conclusions to subsection A, chapter 5). Professor Chevalier once lamented that:

"l'enseignant isole n'apprécier a ses rares heures de liberté de-ci de-là, des fascicules de vulgarisation: Martinet en trois paragraphes et Chomsky en deux pages". In the course of his limited leisure time, an isolated teacher comes across some popular work here and there: three paragraphs on Martinet and two pages on Chomsky.

This situation is undesirable not only in France, but also in Great Britain. The White Paper is glaringly explicit on this issue, as the official standpoint is that "an intending teacher must acquire, as well as the necessary knowledge and the capacity to apply it, that attitude to learning which will sustain him throughout his career". Emergency

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measures should not however be restricted to trainee teachers considering, on the one hand, "the need for language teachers to be well informed about new advances in general and applied linguistics, methodology and technological aids"\(^1\) and, on the other hand, "the neglect of language in the training of teachers in past years should be repaired by the extensive provision of in-service courses".\(^2\)

Recurrent education has therefore its proponents. The James Committee recognized "the needs and aspirations of the teachers now working in the schools and colleges, who for too long have suffered from inadequate opportunities to improve their knowledge and professional skill".\(^3\) Recurrent education, i.e., "l'education permanente", has been advocated on the ground that, as "in the scientific and technological revolution of the current years a proliferation of text-books has occurred . . . knowledge from scholarship and the experience of research"\(^4\) is pre-requisite for operating the ultimate choice and selection. Research, in this context, must be taken in the broadest possible sense.

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4 A. T. Rothstein, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 95, 10.8.73, p. 8.
Conclusions.

Training the teachers on the one hand, and undertaking research on the other are, to a certain extent, the necessary means to achieve an end. We have therefore travelled a long way since the days when Max Beerbohm could write that "to speak French fluently and idiomatically and with a good accent . . . was a rather suspect accomplishment being somehow deemed incompatible with civic worth".1 Or have we? the cynics may ask. The picture emerging in the early nineteen seventies was that "foreign language teaching is nowadays a major industry in most countries"2 yet, in the United Kingdom, the obstinate British pride consisted still in "not being able to speak the others' language".3 Professor Beloff could write that "nothing has been more striking than the contrast between the attitude towards innovation in this country in part of the educational establishment and those in the United States".4

Ever since the days when the National Federation of Modern Language teachers published in the United States a pamphlet in 1949 in which Harry Winton accused the traditionalist teachers of sustaining a blind spot, linguists can "experiment with approaches and innovations in teaching and criticism which meet with blank resistance here"5 in Britain. Even in the United States however, the recent work of Nash, Ager, and others, illustrates that "the whole concept of planned change essentially involves a notion of accountability: teachers and administrators who seek to

initiate change are, inevitably, accountable. If they seek to avoid the implications of this they are likely to lose at least their initiative and at most their professional freedom.\(^1\)

The English system does "reward those members of staff engaged in safe conventional approaches which are easily understood, and . . . punish those members engaged in any degree of innovations or in activities which are unfamiliar".\(^2\) It follows that attempts which are made to introduce innovations and resulting in failure, considerably increase the psychic risks. The explanation is sociological. Considering that "the complex structure of teachers’ salaries provides profoundly conservative forces in educational policy and institutional organization, (the numerous recent reforms, such as) the comprehensive reform of secondary education, the experiments with junior colleges, the rationalization of advanced further education and now the reorganization of the colleges of education have all been bedevilled in this way".\(^3\)

The result is plain. The challenge which might fire the enthusiasm of keen educationists is counterbalanced by a system which paradoxically responds negatively. In view of the fact that, by and large, educational techniques are "still tied to a handicraft technology",\(^4\) experience shows that "attempt(s) to break the vicious circle of perpetuating obsolescence" are bitterly resented at the grass roots. This then is the strange, indeed, disconcerting attitude of the senior staff whose main concern

\(^1\) S. John Eggleston, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3057, 28.12.73, p. 12.


\(^3\) Eric Robinson, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3055, 27.7.73, p. 2.


should be, as many newly-qualified teachers view it, to optimize resource utilization, for "there's a great deal more to a key job than the petty business of seeing that bureaucratic means are perfectly adjusted to academic ends".\(^1\) A major lesson to be learnt is therefore that curricular innovation may perchance be initiated from "the top". For example, when Tony Light summed up in 1974 the first ten years of the Schools Council at a press conference, the secretary admitted that the Council's relations with schools depended upon such factors as heads' attitudes and that they could play a far greater part in blocking curricular development than the shortcomings of outside agencies.

Meanwhile, "there is so much frustration in authoritarian schools where change is stifled".\(^2\) Moreover, Tony Becher, Professor of Education designate (Sussex University), views it in such a way that, "where one finds innovative teaching and assessment procedures, one tends to find no very noticeable change in the nature of the course itself; and where one comes across major shifts in curricular pattern, the accompanying teaching methods are often pretty conventional".\(^3\) Besides, as "the average Englishman has so deep a reverence for antiquity that he would rather be wrong than be recent",\(^4\) promoting personal involvement cannot happen overnight in Britain. It has even been suggested that, in the United Kingdom, promoting personal involvement will require "an attack at all levels on institutional value and reward structures which run counter to interest and teaching as a career".\(^5\) An evaluation of the

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1 David Martin, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl*, No. 163, 29.11.74, p. 4
2 Charles Hannon, in *Times Edin Suppl*, No. 3101, 1.11.74, p. 29.
3 Tony Becher, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl*, No. 163, 13.4.75, p. 11.
American experience led Colin Flood Page (Bradford University) to
surmise that "something may be done by a combination of training, restruct-
uring of the institution, attitude change and the observation of
successful change in another school". ¹

Meantime, the outcome is obvious. The able and ambitious younger
teachers who tend to be attracted to new ideas frequently report in a
dispirited way to their former tutors that "we liked some of the new
methods you taught us. But you try getting them going in our school."
In any event, "where there are well-equipped teachers who have acquainted
themselves with the modern approaches to language teaching, the
administrative circumstances to which they must conform are usually such
as to make impossible use of their knowledge and ability"² for, without
simple and automatic access to reliable equipment, the additional burden
on the teacher "quickly becomes an unacceptable inconvenience. So he
takes the path of least resistance and reverts to his previous practice."³

Sadly, paraphrasing Dr. Williams (Jesus College, Cambridge), if in our
schools you were trying "anything new... not only would you have
committed an error of taste and judgment but you would find, rising from
the ground like armed men or armed ghosts",⁴ tame psychologists insisting
on the paramount importance of keeping out Linguistics, tame linguists
saying the same thing the other way round.

Summing up, all around Europe and beyond it, many countries have
adopted a policy which has enabled a large proportion of every age-echort

¹ Colin Flood Page: Student Evaluation of Teaching, (Society for
Research into Higher Education, 29.11.74).
² Charles G. Fries: Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign
⁴ Raymond Williams, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 112, 7.12.73, p. 12.
to learn at least one Modern Language. Examples abound. In Lebanon, the French mandate has rendered French as well as Arabic a "sine qua non" for the average Lebanese, thus substantiating the claim that Modern Language "learning is a response to the enormous social pressures on the individual to be able to use the language". In Sweden, "all pupils between the ages of nine and thirteen are taught (English)". Again, Norway "begins its English teaching with pupils aged 10 years". Close to England, "most people in France study English at school". Unfortunately, we have seen that "the teaching of languages in this country has not assumed the same importance as in other countries of Europe", owing to the endemic shortage of "staff who are fluent in their languages and competent in the methods they use".

As a result, it is therefore not surprising that "the English people are notoriously behind the other Europeans in skill in and knowledge of foreign languages". Professor Weightman has remarked that "one cannot but be impressed by the enormous increase in the number of continental intellectuals and businessmen . . . who can now express themselves accurately and fluently in English and, to all intents and purposes, lead a second, parallel life in English". Dr. Thimann who ventured to

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2 Sue Cameron, in *Times Educational Suppl.*, No. 2999, 17.11.72, p. 11.
3 Donald G. Riddy, in *Times Educational Suppl.*, No. 3048, 26.10.73, p. 44.
4 Susan Taylor, in *Times Educational Suppl.*, No. 2996, 27.10.72, p. 44.
5 Lord Belstead. (cf. *Times Educational Suppl.*, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. XVI.)
8 John G. Weightman, in *Times Educational Suppl.*, No. 3716, 25.5.75, p. 577.
discuss how to organize European studies, first established a pecking order that Professor Hudson, the author of "The cult of the fact," would not have disavowed. Ivor Thimann concluded that, for the time being, "the modern language world, with its aristocracy of theorists, research fellows, advisers (sic), lecturers, and inspectors, and its lower level of honest but bewildered teachers, now offers everything from solid language learning to 'background studies'."\(^1\)

Different types of programmes have been developed after the hopes that had been put into the audio-visual courses were dashed in spite of the sustained effort emanating from research workers. Sadly, the leading figures on both sides of the Atlantic confined themselves to "certain kinds of empirical studies",\(^2\) therefore missing out the new vistas opened up by the pioneer work of neuropsychologists, neurophysiologists, and others. In order to record the directions that language learning is taking in the nineteen seventies, our objectives at this stage of the dissertation still remain a critical appraisal of the interactions of teachers and taught at the various chronological levels of the learning situations, as well as tracing carefully the impetus which was brought about by the combined effects of the societal needs and the Biological Sciences, whose recent empirical research substantiates the reorientation towards the teaching of a Modern Language at the pre-secondary stage of education.

\(^1\) Ivor C. Thimann, in *The Teacher*, (Kettering), 7:4, 1972, p. 13.

Chapter 10. French for the Majority?

"The myth of verbal deprivation . . . diverts attention from (the) real defects of our educational system."
— William Labov, 1969

At a time when the theory behind who shall learn a Modern Language is influenced by the whole ethos that stresses the individuality of each child and, consequently, we are beginning to think most in terms of learning systems within schools which enable all pupils to travel as far and as fast as their ability allows, "teachers have been surprised, and not only in language teaching, by what many pupils with little academic ability can achieve when teaching methods and subject matter are deliberately related to their aptitudes and interests". 1 Professor Hawkins once observed that "we do not hear suggestions that, for example, mathematics should only be taught to the most able pupils". 2

Educationists hold the view that "less able children should be taught a foreign language because experience shows that, using appropriate methods, communication skills can be taught to the less able". 3

Michael Halliday, now Professor of Linguistics at Essex University, pointed out that Basil "Bernstein's work suggests that in order to succeed in the educational system a child must know how to use language as a means of learning". 4 This must be seen as a challenge by contemporary educationists for, in the course of their enquiry, a team of French research workers found that,

1 William Labov, in M S Lg Ling, No. 22, 1969, p. 2.
"de tous les obstacles culturels, ceux qui tiennent à la langue parlée dans le milieu familial, sont sans doute les plus graves et les plus insidieux... Mais l'influence du milieu linguistique d'origine ne cesse jamais (c'est nous qui soulignons) de s'exercer". 1 

"of all the cultural hurdles, those pertaining to the spoken language in the family environment, are without doubt the more serious and the more insidious ones... But the influence of the linguistic aspect of the background environment never (our emphasis) disappears". 1

In the early nineteen sixties, Professor Bernstein had postulated that a child whose language is not mobile and versatile, will experience difficulty in learning to read, in extending vocabulary. Contemporary research in cognitive growth undertaken in the United States led Professor Bruner and his associates to state that "there is more often than not a requirement of developing correspondence between what we do, what we see, and what we say. It is this correspondence that is most strikingly involved in reading and writing, in 'school learning', and in other abstract pursuits." 2

The implications are twofold. First, Theodore Mueller has explained that, "for them (sc. the linguistically 'underprivileged'). the foreign language requirement is a serious stumbling block in their education and requires an undue amount of their time if there is any hope of success at all. The first year of a foreign language is likely the most difficult for them, since they are weakest in mastering the sound system and basic grammatical structures of any language including their own". 3

Secondly, the crux of the problem is that "the seminal studies of Hess and

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Shipman, of Bernstein, and of the Schoggens indicate that there is
(emphasis in original) an early de-emphasis on self-directed,
cognitively inquisitive activity in lower working class children.¹
Considering that "we see no connection between the verbal skill in the
speech events characteristic of the street culture and success in the
school room",² "the condition progressively worsens over the years. As
the educational process becomes more analytic and relatively abstract at
the secondary level the discrepancy between what the pupil can do and
what he is called upon to do is painfully revealed."³

Dr. Lawton (Bernstein’s famous impartial observer) has attempted
to extend the range of evidence already provided by Basil Bernstein
himself. Indeed, Denis Lawton has claimed that his "study (of social
class, language and education) demonstrates a very considerable gap
between the normal linguistic performance and the potential attainment of
certain working-class pupils".⁴ In the words of Professor Wallon
(College de France, Paris),
"Il (sc. l’enfant.A.S.L.) reste
deconvenance, n’ayant rien dans
ses habitudes ou ses routines
qui lui permette une réponse
aissie et spontanée... C’est
alors un renoncement souvent
total et definitif."⁵

¹ Jerome S. Bruner, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3051, 16.11.73, p. 5.
Such is the handicap of children whose linguistic scores are markedly inferior to their general attainment scores.

It is this under-achievement by working-class children which is usually borne in mind when the claim is made that "even when partially successful the study of a foreign language is an important element in a programme of verbal education that every child requires but of which the less able among our pupils have special need". For example, Dr. Rushworth's discussion of Modern Languages in the comprehensive school, which was published in a 1967 issue of "Aspects of education", brought out "the cultural value of language learning, particularly for children in deprived areas". Researchers such as Bereiter and Engelmann, have shown that "an intensive programme aimed specifically at improving the use of language in thinking produces marked gain".

Educationists who advocate the teaching of a Modern Language across the ability range do so largely in the light of the results achieved by the national pilot scheme for teaching French. The analysis of the objective tests which had been administered to a sample of some 11,500 children participating in the Ministry's Pilot Scheme led Dr. Parr to comment that "some pupils of less than average ability have gained such social and psychological stimulus from this experience that their approach to other branches of learning has become at once more confident and successful. (So) the fallacy of the prejudice that time spent on a new language is necessarily time lost for learning the mother-tongue is

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3 Magdalen D. Vernon, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 2999, 17.11.72, p. 23.
A former headmaster of Calder Grange Grammar School pointed out that the "study of a foreign language has a special value, in turning a second light from outside (emphasis in original) upon the problems of meaning and expression in terms of idiom which can be studied in a detached way, without the overtones of emotion, prejudice, linguistic anobberies, etc., which tend to hover round our use of our mother tongue". 2 In the words of the Central Advisory Council, "it is not only through the discipline of vocabularies and translation that learning a foreign language improves a pupil's knowledge of English, but also in a more general way through arousing an awareness of words and their meaning, and of the structure of sentences". 3

Furthermore, "the case for generalising the teaching of modern languages in our schools was clearly and cogently stated in the Newson report . . . . Given good conditions, a foreign language, taught in a well-conceived oral course and enlivened wherever possible by direct contacts with a foreign country, might well be one of the most stimulating subjects in the curriculum for some of the pupils of this report." 4 In the teaching of a Modern Language across the ability range, "early language studies should be meaningful and seminal for their (sc. the pupils' A.S.L.) future". 5 While "the high value placed on verbal skills reflects the perspective of a particular class in a particular historical

era, highly developed verbal skills are probably more important than ever in contemporary society"\(^1\) considering that language "is still the least ambiguous of all the channels open from one human being to another".\(^2\)

As "a large part of education is devoted to equipping a child, or young person, with the linguistic and pragmatic resources which he must command when participating in acts of communication and in training him to perform well in these acts",\(^3\) it follows that the learning of a Modern Language makes a hidden contribution towards achieving functional competence. Indeed "sound work in another language has a beneficial influence on control of the first".\(^4\) When the Modern Language Association reported to the Central Advisory Council for Education, their conclusions were that "there is evidence that modern languages on a very simple level, taught by patient and sympathetic teachers, can provide experiences and achievements of great value to backward children".\(^5\)

So, patient and sympathetic, Modern Language teachers have to be. Indeed, Modern Language teachers who have been substantially involved in the teaching of slow learners in secondary schools, know that at this level, in order to engage the reluctant learners, it is ironical, yet it is true that the teachers have to cope with the more exacting demands made upon their enduring qualities than when they are teaching ordinary-level classes. Nonetheless, Dr. Greatwood contended that "slower pupils can make good progress if they practise enough".\(^6\) Moreover, recent

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research in cognitive growth has brought to light interesting facts. For example, in an African country (Senegal) where Wolof-speaking children also speak French fluently, they "perform more abstractly in French than in their native tongue".  

At the secondary school level, as in adult education (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection A), "educationally we are still Two Nations, and among the educational 'have-nots' the needs are vast". Dr. Riddy, who reviewed the Continental trends in fifteen countries, found that "the percentage of secondary-age pupils learning a N L is increasing—except in those (countries) which have already reached the target of 100 per cent such as . . . Denmark, Finland, France, the German Federal Republic, Italy, and the Netherlands". In a 1972 report, the Department of Education and Science estimated that, in England and Wales, only 70 per cent, of all secondary pupils were enabled to begin a foreign language in 1972. The existing pattern in Modern Language teaching is the inheritance of the fossilised early twentieth-century school organization, brought about by Morant in 1902. Robert Morant, who rejected the liberal curriculum of the Higher Grade Schools, placed the academic stamp by advancing "a curriculum based on that of the old grammar and Public schools".

This curriculum was suited to national circumstances very different from those of today, for our "egalitarian society is increasingly asking

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3 Donald C. Riddy, in Times Ednal Suppl., No. 3048, 26.10.73, p. 44.
why foreign languages should be the exclusive prerogative of the more
able"¹ (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection B). Considering, on the one
hand, that the "blanket cover of French teaching is little more than an
historical accident and, (on the other, that) Spanish is a language that
offers many advantages over French, particularly for the pupils of
average ability (it has been argued that) efforts to change the situation
must be made now".² The plea was originally made by the official
committee who issued "The Norwood report" in the nineteen forties. They
recommended the teaching of:

"The languages of nations whose achievements are
great in varied fields and with whom it (sc. the
British people, A.S.L.) must come into contact in
the spheres of international relations and
commercial dealings . . . .
And so the plea is made that there should be, not
a new burden on the curriculum, but a gradual
redistribution."³

When the Minister of Education convened delegates to investigate the
teaching of Russian, the members of the committee whose investigation
formed "The Annan report" published in 1962, concluded that the only
solution to the problem of continuity appeared to be the introduction of
French. A decade later, there was no sign of further diversification as
George Perren reported that " 'a modern language' usually means French,
and for the majority it will have to be French".⁴

¹ Michael J. Smith, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3015, 9.3.73, p. 58.
² Robert P. Clarke, in Times Edn Suppl, 20.2.72, p. 50.
³ Committee of the Secondary School Examinations Council: Curriculum
   and Examinations in Secondary Schools, "The Norwood Report", (London:
⁴ George E. Perren, in GILT Reports and Papers 8, (London: GILT,
   1972), p. 11.
On the grounds, first, that "socio-economic limitations have frequently given the less able pupil severe verbal handicaps (and, secondly, that) it is precisely the less able child who stands in need of the verbal aspects of education more than his abler and more articulate fellows. . . . when he begins French, . . . he is on an equal linguistic footing with all his contemporaries, even in a mixed ability class".¹ However, George Perren rightly stated that, as "each level needs its own useful surrender value . . . a satisfactory definition of different, yet appropriate, levels of achievement for those of varying ability has yet to be made".² Peggotty Freeman who discussed certain age and ability levels, also drew attention to the "great need for thoughtful planning of syllabuses with clearly defined objectives".³

A cautionary note must be sounded here, lest "the pendulum swings far beyond the golden mean of common sense".⁴ The following example will suffice to illustrate this point. In the early years when French was introduced on the time-table of the secondary modern school, it was thought that scrap-books "seem an excellent way to encourage children to do extra work without their realizing it".⁵ Such a task had obvious limitations for, with an audio-visual course, the homework sets a problem, considering that "when the lesson ends the pictures vanish like Prospero's magic.

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¹ Michael J. Smith, in Times Educational Supplement, op. cit., p. 58.
² George E. Perren, in CILT Reports and Papers 8, op. cit., p. 10.
⁵ Mavis Blow, in Modern Language, Vol. 37, 1956, p. 150.
There is nothing to take home to show 'sum'. Yet, even when a parent is "taken by the theory, .. he would like to know what the homework is". Beside, evidence of the pupil's dilemma is afforded in a pupil's letter quoted by Frank Dash. In his search for brochures, the boy had written to a London travel agency;

"Dear Sir,

I am a new boy at a Grammar School and I am learning French by the audio-visual film method; therefore we are not able to do any written homework. Instead, we have to make a scrapbook about France ... I am wondering whether you could tell me where to get some suitable information."

Moreover, the introduction on a large scale of a Modern Language by means of an audio-visual course has highlighted the difficulties pertaining to the ability of reading pictures (vid supra, chapter 2). The problem, which is also found in other subjects (History and Geography being obvious examples), is acute for a significant proportion of less able pupils.

The underlying assumption made in connexion with an audio-visual course, while rarely stated as if it was obvious, is that learning a Modern Language by means of an audio-visual approach is particularly suited to teaching a Modern Language across the ability range. Yet, a contributor to "Modern languages" expressed the view in the nineteen fifties that "serious thinking is required on the place of films in language studies and the contribution, if any, that they can make to the actual learning of language". In the inter-war years, it was thought

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2 David Martin, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 143, 12.7.74, p. 5.
3 A pupil. (cf. Barnet Libbish, ed., op. cit., p. 102.)
that the visual element could be the instrument which would arouse the desire for knowledge that is dormant in children who are backward and retarded. Philpot provided a summary of "Sound films in schools", a 1932 report, when he wrote that "the backward and retarded child is one of the major problems in education to-day. . . it is the claim of this report that an instrument has been found to arouse the desire for knowledge that is dormant—not non-existent—in children of this type. . . . We, therefore, believe that scientifically constructed educational films may prove of the highest value."¹

This claim has not resisted the test of time with regard to its relevance across the disciplines. In a newsletter issued in 1972, we were made aware that the Schools Council project based on Liverpool University brought to light at an early stage of research that there were limitations in both a highly visual approach and oral work, that is, "many less able pupils interpret pictures in as limited a way as they read and write".² Again, teachers who have witnessed the results at the grass roots do not express an optimistic viewpoint. Among others, Ingram and Mace have sounded a note of caution when they asserted that "we must . . . not expect children to be able to do more in the foreign language than rather elementary imitation and adaptation".³ In a similar vein, Frank Dash has disagreed with the claim "made by the 'progressive' school . . . that the less gifted the pupil, the more easily will he take to oral methods of instruction. Only teachers who

² Schools Council. (cf. The Teacher, Kettering, Vol. 21, 17.11.72, p. 6.)
³ Stewart B. Ingram et al., in Mod Langs, Vol. 41, 1960, p. 128.
have tried the Direct Method both with A and C classes will be able to appreciate the fallacy of this belief.\(^1\) Considering that "writing in school is a big industry (and that) it presents special problems\(^2\) (vid supra, chapter 7, subsection A), Dr. Thimann commented that "it used to be thought that candidates, however poor academically, would have some compensating skill in guided composition and oral fluency. This has proved a cruel deception".\(^3\)

When the linguist states, as he does, that "we cannot deny that, within the first area of language teaching, speech is primary and writing secondary",\(^4\) then it can be asserted that "in the elementary stages of language learning two main principles clearly emerge:

(a) that language is not here an intellectual study but a means of communication;
(b) that most children learn more by concrete than by abstract methods".\(^5\)

Besides, according to the linguist, "a conscious knowledge of formal grammar is not a necessary condition for the acquisition of fluent language skills".\(^6\) In some other countries however, psychologists have begun to discover the workings of the background linguistic system at a

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1 Frank L. Dash, in Barnet Libbish (ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 103-104.
2 Nancy Martin, in \textit{Times Ednl Suppl}, No. 3077, 17.5.74, p. 16.
3 Ivor C. Thimann, in \textit{The Teacher}, (Kettering), 6.11.70, p. 16.
deeper level. For example, Vyacheslav Ivanov has commented that "the Soviet psychologist L. Vygodsky, in his work 'Thinking and Speech', has shown that the awareness of the rules of the native language is a turning point in the life of the child and marks his transition to the logical thinking of the adult".¹ In Britain, a staff inspector for Modern Languages considers that foreign language "teaching must be done within a firm and recognisable framework".² Even for the lower ability group, the Modern Language Association's enquiry led to the conclusion that, "if the course is to progress beyond the merely perfunctory, basic grammar must be assimilated, but there can be little recourse to correlation and the mental discipline of grammar must remain in the background".³

Diverging views such as Allen and van Buren's, and the Modern Language Association's, provide unmistakable signs that by the late nineteen sixties the ends and aims of foreign language teaching were in need of questioning. With the "retreat from ideal equality",⁴ more attention was focussed on the fact that "the greatest inequality of the present age is the equal treatment of unequals".⁵ Indeed, in a recent official statement, it is acknowledged that "the range of ability in some classes often posed intractable teaching problems".⁶ Teachers also deprecate this new trend on the ground that "secondary schools that are

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² Kenneth MacGowan, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3097, 4.10.74, p. 28.


⁴ Robert Jackson's phrase. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 33, 20.10.72, p. 2.)


forced to accept something like 20 per cent non-readers and non-writers from junior school sources find themselves under considerable pressure.

In an unstreamed situation this can mean that a class of 30—or more—may contain six—or more—pupils who too often settle down to the ever-widening fringe at the extreme end of the educational spectrum. With Professor Politzer we may deplore that "Applied Linguistics does not tell us how to teach effectively in overcrowded classrooms nor will it lead to the preparation of teaching materials which can be used efficiently on students of widely varying intelligence and ability in the same classroom".

The fact remains though that Modern Languages "do not readily conform to the demand of contemporary educational ideologies of mixed-ability teaching, unstreamed classes and freedom of choice of subject." Although in London "languages are considered a special case by more than half of the schools that have adopted mixed ability teaching as a general policy", Modern Language teachers "mostly face two formidable barriers—the over-large class and the un-settled class". Realistically, Professor Cox (Manchester University) has commented that "to place a 14-year-old child with an IQ of 140 side by side in a classroom with an IQ of 80 is likely to make the backward child feel humiliated". To quote Professor Ree, "an unstreamed class is hell". Besides, the questions remain of

3 Robert T. Pullin, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3121, 21.3.75, p. 35.
4 S. M. Stoker, in CILT Reports and Papers 8, op. cit., p. 43.
6 Brian Cox, in The Guardian, (London), 5.6.73, p. 20.
7 Harry Ree, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 3002, 8.12.72, p. 4.
how many teachers can go home at the end of the day confident, first, that
each child has worked to capacity and is following a proper progression,
secondly, that the quiet child has received attention and, thirdly, that
they have done the best for all at the same time. George Perren has
expressed the view that, while all should try to learn a language, "it is
by no means a necessary condition that they should be taught in unstreamed
or mixed-ability groups".\(^1\) Considering that "the approach is essentially
practical and oral, (it) is an added complication . . . that in any one
class in a Secondary Modern School the children will vary a great deal in
ability".\(^2\) A local authority adviser made the claim that, "nationally,
the major problem for French teachers is certainly this: what is the
best way of teaching French to the less able child? (adding that) the
problem is compounded in those schools where teachers face totally
unstreamed classes".\(^3\)

Even in grammar schools, "most teachers of Modern Languages agree
that successful work can only be done, however, if the pupils are divided
according to their ability after the first or second year".\(^4\) In a way,
the attitude displayed by the grammar school teachers highlights the
shortage of "material suited to the less able pupils in the second, third
and fourth years".\(^5\) Apart from the need to meet the basic requirements
for simpler textbooks, Modern Language teachers have been hoping for some
time to obtain material "differentiated by ability group within a given
lesson".\(^6\) The Central Advisory Council that offered hortatory advice, wa

\(^1\) George E. Perren, in GILT Reports and Papers 8, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 9.
\(^2\) Modern Language Association, \textit{Modern Languages in the Secondary
Modern School}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 15.
\(^3\) David G. Smith, in \textit{Mod Langs, Vol. 54, 1973}, p. 105.
\(^4\) N. S. Malpas (ed.), \textit{Memorandum on Modern Language Teaching},
\(^6\) Edward D. Allen et al., \textit{Modern Language Classroom Techniques},
convinced that "ability setting enables speed on a narrow front... because they (ex. the pupils A.S.L.) have the ability to do so."

On the one hand, although "all pupils begin on the same programme, absorbing linguistic material and practising using it, the later stages of the course will be 'streamed' or 'settled' to permit of different treatment for these (ex. the 'linguistically intelligent' and the others A.S.L.) different sorts of pupil." On the other hand, "when one considers the disparity of student ability, it becomes quite clear that individualized learning is necessary." Considering that "an effort is now being made in this country to teach French much further down the ability range, often at an earlier age, by methods which have yet to be fully developed or even understood", the Modern Language Project team (York University) who devised new materials was aiming to provide the support so necessary in the learning of a Modern Language.

Such practical help provided to foreign language teachers will contribute to the furtherance of the ideal which, for the first time, upholds the principle that as many pupils as possible should be able to understand the spoken language, a development that is explained by sociological, as well as economic, considerations. For example, British headmasters were agreed that when "Britain joins the Six..."

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in a wider European Community there must inevitably be an accelerating movement to and from the Continent of technicians of all kinds... our professional and technical people will require both the ability to understand (emphasis in original) at least one European language and if possible more than one, and the ability to communicate their thoughts (emphasis in original) in one language besides their own.¹

In economic circles, there are clear indications that "it is becoming increasingly common in gatherings of Europeans for each to speak his own language and to understand his interlocutor speaking his".² In line with the increasing social, commercial, and economic contacts with France then, "cultivation of an 'ear for the language' is essential".³ The Anglo-French Concorde project is a case in point for "it has broken linguistic as well as sound barriers".⁴ The Federation of British Industries pointed out in the early nineteen sixties that "a man who can make himself understood in his own subject with the aid of diagrams, drawings and models and 2,000-3,000 words in the other man's language is a valuable member of a company's staff"⁵ "in today's world where languages are becoming a prized asset for industrial and commercial interchange".⁶

The task that befalls the Modern Language teachers has been summarized by Michael Salter, an H.M.I., who has averred that "what we expect of these

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² Michael V. Salter, in CILT Reports and Papers 8, op. cit., p. 40.
children should . . . be based on a clear understanding of what the majority of them are capable of achieving. The appraisal of what pupils are capable of achieving is blurred however, by the gulf which lies between "what children conventionally do and what they are capable of doing", as revealed by the vigorous research activity in cognitive growth and inter-related fields. Professor Strevens has argued that the variables in foreign language teaching point above all to the need "for a flexibility of approach that would take account of the different objectives of learners, their diverse characteristics and the varied conditions of learning. Consequently, "it is not only conceivable, but rather likely that the materials used to teach one type of student effectively will be unsuited for a different type". For example, although Downes and Griffith produced a carefully planned textbook for beginners, claiming it to be "a flexible course which pursues a steady grammatical path", in the case of mixed-ability teaching, the textbook becomes a mere element of a resource unit, whose supplementary material consists of a worksheet booklet known in 1974 as "worksheets A", designed by Johnstone and Downes.

Similarly when, in 1969, Arthur Spicer reported on "En Avant", the five-year course whose design he had supervised, he announced that, for

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1 Michael V. Salter, in GILT Reports and Papers 8, op. cit., p. 39.
2 Denis Lawton, op. cit., p. 143.
3 Peter D. Strevens. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl. No. 103, 5.10.73, p. 5.)
"A votre avis"—the continuation materials for pupils between thirteen and sixteen years—organized by N. Patrick (York University), "two sets of materials will be produced, one for faster learners, and the other for slower learners". Francis Debyser, who commented on the proliferation of courses, ventured to say that:

"ce phénomène est dû à l'opinion, dominante depuis une vingtaine d'années, selon laquelle c'est au niveau des méthodes que l'intervention pédagogique en faveur de l'amélioration des résultats dans l'enseignement du français langue étrangère peut être la plus efficace". 2

"this phenomenon is in keeping with the viewpoint that has been predominant for some twenty years, according to which the results of learning French as a foreign language can perhaps be improved most substantially at the level of teaching techniques". 2

It also reflects a growing awareness that, for the lower ability pupil, "nothing could be less appropriate to this type of child than a watered-down GCSE course". 3 Nonetheless, an official committee deplored that "there is too little experience nationally of trying to teach a foreign language over the whole, or most, of the ability range". 4 The result is, in Dr. Rushworth's words, that the bearing of "content and method of work for the weakest pupils . . . is still little understood" 5 by so many Modern Language teachers. Besides, "all the methods suggested for dealing with less able pupils involve a much wider range of materials than has been generally considered necessary for an examination course". 6

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2 Francis Debyser, in Le Français dans le monde, No. 100, 1973, p.64.


On the other hand, "it is when the later stages are reached that the learning problems of less able pupils can be assessed". It is a common failing of many courses that after the first two or three volumes, in the succeeding books the authors are unable to avoid what amounts to an excessive hotting-up of the linguistic pace, with scant reference to what has gone before. For example, the reviewer for the Modern Language Association found Mark Gilbert's Book 5 of his "Cours illustré de français" fit for sixth form General. It had nevertheless been frequently suggested in the early nineteen seventies that the "Cours illustré de français" "has been particularly praised by inspectors, advisers", on the grounds that it had succeeded "in meeting the needs not only of the brighter but also of the average and below-average pupils". Yet, although the "Cours illustré de français" was "so well graded that the children learn the grammar without realising it"—the grammatical element consists in a hidden factor—publishers were advertising in the middle nineteen seventies Mark Gilbert's "Le français par l'image", a course which "proceeds at a much slower pace linguistically, ... particularly suitable for pupils of lower ability", as well as "Un, deux, trois", "a new audio-visual course for the less able". The present analysis highlights the major problems which Modern Language teachers have to face.

2 Anon., in Times Edun Suppl., No. 3048, 26.10.73, p. 43.
3 Loc. cit.
5 Matthew Hodder, in Times Edun Suppl., No. 3100, 25.10.74, p. 53.
6 European Schoolbooks Limited, in Times Edun Suppl., No. 3100, op. cit., p. 56.
The point then is that "the less academic the learning becomes, the more important is equipment" and methods of teaching.

New teaching techniques are necessary to meet the requirements of the new aim, which consists in teaching a Modern Language to the majority of pupils. The Bullock Committee's view on English is also valid for L₂. In fact, "there is no one method, medium, approach, device, or philosophy that holds the key" to the successful process of acquiring fluency in a Modern Language. The array of "techniques available for teaching languages today is the pooling of all the resources that can be contributed by the educational psychologist, the expert linguist, the native speaker, the course-producer, the educational technologists".

The foundation of the new techniques which are being developed, rests upon such principles as:

— a novel item is not learnt merely by having been clearly and unambiguously heard;

— a novel item must be related to as many as possible of the foreign words and structures previously acquired by the pupil's mind;

— tagmemic recombination of patterns memorized tends to offset the rigidity of rote dialogues; and

— "instruction should proceed from the known to the unknown," for "all learning tends to utilize and build on any earlier learning".

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"Le français pour tout le monde" which has been produced by Hawkins and Bowson, has been developed in accordance with the iron law that "the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows." This course should therefore succeed.

As an alternative to the G.C.E. "C" level, the G.S.E. "provides an examination which enables weaker fifth-form pupils to aim at an external test which does not militate too harshly against teaching designed to active use of the foreign language as a means of communication." The G.S.E. programmes resulted in breaking the preserve of the brighter pupil by attempting to introduce the teaching of Modern Languages across the ability range. Furthermore, "oral fluency created a favourable image".

Professor Roeming (Wisconsin University, Milwaukee) has surmised that the motto "Speak the language" "implies sociability, pleasantness, effortless grace, adventure, horizons unlimited without any intellectual demands".

Understandably, both pupils and teachers reacted with interest. So much so that Lord Belstead has been able to claim that, in seven years, "the number of modern language entries for this (G.S.E.) examination has trebled." The statistical returns published by the D.E.S. show that the number of Modern Language entries which reached 25,000 in 1966—the first full year of G.S.E.—rocketed to 73,000 in 1971. It is worthwhile.

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3 Ivor C. Thimann, in *The Teacher*, (Kettering), 8.11.66, p. 16.
5 Lord Belstead. (cf. *Times Edn Suppl*, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p.XVI.)
Table III showing for selected years in Wales, first, the progression of the G.S.E. examination in the five Modern Languages taught and, secondly, the decline of the C-level examination in two languages: French and Spanish. German and Italian are relatively unaffected. (G.S.E. figures are shown in brackets.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Italian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>7,577</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(601)</td>
<td>(47)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>7,216</td>
<td>1,269</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(766)</td>
<td>(119)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>6,892</td>
<td>1,313</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1,032)</td>
<td>(138)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>6,575</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1,350)</td>
<td>(155)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>6,314</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1,754)</td>
<td>(219)</td>
<td>(26)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>6,036</td>
<td>1,404</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2,058)</td>
<td>(255)</td>
<td>(43)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>5,991</td>
<td>1,446</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2,408)</td>
<td>(323)</td>
<td>(45)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Welsh Education Office: Modern Languages other than French in Secondary Schools, (Cardiff, 1973), p. 17.
to contrast these figures with those available for Wales. For both the "O" and C.S.E. levels, the Welsh Board can be looked upon as a microcosm of the United Kingdom. Their figures confirm that, from 1966 onwards, the C.S.E. becomes progressively established in French, German, and Spanish, but the grounds made up by the C.S.E. examination is gained at the expense of the O-level candidates, with the exception of German (cf. Table III). Indeed, the statistics for the period 1968-1969 compiled in 1973 by James and Houve in their "Survey of curricula and performance in Modern Languages" reflected the boys' massive flight from G.C.E. O-level to C.S.E. in foreign languages.

The bearing upon Modern Language teaching is that teachers are increasingly "forced to change their standards when handling children of below average ability or mixed ability classes". There is of course a danger here. It is fair to venture that, whenever the teacher adopts, say, "small group techniques then, inevitably, he adds to his fatigue and in the long run may reduce his efficiency". It has however been averred elsewhere that "there is more to language learning than learning the language". Even an up-to-date method has its limitations. For example, "it is generally agreed that the (Direct) Method will work only with homogeneous classes of high ability". It is a commonplace that teachers are conservative in outlook, mistrust innovation, and are cautious towards change.

Yet, it has been surmised that, "if linguistic objectives suited to

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1 Anon., in Times Educ. Suppl. No. 2998, 19.11.72, p. 34.
the ability and interest of pupils were more generally accepted, the
teaching of modern languages, especially to pupils of average and less
than average ability could be revolutionised".¹ That this ideal has
not permeated every stratum of the population is reflected in the
squeamish claim emanating from a Member of Parliament. Ronald Bell,
q.c. (Buckinghamshire, South), is reported to have remarked that "secondary
modern schools should be fully academic, jolly well making sure the
children there learn such things as Latin and Maths, whether they have
the aptitude for it or not".² In a sense, this statement illustrates the
assertion that "we live in an age of euphonious twaddle".³ With a view
to gathering sound information on which the teaching of Modern Languages
should be based, the British Modern Language Association has undertaken
an enquiry in the early nineteen sixties. It brought to light that, for
the lower ability groups, "the most important fact to bear in mind is that
methods of teaching must differ radically from those adopted for more
able children".⁴

It therefore means that Modern Language teachers will have to get
accustomed more and more to relating practical methods of teaching with
individual differences in ability and style. Unfortunately, in Professor
Carroll's words, "teachers find it rather difficult to change their
behavior on the basis of research findings, even when the procedure is
exceedingly simple and obvious".⁵ Raymond Cartier, whose fame was

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² Ronald Bell. (cf. Times Edn Suppl, No. 2875, 26.6.70, p. 1.)
³ Donald Freeman, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 66, 19.1.73, p. IV.
connected with Contemporary History, could write with confidence that:

"les forces du conservatism sont preponderantes dans le coeur des hommes, et cependant le progres marche d'un pas irresistible".  

"the forces of conservatism are dominant in the heart of human beings, and yet progress moves on at an unhampered pace".  

Conclusions.

The evidence gathered in this chapter witnesses the development of the C.S.E. It is the natural outcome of the emphasis on the spoken language brought about by the audio-lingual movement into the class-room. Michael Young has asserted that "we so take for granted the selective consequence of how we organize knowledge that we are unable to conceive of alternatives".¹ In a way, the C.S.E. may be seen, first, as an attempt to meet the great challenge and to avoid the "risk that the forms just below the examination stream or streams may be left to follow a humdrum syllabus with the dullest teachers".² Secondly, the new trend also betrays a shift in contemporary thought which is of profound significance. In recent educational theory, there is a strong tendency to move away from the deductive and internal towards the synthetic and external (vid supra, chapter 7, subsection B).

The C.S.E. then constitutes a first step, albeit a small one, taken as a departure from the curriculum of the formal educational system, a system which in Professor Bernstein's words, forces the pupil in a "confrontation between the universalistic orders of meaning, and the social relationships which generate them, of the school and the particularistic orders of meaning, and the social relationships which generate them, which the child brings with him to the school".³ Even after a recent period of unprecedented expansion when the secondary modern schools were more and more competing with the selective schools in an attempt to approach parity of esteem, the percentage of the age-cohort obtaining their G.C.E.

Ordinary-level in French remained pathetically small. "The Robbins report" made available the 1958 statistical returns showing that, for secondary modern-school pupils, the rate of passes for the Ordinary levels was fifty-two per cent., a figure which is seven per cent. below the over-all rate of passes achieved by all pupils when returns are tabulated for all schools, the selective ones as well as the others. Traditionally however, French was flourishing almost exclusively in the selective schools, that is, by and large the grammar schools.

The implications for Modern Language teaching are twofold. On the one hand, "in most Secondary Schools, there is usually an examination, set by one or other of the Universities, to be faced at the end of the course of studies in a modern language, and so it appears as if the purpose of including a foreign language in the curriculum is the purely academic one of using grammar and translation to give children practice in mental gymnastics, the end-product being a status symbol with which to adorn the General Certificate of Education". 1 On the other hand, the issues underlying the teaching of a Modern Language to "the less able two thirds of each age-group who in a tripartite system of secondary education are judged unsuitable for an academic grammar school curriculum" 2 mean dealing with almost half the age-cohort, considering that "the G.C.E. 'O' level examination is designed for the top 20%, i.e. 80-100 th percentile of the 16-year-old secondary school population (and) the C.S.E. examination is designed for the next 40% of the age group, i.e. 40-80 th percentile". 3


The bearing on Modern Language learning is obvious, for "the curriculum of the formal educational system is primarily cognitive in orientation and makes specific sets of demands on capacity to handle certain concepts and achieve certain levels of understanding",¹ a principle which was advocated at the beginning of the century by a public commission. Its members considered that "all external examinations should be so conducted as to assist and emphasise the principle that every secondary school should provide, for pupils up to an average age of 16, a sound basis of liberal education which . . . would serve as a foundation upon which varieties of further education could be based".²

The Modern Language Association stated in 1952 that, in a secondary modern school, "the teacher is not limited by any examination syllabus"³ with all that that implies, considering that "if there are reasons, apart from merely utilitarian ones and the substitute aims of examinations, why a foreign language should be taught, then it is right to ask why these reasons should not be valid for all".⁴

The expansion was the result of societal demand. Kenneth MacGowan has asserted that, "after the mother tongue, there is a strong case to be made for regarding the learning of a language as the most important academic enterprise".⁵ Dr. Rushworth's discussion on the teaching of Modern Languages in comprehensive schools "suggests that if language

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¹ Geoffrey E. Bantock, in *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 77, 6.4.73, p. 2.
² Consultative Committee: *Report*, (1911).
learning is good for some, then it is probably good for all", 1
notwithstanding the fact that "to make up for a bland impoverishment of
experience early in life may be too great an obstacle for most organisms". 2
This has prompted educationists to look for alternatives. In their
attempt to extend the teaching of a Modern Language to the whole ability
range, many of them turn their attention to French studies.

The main assumption advanced by the faction of Modern Language teachers
who supports French studies "is that language, history, geography and
inter-connected disciplines can form the basis of a challenging
integrated course which can bring (third and fourth-year secondary
pupils) into intelligent and understanding contact with a way of life
totally different from their own, yet to which as a result of the EEC they
are now closely linked". 3 The proponents of interconnected disciplines
visualize that the ultimate aim consists in gaining a better
understanding of France "today based on a knowledge of its institutions
and of the conditions, events and processes that have led to the creation
of these institutions. At the same time consideration should be given
to the limits on the influence and effects of institutions and to the
spheres of individual expression and choice. Understanding of
contemporary (France) demands a background knowledge of recent history;
of economic resources; of political organisation and ideologies; and
of the cultural legacy." 4

Such hopes are not substantiated by the evidence available. For

2 Jerome S. Bruner: On Knowing, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
3 Paul V. Hill, in The Teacher, (Kettering), Vol. 23, 19.10.73, p. 3.
4 Associated Examining Board: European Studies, Ordinary Alternative
example, at the 1972 conference convened by the Centre for Contemporary Studies (Sussex University), it became clear that "the few schools who have introduced some form of French studies have made them a preserve for the less able students—either those destined for GSE Mode 3 or for those who, after O level, will not go on to take French as an A level subject".\(^1\) This outcome highlights, first, that "innovation is determined as something appropriate to low-status learners"\(^2\) and, secondly, that innovations "disregard the social evaluation implicit in academic curricula. (Characteristically,) new courses are created in 'low-status' knowledge areas, and their availability is restricted to those who have 'failed' in terms of academic definitions of knowledge."\(^3\)

That is not all. Earnshaw has warned that the A.S.B. syllabus in European Studies embodied the view that, if the study is to be an integrated one, then language teachers should not be expected to carry the whole, or even the main burden.

French (or European) studies do not therefore constitute an alternative route offering French, or another Modern Language, to a majority of pupils. Considering that what is the product of the mood of the moment may, with the swing of time's pendulum, very easily carry us into a condition entirely opposed to the new aim, it is becoming increasingly obvious that teaching a Modern Language to a majority of pupils through French (or European) studies will only succeed after the syllabus has received much thought and consideration. Funds are of

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1 Guy Reave, in *Times Educational Suppl.*, No. 3019, 6.4.73, p. 33.
2 Ian Lister, in *Times Higher Education Suppl.*, No. 124, 1.3.74, p. 13.
course essential for innovation and, while the Sussex University "centre sees such research as part of its role and is equipped to undertake it: the main obstacle is lack of funding". ¹ So, French for the majority of secondary-school pupils remains a pipe-dream (vid supra, conclusions to subsection B, chapter 9).

To conclude, our investigation points to the fact that the bulk of administrators and teachers supports the fairly well entrenched practices of Modern Language teaching. The outcome is obvious and can be summed up as ours is a time of lost opportunities. Sadly, little attention has been paid to some clear-sighted academics, whose claims are epitomised in Professor Strevens's statement that "new social and political pressures make it virtually certain that before long some European languages will be taught to all (emphasis in original) children, and from an early age".² The alternative rests with curriculum innovation in Modern Language teaching, which forms the theme of the concluding chapters.

¹ Eileen Daffern, in Times Educational Supplement, No. 3072, 12.4.74, p. 19.

"Language learning by young children in a natural setting is widely recognized as something quite different from the kind of learning that takes place in school by older children or adolescents, usually called conceptual learning. This difference, most writers on the subject agree is primarily a function of age."

— Dr. Andersson, 1960.

If on the one hand the thesis shows so far that, given the chance, current practices in the teaching of Modern Languages could be perfected beyond recognition, on the other, it is quite clear that great hopes are tied up with curriculum innovation. George Perren once declared that "the aims, content and techniques derived from past experience with a selected minority will not do". Indeed, the greatest opportunities exist in the nine-to-thirteen-age range for a major improvement of classroom practice and research work in Psycholinguistics has brought out that the most formative changes in the language competence of pupils occur in the nine-to-thirteen-age range.

In the nineteen sixties, it has been intimated in the United States that "all children have the ability to learn a second language more quickly and easily at pre-adolescence than at any other age in life". Unlike the pre-adolescent child, the older pupil lacks the receptive schemata—that is, the active organization of past experiences (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection A)—or, if he possesses them, they are weakly organized and are unstable. So, Charles Dodson's work prompted him to state that


"the older the learner, the more his neurons will have set, thus making it (sc. consolidation. A. S. L.) more difficult for the individual to establish permanent or long-term memory pathways or circuits". The adolescent's acquisition of a second language is therefore likely to consist of:

"une organisation plus fragile par sa complexité et moins bien intégrée qui correspond à la fonction symbolique (pensée consciente et verbalisation volontaire²)". ³ an organization which, owing to its complexity, remains shakier and is less well integrated. It is related to the symbolic function (conscious thought and overt verbalization -2 -)". ³

While, in the nineteen sixties, there has been a revolution in Modern Language teaching in secondary education, "the introduction of French in primary schools . . . is not only curriculum development, it is—in this country—curriculum innovation". ⁴

Clearly, "tradition did not get in the way in the primary schools because there wasn't any". ⁵ Dr. Stern did not hesitate to call the Ministry's Pilot Scheme a major undertaking for it ultimately aims at "turning an educational system which by and large is monoglot to one in which a second language will play a considerable part". ⁶ The teaching of a Modern Language in primary schools is supported by the neurologist who asserts that "speech indeed, like good habits, is something that it is as

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2 Brackets in original.
well to get into the way of early". Moreover, the teaching of French in primary schools should be seen as a reaction against the prevalent situation in Modern Language teaching of which—here, in Britain, as well as in the United States—hitherto, "there is not enough of it and it does not begin early enough."

A serious difficulty that besets the learning of a Modern Language "is due to the fact that foreign language learning begins at the age of eleven or twelve—that is to say at the end, according to psychologists, of that very favourable period in a child's life when his powers of imitation are at their peak", for the pre-adolescent child "does (emphasis in original) pick up the new tongue with little, if any, accent, and can produce all manner of sounds few of us as adults can master". In the main, the growing interest was generated in the early nineteen sixties both by Marcelle Kellermann's celebrated experiment in Leeds and by the announcement released to the press on May 13, 1963, by the Ministry of Education of their intention to organise the national pilot scheme for the teaching of French in primary schools. The Ministry's Pilot Scheme was planned by study groups comprising "linguists, psychologists, sociologists and educational planners", "in response to a growing dissatisfaction with the


scope and outcome of modern language teaching within the state system. 1

"Primary" French rapidly gained popularity in many schools using "Bon Voyage", for Mary Glasgow's "is the most widely used French course in primary schools"; 2 by contrast, in the early nineteen seventies, only eight per cent of the primary schools teaching French have opted for "En Avant", Arthur Spicer's course sponsored by the Schools Council and produced by the Nuffield Foundation. In the decentralized system of educational control which is the pride of the United Kingdom, the Nuffield Foundation's attempt to monitor the general introduction on a large scale has not met with the success anticipated by the central authority and its research agency that developed, tested, and commercialized the language courses. First, the increased importance conferred on the teaching of the foreign culture has resulted in a shift in the emphasis. The devolution onto the Modern Language teacher of the responsibility for teaching the foreign culture is in agreement with Attitudinal Psychology whose literature provides evidence that "the ages of 8-11 in a child's life are important in the development of attitudes to other nationalities". 3

It is thought that, by introducing French in primary schools, "early learning will give children a chance of getting a language 'under their skin' or 'into their system'." 4 In fact, teachers report that, when French was started at eight instead of eleven, it "went deeper into people's skins". 5 Besides, the director of the Schools Council pilot

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2 Mary Glasgow, in Times Educational Supplement, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. III.
3 Keith Mercer, in The Teacher, (London), 7.3.69.
5 The teachers of Bishop Luffs Secondary School. (cf. Times Educational Supplement, No. 2999, 17.11.72, p. 11.)
scheme in Welsh primary schools has commented that "children who are introduced to two languages from an early age seem to develop a feeling for language as such." So, "of the many projects launched in the past decade, none is of more interest than the introduction of French in primary schools", owing to "the fact that age eleven (which) has long been traditional (in Europe) for beginning instruction in foreign languages means that a proposal to reconsider this arrangement must be based on good evidence". For example, Dr. Burstall was able to show in her 1970 interim report, that there were definite advantages for eleven-year-old primary children against a control group of thirteen-year-olds who had had the same amount of teaching in French. The N.F.E.R. project provided some indication that the eleven-year-olds were better at speaking and listening comprehension.

The revolution, as Dr. Thimann called it, is not only due to the belief that the child "has an uncanny talent to imitate new sounds and new words, and (that) he has an uncanny memory to remember new words" however, but also to the fact that "the learning of a modern language, usually French, provides glamour and excitement at the primary level". Moreover, French in the primary school, which was recommended in the early nineteen sixties by both the Committee presided over by Lord Annan and the British Bilingual Association, has become the official policy of several L.E.A.s in the hope that, in common with the Ministry's Pilot Scheme, it will ultimately "lead to the earlier and easier introduction of a second modern

language at the secondary stage, on a wider scale than had previously been the case. On the other hand, Wallace Lambert (McGill University, Montreal) found that "bilingual children have markedly more favorable attitudes towards the 'other' language community in contrast to the monolingual children. Furthermore, the parents of bilingual children are believed by their children to hold the same strongly sympathetic attitudes in contrast to the parents of monolingual children, as though the linguistic skills in a second language, extending to the point of bilingualism, are controlled by family-shared attitudes toward the other linguistic-cultural community."

In Britain, a ten-year survey of French attitudes and achievement in primary schools supported Wallace Lambert's findings. In their appraisal of the N.F.E.R. longitudinal study published in 1974, Blanc and Mullineaux summed up that, "in spite of initial interest and a fair measure of success, a large minority of primary school pupils find French increasingly difficult and irrelevant. This minority includes more boys than girls, more 'lower' than 'upper class' children, more pupils in large than small primary schools." Earlier surveys had already provided some clear indication that neither boys nor their parents were convinced of the value of learning a foreign language. The statistics compiled for the Schools Council, which were published in 1968 as "Enquiry I", were respectively twenty-seven per cent. for the thirteen-to-sixteen-year-old boys and twenty-eight per cent. for their parents.

In primary schools for example, "boys who comment at all on their

parents' response tend to report either apathy or mild hostility: learning French is considered 'silly', 'a waste of time', or 'all right for girls'. While "the purely oral approach is essential to exploit fully the auditory and vocal potentialities of young children", pupils in primary schools were still sometimes taught in the early nineteen seventies by means of old-fashioned methods and even by non-specialists (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection B). The import is that, "if French has been badly taught in the primaries, it may do more harm than good" considering that "the first foreign language is an experience a little like first love—failure and frustration may be traumatic".4

At all events, short-term results have not sustained the initial interest displayed by L.E.A.s, their advisers, and even the N.M.I.s whose supervision had been perceived as a personal involvement (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection B). In spite of George Taylor's claim that "the basic thinking has been done, the techniques and aids are available", disappointment has followed. The earlier start has made more acute one of the intractable problems so familiar to Modern Language teachers for, as the Schools Council reported, "many teachers are perplexed by the unresolved question of what to do at the end of the one or two-year audio-visual course".6 On the other hand, the pre-requisite of success

4 Bernard Kavanagh, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. XI.
is that "the primary teacher of French must have an authentic accent". ¹ otherwise, when "lacking a skilled teacher, FLES is lost before it starts". ² We have also seen however, that "the effectiveness of a teaching programme is in inverse ratio to the number of pupils in the form" (vid supra, chapter 1). It is well known that "at eight the child is group-minded, expansive, and receptive" ³ and, more important, that "primary school children possess a great natural capacity for assimilating the speech-patterns of a foreign language". ⁴ Yet, a working party of headmasters found in the early nineteen sixties that, all too often, "despite the advantage of several years start they (sc. the pupils A.S.L.) show limited command of the spoken language". ⁵ More recently, in the wake of the Primary School Pilot Scheme, an H.M.I. has even deplored that "it is difficult to detect whether children are in their third or their first year of French and in many there appeared to be little or no progress in the knowledge of structures". ⁶

The fact is then that the relatively new venture has been, and still is marred by serious difficulties. The degree of success is determined "by the teacher's linguistic competence, his grasp of basic principles and his understanding of what is involved in learning to use (emphasis in original) a language". ⁷ By 1968, secondary school teachers of Modern Languages knew that "evidence from other countries postulated for success

¹ P. H. Hoy, in Mod Langs., Vol. 44, 1963, p. 16.
³ Frances L. Ilg, in Foreign Language Bulletin, (Modern Language Association of America), No. 49, August 1956, p. 5.
an adequate supply of reasonably qualified teachers".\footnote{1} Moreover, the need for an extensive in-service teacher training programme has been confirmed by recent enquiries. For example, Dr. Burstall stated in her 1968 report that, in 121 schools of the Ministry's Pilot Scheme, almost half the teachers, that is, 194 of them, had not studied French beyond the G.C.E. Ordinary level. With the acknowledgment that "success depends upon the teacher's preparation for his job",\footnote{2} the D.E.S. has advised that "experience now shows that clear conditions must be fulfilled if primary school French is to succeed".\footnote{3} Consequently, "the responsibility facing the L.E.A.s, so many of whom welcomed the start of the Primary Project is a heavy one".\footnote{4}

All the same, in this country, a serious shortcoming is that the efforts are rather too fragmentary. The content and method have often been developed on an "ad hoc" basis, which resulted in "uncoordinated, ill-conceived, and unsuccessful schemes of language teaching to younger children".\footnote{5} On the other hand, "the recent findings of neurologists, anthropologists and psychologists specializing in child study, support the view that the human brain has the greatest plasticity, and a special capacity for acquiring speech during the first decade of life, with superior performance at the ages of eight, nine and ten",\footnote{6} "when small children are linguistic giants".\footnote{7} Dr. Kern (Pennsylvania University)

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{1} Irene Hindmarsh, in Mod Langs, Vol. 49, 1968, p. 24.
  \item \footnote{2} "The Headmasters' Report", \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22.
  \item \footnote{3} DES, in Reports on Education, (London), No. 75, 1972, p. 1.
  \item \footnote{4} Eric W. Hawkins, in \textit{Aspects of Education}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 41.
  \item \footnote{6} Juliette Decressus, in Barnet Libbush (ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 28-29.
  \item \footnote{7} Richard Mayne, in \textit{Times Edul Suppl}, No. 2946, 5.11.71, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
once quipped that F.L.E.S. stood for "Foreign languages in the
enthusiastic stage"\(^1\). "Non-success"\(^2\) is therefore disappointing.

1 Dr. Kern's phrase. (cf. _Fr. Rev_, Vol. 33, 1959, p. 45.)

2 Dr. Thimann's term. (cf. _The Teacher_, Kettering, 20.6.69, p. 14.)
Conclusions.

It emerges from the thesis that psychological theories which purport to explain how language is learnt are still in a considerable muddle. Considering that "cognitive, attitudinal, and evaluative processes are an integral part of a total performance", 1 "it is from the utmost importance in studying learning to understand systematically what it is (emphasis in original) that an organism has learned. This is the cognitive problem in learning." 2 While "a modern language is essentially a practical subject, and a subject in which actual practice counts more than 'learning'," 3 even the critical period of learning a Modern Language "is a variable that has been remarkably neglected" 4.

It has been intimated that "when one learns a language one learns a coding system that goes beyond words". 5 So, "mastering the motor skills of another language is a simple task compared to the 'mastery' of the semantic reactions appropriate to another culture". 6 Indeed, Professor Chomsky's work led him to adduce that "the child who acquires a language . . . knows a great deal more than he has 'learned'. His knowledge of the language, as this is determined by his internalized grammar, goes far beyond the presented primary linguistic data and is in no sense an 'inductive generalization' from these data" 7 (vid supra, chapter 8). The relevance for the acquisition of a second language is

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1 Frederick J. McDonald: Educational Psychology, (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1965 ed.), p. 391.
the complexity of the condition of learning, for psychologists have acknowledged that "the most urgent requirement is to set our findings on the condition of learning' theory into the broad context provided by the recent history and current condition of psychological theory 'in general'."

Much of the confusion resulting from the teaching of French in primary schools may have its origins, on the one hand, in the inadequate treatment in differentiating perceptual skills in contrast to motor skills (vid supra, conclusions to chapter 3) and, on the other, in the common failure to identify the diverse aspects, such as learning versus studying, pertaining to the acquisition of a Modern Language. For example, in what may now be looked at as a pioneer study, Professor Twaddell averred that "learning a language is acquiring new habits, by imitation and practice; studying a language is acquiring new insights and understanding of a complex behavioral pattern". The distinction he made, then led him to comment that "the purpose of studying (emphasis in original) a language is to understand its structure, to discover the nature of the habits of its users—that is, an act of linguistic research, whether on an elementary or an advanced level of research. The purpose of learning (emphasis in original) a language is to control it, by building into one's own nervous system a maximally complete replica of the language habits of another community." The important is that practicing Modern Language teachers need not only

3 Ibid., p. 580.
to refine the learning theory by distinguishing between learning and studying, but also by working out a methodology which will enable their pupils to cope with the tasks they encounter in the course of their language studies. The prevalent approach has been found wanting both in Britain and the United States. For example, it has been deplored that "oral and aural work used as a medium for communicating culture too often results in the pupil merely obtaining the 'small change' of the foreign civilization". Again, it has been averred that "the weakest aspect of our whole performance is the teaching of the foreign culture and society". Considering that the "competent speaking of the language is a way of imprinting the psychological-physiological truth of the foreign culture on the sensibility of the student", "to learn a new language means to acquire a new set of speech habits, different word-thought associations, new and profound mental adjustments".

We have seen that the interplay is complex. Indeed, studies have brought to light that there were subtle elements involved. According to Wallace Lambert, for English-speaking Montreal high school students, their achievement in French is tied to their social attitudes towards French-Canadians and it is also "dependent upon both aptitude and intelligence as well as a sympathetic orientation toward the other group".

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3 John G. Weightman, in Times Lit Suppl, No. 3716, 25.5.73, p. 578.
Nevertheless, the psychologist asserts that "if you take a (six-year-old) child from one country to another he will forget his first language (unless it is deliberately kept up) and will acquire the new language in a very short time". In Britain where "population mobility and the difficulty of fitting any instruction into an already overloaded timetable has virtually relegated French to the category of a non-starter, the . . . shortage of teachers whose French is fluent enough to teach the language effectively" is so acute that "in many schools only one class at the top of the (junior) school is learning French because of the lack of teachers".

The planners' casual support for the Ministry's Pilot Scheme over a decade of education expansion which resulted in such lackadaisical distribution is all the more surprising for, in the terms of an official publication, "if one aspect of education is the widening of experience, then the part played by modern languages must be considerable". Dr. Burstall's reservations which she expressed in her "Primary French in the balance", the N.F.E.R. longitudinal study's final report published in 1974, were a godsend for the administrators who, at the local level, were eager to reduce their education budgets, but they considered of paramount importance to implement the cuts where they would hurt least.

Any reversal of the development seemed rather premature, in view of the

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1 Brackets in original.
fact that—according to the D.E.S.'s statistical returns published in November, 1972, the November, 1972, issue of "Reports on education"—the "mountain of language"\(^1\) amounted to thirty-five per cent. of primary schools teaching French. The change appeared untimely and ran counter to the policy pursued by the governments of most European countries. Indeed, authorities such as "the Committee of Ministers who since 1969 have been the keystone of the Council of Europe's policy for modern languages... held a symposium at Wiesbaden in November, 1973, on 'The Early Teaching of Modern Languages', in which, after animated discussion, the final consensus of opinion favoured the early start".\(^2\)

This is moreover in keeping with the trend that emerges from the practice in many European countries. Considering that in Sweden "all pupils between the ages of nine and thirteen are taught (English)"\(^3\) and Norway "begins its English teaching with pupils aged 10 years",\(^4\) perhaps we should beg the question whether it is "true that we English-speaking people are taking too much for granted in 'this language-learning business', on the facile assumption that all our foreign friends from China to Peru will be able and willing to talk to us in good (or bad)\(^5\) English long before the dawn of the twenty-first century".\(^6\)

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1 Dr. Thimann's phrase. (cf. The Teacher, Kettering, 20.6.69, p. 14.)


3 Sue Cameron, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 2999, 17.11.72, p. 11.

4 Donald C. Kiddy, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3048, 26.10.73, p. 44.

5 Brackets in original.


"(When) we are trying to understand what people do, to do this we must understand what goes on in their heads." — Professor Hebb, 1958.

On the one hand, "there is reason to believe that the language-acquisition system may be fully functional only during a 'critical period' of mental development" and, on the other, in the learning of a Modern Language "the earlier the start the better the acquisition of the basic neuro-muscular skills involved". Moreover, "there is no evidence that what is easily learned is more readily forgotten". So, when Professor Penfield addressed in 1953 a meeting in Boston, he ventured to discuss in the following terms,

"a day-school in an English-speaking community. Let the first years, from nursery school and kindergarten on to grades for children of eight or ten, to be conducted by foreign-born teachers who will speak only their native tongue in school, at work and at organized play. If such a school is staffed, for example, by German and French teachers, let the little ones begin their years of normal play, drawing, singing and memorizing, in French or German. Teach them no language as such except by the methods so long employed by mother and nurserymaid. After, possibly, two years in the French department, let them shift to the German department or vice versa. Get on from fairy tales to folk literature as rapidly as the child's mind is prepared for it."


The point is, as Dr. Penfield explained it further in the early nineteen sixties, that "you must employ teachers who have begun the language they speak by the mother's direct method, and they must teach school in the language, not making language a subject in itself".¹

"School" is taught in the Modern Language in the six multilingual European Schools, which are "governed by one board—the governors are, in name, the Ministers of Education of each contributing country".² Indeed, the results achieved in the European Schools are proving that Professor Penfield was right in his claim, i.e., to teach school in the language, for "the pupils really do learn languages: most of them are fluent in at least one European language by 10, in two by 14 or 15".³ To name one further example, Professor Mackey reported that "in the USSR some 700 schools now make use of such foreign languages as English, French, German and Chinese as languages of instruction in various school subjects".⁴ This has been profusely documented in 1960 by means of contributions which have appeared in Russian in "Inostrannye Jazyki v škole".

Alternatively, better prospects rest with the introduction of French in the primary school. Such has been the suggestion made in the nineteen sixties both by the Committee under Lord Annan's chairmanship and the

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² Caroline Moorehead, in Times Ednl Suppl, No. 3030, 22.6.73, p. 18.
³ Loc. cit.
British Bilingual Association, whose work has been seminal in this field. In the United States, Professor Parker has pioneered the movement, drawing attention to the long-term implications. He lucidly wrote in the nineteen fifties that "foreign language study should begin in kindergarten or the first grade, and should be pursued to the point that it becomes functional and constitutes a challenge to teachers of all other subjects."\(^1\) In the United Kingdom, practical help to teachers of children below ten years of age came from the British Bilingual Association that sponsored in 1962 the publication of "French at the primary level", Dr. Elston's primer. In the wake of the UNESCO conference of 1962, evidence has been accumulating that "the period of maximum receptivity and facility of linguistic learning comes well before adolescence".\(^2\)

The result is that, by now, "it is a well-known fact that children (at the pre-adolescent stage) can learn one or more foreign languages without retaining any trace of their native accent in the foreign language and without any other interference coming from their first language. Various explanations have been given for this phenomenon."\(^3\) The problems that underlie the acquisition of the complex code of unaccustomed articulations—that is, the foreign phonemes which make up a language (vid supra, chapter 3)—have led to a proliferation of theories. Quoting Asher and Garcia who have summarized them, "theories

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\(^3\) Robert L. Politzer et al., in Mod Lg J. Vol. 53, 1969, p. 75.
have been created from which optimal ages have been inferred. Examples would be the brain plasticity theory, the biological predisposition theory, and an imprinting theory."¹

As a result of the growing awareness that Modern Language teaching "based essentially on an S-R Bond model . . . ruled out the importance of feelings, instincts, and soma in learning",² Eric Lenneberg, an exponent of the biological predisposition theory, has intimated that, "for the ability to acquire language, we should look toward much more specific modes of internal organization of neurophysiological processes".³ Werner Leopold's extensive empirical work has shown that there is a time lag from the first hearing of a word until the child's first meaningful utterance (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection B), hence the pronouncements by Morris Lewis on the one hand and Wilder Penfield on the other (vid supra, chapter 1).

In that interval, the child must "create a neurone counterpart of the name in which is included both the sound and the motor pattern that will produce the name or something like it. The pattern of a word, both motor and sensory, must be established somehow in the speech mechanism of the dominant hemisphere. The concept must also be set up somewhere in the neurone system which . . . is functionally separable from speech"⁴ although, at present, we have no knowledge of where the neurone circuits of that concept system or mechanism are located. Professor Penfield


has found that, under normal circumstances, the concept mechanism is independent of speech for, "in the process of naming, a man must present to the speech mechanism a concept, or a proposition, and some automatic type of reflex produces for him the correct name instantly". So, this assertion has led James Ney to conclude that "neurologists such as Penfield seem to feel that conditioning plays a large role in language learning".

Moreover, Professor Penfield holds the view that "there is a large area of cortex underneath the temples and covering a given part of each of the two temporal lobes that is uncommitted at birth. This uncommitted cortex will in time be used for language and perception. It will make possible the memory and use of words, as well as the memory and interpretation of experience (considering that) auditory and visual experience is not subject to conscious recall, but is evidently used in the subconscious brain transaction". The nineteenth-century philologists’ awareness of this phenomenon is reflected in the writings of the time. First, Professor Paul (Freiburg University) asserted that:

"alle äußerungen der sprachtätigkeit fließen aus diesem dunkeln raume des unbewussten in der seele". 

"all the utterances of linguistic activity flow from this dark chamber of the unconscious in the mind".

1 Ibid., p. 63.
Secondly, in the words of Felix Franke:

"Wir wollen des Kinnen der Sprache; d.h. wir erstreben die Konstruktion eines ähnlichen unbewusst wirkenden Sprachmechanismus in unserer Seele als Vehikel unseres Denkens und unserer Gedankenmitteilung; mit einem Worte, wir suchen die Sprache als Form unseres Denkens". 1

"to achieve the power of using the language—we try now to construct in our minds a similar unconsciously working speech mechanism as the vehicle of our thoughts—we now seek the language as the form of our thoughts". 2

Recall then, occurs by means of a second signalling system—that is, "the brain mechanisms of speech, thought, and labor activity" whose nature consists in "an internalized linguistic mechanism" that shapes and transforms experience.

Briefly, as "modern physiology has presented psychology with new opportunities for the synthesis of divergent theories and previously unrelated data, (prevalent contemporary thoughts) seem to require radical changes in the theory of perception and of learning". 5 However, Professor Bruner has observed that "if current theories are poor—and they are not well developed yet—it is not through lack of trying". 6

Professor Hebb's work consists of a detailed analysis of the data available, mainly the work of Austin Riesen and Marius von Senden's

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monograph, "Raum- und Gestaltauffassung bei operierten Blindgeborenen vor und nach der Operation" published in 1932 by Barth of Leipzig.

In a statement leading to the conclusion that the difference between early and late learning is somehow a function of age, Dr. Anderson has surmised that:

"Language learning by young children in a natural setting is widely recognized as something quite different from the kind of learning that takes place in school by older children or adolescents, usually called conceptual learning.
This difference, most writers on the subject agree is primarily a function of age." (vid supra, epigraph to chapter 11.)

Theodore Anderson's formulation conveys how widely perceived is the distinction between early and late learning, a suggestion which Donald Hebb's writing—such as his "A textbook of Psychology"—has amply shown, that "can be used to make predictions about subjects who have or have not had opportunity for certain kinds of learning".¹

Indeed, this view has been substantiated by psychologists in the nineteen fifties. During early learning, as James Drever phrased the point, "organization occurs in the non-specialized cortical areas, and this organization acts as a basis for the perceptual skills and insights upon which later learning in part depends".² Moreover, research work—such as undertaken in the nineteen fifties by John Eccles with regard to the neurophysiological basis of the mind—leads to affirm that "there is now direct evidence for plastic changes at synapses whereby their excitatory effect is increased by usage (which) tend to cause the development of specific spatio-temporal patterns of activity in the

2 Loc. cit.
neuronal networks of the central nervous system."^1

To Professor Hebb, for the basis of the activity in the brain, "the key conception is that of the 'cell assembly', a brain process which corresponds to a particular sensory event, or a common aspect of a number of sensory events. This assembly is a closed system in which activity can 'reverberate' and thus continue after the sensory event which started it has ceased. Also, one assembly will form connections with others, and it may therefore be made active by one of them in the total absence of the adequate stimulus."^2 Although the neurophysiologist freely acknowledges that current hypotheses "give an account of the specific states in the mind, but say nothing concerning the 'how' of that linkage",^3 Donald Hebb's analysis of the central nervous system, or C.N.S., has much contributed to our understanding of learning processes in "the higher animal". In his discussion, Professor Hebb has averred that activity" can continue after the stimulation has ceased",^5 he had found that from "about 1930 it began to be evident that the nerve cell is not physiologically inert, does not have to be excited from outside in order to discharge".^6

In the following decades, Professor Lhermitte explained that:

"(Les souvenirs) courant à travers de gigantesques ensembles mathématiques, les 'patterns'. Immenses "(Memories) run across gigantic mathematical organizations, or '(neural) patterns'. Immense circuits

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5 Ibid., p. 104.
developed between such and such pathways of nerve cells, or neurons.
A specific (neural) pattern brings into interplay millions of neurons for the slightest neural activity

Every neuron however can be used in thousands of (neural) patterns... The cerebral cortex ("which unfolded, would be like a small, square sheet 20 inches wide and \( \frac{1}{4} \) th of an inch thick" -1-) is made up of 10,000 million neurons. Each one of them can have 10,000 conn exions, or synapses."

The tremendous possibilities result from the fact that the synapses are the areas "where the processes of two neurons (emphasis in original) come into close contiguity, and the nervous impulse passes from the one to the other, the fibres of the two (neurons) are intermeshed".

The neurophysiological postulate is that "any two cells (or systems of cells) that are repeatedly active at the same time will become connected functionally and/or structurally" and, as Bergen Bugelski summarized it—but the interested reader should have recourse to Professor Hebb’s work—Donald Hebb assumes that something like 'neurobiotaxis' occurs so that neurons actually grow toward each other and/or that enlargements on nerve endings (boutons) develop as a result of

1 Jean-Pierre Parnas, in Paris Match, (Paris), No. 1293, 16.2.74, p. 48.
4 Here andinfra, brackets in original.
use and provide contact surfaces".¹ The neurogram, that is, "a patterned association of neurones . . . is called into existence, and maintained, by the increased synaptic function caused by usage";² notwithstanding that "any cortical neurone does not exclusively belong to one engram (or neurogram), but on the contrary each neurone and even each synaptic junction are built into many engrams (or) neuronal associations"³ (vid inf., this chapter).

In Modern Language learning, Earl Stevick wrote of "necessary neuromuscular inculcation".⁴ When Wallace Lambert discussed the psychological approaches to the study of language, Professor Hebb's writings prompted him to hypothesize that "a stimulated network could store the input signal and maintain its fidelity long after the environmental stimulation had ceased. Not only were there networks of cells found in the brain which might become reverberatory circuits of this sort, but it was also noted that . . . once a circuit unit has become established it would be possible either for outside stimulation to activate the whole unit or for some other inside (emphasis in original) stimulation coming from another point in the continuously active nervous system to activate it."⁵

In sum, "the assembly activity is the simplest case of an 'image' or an 'idea': a representative process. The formation of connections

¹ Loc. cit.
² John C. Eccles et al.: "The Effects of Disuse and of Activity on Mammalian Spinal Reflexes". (Forthcoming.)
⁵ Wallace E. Lambert, in Mod Lg J. Vol. 47, 1963, p. 57.
between assemblies in the mechanism of association."¹ The import for
the acquisition of new knowledge has been aptly described by Professor
Lhermitte when, in 1973, he summarized Dr. Rosensweig’s conclusions.
He stated that:

"La mémoire se jouerait en
deux temps: d'abord le
cerveau fixe où que nous
venons d'apprendre grâce aux
connexions entre les neurones
qui se développent au moment
même où nous captions une ou de
nouvelles connaissances.
Second temps, le stockage, la
vraie memorisation, grâce à un
nouveau réseau de connections
entre les cellules qui
existent déjà." ²

François Lhermitte’s discussion throws some light on the learning process
which fosters the mastery of a language.

This process has been shrewdly examined by American writers over
a sizable period of time. It has been argued in the nineteen fifties
that "an individual will learn more readily activities which are
facilitated by prior acquisitions, and will learn less readily those
activities which are not facilitated or are perhaps inhibited by prior
learning".³ Another important contributor had defined in the inter-war
period the pre-requisite for the language learning process. He had
written that "direct bonds can be established only in one way, namely,
by creating a new path in the neural system by the constant use of this
path"⁴ and, later, influenced by the predominant connexionist theory,

¹ Donald O. Hebb, in Sigmund Koch (ed.), op. cit., p. 628.
² François Lhermitte. (cf. Paris Match, Paris, No. 1293,
16.2.74, p. 57.)
⁴ Peter Hagboldt: Language Learning, (Chicago, Ill.: University
Max Sherover explained that "repeated auditory stimuli . . . establish a fixed neural pathway".\(^1\) A few years later, Professor Penfield propounded that, "as the child begins to understand, electric currents must pass in corresponding patterns through this (uncommitted) cortex. After each time of passage, it is easier for the later currents to follow the same trail. This tendency toward facilitation of electric passage results in man's amazingly permanent records of the auditory and visual stream of his conscious life."\(^2\) It has been asserted that "there is a good deal of evidence that he who learns more than one language as a little child has greater facility for the acquisition of additional languages in adult life"\(^3\) for, first, every language contains sounds difficult to produce for those who have not spoken it from childhood (vid supra, chapter 3) and, secondly, neurologists "consider that the development of the cortex and the setting of neurones depends very largely on the environment, experience and training of the individual".\(^4\)

In second language learning then, the favourable language learning latency is the determinant for, as we shall see presently, "it is easier to establish permanent memory circuits in the young child than in any older learner".\(^5\) In the nineteen forties, Suzanne Langer averred that "there is an optimum period of learning (emphasis in original), and this is a stage of mental development in which several impulses and interests happen to coincide: the lalling instinct, the imitative impulse, a

\(^1\) Max Sherover, in Nod Lang J. Vol. 34, 1950, p. 445.
\(^5\) Loc. cit.
natural interest in distinctive sounds ... Where any of these characteristics is absent or is not synchronized with the others the 'linguistic intuition' miscarries."¹ More important, in Professor Penfield's words, "the human brain is a living, growing, changing organ. It can even carry out its own repairs to some extent. But it is bound by the inexorable evolution of its functional aptitudes, and no one can alter this, not even an educator or psychiatrist. One can draw up a functional timetable for the brain of a child. One might well say there is a built-in biological clock that tells the passing of educational opportunity."² There is therefore a decile season which constitutes for the mind its learning-time.

This is by no means to say that one cannot learn once adolescence has been reached. One can but—at that belated stage—even a perfunctory investigation into the process involved, reveals the nature characteristic of mechanical learning and, moreover, once the stimuli cease to be regularly reinforced there is a high probability of the pupil forgetting. In a sense, it is as if the learning never really gets inside to become integrated into pre-existing schemata, for "memory of any particular event is dependent on a specific reorganization of (neurograms, or) neuronal associations in a vast system of neurones widely spread over the cerebral cortex".³ So, the schemata are the active organization of past experiences (vid supra, chapter 5, subsection A) established by the pre-adolescent child, and such schemata "operate and exert their influence upon the retention and reproduction of our perceptions".⁴ It

³ John C. Eccles, op. cit., p. 266.
follows that, as regards receptivity and facility of linguistic learning, "physiological evolution causes it (sc. the organ of the mind, A.S.L.) to specialise in the learning of language before the ages of 10 to 14. After that gradually, inevitably, it seems to become rigid, slow, less receptive. In regard to this function, it is soon senescent."

The implications for the teaching of a second language are that, with the relevant exposure in childhood—i.e., the formative period—the elaboration of the pattern of nervous processes takes place through the stimulation of the nerve cells and the appropriate areas of the brain, "functional connections are gradually established by the child, and the general uses of the uncommitted areas are fixed for life", "before the time has robbed them (sc. the pupils, A.S.L.) of their priceless early linguistic capabilities", then "the brain of the twelve-year-old . . . is prepared for rapid expansion of the vocabulary of the mother tongue and of the other languages he may have heard in the formative period".

The fact is that, if the child has heard these other languages before the growth of association paths makes imitation harder, "he has developed also a remarkable switch mechanism that enables him to turn from one language to another without confusion, without translation, without a mother-tongue accent". Hence the common-sense approach advocated by Jowett of Balliol in the nineteenth century. When the master of "the leading university institution of Victorian England" addressed the

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5 Loc. cit.
6 Dr. Halsey's phrase. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 122, 15.2.74, p. 4.)
"Société nationale des professeurs de français en Angleterre" in 1887, he reminded them that "Nature taught to begin with the ear, and not with the eye; with association, and not with analysis; with imitation, not with abstractions; with conversation, not with books of exercises - that the first step towards a more successful study of modern languages is to teach them in the order and manner which Nature indicates... The powers of the mind generally strengthen, at least to middle life; but the faculty of learning languages decays, and is almost in inverse ratio to one's years. It is stronger before than after ten",¹ because "the child's brain is functionally flexible for the start of a language".²

This view is a commonplace. It is often expressed as "children under, say, ten or twelve have much less difficulty than do adults in foreign-language learning; recent experiments would seem to indicate that there is a physiological basis, in the structure of the brain of the growing child, for the relative ease with which a new language is acquired before puberty".³ Indeed, "after the age of ten or twelve, the general functional connections have been established and fixed for the speech cortex (in the dominant hemisphere). After that, the speech center cannot be transferred to the cortex of the lesser side, which is then fully occupied with the business of perception."⁴ When Dr. Masson attempted to test the validity of Professor Penfield's theory, the results showed that, "as the higher means were achieved in each case by the group of five- to six-year-olds (in comparison with 'an ethnically

¹ Benjamin Jowett. (cf. J Ed, No. 211, 1.2.1887, p. 114.)
similar group of eleven- to twelve-year olds\(^1\), . . . the younger group had achieved significantly better results in both the Vocabulary and Comprehension tests\(^2\).

Following the well-structured discussion in which Wilder Penfield asserted that "the years when the child is a genius at language initiation (are) the time when the uncommitted cortex can still be conditioned to foreign tongues",\(^3\) has any educator taken action in one form or another? Indeed, in the U.S.S.R., Nigel Grant reported in the nineteen sixties that, when simple lessons in foreign languages were organized in "детские сады",\(^4\) such ventures received strong support both from parents and local authorities. Furthermore, we have seen that "in the USSR some 700 schools now make use of such foreign languages as English, French, German and Chinese as languages of instruction in various school subjects".\(^5\)

Nor is the Russian experience an isolated example. Sweden has made a decision after a lengthy experiment. National delegates at the London seminar of the Council of Europe convened in 1962 by the Ministry of Education have explained that "in Sweden and in Denmark a modern language is being taught experimentally to pupils in their first year in primary schools, i.e., at the age of 7 when the pupils are still unable to read their mother tongue".\(^6\) In Sweden, the decision was made that,

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2 *Loc. cit.*


5 W. Francis Mackey, in *Languages and the Young School Child*, (Hans H. Stern, ed.), London: CUP, 1969, p. 82.

as from 1972, "all pupils between the ages of nine and thirteen are taught (English)\(\textsuperscript{1}\). Similarly, Peter Doye has described the "Frühbeginn des Englischunterrichts\(\textsuperscript{2}\)" in Berlin, where English is introduced at the primary school level by means of a pilot project. In England, the 1944 (Butler) Education Act has provided the educationists with a fresh opportunity for considering critically the age at which different curriculum subjects—in this case Modern Languages—should be introduced into the school.

Our understanding of the developmental growth with regard to the unfolding of abilities and aptitudes in children should guide us—and even form the basis—as to the approach we might adopt for Modern Language teaching (vid supra, conclusions to chapter 2). This type of procedure seemed to receive the approval of the Ministry of Education, whose viewpoint was expressed in an official publication as "a modern foreign language may be taught in any type of school in England"\(\textsuperscript{3}\). The City of York Modern Language adviser acknowledged that "there are lessons to be learnt from the best of the continental education systems"\(\textsuperscript{4}\).

Dr. Alexander King, formerly Director General at O.E.C.D., has pointed out that "change in education is now so rapid, so costly, and so long in showing its effects that different countries, perhaps for the first time, are showing signs of being eager to profit by the experiments, achievements, and mistakes of their neighbours"\(\textsuperscript{5}\).

The import of starting a Modern Language in the pre-school years is that "the bilingual child prepared for formal education by mother and

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\(\textsuperscript{1}\) Sue Cameron, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 2999, 17.11.72, p. 11.
\(\textsuperscript{4}\) Keith A. Emmans, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3014, 2.3.73, p. XVI.
nursemaid, or mother and a second-language kindergarten, has undoubted advantage over (other) children, whatever the second languages may have been and whatever the eventual work of the individual may prove to be.¹ Professor Penfield firmly stated that, in view of the "built-in biological clock,... the uncommitted cortex must be conditioned for speech in the first decade. This is the miracle that makes man's education possible."² For example, "whether, in fact, they (sc. the children. A.S.L.) learn to read will depend largely upon whether the teacher gives them the experience to build up the necessary cortical links."³ Similarly, the capacity to learn a Modern Language depends basically on the experience which fosters the development of the cortical links in the first ten years of life.

It led Professor Penfield to conclude that "what the brain is allowed to record, how and when it is conditioned—these things prepare it for great achievement, or limit it to mediocrity. Boy and man are capable of so much more than is demanded of them! Adjust the time and the manner of learning; then you may double your demands and your expectations."⁴ The issue is an important one. Wilder Penfield's "plea is that we should let children hear secondary languages, properly spoken, at an early age."⁵ The reason is that, beyond the age of twelve years, "it is highly unlikely that the individual can ever learn to pronounce a foreign language so accurately as to be mistaken for a

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² Ibid., pp. 78, 81.
native",\(^1\) for recent "research into pronunciation structures has revealed
the extent and depth of the embedding in the nervous system of the habits
which dominate our speaking".\(^2\)

\(^1\) Charles J. Dodson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 33.
Conclusions.

Making nursery schooling as widely available as possible is the order of the day in many a west European country. The United Kingdom is no exception. Indeed, "the NUT urge schooling instead of playgroups".\(^1\) As contemporary educational thought dictates that "you have to spend your money where it can do most good—right at the start of the child's schooling",\(^2\) concern has been expressed as to the extent curriculum development in any form has been empirically investigated. Once again, the findings have been staggering. At research level, the investigation of the relevant journals, which Dr. Derrick published in the November, 1974, issue of "Educational research", brought out that very young people have been severely neglected as research subjects. A notable exception is Dr. Blackstone's post-graduate enquiry, whose results were published in 1971 as "A fair start" by Allen Lane. The project was in fact started in 1964 and Tessa Blackstone (L.S.E.) is reported to have said that "in those days it (sc. nursery education."A.S.L." was almost unthought of as an area for study".\(^3\)

On a general plane, in Great Britain, "there is evidence that the social background of the primary schools has a persisting influence on secondary school performance",\(^4\) the primary curriculum must therefore succeed in developing the skills connected with Modern Language acquisition, for we have seen that the child is a genius at language initiation. The problem is not peculiar to the British educational scene. For example, Professor Aron has explained in 1973 in a live broadcast on Europe-1 that,

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1 Anon., in *Times Educational Suppl.*, No. 3053, 30.11.73, p. 3.
3 Tessa Blackstone. (cf. *Times Higher Ed Suppl.*, No. 101, 21.9.73, p. 7.)
"in order to safeguard the equality of opportunity, it is necessary to ensure the acquisition, the practice, and the mastery of language by starting the children's education as early as possible".

On the basis of this general principle, many are the linguists who hold the view that a Modern Language must be catered for in the curriculum at an early stage, i.e., in primary schools, even if this new subject can only be accommodated at the cost of removing a well-established one.

This view, which was expressed by Professor Robins in the 1973 de Saussure lecture delivered at the Polytechnic of Central London, has formed one of the main themes of a conference convened in Cologne. The conference was organized in December, 1974, by the "Association linguistique franco-européenne" and Jean-Bernard Marquet reported that conference were agreed upon the principle of:

"introduire l'enseignement (des langues vivantes) dès un beaucoup plus jeune âge, et l'étendre, ainsi, à la plus large population scolaire possible—même s'il faut le faire au détriment de disciplines jugées traditionnellement plus nobles".

The new demands largely stem from the growing body of evidence that "le cerveau se forme très tôt". For example, on June 2, 1970, a headline in "Le figaro" read "Cerveau: à trois ans tout est joué".

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PART IV - GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

"Changes in the present organization of language teaching and in the training of teachers could prove to be much more revolutionary than new developments of materials and techniques." 1

Gone are the days when exiled Frenchmen "taught for a pittance" their "mother tongue to classes of unruly English boys." 2 So is the transitory period characterized by the sharp split which resulted in two well-defined sub-groups of Modern Language teacher according to their initial training. This pernicious differentiation was conducive to the view that "the graduates are academic professionals and pedagogical amateurs; the non-graduates are pedagogical professionals and academic amateurs. (As the) of college of education certificate orientated towards the primary school", 3 it is not surprising that Dr. Riddy could still write in the early nineteen seventies, that "the colleges are mainly orientated towards primary education, and the universities towards secondary (although a third or more of those who take main courses of French seek appointments in secondary schools". 4

While "the Education Act of 1944 extended the opportunities for the learning of foreign languages to pupils of all Secondary Schools", 5 the secondary modern school has not achieved parity of esteem with the grammar school. In practice, we have seen (vid supra, chapter 9,

"In the Grammar School, the specialist has the fluency. . . .
In Secondary Modern Schools, little effective modern language teaching is being provided. . . . in the absence of modern language graduates." 1

The apparent inadequacy has been explained by the fact that, traditionally "French was included in the college curriculum primarily if not exclusively, as part of the student's opportunity to continue his own education". 2

The early nineteen sixties marked the turning point. Once the length of teacher training was increased in 1960 from two to three years on the recommendation of the National Advisory Council on the Training and Supply of Teachers, further development could take place. French became therefore a recognised discipline in teacher training under the influence of the 1957 Ministry of Education pamphlet "The training of teachers". In 1973 however, the year before the D.E.S. decided that the colleges of education should be reorganized, parliamentary pressure was still urging the Department "to stimulate training colleges to provide a greater supply of modern language teachers", 3 as "the lengthening of the general training period in 1960 from two to three years. . . . enabled colleges to give serious consideration to the possibility of providing students with courses in French and German as teaching subjects". 4

We have seen (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection B) that, the needs

have not been, and are not likely to be, met in the near future. The
difficulties are cumulative, considering what is implied in learning more
than one Modern Language, but also in view of the professional demands
imposed by the spreading of technological equipment to the language
class-room. In a carefully-argued analysis, Professor Weightman has
suggested that "only the very exceptional student can cope adequately
with more than one foreign language, while retaining some grip on his
native culture".¹ Another Anglo-Saxon had written at the beginning of
the century, that "French civilization is fundamentally a discipline into
which the novice can only obtain entrance by arduous effort, and the
consequent sacrifice of his personal idiosyncrasy, however completely in
the end he may reconquer his personality".²

The lesson learnt in connexion with the renewed interest displayed
in the old conjunctions of French and German, French and Spanish, et
cetera, is that "for most students it is impossible to attain high
standards of linguistic performance in more than one foreign language at
a time".³ On the strength of the French experience, Olivier Guichard,
then Minister for National Education, issued on November 17, 1969, a
Circular-Letter notifying that the second Modern Language hitherto taken
in the "classe de quatrième", or third form, would be optional as from
October, 1970. Again, in trilingual Luxembourg, if local born and bred
children have coped quite well with "Luxembourgeois" in the home, German
in the infant school, and French once they entered primary school, "two

¹ John G. Weightman, in Times Lit Suppl, No. 3716, 25.5.73, p. 577.
² H. Havelock Ellis: The Genius of Europe, London: Williams and
Norgate, 1901. (1950 reprint, p. 24.)
³ Brian Gomes da Costa, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 57, 17.11.72,
additional languages are often too much for the migrant children, who are allowed to opt for one\textsuperscript{1} even though tape-recorders have made class-work and oral work more interesting.

In their trail, new demands and—indeed—shortcomings soon emerged. A survey of schools undertaken by the Schools Council has brought to light the deplorable "difference between the equipment available to one school and to another doing the same work, and to schools in one area compared with another, (which) are staggering".\textsuperscript{2} Moreover, someone shrewdly asked in the nineteen sixties, whether the training colleges were "equipping themselves rapidly enough to train intending modern-language teachers to handle and organise the technical equipment available".\textsuperscript{3} It has been deplored with some justification that outside pressures have always mitigated against the acquisition of functional competence. So long as the school's and the individual teacher's reputation are tied up with the number of passes or, better still, with the number of "As" obtained by the pupils taking their G.C.E. Ordinary-level examinations (the teachers "have little choice when it comes to the examinations for which they must prepare"\textsuperscript{4} for, "despite all their disclaimers and buck-passing, the boards have always been—and still are—the great dictators".\textsuperscript{5}) there will be considerable pressure for devoting as soon as possible an ever increasing proportion of the teaching time to the printed word, "which upsets the balance of linguistic activities more and more as the course proceeds".\textsuperscript{6}

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\textsuperscript{1} Caroline Moorehead, in \textit{Times Educational Suppl.}, No. 3030, 22.6.73, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{3} L. Mona Thomas, in Barnet Libbish (ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{5} Frank M. Willis, in \textit{Times Higher Educational Suppl.}, No. 30, 5.5.72, p. 14.
Through the Area Training Organizations and the B. Ed. degree, the colleges of education have benefited from a cross-fertilization with the universities. The D.E.S. has however made the decision in 1974 that most of the 155 colleges of education must amalgamate with a polytechnic or one or more colleges of further education. In spite of the compounded effort in terms of expansion and finance (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection A), the output of Modern Language teachers has never been adequate. In the early nineteen seventies, the D.E.S. was seriously contemplating of including French among the shortage subjects. Although the pressure of the Modern Languages section of the A.T.O.D.E. and others did not meet with the approval of the D.E.S., when they decided on a moratorium on post-graduate expansion in colleges of education and education departments in polytechnics, French came under a special category thus escaping the full brunt of the cuts. Three years later, under circular 1/76, the ten regional advisory councils were empowered by the D.E.S. to convene meetings and discuss which colleges should continue to run courses in such subject shortage areas as Modern Languages. Considering that, at the grass roots, teachers had bemoaned that "the courses in colleges do not seem to have made much impact on the shortage of language teachers", further developments in teacher training for the late nineteen seventies were bound to be eagerly received.

The change was timely in view of the demands that were imposed on the Modern Language teachers. As traditional methods were retreating under the attack of the progressive Modern Language teachers' enduring action, new alternatives came successively into being, taking the form of:

• new teaching techniques in the early nineteen sixties with the fast-encroaching audio-visual courses in secondary schools (vid supra, chapter 1);

• new school organization with the increasing tendency of teaching French in mixed groupings across the whole ability range (vid supra, chapter 10);

• new examinations with the comparative success of the C.S.E., a teacher-moderated examination impinging on the well-established G.C.E. (vid supra, chapter 10);

• curriculum development when French was introduced into the junior-school timetable (vid supra, chapter 11).

This curriculum development — the national pilot scheme for the teaching of French in junior schools — was the result of the decision taken by the National Foundation for Educational Research to support the Nuffield Foundation.

The bearing on teacher training is that the staffing requirements have been large considering that, in the early nineteen seventies, the D.E.S. estimated that thirty-five per cent. of primary schools were teaching French. As, "to be most effective, the foreign language teacher must, of course, have flawless and fluent command of the target language",¹ some promising possibilities lie in the development of the B.Ed. degrees. In the early nineteen seventies, the Government strongly supported the promotion of such a development in the White Paper when they proposed "to work towards the achievement of a graduate profession as the ultimate aim".² The unifying effect of a four-year course, for example, offered a unique opportunity for restructuring adequately the many aspects (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection B) which


form part and parcel of the training, considering that "the methodology
of modern language teaching is more extensive than that of almost all
other subjects . . . because of the vast amount of experimental work
which has been done in recent years and has a direct bearing on the
teaching of modern languages in schools".1

The implications for teacher training are twofold. First, the
traditional teaching habits entrenched in the colleges of education
coupled with the institutional organisation have constituted a formidable
barrier against any reform. As the colleges, like any hierarchical
organisation, are internally resistant to change, innovation can be
generated more easily in the open situation created by a new type of
training establishment (vid supra, conclusions to subsection B, chapter 5).
The point has been made, for example, that "only the departments of
education in the polytechnics can feel secure and therefore only they
have the chance to determine the nature of teacher education in the next
decade".2 Secondly, in the middle nineteen seventies, the Government
has decided to "propose to work towards the achievement of a graduate
teaching profession as the ultimate aim"3 and, in the White Paper, the
suggestion is made for "new three-year courses incorporating educational
studies which are so designed that they will lead both to the award of
a BEd degree and to a qualified status".4

The N.U.S. Council have realized that, in the early stages of the
B.Ed. degree, some colleges were too small to have their degrees awarded

1 Donald C. Riddy, in Times Edn Suppl, No. 2944, 22.10.71, p. 38.
2 Eric Robinson, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 143, 12.7.74, p. 3.
3 Education: A Framework for Expansion, op. cit., para. 73.
4 Ibid., para. 75.
by the C.N.A.A. A member of the N.U.G. Executive told Conference in
November, 1967, that already at that time "this is the most important
issue facing the union in the next twelve months". Moreover, the
planning of the new B.Ed. in the post-Jamesian era had to take into
account the dominant attitudes found in colleges of education where
trainee teachers displayed "an impatience with theory, a great appetite
for practical tips and an encouraging eagerness to have a go, to have a
chance to control a classroom". In keeping with this, for example, when
the North East London Polytechnic submitted proposals in 1973 for the
country's first three-year honours degree course that incorporated a
teaching qualification to the C.N.A.A., David Gorbutt, then Head of the
Teaching Studies Department, claimed that "the course is specifically
designed for committed students" and that it emphasized practical work
for student teachers.

Such ventures were eagerly received by the C.N.A.A. Geoffrey Nokes,
who was newly appointed with responsibility for education, pointed out
that, as "it is almost certain that there will be some sort of education
degree offered by the CNAA in the future... it will offer an
alternative and prompt some universities into rethinking their own
degrees". The Hudson Institute's damning comment was that, in the
United Kingdom, "the existing higher education structure... is too
amorphous and too little committed to practical action and the application
of theory to adjust adequately to such a need... so long as the
higher education system remains open to very small numbers, with the

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1 Alun Evans. (cf. The Teacher, Kettering, 1.12.67.)
2 Eric Clavering, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 135, 17.5.74, p. 4.
3 David A. Gorbutt. (cf. Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 105,
19.10.73, p. 5.)
4 Geoffrey Nokes. (cf. Times Edul Suppl, No. 2999, 17.11.72,
p. 14.)
technical and teacher-training establishments pushed to the fringe". It has been deplored that the institutional organisation "is still within the grip of an obsolete system". So, as "education, the biggest industry in all advanced countries, is often the most outmoded", characteristically, it is responding negatively as the implementation of the diverse reforms has amply illustrated it.

In recent decades, all reforms have been bedevilled by the conservative forces at work (vid supra, chapter 9, subsection 3), not least a more open avenue to teacher training which has been badly needed for some considerable time. In 1970, the Schools Council backed up the Robbins Committee's assertion that "many more young people would like to be able to speak and read languages fluently, and such knowledge is becoming essential in a growing number of occupations". Considering that "the goal of his (Lord Belstead's) Department must be that every normal child in Britain grows up at least bilingual", "the only satisfactory remedy for this is a drastic revision of the secondary course making it possible for a student to pursue a broad range of studies up to the age of eighteen". A word of caution must be sounded here, owing to the entrenched "idea that the English are no good at foreign languages because of some native deficiency" (in practice, the acquisition of

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3 Edmund J. King, in Times Higher Ed Suppl., No. 147, 9.3.74, p. 8.


Russian is easier for the English speaker than the acquisition of English for the Russian speaker).

The problem lies elsewhere. The thesis has substantiated the fact that most of the Modern Language materials currently used in the nineteen seventies in our schools were largely based on an over-simplified view that is typical of much recent work on language in Psychology and linguistics (vid supra, conclusions to subsection A, chapter 5). Coupled with this shortcoming in Modern Language teaching is the awareness of the need for a profound rethinking of current theories of foreign language teaching in the light of contemporary advances in psychological and psycholinguistic theory (vid supra, chapters 1, 5). Well-informed Modern Language specialists have affirmed that changes in the present organization of language teaching and in the training of teachers could prove to be much more revolutionary than new developments of materials and techniques (vid supra, epigraph to PART IV).

In the nineteen seventies, the pupil was still meeting in secondary education a learning situation which was not in keeping with the prevalent thoughts in Psychology. Briefly, at the 1962 U.N.E.S.C.O. conference on foreign languages, the Modern Language teachers’ attention was drawn to the notions based on Developmental Psychology according to which "the child's linguistic achievement is the result of conditioned and conceptual learning. In infancy and the early years of childhood conditioned (i.e. unconscious) learning prevails and conceptual learning increases" (vid supra, chapter 12). In many a secondary school, a conventional audio-visual course, such as "Tavor" or "Voix et images de France", is made use of usually for a year or so. Unfortunately, after

1 Brackets in original.

the inception course, there is evidence that, at the transitional stage, a "totally unrelated textbook"\(^1\) frequently forms the basis of the Modern Language lessons.

The result is that the oral skill, first, tends to be neglected (vid supra, conclusions to chapter 6) and, secondly, it is either not tested or tested in a most unreliable, amateurish way. As the Psychology of language learning suggests that command over the spoken word lays an excellent foundation for better reading and written work (vid supra, chapter 8), it has been deplored that "testing the ability to speak a foreign language is perhaps the least practiced in the language testing field".\(^2\) It has also been urged that it was necessary to test the speaking skill, for a great deal depends on such tests. So, the difference between merely paying lip service to the oral objective and actually achieving it resides in making clear to the students that their progress depends to a considerable extent upon their speaking performance (vid supra, chapter 8).

On a general plane, there has been a tendency at every level to disconsider the previous stage within the education system. The criticism may take various forms. For example, Professor Niklaus rather petulantly decried "the laziness of teachers".\(^3\) At a time of reappraisal which is the peculiarity of Modern Language teaching in the nineteen seventies, must we choose between F.L.E.S. and F.L.O.P., that is, Foreign Languages in the Elementary Schools and Foreign Languages for Older Pupils? Perhaps we may wonder whether our thinking is sufficiently progressive considering, first, that in the teaching of French "each

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3 Professor Niklaus's phrase. (cf. *Times Higher Ed Suppl.* No. 53 20.10.72, p. 4.)
level needs its own useful surrender value"¹ and, secondly, that
"language teaching . . . suffers because its aims are ill-defined".²
Significantly, at a 1973 conference, Dr. Blanc (Birkbeck College, London)
pointed out that "the objectives of language teaching . . . were
conspicuously absent from most syllabuses".³ At least, the dissertation
has helped to clear the ground neatly in spite of the complexities of
language mastery for which the possibility of an attractive, dogmatic,
over-simple hypothesis seems farther away than ever.

Although, in matters of this sort, stating the problems involved is
illuminating and, in formulating them, some progress is made towards
their solution, in the main, our conclusions have merely confirmed
convictions. Our task consisted in following the process as far as we
were able and, at this point, our conclusions appear rather tentative.
That may be the price to be paid for "asking unanswerable questions and
probing insoluble problems (which) are the only legitimate subjects of
inquiry by professional specialists".⁴ A set of conclusions providing
over-simplified answers which should, sooner or later, remove the many
practical class-room problems depends upon pooling resources on an
unprecedented scale, but it would still be no more than a pious hope that
their outcome might take the form of a coherent, compelling, necessary
argument. So long as our "main obstacle is lack of funding".⁵

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¹ George E. Ferrés, in CILT Reports and Papers 8, (London: CILT,

² Ivor G. Thimann: Teaching Languages, (London: G. G. Harrap,
1955), p. 5.

³ Michel Blanc, in Times Higher Ed Suppl, No. 65, 12.1.73, p. 5.


⁵ Eileen Daffern, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3072, 12.4.74, p. 19.
"contemporary linguistics (will remain) in ferment and the psychology of language in a somewhat infantile stage". While it is obvious that better prospects rest with radical changes, Richard Tawney's formulation befits Modern Language teaching, "those who have the power to remove social evils have not the will and those who have the will have not, as yet, the power" (vid supra, conclusions to subsection B, chapter 9).

A case in point is that preference should be given to teachers who have begun the language they speak by the mother's direct method, and they must teach school in the language, not making language a subject in itself. To find such teachers is your primary problem, whatever your method may be (vid supra, chapter 12). Indeed, school is taught in the Modern Languages in the six multilingual European Schools, which are "governed by one board—the governors are, in name, the Ministers of Education of each contributing country". The results achieved in the European Schools have proved how right is the claim to teach school in the language with teachers who have begun the language they speak by the mother's direct method, for "the pupils really do learn languages: most of them are fluent in at least one European language by 10, in two by 14 or 15".

Concern is of course expressed from time to time. The predominant set-up has been criticised by a contributor to "Science et vie", who commented in the early nineteen sixties that:

"On croirait qu'à notre époque, on aurait au moins réussi à organiser l'échange

"In this day and age, one would have believed that the exchange of teachers would

3 Caroline Moorehead, in Times Educational Suppl. No. 3030, 22.6.73, p. 18.
4 Loc. cit.
systématique des professeurs de pays à pays, et que les langues ne seraient plus enseignées que par des maîtres d'origine. Pour qui connaît bien l'anglais, par exemple, écouter un cours donné dans cette langue par la plupart de nos agrégés, est un supplice pour l'oreille.  

On the other hand, Professor Chomsky asserts that "there is reason to believe that the language-acquisition system may be fully functional only during a 'critical period' of mental development" for, "when more than one language is learned, the speech areas of the dominant hemisphere take them all on without geographical separation that one can discover. If languages are learned in the right way, and particularly if they are learned at the right age, multiple languages may be learned perfectly, with little effort and without psychological confusion". We may therefore wonder when the administrators will take the hint and help positively the teachers to meet the challenge, in the light of the French experience.

The French have certainly shown interest in "l'apprentissage precoce d'une seconde langue", as well as in the "Langages et mécanismes cérébraux", the 1963 translation of Professor Penfield's "Speech and brain-mechanisms" (on June 29, 1973, for example, Wilder Penfield was referred to by name on an O.R.T.F. broadcast). For several decades, Professor Penfield, the distinguished neurosurgeon, has "been the only

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4 Fredéric François's phrase. (cf. Le Français dans le monde, No. 46, 1967, p. 26.)
one who related second language learning to the developmental aspects of neurology.\textsuperscript{1} So far, in England, the desirability of teaching French to the five-to-six-year-olds is left to the individual head teachers and therefore, if a number of infant schools have introduced French on a freelance basis, the content and method developed as an "ad hoc" venture by those who work within the infant schools. Yet, in 1968, Irene Hindmarsh (The High School, Birkenhead) expressed concern with regard to our approach in this country, considering that "inadequately prepared programmes abroad have cast disrepute on language teaching to young children".\textsuperscript{2}

A French "inspecteur", Alice Desonay, has revealed that France had made some headway for several years. Although it was of an experimental nature (e.g., in the Bordeaux area, and in the "departements" of Basses-Pyrénées and Meurthe-et-Moselle), the teaching of German in 800 classes of their "écoles maternelles", now officially known as pre-elementary schools, by 180 native teachers (they included a small minority of English teachers) operated on mutual exchanges, in accordance with the Franco-German cultural agreements signed in 1967 by Alain Peyrefitte, then Minister for National Education. The trend was however reversed in the nineteen seventies. By then, the Ministry had become aware of the long-term implications with regard to the financial investments involved. So, in 1973, "the Ministry of Education has issued instructions that no school may start bilingual classes at these early ages, although schools can continue with those that exist. (Clearly, as) by most accounts the experiment has been a success",\textsuperscript{3} the

\textsuperscript{1} Louis I. Masson, in \textit{Canadian Education and Research Digest}, (Toronto), Vol. 4, 1964, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{3} William Farr, in \textit{Times Educ. Suppl.}, No. 3038, 17.8.73, p. 9.
hard fact is that the earlier a Modern Language is introduced the heavier the demand will be, not only in terms of organization between the school where the language is introduced and the next stage of the educational system, but also as regards the ever-increasing cost owing to the cumulative effect over the pupil's whole school career.

In the final analysis, it is doubtful whether British educationists could go further than their French counterparts. It is a recurrent feature of tight local government budgets that there will be for a long time to come conflicting interests which have to be resolved within the administrative structure. At the decision-making level then, there were signs that, in the early nineteen seventies, they would look more favourably either on the Educational Priority Area programme, or even upon primary education. First, there were constant reminders that "classes are too large, teachers (in primary schools) are inadequate in quantity and quality". Gerald Haigh even asked "why spend money on (French) when there are Primary Schools without bogs?" Secondly, the debate centred on the cost limits imposed in the school-building specifications, owing to the belief that the "Open plan won't work if cost limits cut space". The cost limits meant, as Erica Cobbett, a Headmistress (Edith Neville School, London), neatly put it, that "the freedom to move around, the projects, the nature table—all the research of the past 20 years—are impossible to implement".

It is a truism that the development of the teaching of any particular subject ultimately depends on the development of the educational system

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2 Gerald Haigh, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 2965, 17.3.72, p. 4.
3 Sue Cameron, in Times Edul Suppl, No. 3033, 27.7.73, p. 5.
4 Erica Cobbett. (cf. The Guardian, op. cit., p. 21.)
as a whole. Even after several years of promising expansion, the junior school venture was still being threatened in the early nineteen seventies as an education correspondent thought it fit to warn that a "row may be triggered by (the) report on primary French".\(^1\) In this context, Professor Parker's warning in the nineteen sixties which was directed against the United States, may also remind us that the "popularity of language teachers is basically illusory; it can disappear as dramatically and unexpectedly as it appeared".\(^2\) Whatever the outcome, the primary school reorganisation and the Ministry's French Pilot Scheme have something in common: they "have not been as successful as many of us hoped 10 years ago".\(^3\)

Yet, the various pressing needs of the educational scene do not invalidate the fact, paraphrasing a quip directed against the universities that "head teachers run the schools with as little imagination as the State runs the postal service".\(^4\) At a time when "Britain's entry to the Common Market had meant that modern language teaching had become a matter of general rather than merely academic concern"\(^5\) with all that that implies for the funding of nationally-wide research schemes, some inward-looking teachers were readily prepared to ridicule still—rather than welcome such facts as "modern languages, a peripheral concern get nearly £ 1 million and environmental studies a measly £ 60,000".\(^6\)

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1 Sue Cameron, in *Times Edn Suppl*, No. 2999, 17.11.72, p. 11.
3 John Vaizey, in *Times Edn Suppl*, No. 3127, 2.5.73, p. 4.
5 Anon., in *Times Edn Suppl*, No. 3046, 12.10.73, p. 10.
6 Ian Lister, in *The Teacher*, (Kettering), Vol. 24, 15.3.74, p. 12.
expansion of Modern Language teaching has made traditional attitudes and concepts inadequate.

Moreover, it has been deplored that, "for most people, foreign-language learning is probably bound to be a slow and arduous process, since the way language is introduced into, and functions in, the mind may well remain a permanent mystery (for,) in our present state of knowledge, there is no way of making it easy". We have seen (vid supra, chapter 12) that this viewpoint has been challenged by Professor Penfield. Besides, "by definition, well-educated people are multilingual". In Brinley Jones's words, "multilingualism has always been a fact; modern society, with the democratization of education, makes it a concern, (unfortunately,) it is recognized that effective bilingual education is expensive in funds, in personnel and in evaluated programmes".

Are we prepared to pay the price or do we want to opt out and remain a monoglot people? Considering that nobody teaches presently the children a second language "before time has robbed them of their priceless early linguistic capabilities", the result is that "we have to start teaching a foreign language when what is called 'interference' by the mother tongue has become a positive hindrance". It is hardly surprising if the learning of French has scarcely been successful for there is too little Modern Language teaching still and the little there is comes too late (vid supra, chapter 11). Our administrators

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1 John G. Weightman, in *Times Lit Suppl*, No. 3716, 25.5.73, pp. 577-78.


3 R. Brinley Jones, in *Times Edul Suppl*, No. 3071, 5.4.74, p. 27.


implicitly support Professor Penfield's quip that, perhaps "the good Lord intended the educated man to read foreign languages painfully and by the sweat of his brow, as a sort of penance, regardless of how easily he learned to manage the mother tongue".¹

¹ Wilder G. Penfield, in *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
APPENDIX: Selected Bibliography.

Full references are given in the form of page footnotes throughout the dissertation. The classified bibliography set out below is intended as an extension of the data embodied in the thesis. (Some main items have been annotated.)

Section A - Pedagogically Oriented Linguistic Analyses.


— An approach which applies Linguistics with special reference to speakers of English.

Section B - Linguistics Applied to Target Language Teaching.

Note:— The publication date is an indication of the stage of development in Linguistics.


Section C - Some of the most Informative Journals for French.

Archivum Linguisticum, (Glasgow), 1949 ff.


Culture française, (Bari), bi-monthly, 1953 ff.


Language, (Baltimore, Md.: Linguistic Society of America), 1925 ff.


Lingua, (Amsterdam), 1948 ff.


Orbis, (Paris), 1952 ff.

Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, (Menasha, Wis.), 1886 ff.

Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire, (Bruxelles: Van Campenhout), quarterly, 1922 ff.


Revue des langues romanes, (Montpellier: Société des langues romanes), yearly, 1870 ff.

Romania, (F. Legoy, publisher), quarterly, 1872 ff.

Romanische Forschungen, (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann), quarterly, 1883 ff.

Studia neophilologica, (Uppsala: Lundequistaka Bokhandeln), 1928 ff.


Vox Romana, (Berne: A. Francke), 1936 ff.


Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, (Tübingen: Niemeyer), 1877 ff.

Section D - Bilingual Dictionaries.


Section E - French Analytical Lexicon

 — Frequency of 1,003 words.


 — Description of "le français de base".

Section F - French Glossesmatic.


Section G - French Grammars.

1. Historical Grammar.

 — A comprehensive list of loan words from the Latin stock and others (pp. 1-47).

2. Pedagogical Grammars.

 — Simultaneous analysis of the oral and written codes.


Maurice Grevisse: Le Bon Usage, grammaire française, (Geumbloux: J. Duculot, 1969 ed.).
 — Drill-master giving the teacher direct access to an almost comprehensive grammar of a manageable size.


a) Structural Descriptions.

 — The negative forms in French studied from the psychological and sociological standpoint.

 — Example of structural grammatical analysis, with particular reference to methodology.

Good example of descriptive grammar from the structuralist's standpoint.


b) Structural Semantics.


Uses of French tenses with literary examples. Frame of reference is semantic.

Section II - French Language as Prose Instrument.


Section I - French Literature.

1. French text analyzed in terms of structure and, in particular, for rhythms and tensions.


2. Modern fiction with a sociological emphasis.


Section J - French Morphology.


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--- Morphological analysis of the possessive adjectives. Presentation of drill procedure.

Section K - French Morphophonology.


--- A reprint of 32 papers originally published in journals.

The list includes, among others, topics such as:

- b. Useful rules for the prediction of the realization of latent consonants (pp. 49-54).
- c. Predictive statements for the optimal realization of latent consonants (pp. 55-62).
- d. The five types of variations in French vowels, of which examples are provided and discussed (pp. 103-110).


— Refinement of the so-called rule of three consonants, i.e., preceding and following consonants.


P. Jean Rousselot: Les Modifications phonétiques du langage étudié dans le patois d’une famille de Cellefrouin (Charente) 1901.

— A detailed phonologic analysis of the French nasal vowel system is given.

Section L - French Orthoepy.

— Empirical study of the cultured Parisian's speech.

— Revised edition of Pierre Léon's "Aide-mémoire d'orthoépie".


— Descriptive study of French Phonetics.


Section M - French Orthophony.


— The author's subtitle is "A guide to present-day usage for students of French".

— Outline of the course designed by Professor Delattre in accordance with linguistic theories for the teaching of Orthophony at Colorado University.

— Best study on Applied Phonetics.

— For a helpful summary of the guiding principles on "liaison", as regards its frequency in connexion with the level of speech, see pp. 39-48.


— Practical exercises based on the traditional approach.


Section N — French Phonology.

1. Strictly Phonemic Studies.


— The author has compiled a useful bibliography.

— Good phonemic description.


— Structural description of the main French phonetic features.

— Structural description based on an enquiry of French pronunciation.


2. Comparative Phonetics.

— The closing section (pp. 71-106) consists of a comparative description.

— This treatise contains comments on Comparative Phonetics.


— Comparative Phonetics described from a progressive standpoint.

3. Diachronic Phonetics.


4. Synchronic Phonetics.

M. Bara de Tover: *Principes généraux de la diction française*, (Paris, 1933).
— Pedagogically oriented description.

— Overall view of French Phonetics.
Section 0 — French Prosody.

1. Acoustic Studies.


- Pierre Delattre: *The General Phonetic Characteristics of Language.*, Boulder, Colo.: Colorado University, 1962. (Cyclostyled.)


- Pierre Fouche: "Phonetique appliquée. Quelques Considerations sur l'intonation de la phrase énonciative française", in *Annales de l'université de Paris*, (Société des Amis de l'Université), Year 9, November 1934, pp. 511-51.


2. Pedagogical Approaches to Rhythm, Pace, Sound, and Intonation.

Note: See also section M — French Orthophony.


— The author has complied with the linguistic principle known as minimal pairs.

— An approach through which the teacher compares and contrasts the target language with the mother tongue in beneficial to all beginners, both those who have an 'ear' for languages and the others.


Section P — French Semantics.


Michel Bréal: Essai de sémantique, Paris: Hachette, 1897 ed. (Translated by Mrs. Henry Cunt as Semantics, London: W. Heinemann, 1900.)


— Review of recent studies in Semantics.

Section Q - French Stylistics.

1. Comparative Stylistics.


— Comprehensive comparison of the Syntax, Semantics, and Stylistics of French and English.

2. Genetic Stylistics.


3. Lexicology.


— Treatise on stylistic analyses.


— Survey of the main trends of style studies.
— A study of the modes of expression pertaining to Literary French.


4. Linguistic Stylistics.


5. Linguistic Stylistics.

— Treatise on Stylistics.

Charles Bally: *Précis de stylistique française*, (Geneve: Eggimann, 1905).
— Basic work for the study of Stylistics.


— Language and the oral forms of style.


— A study of the processes of expression in spoken French.


— The Reviewer advocates a formal approach to Stylistics, so that it gains recognition as a discipline in its own right.


— The author deals with Stylistics, taken to mean the study of literary and aesthetic employment of language.


— This collection of ten studies, including du Bellay, Baudelaire, Klee, constitutes an eminently representative selection.


Section R — French Syntax.

— Breakdown of a grammatical point in successive binary steps.


— Classifies words in accordance with the notions of historical grammar.

— A collection of ten papers providing an overview of the research in progress.

— The sub-title is "a statistical study of grammatical usage in contemporary French prose on the basis of range and frequency".

— Written from the descriptive and explanatory standpoints.


— Treatment of definite and non-definite articles, latter comprises an indefinite and partitive variety.

Vladimir G. Gak: "Francuzskaja orfografiya. . .", (reviewed by Irene Vildot Lot as "L'Orthographe française, manuel à l'usage des enseignants", in *F. Mod.*, Vol. 30, 1962, pp. 212-24.)


— Syntax of the subjunctive presented in a fairly traditional frame of reference.


Section 3 - French Vocabulary: Cognates, Doublets, Frequency, and Synonyms.


Arsène Darmesteter: *De la Création actuelle de mots nouveaux dans la langue française*, (Paris, 1877).

Arsène Darmesteter: *Traité de la formation des mots composés dans la langue française*, Paris, 1875. (No. 19 in the "Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études" series.)


Henri Frei: "Le Livre de deux mille phrases", in *Publications romanes et françaises*, (Geneve), No. 40, 1953.


A. Kropman, A. Sciaroni, and A. Sisternans: *Vocabulaire fondamental illustré*, (London: G. G. Harrap). The authors have grouped under topic headings 1,300 words defined in French.


Malcolm W. Murray and E. Ernest Lentz: A French Vocabulary, (revised by
W. B. Seacroft), Glasgow: Blackie.
— A compendium of 3,500 words selected for their usefulness in spoken
and written French. They have been arranged in connected groups.


— Presentation of nouns with cognate adjectives and verbs.


Section T — Periodical Literature.

— Many of the developments in the methodology of Modern Language teaching
take the form of articles rather than of books.

Theodore S. Anderson: "The Optimum Age for Beginning the Study of

James J. Asher and Ramiro Garcia: "The Optimal Age to Learn a Foreign

David P. Ausubel: "Adults versus Children in Second-Language Learning:

R. Barrutia: "Some Pedagogical Dangers in Recent Linguistic Trends",

David W. Bell: "Problems in Modern Language Teaching", in Edal Res.

Arthur G. Bovee: "A Study of the Relationship between Visual Thought
Comprehension in English and in French", in Fr Rev, Vol. 21, 1947,
pp. 120-23.

John B. Carroll: "The Contributions of Psychological Theory and
Educational Research to the Teaching of Foreign Languages", in Mod Lg J,

John B. Carroll: "Quelques Mesures subjectives en psycholinguistique",
in Bulletin de Psychologie, (Paris: Université de Paris), Vol. 19,

J. C. Catford: "Langue maternelle et seconde langue", in Le Français
dans le monde, No. 17, 1963, pp. 8-11.

Courtney B. Gazden: "On Individual Differences in Language Competence
and Performance", in Journal of Special Education, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1967,
pp. 135-50.


- The various methods of teaching Modern Languages are discussed.

Pierre Delattre: "Une Technique 'audio-linguale' d'initiation au français", in Le Français dans le monde, No. 13, 1962, p. 15.


Mary R. Hans: "The Linguist as a Teacher of Languages", in Lg, Vol. 19, 1943, pp. 203-205.


— An early experiment attempting to test the aural-oral approach.


— Dr. Huebener explains the basic principles which govern the use of audio-visual aids.


— Professor Marty's article helps the teacher unprepared for the new orientation of language teaching to understand why the spoken forms must be taught before the written forms.


The writer has surveyed the approaches in Modern Language teaching and has appraised them.


In early reaction against the visual emphasis.


