Durham E-Theses

Foreign languages in the comprehensive school curriculum

Nightingale, Peter John

ABSTRACT

FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

P.J. Nightingale

This thesis is an analysis of foreign language teaching and learning
in schools during the course of two decades or so of radical change in
the education system of this country. For a subject area which had
hitherto been taught mainly to pupils in selective schools, the necessity
of catering for pupils of all abilities has been particularly challenging,
even unique.

Now that comprehensive schools are well established, therefore, it
is appropriate to examine the contribution of foreign languages to the
curriculum of their pupils, the successes and failures of this subject
area and its role in the future. To this end, this work is made up of
three sections. Part I analyses foreign language teaching and learning
in the Primary and Secondary sectors. It also includes an assessment of
contemporary methodology and its contribution to the situation in those
sectors.

The second part of the thesis outlines many of the outcomes and
initiatives in foreign language teaching resulting from those experiences
detailed in Part I. It takes into account outcomes at local and national
level, but also examines recent research into such areas as curricular
theory and development, language awareness, learners' needs and the
cultural and social aspects of language learning, with particular refer-
ence to their contribution to the future developments of this subject area.

Part III assesses the present-day situation with an emphasis upon
those pressures emanating from central government in the way of policy
documents and changes in the examination system. It concludes by suggest-
ing positive changes and outlooks for future developments in foreign
language teaching and learning within a curricular outline appropriate to
pupils' needs in contemporary society.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Peter John Nightingale

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

PREFACE

The impetus for this work was provided by the opportunity of a year's
secondment after twenty years' experience of teaching French at all age
and ability levels in one Grammar School and two Comprehensive Schools
in the North East of England. Precisely in the middle of these two
decades came experience of the re-organisation of secondary education in
my area and the subsequent need to adapt to the new situation in Comprehen-
sive Schools where, for the first time, one was faced with the problem of
teaching pupils from across the whole ability range, with little previous
experience of such work. Personal feelings of unease and a lack of
effectiveness in the new situation, therefore, have strongly influenced
the format of this thesis as it traces developments in foreign language
teaching during my career so far and looks at recent developments with
their implications for the future.

Foremost among such developments have been the methodological shift
in emphasis towards teaching languages for communicative purposes and the
growth of the Graded Objectives movement, neither of which appears to have
arrested the decline in number of pupils, particularly boys, continuing to
study foreign languages in our schools beyond the age of fourteen. Rather
they have increased a sense of disappointment in the writer of this work
at the continuing unsatisfactory situation in many of our foreign language
departments.

This, then, is the climate in which this thesis was written. My thanks
are due to Cleveland Education Committee for granting me leave of absence
for a full academic year, to Mr. R. Hullcoop, Modern Languages Adviser to

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is, of necessity, largely an historical account which
seeks to cast some light upon the situation of foreign language teaching
and learning during the twenty years of my own involvement in this field,
in which time secondary education generally has been subject to widespread
change which, in turn, has affected foreign languages as a subject area
probably more than any other in the comprehensive school curriculum.

The work falls into three sections. In the first part, an analysis
is made of foreign language teaching and learning in both the Primary and
Secondary sectors. The former is included here, because of the effect of
the Primary School French experiment upon secondary school intakes of those
pupils with experience of learning French, its methodological implications
and the questions raised by it concerning the supply and quality of foreign
language teachers. The latter analysis concerns itself with the situation
in Comprehensive Schools as they developed in the 1970s. Attention then
turns to the question of methodology and the ways in which it contributed
to the lack of success in both primary and secondary education.

The second part consists of an assessment of some reactions and out-
comes to the situation outlined in Part I. These include local and national
initiatives, an assessment of the contribution of foreign language teaching
to the present-day curriculum, taking into account recent re-appraisals of
learners' needs, the whole question of awareness of language and the
cultural and social aspects of this contribution.

The final section examines the situation as it stands today, particu-
larly in view of recent DES involvement and pronouncements with what I hope
are reasonable and practical suggestions for ways in which the teaching and

learning of foreign languages might go forward, following two decades of decline.

This work, therefore, is organised in such a way as to survey some of the major aspects of foreign language teaching and learning over a deliberately chosen span of time. Its aim is to analyse the course of events, to discover reasons for the ways in which things happened and to assess the reasons for many of the critical findings emanating, in the main, from official reports.

This is particularly so in Part I of the work. Here, it appeared necessary and worthwhile to commence the analysis in the first chapter with an examination of the Primary School French experiment and its context. Although nominally outside the scope of this work, this episode in the recent history of foreign language teaching, if successful, could have exerted a lasting and profound influence upon such teaching in the secondary sector. For, by introducing primary age children to a foreign language at a time in their development when, research suggested they were most susceptible to its assimilation, it seemed self-evident that secondary schools would be able to build rapidly upon this early linguistic knowledge and produce large numbers of highly proficient linguists after they had been exposed to French for seven or eight years instead of the usual five. Furthermore, second or even third foreign languages might be more readily undertaken with such a background.

The reasons for the abandonment of this project, therefore, form the starting point for this work, not only because of the long-term beneficial effects the experiment might have had, but also because its abandonment and the reasons for it, tie in all too well with perceptions of failure in other areas of foreign language teaching and learning.

Just such a situation is taken up in Chapter 2, where the focus shifts to comprehensive schools, and where, by 1977, further evidence of failure was to hand. By then, with the greater part of secondary re-organisation completed and, in most cases, already existing for a sufficient period of time for the new situation to be evaluated, the HMI report 'Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' (1977) found little to praise and much to criticise in the provision being made by foreign language teachers in these schools. This report is examined in this chapter, with particular reference to teacher training and supply, which also form a link with observations made about Primary School French in Chapter 1.

The theme of failure is pursued in Chapter 3, which examines the role of methodology and its contribution to this concept of inadequacy. Here, a brief assessment is made of the methods prevalent in the course of the last hundred years, with a more detailed analysis of the shortcomings of the audio-visual or audio-lingual methodology so widely in use at the time of the Primary School experiment and of the re-organisation of secondary education. Its suitability, or lack of it, in these two situations forms the core of this chapter and the final foreign language learning and teaching in the context of such theory. In particular, I shall consider how such theory is regarded and applied, in practice, by HMI and DES via their pronouncements and reports upon the curriculum in general and foreign languages in particular. Increasing pressure from these two bodies in the form of policy documents and curricular statements must be taken into account as a key element in this survey.

However, other key elements include an appreciation of some of the newer ideas recently introduced into the discussion of foreign language

teaching and their contribution to a wider role for this subject area.
Chapter 6, therefore, seeks to appraise the fresh thinking that has gone
into the research on learners' needs which have for too long remained a
matter of supposition for teachers and subjugated to the requirements of
the language being studied. It concludes with an analysis of the contrib-
ution of "Awareness of Language" to these needs. A similar analysis of
the non-linguistic contribution of foreign language learning to the
learner's development is undertaken in Chapter 7. This, again, is an
area in which much is assumed as to the extent to which learners assim-
ilate positive attitudes to foreign people and cultures and one in which
the research has yet to be done, particularly in the areas of examining
and testing. It brings to an end Part II, which has taken this work from
the gloomy situation identified in Part I through some of the initiatives,
pressures and fresh work done in the last few years to the point where we
need to look forward.

In Part III, therefore, account is taken of the contemporary situation
and suggestions are made as regards the future. Chapter 8 looks at the
position today, with particular reference to the DES view as stated in its
latest document 'Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum' (1986), a
document which, both in its tone and far-reaching recommendations, is a
clear statement of government policy for the future. It also considers
the implications of the new GCSE examination and the new directions and
courses presently implemented in sixth form language work.

Chapter 9 gives a personal view as to possible ways forward and
draws together the strands of the thesis as a whole. It is not claimed
that this thesis is a detailed history of language teaching in the last
twenty years, but rather an historical review of the issues which have

dominated foreign language teaching and learning from a period of failure and inadequacy, through a time of re-adjustment, to a situation from which change and positive progress can be made. Much has already been done and it is to be hoped that teachers and pupils alike will be allowed the opportunity, the resources and the climate in which to move forward.

6

PART I

ASPECTS OF THE FAILURE TO ADAPT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE

SCHOOL POPULATION : THE INITIAL RESPONSE

CHAPTER 1

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL FRENCH EXPERIMENT

By the 1970s, foreign language teaching faced many new pressures and

no little criticism, as it sought to maintain the high curricular status

it had achieved in the Grammar Schools during the previous twenty-five

years. This relative eminence had been achieved by objectives which

insisted upon a high level of intellectual rigour,

> '... the claims of Modern Languages to an important place in
> the curriculum ... cannot be justified unless the course con-
> tains intellectual discipline,'
>
> (Min. of Ed. Pamphlet No. 29 1956:1)

and through methods based upon behaviourist theories of language acquisi-

tion, supported by the latest technical provisions in the form of Language

Laboratories, tape recorders and projectors, by means of which

> 'Modern Science has presented the teacher of languages with
> electronic equipment which can provide ... for this constant
> practice which is necessary to promote fluency in language ...'
>
> (Stork 1965:152)

Such methods, which relied heavily upon mimicry, memorisation and

repetition, were put to use by teachers involved in foreign language

teaching as part of the Primary School French pilot scheme, launched in

the 1960s among a selected group of primary schools nationwide, on the

assumptions that a foreign language could be acquired in much the same way

as a child learns its mother tongue and that an early start to such learn-

ing would inculcate positive attitudes towards foreign languages generally

with consequent advantages for secondary school work in this subject area.

Justification for the advantages inherent in exposing young children

to the learning of a foreign language lies in the hypothesis that a child's

apparently superior performance when placed in such an environment is attributable to brain malleability and the consequent retention of language patterns. In the main, this arises out of the research of Lenneberg during his work with aphasic and retarded children, from which he was able to conclude that

> '... when the brain reaches maturity around adolescence ... much of the flexibility of the young brain seems to be lost,'
>
> (Lenneberg in Krashen 1982:32)

and that rapid fluency among young people could occur as

> '... the child learns nativelike pronunciation because of a biologically based "critical period" for language extending from age 2 to puberty,'
>
> (Lenneberg in Krashen 1982:14)

a stance supported by Oyama who reported that

> '... there exists a period, lasting roughly from the second to the tenth or twelfth years, during which the child is able fully to exploit its extraordinary capacity to acquire its native language and after which the primary linguistic development is severely constrained.'
>
> (Oyama in Krashen 1982:33)

Lenneberg's theories on brain function and hemespherity have been summarised by apportioning functions thus:

FUNCTIONS OF THE TWO HEMISPHERES

Left	Right
Language	Spacial relations
Time-related functions	"Gestalt" perception
"Propositional" thought	Part-to-whole adjustments
	Music
	"Appositional" thought

and by the following conclusions from his work:-

(a) Development of cerebral dominance is complete by about puberty;

(b) The infant brain is not firmly lateralised;

(c) The ability of language function to "transfer" hemispheres lasts until puberty;

(d) After puberty the right hemisphere does not appear to be able to assume the language function (i.e. after injury);

(e) The end of development of cerebral dominance coincided with close of "a critical period" for language acquisition.

(Krashen 1982:203-205)

The absence of transference between hemispheres and the loss of language function in the right hemisphere, both of which occur after puberty, are critical events in a child's development and take on even greater importance in the context of foreign language learning.

In this area, Lenneberg concluded that

'Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty'

and

*'... automatic acquisition (of L2) from mere exposure ...
seems to disappear after this age,'*

(Lenneberg 1967:176)

which adds substance to the concept that

*'The superiority of children over adults in second language
learning is a strong belief that probably results from the
common observation that children living in a foreign country
seem rapidly to achieve nativelike fluency in the alien lang-
uage while their parents may lag far behind.'*

(Krashen 1982:3)

Language acquisition in very young people is not confined to their native tongue, but is equally applicable to 'alien' languages, if these theories on brain function are adopted. Moreover, delaying foreign language learning until secondary school would be a positive disadvantage. With such

weight of evidence to support primary school language learning, it is not surprising that the pilot scheme was enthusiastically embarked upon and assessment of it awaited with optimism.

At a one-day conference at Nottingham University (1971) under the title 'French from eight to sixteen', Burstall was able to give an interim report upon progress in the pilot scheme, and to make some optimistic observations.

> 1. *'A statistically significant number of children of very low ability do well in oral work, sometimes even better than children of higher ability ...'*
>
> 2. *'Children of 13 who have studied French for 5 years (3 years in primary school and 2 years in secondary) are considerably more fluent than are children of the same age who started to learn French in the secondary school. The former are also more proficient in understanding, reading and writing the foreign language.'*
>
> *(Burstall 1971:101)*

HMI Salter was able to support these views with his own findings, that:

> *'Primary School French can be as exciting to see as language work at any level. Well-taught primary school children show initiative and ask, as well as answer, questions,'*
>
> *(Salter 1971:101)*

and

> *'It has more success to show than failure, and much of the work produced is of high quality.'*
>
> *(Salter 1971:102)*

At this stage, then, the overall picture appeared to be one of success and achievement, a vindication of the hopes of such as the Fabian Society who welcomed Primary School French hoping to see it,

> *'... increase the children's interest in the world around them. A happy start will also form a solid base for future progress ...'*
>
> *(Fabian Society 1964:18)*

Certainly, at the Nottingham conference, there were also findings to temper enthusiasm, for example the discovery that girls were doing markedly better than boys and could see more relevance in the work as regards careers, also that there was a distinct correlation between good results and small schools. Yet the general tone was positive and gave little inkling as to the shock in store, when the final report was published, but twelve months later.

For. when 'Primary French in the Balance' (1974) was finally published, its findings were sufficient to spell the end of the experiment altogether. Whilst asserting that the reason for the NFER evaluation of the pilot scheme was 'to provide proper evidence on which to base a decision for the future' and that the 'pilot scheme had not been set up to establish whether or not it was possible to teach French in primary schools' (Burstall 1974:241), the Report centred its conclusions around answers to the following questions:

1. Do other aspects of education and general intellectual development gain or suffer from the introduction of French teaching in the primary school?

2. Are there levels of ability below which the teaching of French is of dubious value?

3. Is any substantial gain in mastery achieved by beginning to learn French at the age of eight?

4. What methods, attitudes and incentives are most effective in promoting the learning of French?

5. What organisational and teaching problems are posed by the introduction of French teaching in primary school?

Whilst these points are far from all-embracing and in Burstall's words even 'naive in the light of ten years' experience' (Burstall 1974:242),

they were proferred as a reasonable basis upon which to evaluate '"the

profit and loss" of the introduction of French into the primary school

curriculum' (Burstall 1974:242).

In their turn, the replies were less than encouraging.

1. *'... the introduction of French did not exert any significant
    influence on children's other attainments. There was no evid-
    ence of any retardation of the children's acquisition of the
    basic skills of literacy and numeracy, nor was there any indic-
    ation of increased proficiency in the children's use of their
    mother tongue. At the primary level, then, neither profit nor
    loss.'*
    (Burstall 1974:242)

Furthermore, in secondary schools,

*'... the early introduction of French had tended to exert a
negative effect on the teaching of other foreign languages: it
had reinforced the position of French as the dominant foreign
language taught in our schools and it had increased the number
of pupils who reached the secondary school convinced that further
foreign-language study was not for them. So, at the secondary
level, more loss than profit.'*
(Burstall 1974:242)

Such negative attitudes upon entry into secondary school are all the more

disquieting, when compared with one of the original justifications for the

pilot scheme which was felt to be '... a growing sense of unity with our

European neighbours.' (Schools Council 1966[1]).

2. Here, whilst emphasising the necessity for differentiated objectives

to cater for articulate and inarticulate children, it was found that

*'... large numbers of children patently failed to achieve even a
modest and impermanent measure of success,'*
(Burstall 1974:242)

with much of the blame attributable to methodology, '... a consequence of

teaching through the medium of French' (Burstall 1974:242). The dangers

of relying upon audio-visual methods are dealt with elsewhere in this piece,

but, clearly, such methodology, combined with inadequate objectives led to

many children developing "... a sense of failure during their first year
of French', convincing them '... that foreign language learning was beyond
their capabilities' (Burstall 1974:243).

3. As for gains in 'mastery', any pre-suppositions in this direction are
rapidly dispelled.

> *'By the age of 16, compared with those who are taught French from
> the age of 11, the only area in which the pupils taught French
> from the age of 8 consistently show any superiority is that of
> listening comprehension,'*
>   *(Burstall 1974:243-244)*

although successful pupils

> *'... do appear to retain a more favourable attitude towards speak-
> ing the language than do those who were not introduced to French
> until the age of 11.'*
>   *(Burstall 1974:244)*

Such willingness and empathy are no more than could be expected of succes-
sful pupils with no foreign language experience pre-secondary school.
Further, valuable though listening ability is, such gain is of limited
significance, alongside the overall demands of learning a foreign language.

4. Audio-visual methods are brought into question here, as pupils reacted
against

> *'... enforced passivity, repetition and incomprehension associated
> with theuse of the tape-recorder and the practice of reading French
> aloud, which for most pupils acts as a source of embarrassment and
> a barrier to understanding.'*
>   *(Burstall 1974:244)*

More able pupils tended

> *'to reject the audio-visual approach in favour of a more "tradit-
> ional" grammar-based approach, with a greater and an earlier
> emphasis on the development of written skills,'*
>   *(Burstall 1974:244)*

whilst lower-achievers tended

> *'to react favourably to the audio-visual approach, but experience
> learning difficulties when reading and writing are introduced.'*
>   *(Burstall 1974:244)*

The method is seen to fail both the high achiever by not catering for his need to be stretched in all areas of linguistic performance and the lower achiever by boring him and by reinforcing his feelings of inferiority. This finding goes against Byram's assertion that '... if the method is fundamentally flawed it should be ineffective for all learners' (Byram 1984:6). However, the actual reason for failure in methodology is focussed upon in the findings of the fifth area of enquiry.

Here it was found that secondary schools were unable to segregate the Primary French cohorts into separate classes, thus slowing down their progress, as children with no foreign language experience diluted the intake and widened still further gaps in achievement. Reservations about mixed-ability classes at both primary and secondary level both among teachers and pupils themselves (Burstall 1974:245) suggest that difficulties encountered with the wide range of pupils' abilities were of a pedagogical rather than a methodological nature. Earlier in the experiment, HMI had found it necessary to comment adversely on 'the lifeless presentation of lessons, the almost complete dependence on mechanical aids and the excessive repetition and drilling ...' (HMI 1969:17), and had urged, in their recommendations that teachers should be able to

> '(i) *Speak French with an acceptable accent and with no serious errors of pronunciation;*
>
> (ii) *To manipulate simple spoken French correctly and with sufficient fluency to be able to develop a situation at the appropriate level.'*
> (HMI 1969:19)

The suggestion that many were unable, through lack of expertise and training to make this situational development and, therefore, to enliven the learning process, goes far towards revealing the underlying reasons why methodology appeared to be at the root of failure. In reality, too much

was being asked of teachers' expertise (or the lack of it), in three main

areas: (a) lack of knowledge of French; (b) lack of language teacher

training, and (c) inexperience in the handling of new materials (Hawkins

1981:187-195). This, combined with a slavish reliance upon methodology

is the fundamental cause of perceived failure.

Indeed, it was the Report's final conclusion,

> *'that the weight of evidence has combined with the balance of*
> *opinion to tip the scales against a possible expansion of the*
> *teaching of French in primary schools'*
> > *(Burstall 1974:246)*

which led to the abandonment of the experiment. The 'loss' outweighed

the 'profit' in pedagogical terms. Even so, things could have evolved in

a more positive fashion, if the pilot scheme itself had been managed more

positively.

First of all, there is evidence to show that the scheme, limited to

thirteen pilot areas involving some 6,000 children in 125 participating

schools (Schools Council 1966:9), was looked upon 'by some authorities and

teachers as an encouragement to launch local experiments' (Schools Council

1966:13), so that a Schools Council survey of 1964 discovered

> *'that in 119 local education authority areas, there were nearly*
> *5,000 primary teachers teaching French, 1,600 of them in schools*
> *in the pilot areas or associate areas or schemes locally organ-*
> *ised by local education authorities, and about 3,300 in schools*
> *which were not co-ordinated in any scheme at all.'*
> > *(Schools Council 1966:13)*

From these statistics, they inferred that 'the quality of much French

teaching outside the pilot scheme or local schemes must leave something

to be desired' (Schools Council 1966:14), a feeling echoed elsewhere where

it was also found to be 'unfortunate that many schools and areas have

chosen to add French to the curriculum without ensuring reasonable condi-

tions for success' (Plowden 1967:Para. 617).

Such proliferation, beyond the intended parameters of the pilot scheme, besides raising questions about the quality of teaching, also explains the underlying problem of the entire concept, namely the shortage of teachers necessary either to prolong the experiment or to exploit and expand it. Hawkins is convinced that

> '... whatever the verdict of the NFER evaluation had been, the issue of ETML in the UK was already decided well before the brave pilot scheme ran its course. Although the report by Dr. Burstall and her colleagues may have served to furnish some LEAs with a justification for decisions that they would have taken in any event, in fact many LEAs had little choice. They already faced an insoluble problem, that of teacher supply,'
>
> *(Hawkins 1981:13)*

and elicits support from investigations in language teacher training in 1969-70:

> 'the colleges would need to train many more junior teachers with qualifications in French if it was desired that French teaching should thrive and expand in junior schools.'
>
> *(Spicer and Riddy 1974 in Hawkins 1981:13)*

Similar conclusions had already been presaged by the Schools Council's 'unexpected' discovery that

> '... some authorities are losing their teachers to other author- ities outside the pilot scheme who are anxious to start or expand the teaching of French in their primary schools and who therefore offer headships, other things presumably being equal, to teachers trained under the pilot scheme.'
>
> *(Schools Council 1966:35)*

Such 'poaching' was but one symptom of the prevailing problem, despite encouraging statistics to the contrary in the number of first-year students taking 'main' French in colleges of education over a four year period: 1962 : 429; 1963 : 614; 1964 : 968; 1965 about 1,350 (Schools Council 1966: 32) and despite MLA criticism of the NFER report that it had not taken into consideration the benefit schools should have begun to feel from the '3 or 4

year courses in French language, literature, civilisation and appropriate language teaching methods and materials' (MLA Conference 1975:96), available in over 100 colleges of education. Teacher supply and the problem of the distribution of learning time and resources were sufficient to provide a fundamental reason for abandoning the pilot scheme.

Criticisms of the NFER report were made on statistical grounds (11,300 students listed at the beginning, only 1,227 by 1973) (Gamble and Smalley 1975:94). Also the fact that the experiment had caused organisational and teaching problems in the primary schools, thus reducing their curricular flexibility, was refutable if the experiment had been conducted on a wider front. 'If French was introduced on a larger scale this problem would probably decline' (Bennett 1975:340). Furthermore, if those pupils from the experimental group entering Year 1 of secondary schooling had been placed in classes catering solely for them instead of only 13% of their number (Bennett 1975:338-339), the rest entering classes starting French, then more telling benefits might well have been evident as the groups worked their way through secondary school.

As it was, neither HMI support,

> *'Primary French in the Balance should not be looked upon as a black paper, but as a document containing valuable lessons for all concerned with the teaching and learning of foreign languages'*
> *(Salter 1975:155)*

and

> *'It has more success to show than failure and much of the work produced is of high quality'*
> *(Salter 1971:102)*

nor Bennett's assertion that

> *'both the weight of the evidence and the balance of opinion favours the experimental group. What, I wonder, tipped the scales the other way?'*
> *(Bennett 1975:340)*

were sufficient to ensure continuity on an organised basis. The pressing

nature of other aspects of foreign language provision served to 'tip the

scales' as

> *'By 1977 ... the DES, HMI and LEAs ... were preoccupied by a more*
> *immediate problem: the crisis of modern languages in the compreh-*
> *ensive school and particularly the alarming drop-out figures at*
> *fifth- and sixth-form level.'*
>
> *(Hawkins 1981:14-15)*

The Primary School French Experiment was deemed a failure as attention

turned to the situation in the recently reorganised secondary sector of

state schools, an analysis of which forms Chapter 2 of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Hardly had the impact of the NFER Report (Burstall 1974) been

assimilated, than evaluation of work in comprehensive schools was under

way, as HMI conducted a survey of the teaching of foreign languages in

83 schools during 1975 and 1976. In their findings (HMI(b) 1977), it

is clear that such a survey was deemed necessary 'at a time of rapidly

growing concern about the future of language learning in our schools'

(HMI(b) 1977:3) and they identified three major areas of concern which

had already manifested themselves where comprehensive schools had been

established for at least five years, in itself hardly sufficient time

for schools to establish themselves.

First of all, the question of re-organisation itself and its effect

upon foreign language teachers is highlighted, for as they

> 'were being asked to review the aims of their teaching and to
> study new approaches, new methods and new techniques, they
> suddenly found themselves caught up in the process of major
> educational reform with the introduction of comprehensive
> secondary schools and the gradual abandonment of the tripartite
> system.'
>
> (HMI(b) 1977:3)

Moreover,

> 'Work in a comprehensive school required them to adapt their
> teaching to an entirely different situation and to rethink the
> aims, objectives and content of the courses which they offered
> their pupils. Few of them have found this easy.'
>
> (HMI(b) 1977:4)

Such a requirement was to be all the more difficult to adapt to, in view

of the unique implications for a subject area whose clientele had, for

the most part, consisted of more able pupils in grammar schools. As

Hawkins points out, other important subject areas had had many years to

develop 'objectives and methods appropriate to the 75% of children not admitted to grammar school' (Hawkins 1981:23). Foreign language teachers could either start again from meagre beginnings, or adapt from their own limited experiences.

Secondly, HMI were concerned about the implications of a 'French for all' policy in comprehensive schools, which, by increasing demand had 'led to a shortage of teachers of French, with the inevitable dilution of quality that that implies' (HMI(b) 1977:4), a situation reminiscent of the position with the Primary School French project.

Thirdly, they expressed anxiety that 'for the bulk of comprehensive school pupils the language course lasts no more than two or three years' (HMI(b) 1977:4) compared with the situation in grammar schools, where the majority of pupils continued for a full five years and took an examination at the end of them. Figures to support this contention were expressed thus:-

TABLE 1

Approximate percentages of pupils taking
Modern Foreign Language courses in the sample schools (1975-76)

YEAR	I	II	III	IV	V
French	81	77	71	32	27
German	4	14	18	9	9
Spanish	5	5	5	3	3
Italian	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1
Russian	NIL	NIL	0.1	0.1	0.1

(HMI(b) 1977:32)

The large numbers in French 'voting with their feet' afford little comfort, nor does the tenuous hold of 'minority' languages with their meagre provision in the curriculum.

With these areas of anxiety as a basis for the survey, plus misgivings about the 'declining numbers of language students in sixth forms', with obvious implications for the recruitment of language students into Higher Education and into teaching, the HMI report appeared at a significant time in the reorganisation of secondary schooling which had reached a crescendo by the mid-1970s, as suggested by the following DES figures:-

TABLE 2

Comprehensive Schools

	1960	1965	1970	1974	1975	1980	1982
No. of Schools	130	262	1,145	2,773	2,596	3,318	3,358
No. of Pupils	128,835	239,619	937,152	2,136,958	2,459,648	3,147,246	3,150,313

(DES Statistics of Education 1960-82)

Certainly, the demand upon the supply of sufficient foreign language teachers, without reference to their quality, would be difficult to meet, with a simple comparison of pupil numbers between 1965 and 1975 - an increase of more than 2,000,000. On the other hand, such expansion, fuelled by goodwill and enthusiasm, could have been expected to provide further worthwhile expansion in foreign language learning.

For example, the Incorporated Association of Head Masters had envisaged 'exciting new possibilities', a 'richer choice of courses' and 'modern language teachers will have a challenging and rewarding task' (Modern Languages in the Grammar School 1966:23-24), as they looked forward

to an increase in the number of comprehensive schools, admittedly whilst
assuming rigid streaming and the early recognition of linguistic ability
amongst pupils, conditions which have rarely obtained as the schools
developed. Nor did they foresee the impact of the necessity to offer
French to pupils of all abilities upon teachers and their methods, which
had been carefully honed and adapted for more able grammar school pupils.
The position could be summed up thus:

> 'To many (foreign language) teachers, however, the least able
> children are a new phenomenon, and there is no established
> body of opinion on what to do with them. <u>Linguistically</u>, what
> they are generally offered is a "watered-down" version of what
> their faster peers get ... they seem to become disillusioned
> and their course often comes to an end after the second year
> with little apparent gain to the pupils.'
>
> (D.G. Smith MLJ Sept. 1973:107)

With 'no established body of opinion' to refer to, no specific training
and no HMI guidelines, what were teachers to do? It was easy to assume
that 'watering down' would suffice, without looking at objectives; slower
pupils should cover the same work content at a pace suitable to their
abilities.

This, then, was the climate in which HMI produced their report.
Somehow, foreign language teaching in comprehensive schools was perceived
to be failing to live up to the high hopes expected of it and the time had
arrived when assessment of the situation was needed.

The report itself found little that was worthy of praise. The general
quality of work was poor with

> 'under performance in all four language skills by the abler
> pupils; the setting of impossible tasks for average (and
> particularly less able) pupils and their abandonment of mod-
> ern language learning at the first opportunity, excessive use
> of English and an inability to produce other than inadequate
> or largely unusable statements in the modern language; ineffic-

ient reading skills; and writing limited to mechanical repro-
duction which was extremely inaccurate.'

<div align="right">

(HMI(b) 1977:8)

</div>

In other words, those able pupils, who would have performed well in a grammar school situation, were now under-achieving, whilst average and less able pupils, hitherto an uncharted area for foreign language teachers, were ill served by aims and methods badly tailored for their needs. Intensive oral work was not being done, skills across the board were weak and even when panic reversion to grammar-translation methods was undertaken in an attempt to ensure successful examination results, even this aim was not achieved as the accompanying sample seeks to prove. It might also be claimed that with some 68% of all entrants being awarded grades at either 'O' Level or at least CSE Grade 4, the situation was, in fact, better than HMI would claim.

TABLE 3

Average annual 'O' Level and CSE entries and successes in the sample schools (1973-75)

	Entries	'O' Level Pass/ CSE Grades	CSE Grades 2-4
French	3,580	1,112	1,398
German	1,120	315	455
Spanish	368	123	136
Italian	20	8	6
Russian	19	12	1

<div align="right">

(HMI(b) 1977:33)

</div>

However, further findings are less contentious, as they discovered that,

'in all too many language classes there was an atmosphere of
boredom, disenchantment and restlessness; at times this devel-
oped into indiscipline of a kind which made teaching and learn-
ing virtually impossible,'
<div align="right">*(HMI(b) 1977:8)*</div>

and that in one particular school at least,

> *'little was being done to challenge able pupils: no attempt*
> *was being made to cater for the wide range of ability: more*
> *often than not all pupils, irrespective of ability, were ex-*
> *posed to the same commercially-produced course,'*
>
> *(HMI(b) 1977:14)*

and generally,

> *'the objectives set before the pupils were often unsuitable,*
> *insufficiently challenging in one or more of the four skills*
> *for the abler pupils, and making unrealistic demands on the*
> *less able.'*
> *(HMI(b) 1977:15)*

As a result, heads of department were criticised as lacking in the following areas:

(i)   helping colleagues to implement schemes of work (or in some cases, even to provide them);

(ii)   watching colleagues teach and being seen teaching;

(iii) encouraging colleagues to undergo in-service training;

(iv)   keeping detailed records of pupils' progress;

(v)   liaising with feeder and receiving schools;

(vi)   delegation of responsibility to junior colleagues;

(vii) setting a personal example of professionalism;

(viii) taking a fair share of difficult classes;

(ix)   supporting junior teachers.

This general lack of professionalism can be directly attributable to the way in which the reorganisation of secondary schools was carried out, following Crosland's circular 10/65 which 'requested' submission of plans to carry this out. Despite the lack of compulsion in this document, the number of comprehensive schools and pupils increased tenfold in the years 1965-1975 (see p. 21) and this rapid development was accompanied by poor preparation and research.

TABLE 4

Short courses for qualified teachers of Modern Languages
organised by the Department of Education and Science

Year	Courses	Students
1963	2	146
1964	2	144
1965	4	341
1966	3	198
1967	7	330
1968	5	282
1969	6	367
1970	6	366
1971	6	389
1972	7	367
1973	8	497
1974	4	234
1975	10	510
1976	6	305
1977	5	355
1978	3	185

(DES Statistics of Education 1963-1978)

TABLE 5

One year and one-term courses for qualified teachers

Years	Courses	Men	Women	Total
1964-65	1	2	10	12
1965-66	1	3	4	7
1966-67	1	6	2	8
1967-68	1	1	4	5
1968-71 onwards	absorbed into 'other subjects' themselves few in number			

(DES Statistics of Education 1964-1971)

*'The swing to comprehensive schools was quite unresearched.
Its likely effects were not studied; in-service preparation
of teachers was quite inadequate.'*

(Hawkins 1981:22)

Quoting from M. Kogan's 'The Politics of Education' (1971:190), Hawkins

goes on to state that political ideals greatly outweighed educational

pre-requisites:

*'Our belief in comprehensive reorganisation was a product of
fundamental value judgements about equity and equal opportun-
ity and social division as well as education.'*

(A. Crosland in Hawkins 1981:22)

The balance here is heavily tilted towards political ideology. Education

would simply have to cope with the burden, even though 'No research ...

was done: no adequate provisions were made' (Hawkins 1981:22).

This contention is borne out when looking at the national picture

for in-service training during the years in question (see DES figures

detailed in Tables 4 and 5). The sheer paucity of provision in Table 5

and the fluctuating, yet inadequate, figures in Table 4, do much to support

Hawkins' contention, at least at the national level. Increased preparation,

in the way of in-service training, was not to be, beyond what might be

provided in a piecemeal fashion at local level.

Nor was the supply of newly trained foreign language teachers afforded

special emphasis, particularly concerning graduates, the majority of whom

would have been destined for the secondary sector. A cross-section across

the crucial years (see Table 6) gives a static situation during the five

years prior to the appearance of Circular 10/65, followed by a 35% increase

in the ten years following the event. Even so, Morris and Smalley, in

their survey on behalf of the Modern Language Association (1979), were able

to report that,

TABLE 6

Graduates completing training in all foreign languages

1960-61	552
1964-65	567
1970-71	643
1974-75	763

(DES Statistics of Education 1960-1975)

> *'the shortage of modern language teachers is not a new problem*
> *and the MLA has been aware of the difficulties for many years'*
>
> *(Morris and Smalley 1979:191)*

and that,

> *'the main reason for the shortage is doubtless the massive*
> *increase in the percentage of children in our schools now*
> *studying a modern language (usually French).'*
>
> *(Morris and Smalley 1979:191)*

They also reported the inevitable fall-off in quality. As one LEA in the

survey commented:

> *'By dint of scouring the area and lowering the standards, we*
> *have been able to put bodies in front of classes for September.*
> *This is very much a situation that this authority has exper-*
> *ienced every year since 1974,'*
>
> *(Morris and Smalley 1979:192)*

this at a time when some increase in teacher supply was taking place (see

Table 6 - 1974), but also at the moment when the number of comprehensives

and pupils had both increased by a factor of five (see Table 2).

In discussions on the depressing outcome of the HMI findings, little

is made of the shortage of foreign language teachers during and after the

period of secondary reorganisation, nor of the paucity of in-service

training. These factors, combined with the pedagogical problems linked

to a policy of 'French for all', provided the weakest base of any subject

area in the curriculum from which to make a successful contribution to

comprehensivisation. In this sense, therefore, the results of the HMI

survey come as less of a surprise. However, follow-up was essential and

this is discussed in Part II. There is, however, a further aspect to

consider in respect of the problems and failures described in Chapters 1

and 2, namely methodology. This has been described in passing as contrib-

uting to the situation in both primary and secondary schools. Chapter 3,

therefore, will examine the question of methodology, both historically and

with particular emphasis upon the audio-visual methods in widespread use

at the time of the Primary School French experiment and in the early days

of comprehensive schools.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO FAILURE

At this stage in this work, it is appropriate that the shortcomings

outlined by both Burstall and HMI be examined from another angle in order

to provide a wider context in which to consider fully the factors and

consequences of failure. For, whatever the sound ideological or pedagog-

ical reasons for the Primary School French experiment or the concept of

'a foreign language for all' in secondary schools, success or failure are

also inextricably linked with methodology.

This chapter, therefore, provides an overview of the most popular

methods in use over the last hundred years and an analysis of the audio-

visual method so much in vogue at the time the two reports above were

compiled. The contribution of the latter method to the perceived failure

in foreign language teaching will be afforded particular scrutiny, espec-

ially in view of the reasonable statement that,

> 'Given good conditions, a foreign language taught in a well-
> conceived oral course and enlivened whenever 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.'
> (Newsom 1963:163)

Such an assertion, made in the course of a report underlining the

necessity for good educational provision for pupils of moderate ability in

the school community, emphasises a popular assumption when approaching the

question of foreign language teaching, that, in order to succeed, the

method to be used must be appropriate to the task in hand. In this case,

a 'well-conceived oral course' would be a pre-requisite to making such

teaching 'stimulating' and a major element in the curriculum of schools as

they moved into the comprehensive era in the 1960s.

In just such a way, the history of foreign language teaching is marked by constant reference to the 'success' or 'failure' of successive methods or approaches, as language teachers have sought panaceas for their problems, and as

> *'the "new" methods for language teaching are continually being invented and advertised as if they were patent medicines for some heretofore incurable ailment.'*   *(Diller 1978:2)*

Indeed, this pre-occupation with methodology, has imposed a burden on language teachers, in that it presumes that one particular method is superior to all others, or that a perfect method is attainable as an answer to all problems, despite regular evidence to the contrary.

For, the major theme which emerges from examination of the history of language teaching, is one of confusion and argument, either as to which method is preferable, or even as to their evolution.

> *'All methods seem to have emerged full-blown from their creators' heads, with no debt to previous teachers and no effect on later ones.'*   *(Diller 1978:2)*

Each one is regarded in isolation from the rest, so that 'the net effect is not of history at all, but of a catalogue of unrelated and apparently unsuccessful teaching methods' (Diller 1978:3). More pertinently, however, it is the methodological choice confronting teachers which has proved so confusing as

> *'... sometimes the pendulum has seemed to swing between learning grammar rules and "direct method". At other times the swing has been from learning by ear to learning through reading. A more recent swing of opinion has gone from emphasis on perception of structural patterns to drilling in new linguistic habits in a language laboratory (and back again).'*   *(Hawkins 1981:98)*

In such an atmosphere of controversy, therefore, logical appreciation and choice of methodology can prove a taxing affair for any teacher.

However, by careful analysis, it does prove possible to extract four distinct methods of foreign language teaching, from its origins in the 19th century classical tradition through to the 1960s and the present day. For example, Richardson, in his overview, sees the chronological development as the Grammar-Translation, the Reform (or Direct), the Compromise Method and the Audio-visual and Audio-lingual methods, 'each based (sometimes unconsciously) upon a different view of what language is and how it may be taught' (Richardson 1983:20), with each one in vogue for a fixed period during the last century, or so it seems. For, as Byram asserts, with reference to study by Mitchell et al. (1981) of foreign language classroom activity, it is possible to find elements of audio-visual techniques in use with younger pupils to this day, with reversion to 'grammar-translation' mixed with direct methodology for older learners, leading to the conclusion that 'all the methods of the past hundred and more years are to be found in contemporary classrooms in various mixtures and dilutions' (Byram 1984:6). In spite of the waxing and waning of individual methods, therefore, as each has been seen to fail, it has been found to contribute something of worth to classroom practice.

The Grammar-Translation Method

This method came into being around the middle of the nineteenth century as the separate study of modern languages was introduced alongside Latin and Greek. Furthermore, as Hawkins has stated, at that time modern foreign languages were taught either by classics teachers or by native immigrants. The former adopted the methods familiar to them in their teaching of classics and the latter soon followed them in this respect, as

oral methods led to a lack of classroom discipline. In short, 'the methods they adopted were the only ones they could adopt in such conditions' (Hawkins 1981:112).

Such methods relied heavily, as the name implies, upon analysis of grammatical points, verb paradigms and declensions, and the learning of unrelated vocabulary lists, all of which were brought together in a series of exercises which, by means of translating sentences into the foreign language, practised the grammar points which were to be learned. Pronunciation was viewed as unimportant, the written form being regarded as paramount, leading to the facility of being able to read extensively in the foreign language, as 'It is the best literature which is the best avenue to a true understanding of national life' (Board of Education 1912: 24-25). All of this mirrors the methodology of the teaching of classics and is closely linked to the nineteenth century concern for logical thinking and the need for modern languages to attain parity with the classical languages, so highly esteemed for the way in which they 'trained the mind'. In the words of the eminent headmaster, H.W. Eve:

> *'Your first object is to discipline the mind; your second to give a knowledge of French or German.'*
> *(Hawkins 1981:113)*

The hypothesis that on the one hand 'language consists of written words, and of words moreover which exist in isolation, as though they were individual bricks which could be translated one by one into their foreign "equivalents" and then assembled according to the grammatical rules into sentences in the foreign language' (Richardson 1983:21), and the aim on the other 'to provide the pupil with mental training and to develop habits of accuracy' (HMI(b) 1977:3), were to provide the basis for its discreditation. The latter, for example, is summarily dismissed by Richardson:

'... even if the learning of a language by the Grammar-Translation Method HAD trained the mind in logical thought when dealing with translation, however, there is little evidence to suggest that this faculty would have been transferable to other walks of life than the language classroom.'

(Richardson 1983:22)

Similarly, in condemning the former, one needs to look no further than Hodgson's perceptive observation that,

'the time spent on relating the foreign language to the mother-tongue is time that is needed for the establishment of the foreign forms and structures in their own right through practice in using them.'

(Hodgson 1955:53)

Her insistence that translation effectively takes away precious time from the foreign language is an eloquent condemnation of the method.

Other aspects of the method are also open to criticism. Prose translation is a demanding exercise, yet has long been used as a teaching aid, instead of a test of what has been learned. More particularly, the basic tenet of the method, that it relies upon the notion that a language can be learned on the basis of word-for-word equivalents, 'that there is no more to language learning than rendering one written word in English by another written unit in French' (Richardson 1983:23) often led to frustration among learners, as they discovered that it was just not possible. Furthermore, it was certainly not a method suited to the less able learners, who 'muddle through, making many mistakes over and over again and thus building up cumulative habits of inaccuracy which are difficult to eradicate at a later stage' (Rivers 1968:17), and its neglect of communication skills could lead to the situation where 'students taught by this method are frequently confused when addressed in the foreign language and may be embarrassed when asked to pronounce anything themselves' (Rivers 1968:17). Its reliance upon a dubious theory of the nature of

language learning, namely that this is merely word-for-word transfer,

relying heavily on the mother tongue, and its inability to provide

learners with any kind of oral fluency are largely responsible for its

discreditation and for the movement which sought to displace it in lang-

uage teaching classrooms, the Direct, or Reform, Method.

The Direct Method

Proponents of this method of foreign language teaching reacted

against both the theory of language learning implicit in the Grammar-

Translation Method, as well as the methodology it relied upon. For them

'language consists - except for lexicographers - not of words, but of

sentences' (Viëtor 1882:4), so denying the reliance upon learning lists

of disconnected vocabulary. The study of grammar was not the best way of

learning a language, rather it was to be acquired by training 'the child

to observe, to classify its observations, to draw its own conclusions'

(Jespersen 1904:127) and oral shortcomings would be overcome by the ban-

ning of the mother tongue from the classroom, all communications to be

transacted in the foreign language. Correct pronunciation was stressed,

backed up by the new science of phonetics and by technical innovations

such as the invention of the phonograph, 'enabling linguists for the first

time to store and reproduce SPEECH, the raw stuff of their trade' (Hawkins

1981:122). Nor was translation into the target language acceptable,

although such work from the foreign language into the mother tongue was

tolerated. To sum up,

> 'these theorists shared a common belief that students learn to
> understand a language by listening to a great deal of it and
> that they learn to speak it by speaking it - associating speech
> with appropriate action,'
> (Rivers 1968:18)

and,

*'they all insisted on the primacy of phonetics as a basis for
language teaching; on the importance of oral practice and the
necessity for making the reader the centre of instruction; on
the principle of direct association between the thing referred
to and the new word in the foreign language; on the teaching
of grammar by inductive methods, and of the avoidance of the
written or printed word until the pupil's pronunciation was so
sound that it would not be influenced by seeing how the words
were spelt,'*

(Richardson 1983:38)

thus forming a link with the audio-visual theories to be discussed later.

There is no doubt that, in the hands of a gifted and energetic teacher

adhering closely to these fundamental precepts, foreign language learning

by the Direct Method could be a livelier and more exciting experience for

the learner:

*'... at its best, the direct method provided an exciting and
interesting way of learning the foreign language through
activity. It proved to be successful in releasing students
from the inhibitions all too often associated with speaking
a foreign tongue, particularly at the early stages.'*

(Rivers 1968:20)

Indeed, certain aspects of the method, such as the way of exploiting read-

ing passages, through listening to the teacher reading, then repeating

each phrase in chorus or individually, followed by explanation (in the

target language) of comprehension difficulties and finally exploitation

of the language via question and answer, have much in common with the

modern audio-visual methods of teaching, where similar activities were

practised. Just such techniques are well known to users of, for example,

the Longman A-V French Course. In fact, much of that advocated by Direct

Methodists strikes a chord with present day teachers, in that the under-

lying theory seems right, more particularly even in the post audio-visual

era where communicative language is a major factor and where learning by

using the language in authentic situations is regarded as being of prime

importance.

Yet, in its turn, the Direct Method was deemed to have failed.

First of all, there was criticism that it relied too much upon the theory

that pupils learn foreign languages in much the same way as their mother

tongue.

> *'It was unrealistic to believe that the conditions of native-language learning could be re-created in the classroom with adolescent students.'*
> *(Rivers 1968:20)*

Accusations have also been made concerning the lack of proper structure

in the choice of materials to be used:

> *'They did not make word counts, nor did they arrive at the idea of a basic vocabulary; they did not grade the structures of the languages they taught for controlled and systematic presentation'*
> *(Harding 1967:7)*

and,

> *'there was not sufficient provision for systematic practice of structures in a planned sequence'*
> *(Rivers 1968:21)*

making for confusion among learners, and leading to a situation analogous

to that in the Grammar-Translation method, where the most able pupils

'with well-developed powers of induction ... profited most from the method,

which could be very discouraging and bewildering for the less talented'

(Rivers 1968:21). Then, of course, the insistence of explaining diffic-

ulties without use of the mother tongue, could lead to long, drawn out

sessions in a lesson as a point was dealt with in a time-consuming manner

or to the unedifying sight of a direct method teacher 'who would spend

much of a lesson jumping over desks and flapping imaginery fins, rather

than admit that un saumon meant a salmon in English' (Richardson 1983:32).

Strict adherence to principle often leads to an unsatisfactory or even

ludicrous situation.

More particularly, however, criticism from official sources was also at hand, first of all in the outright condemnation in 'Memoranda on Teaching and Organisation in Secondary Schools', that some teachers were 'too ready to condone grammatical inaccuracy in speech and the grossly careless performance of written exercises' (Board of Education 1912:17), and that trying to deal with difficult texts with the foreign language as the medium of instruction led to failure, and a neglect of the literary aspect, such an important outcome of the Grammar-Translation Method. The situation with the Direct Method, evoked comment as recently as 1956 from the Ministry of Education who noted that,

> *'the claims of modern languages to an important place in the curriculum ... cannot be justified unless the course contains intellectual discipline. It was on this rock that the less skilful exponents of the direct method foundered ... written work and grammar were neglected and the unskilled teacher could not hold the attention of more than a proportion of the class throughout the lesson by purely oral work.'*
>
> *(M. of Ed. Pamphlet No 29 1956:1)*

It is not surprising that a method which 'by its very nature presupposes a teacher of immense vitality, of robust health, and one endowed with real fluency in the modern language he teaches' (Collins 1934:419) should be found too demanding. The problem with any educational innovation will always lie with the calibre and quality of the available teaching force. Even in an ideal world, such innovation should be undertaken on the understanding that the average teacher will need to cope just as well as the more able one, even though compromise may be needed. Precisely this occurred as a third methodology came into being between the two World Wars.

The Compromise Method

Although, as noted by Richardson,

> '... a successful teacher of the Direct Method needed a competence in his language, a stamina and energy, an imagination, a capacity for working himself and his pupils hard, and the ability and time in which to create his own materials and courses – since these were not yet available – which were beyond the capabilities of all but a gifted few'
>
> (Richardson 1983:31)

such a situation, even though it should not call the method itself into question, had the effect of causing 'a reversion to a grammar-translation approach with as much attention being paid to oral work as could conveniently be achieved' (Richardson 1983:31), the very essence of 'compromise'.

A complementary view states the matter from a different angle, in that this method

> 'aimed at keeping all that was best in the direct method – the thorough training in correct pronunciation, use and comprehension of the spoken foreign tongue – and combining it with the stern mental discipline of accurate written work which demanded a sound knowledge of grammar ... (where) ... the use of the mother tongue was no longer avoided when it was needed to ensure understanding.'
>
> (Min. of Ed. Pamphlet No 29 1956:2)

This reversion to mother tongue usage effectively removed the necessity for long, drawn out explanations of meanings and teachers 'jumping over desks', as it became acceptable to employ simple word-for-word translation where appropriate. Similarly, the retention of an emphasis on the spoken word appeared to maintain much of what was best in the Direct Method. Indeed, one particular course book, 'Active French Course' by F.A. Hedgcock (1926), made extensive use of the phonetic symbols which were such a key part of that method.

Yet another text-book, 'A French Course for Schools' (1929) by
H.F. Collins, contained reading passages, explanations of grammatical
rules, exercises, vocabulary lists and verb paradigms. Much of the
material in the reading passages was oversimplified, even trite:

> *'Bonjour, Marcel, où es-tu?*
> *Je suis dans la salle de classe.*
> *Es-tu l'élève?*
> *Oui, monsieur, et vous êtes le professeur,'*
>
> *(Collins 1929 I:1)*

as the particular grammar point was laboriously worked through. Each
passage and set of exercises was followed by the necessary grammar rules
and explanations, although the writer claimed that the compromise method

> *'... aims at pronunciation, conversation, and grammatical*
> *accuracy .... Each lesson should aim at affording some*
> *practice in all these sections: to isolate any one must*
> *tend to destroy linguistic fabric.'*   *(Collins 1934:419)*

The format of his course books has much in common with theories from the
grammar-translation method.

In the right hands, however, the compromise or oral method could
lead to effective teaching.

> *'It is not too difficult to visualise the excellent teaching*
> *that went on in some schools according to this compromise or*
> *oral method. Especially in the lower years of grammar schools*
> *some really first-class work was done'*
>
> *(Harding 1967:12)*

and to an enlivening of the classroom situation as it

> *'... presupposes a wholesome but difficult discipline -*
> *permitting chatter and even fooling that can be controlled*
> *at a glance, and based on a real and friendly understanding*
> *with the pupils.'*
>
> *(IAAM 1949:89-90)*

Unfortunately, the reverse was also true in many cases. The danger
was ever-present in the use of such course books as 'A French Course for

Schools', that they could be worked from in a manner far removed from the ideals of the compromise method.

> 'In many schools a good start was made with the Oral Method in the early years, but there was a gradual lapse into grammar and translation in the middle school.'
>
> (Harding 1967:13)

Indeed, the whole movement has been discredited by Mallinson:

> '... once the defences were down the rot set in. It was all very well advocating a "compromise" method to retain all that was best in the Direct Method, to teach as Frenchly or as Germanly as possible, but it left the inexperienced or ill-equipped teacher floundering, returning for self-protection to the old translational method, or at the best using to the best of his ability (which usually meant slavishly) the several courses that now came on the market in vindication of the trumpeted compromise.'
>
> (Mallinson 1953:19)

The fact is that the compromise method was far too similar to the grammar-translation method, particularly in the content of those course books compiled for it. Those teachers lacking the drive, energy and imagination to hold on to the best aspects of the direct method could so easily rely merely upon the older method which underpinned the course books of the day. There was too little distinction between the compromise and grammar-translation methods. The former 'was not a compromise with the Direct Method, it was a reversion to Grammar-Translation' (Richardson 1983:34). Fundamental change in methodology had to wait until the 1960s. When it came, it was radical in nature and as clearly and logically con-ceived as the Direct Method of eighty years earlier.

The Audio-Visual or Audio-Lingual Method

The basis of the theory for this method is threefold. First of all, it has origins in behaviourist psychology, secondly in the science of linguistics and thirdly in advances in technology. The combination of all

three produced a method of teaching foreign languages, which swept through
the schools of this country in the 1960s as 'a revolution in teaching
methods and materials' (Cammish 1983:53), yet which was to fall from
favour even more quickly than any earlier methodology.

For the behaviourist psychologist, language learning is the formation
of a hierarchy of speech habits to be reinforced by practice or reward, in
other words, straightforward habit formation, 'the child's verbal behaviour
evolves under the selective action of contingencies of reinforcement'
(Skinner 1974:99). Similarly,

> '... stimulated by physical needs for comfort, a baby makes
> random babbling responses. When certain combinations of
> sounds are rewarded by the satisfaction of the child's des-
> ires, they are reinforced and are more likely to recur under
> similar circumstances. Sound combinations not comprehended
> (and rewarded) by others are extinguished, that is, elimin-
> ated from the child's repertoire of behavioural response.'
>
> (Disick 1975:18)

In this way, therefore, children acquire their mother tongue, almost on a
trial and error basis. They remember utterances which lead to satisfaction
of their basic needs and reject those that do not, so that the former be-
come automatic in nature; their true meaning is incidental. However,

> 'a single emission of a response, even if it is reinforced,
> is by no means enough for learning to take place. Only if a
> response is repeated can it be fully learned. Indeed strength
> of learning is measured in terms of the number of times that a
> response has been made and reinforced.'
>
> (Wilkins 1972:162)

Repetition of a correct response or utterance is essential to its retention.
Thus, by observation of mother tongue learning by young children as being
a habit-forming exercise reinforced by repetition, behaviourist psychology
has provided one fundation stone for audio-visual methodology.

The second is to be found in the development of the science of ling-
uistics, chiefly in America, in the years before World War Two, with the
work of structural linguists such as Bloomfield in the field of American
Indian languages. They took a descriptive approach to the study of lang-
uage, as they

> 'tried to describe the sound patterns and word combinations of
> each language as they observed them in a corpus, without attempt-
> ing to fit them into a preconceived framework based on the
> structures of Greek and Latin and of the languages derived from
> them.'
>   (Rivers 1968:33)

This, in turn, led to investigations as to what people actually say in
real situations and not what course book writers might imagine they say,
to word lists of those most commonly in use and the insistence that lang-
uage is 'a living, evolving thing, not ... a static corpus of forms and
expressions' (Rivers 1968:34). In linguistic terms, therefore, such work
led to the following assertions about the nature of language:

> 'Language is speech, not writing.
> A language is a set of habits.
> Teach the language, not about the language.
> A language is what its native speakers say, not what
>   someone thinks they ought to say.
> Languages are different'
>   (Moulton 1961:86-89)

which, in turn, led to the materials in use with this method to include
natural dialogues, with 'real' people, often a family, in an authentic
setting, drill sequences as reinforcement of the language and a return to
the theory that grammatical points were to be learned through induction
and not through explanation. A more complete summary would appear thus:

> '1.   Learning a language from a text which describes realistic
>   situations such as travelling, living, residing etc.
>
> 2.   This description should develop in a logical fashion as
>   if it were a reality. This makes assimilation of acoustic
>   signals quicker, and assists them arising.

3. *A picture interpreting any expression is a permanent link between the expression and reality.*

4. *The presence of the picture enables the expression to represent the reality. Gesture and intonation find their place, as in spontaneous speech, and these two important elements of linguistic expression are rapidly assimilated. The student is placed in a natural situation, as in real life, and is therefore in a condition helpful to spontaneous language learning. The subject presented visually is closely connected with the sound given by the tape-recorder. This vocal expression is explained through the picture, and thus returns to reality.*

5. *Hence the dialogue form is necessary.*

6. *Structural functioning of the ear and eye enables a person learning a foreign language to understand an acoustic signal quickly and precisely. Therefore correct pronunciation is necessary, and for this reason the tape-recorder becomes a necessity.*

7. *The tape-recorder performs two functions: (a) it gives the acoustic signal of the picture, (b) it makes possible the pronunciation of an acoustic signal.*

8. *The tape-recorder and the picture achieve the transfer of life to dialogue, so that the person learning the foreign language finds himself in a natural situation of reality, and in its linguistic expression.*

9. *The structural image of reality and the structural image of a language are transferred to the new language environment affecting the ear and the eye simultaneously.*

   The reality makes an efficient use of the ear and the eye and through this combination, the signals of language are memorised easily.

   The student must apply what he has learned from the structural images to similar structural situations.'

   (Guberina 1964:16-17)

Here, the third aspect of the audio-visual approach appears, with mention of the picture and the tape-recorder. The former usually takes the form of a still frame from a film-strip, illustrating what a character is doing or feeling or where he is going and is made possible by the portable film-strip projector. It formed an important element in courses, as Guberina's 'link between the expression and reality', even though the

case made out for using these machines is over-stated and over-reliant

upon the behaviourist nature of the methods used. To say that 'the tape-

recorder and the picture achieve the transfer of life to dialogue' and

that 'the picture enables the expression to represent the reality', is only

acceptable in the context of the situation being portrayed and is unlikely

to be meaningful in that of the learner's everyday existence. Their use

in this way merely emphasises that through the audio-visual's 'concern to

make all of the meanings clear through pictures, it limits ... the meaning

to the fixed, and therefore dead, world of the filmstrips' (Stevick 1976:

150), a far cry from the 'natural situation, as in real life' as claimed

by Guberina.

In fact, the student is placed in an unnatural situation, structured

in such a way as to limit his linguistic activity to closely controlled

repetition and question-answering, which restrict students, 'both in the

spectrum of reality about which they talk, and in the areas within their

own personalities which may contribute to creative personal investment in

the learning process' (Stevick 1976:151). It is precisely the restrictive

nature of such methodology, with its reliance upon bringing about changes

in learners' behaviour, which 'subordinates learning to teaching, and

teaching to materials' (Stevick 1976:152), however well designed and pro-

duced, and which gives credence to the assertion that,

> *'In recent years, we seem to have amassed a grand array of tech-*
> *nical means without questioning very closely the ends which they*
> *should serve.'*
> *(Perren 1972:9)*

The 'technical means' and materials were exploited in the service of a

methodology which inhibited rather than encouraged 'reality' for the learner.

A more important advance, however, was the portable tape-recorder,
which gave teachers the facilities of easy play-back, editing and recording
of pupils' voices and flexibility in its ability to reproduce native-speaker
voices at will in the course of visits abroad. Such flexibility made it
possible for the assertion to be made that 'it is impossible to exaggerate
the potential offered by the tape-recorder to language teaching' (Hawkins
1981:172).

This technological masterpiece was supported in turn by the Language
Laboratory, which allowed pupils to work at the practice drills of the
method at their own speed in the privacy of individual booths, with the
facility to record, listen to and correct their own efforts at the lang-
uage; all of this with the help of the teacher at a central console who was
able to monitor their work and help where necessary. Costly though they
were, the 1960s witnessed a remarkable spread in their numbers in this
country.

'1962	20
1963	116
1970	1,500'

(Hawkins 1981:177)

At the time, the value of Language Laboratories was unquestioned, as

'Modern science has presented the teacher of languages with
electronic equipment which can provide the means for this
constant practice which is necessary to promote fluency in a
language ... it provides the means for the necessary repetition
and practice to condition the learner to respond to the speech
patterns of the language being learned. Only by responses to
stimuli becoming automatic, as they are in the nature of lang-
uage, can fluency be achieved.'

(Stork 1965:152)

As a back-up to the behaviourist inspired nature of the audio-visual method,
with its ability to 'condition the learner' and to make 'stimuli ...
automatic', the Language Laboratory became an indispensible tool:

'I should ... dispel any impression that the language laboratory is not entirely desirable - it is, and if language teaching is to achieve fluency and quasi-native accuracy in the learner, it is well-nigh essential.'

(Dutton 1966:19-20)

This, then, was the methodological approach for language teachers during the 1960s. They had at their disposal a new theory of language learning, backed up by formidable technical resources, sufficient to afford foreign language teaching parity of esteem with any subject area in the curriculum. Furthermore, foreign languages were expanding their curricular role, as noted in earlier chapters, with the introduction of Primary School French and the reorganisation of secondary schools into comprehensives. Yet, once again, a new method was perceived to have failed and,

'By 1980 ..., in many schools the tapes and filmstrips were mouldering sadly in stock cupboards and language laboratory equipment stood dusty, derelict and forlorn. The "revolution" in some classrooms had left barely a trace and all was as before.'

(Cammish 1983:53)

How could yet another method prove a failure for language teachers? Indeed, upon what grounds could the method be deemed a failure?

As Rivers has indicated, the audio-visual method has a great deal to offer in its approach to language learning:

'From the beginning the student learns segments of language which could be of immediate use for communication in a foreign-language situation, and he is trained to understand and produce foreign-language utterances with recognizable and acceptable sound patterns and at a normal speed of delivery. With much practice in listening he is trained in auditory memory and in making fine discriminations among sounds - both very important factors in successful language learning.'

(Rivers 1968:45)

The two skills of speaking and listening, therefore, become available to the learner at an early stage, as do those of reading and writing as

'... he is trained to build up skill in these areas step by
step, capitalizing on his growing knowledge of the structure
of the language, until both reading and writing become for him
not exercises in transposition from one language to another but
activities to be conducted entirely in the foreign language.'

(Rivers 1968:45)

All four aspects of linguistic proficiency – reading, writing, speaking

and listening – were developed in such a way as 'to produce pupils who

could actually use the foreign language to communicate' (Cammish 1983:55)

with the consequent encouragement of motivation as,

'Students enjoy learning to use a language from the very first
days of their introduction to it. Both they and their parents
feel that this is "real language". They experience very early
in their studies a satisfying sense of achievement in being
able to use what they have learned.'

(Rivers 1968:45-46)

Chorus work and individual work with tape-recorders and in the language

laboratory could protect the shy individual from embarrassment of making

strange sounds in front of his peers and he was quickly able to compare

his efforts with correct usage and correct errors.

Compared with the grammar-translation method, the advantages of work-

ing with an audio-visual course were immediately obvious to its proponents.

'To ask pupils to labour at endless written exercises in a
strange language, to learn difficult grammatical rules un-
related to the reality of speech, or to toil at impossibly
difficult translation work is, in a sense, inhuman ... On the
other hand, an audio-lingual course that teaches speech, with
all its richness and its complexities, provides an experience
that cannot fail to enrich the pupil's awareness of man's
ability to communicate. Such a course is truly human.'

(Harding 1967:102)

For, as the learner moved through the various stage of learning, from the

mimicry-memorisation stage, through the pattern drills, to the stage where

the pupil could exploit what he had learned by using it in new situations,

the method seemed to provide a complete answer to his needs. It provided

the motivation the learner needed and a means for 'mastery' of a foreign

language.

However, doubts about audio-visual methods were growing at the very

moment it was in its heyday. For example, the psychological justification

for the method, based on behaviourist theories of native-tongue learning,

that,

1. Habits are strengthened by reinforcement.

2. Foreign language habits are formed most effectively by
     giving the right response not by making mistakes.

3. Language is 'behaviour' and behaviour can be learned
     only by inducing the student to 'behave'

was called into question as Chomsky set out hiw views on language acquis-

ition, again in the mother tongue situation. For him, it was a

> '... quite erroneous conception that knowledge of a language
> can be accounted for as a system of habits, or in terms of
> stimulus-response connections, principles of "analogy" and
> "generalisation" and other notions that have been explored in
> twentieth century linguistics and psychology ...'
>
> (Chomsky 1968:112)

Far from being a habit-forming exercise, language is a creative activity

and humans

> '... make use of the mentally represented language in a
> highly creative way, constrained by its rules but free to
> express new thoughts that relate to past experiences or
> present sensations only in a remote and abstract fashion.
> If this is correct, there is no hope in the study of the
> "control" of human behaviour by stimulus conditions, sched-
> ules of reinforcement, establishment of habit structures,
> patterns of behaviour and so on.'
>
> (Chomsky 1968:114)

Moreover, it is possible to discern a 'universal grammar' even from the

study of one language and humans possess a 'language-acquisition device'

(LAD) which makes itself apparent in the form of a 'transformational-

generative grammar' which is at the disposal of everyone.

*'A person who knows a language has mastered a system of rules
that assigns sound and meaning in a definite way for an infin-
ite class of possible sentences. Of course, the person who
knows the language has no consciousness of having mastered
these rules or of putting them to use, nor is there any reason
to suppose that this knowledge of the rules of language can be
brought to consciousness.'*

(Chomsky 1968:103)

'Mastery' of these 'rules' is proof of 'an innate hypothesis-forming

mechanism which the child applies to the language environment to which it

is exposed and which enables it to internalise a set of grammar rules'

(Hawkins 1981:178). By immersion in the language to be learned, the

pupil, using his 'language-acquisition device' is able 'to organise

speech data until (he) can understand and speak the language accurately'

(Cammish 1983:70). Further, by assuming that what is relevant to mother-

tongue learning in Chomsky's theory, can be likewise applied in second

language learning, it can be seen that the behaviourist-based audio-visual

method is the outcome of an erroneous view of language acquisition in that

situation.

Attacks on the methodology have, in fact, come from many quarters.

Rivers has demonstrated the following detrimental effects upon learners:

*'Students trained audio-lingually, in a mechanical way, can
progress like well-trained parrots: able to repeat whole
utterances perfectly when given a certain stimulus, but un-
certain of the meaning of what they are saying and unable to
use perfectly memorised texts in contexts other than that in
which they have learned them.'*

(Rivers 1968:46)

Insufficient transfer of meaning in a system based on repetition, makes for

a limited application of new language patterns; as does its assumption that

learners are indeed able to use powers of analogy to perceive the rules they

are intended to assimilate by induction.

*'Students are trained to make variations on language patterns
by a process of analogy, without being given a very clear idea
of what they are supposed to be doing in the process. As a*

result, they do not understand the possibilities and limitations of the operations they are performing and are unable, later, to use these patterns outside the framework of a particular drill.'

(Rivers 1968:47)

Pattern practice and drill work impose limits on the use of what is learned and the very methods themselves 'can become intensely tedious and boring, causing fatigue and distaste on the part of the student' (Rivers 1968:46), as he pursues the goal of perfect sentence formation at the expense of communicative competence. The communicative aspect of such learning is placed at risk, by this inability to use language in a meaningful way as learners lack the basic linguistic knowledge upon which they can build authentic language for themselves.

'We have come to remember belatedly that parrotting basic sentences and performing mechanical pattern-drill is not communication, that is, the natural use of language in an authentic cultural context.'

(Valdman 1966:105)

Unless the teacher works on the learner's ability to carry over what he has learned into a variety of new situations, meaningful communication could never be attained through this method of teaching. A gifted teacher would insist on just such a course of action but 'his less gifted colleague thought he had completed his task when the dialogues were memorised and the drills practised' (Cammish 1983:62).

Indeed, it was all too easy for teachers to assume that the course they were using, typically consisting of course book, tapes, filmstrips, exercises and language drills was complete in itself, that they need not go beyond the confines of these materials to complete the task in hand (even if they had time to do so). As Hawkins points out, however, things could have been different:

'Had the early materials been described merely as an aid in the presentation of language a great deal of confusion might have been avoided.'

(Hawkins 1981:175)

As it was, all too often, once the drill stage had been mastered, the task was assumed to have been completed, teachers passed on to the next unit, without fully exploiting the one in hand, thus ensuring adequate practice and rehearsal but without performance in the language.

Alongside criticism of its psycho-linguistic basis, its courses and materials and the way they were often used, research was being built up suggesting that all the advantages claimed for audio-visual techniques were not being attained in practice. Work done by Dodson in promoting his Bilingual Method in Welsh schools, for example, provided insights into the way in which many of the problems inherent in audio-visual methods could be avoided. Starting from the premise that

'No matter whether a foreign language is learnt in the class-room, at home or in the foreign country, the learner must first of all acquire the meaning of the sentences he hears before he can respond in speech or action. In a learning situation it is the response which is the most important factor determining the quality and the rate at which a human being can learn an addit-ional language'

(Dodson 1967:4)

and after ensuring correct pronunciation via intensive imitation of sentences, the second stage of Dodson's method requires the teacher to say the sentences in the mother tongue with pupils giving the foreign language equivalents. The next process reverses the situation with the teaching proceeding in the foreign language, the learner in his mother tongue, the complete pattern of working being summarised thus:

TEACHER	PUPIL'S RESPONSE
SM	SF
SF	SM
QM	QF
QF	AF

Key: M = *mother tongue*   Q = *question*
         F = *foreign language*   A = *answer*
         S = *statement*

(Dodson 1963:23)

with writing of everything spoken in the foreign language as the final
follow-up.

By this adept mixing of both mother tongue and foreign language,
Dodson claims to break down the barrier for the second language learner
of the inability to fit

'*... the meaning of foreign language sounds without an initial
reference to concepts thought in mother tongue terms, especially
if the concept of the sentence refers to a familiar situation*'

(Dodson 1967:94)

and to arrive at the following situation:

CONCEPT   CONCEPT
   1   2

M.T.   F.L.

where

'*it matters not which language system he might be using to
express concepts for either of the environments. He feels "at
home" in both languages and countries*'

(Dodson 1967:95)

- the perfect bilingual situation.

The key stage in the process is regarded as the interpretation element
with the mother tongue cues being used to draw out the foreign language
responses, as this 'exercise, in fact, strengthens the association between
meaning and FL sounds' (Dodson 1967:96), and 'the learner refers to known
values and proceeds from the familiar meaning to the unfamiliar foreign

language expression' (Dodson 1963:40). In this way, Dodson's bilingual method nullifies the problem of linguistic concepts for learners using other methods and, in particular, the audio-visual method, which has also been put to the test in another context.

Research by Sherer and Wertheimer at Colorado University with groups of students beginning studies in German in the fall of 1960, revealed findings which posed many questions concerning audio-visual techniques. They conducted their experiment with two groups, one which was

> '*to be taught through a traditional multiple-choice method ...*
> *over the main language skills, both passive and active ...*
> *(using) a traditional elementary book*'

and a second which was

> '*to receive an initial period of about twelve weeks of purely*
> *audiolingual training before it was given any training whatso-*
> *ever in reading and writing*'
>
> *(Sherer & Wertheimer 1964:7)*

over a period of two years.

Results emerged as follows:

> '*LISTENING. The audio-lingual group were superior to tradit-*
> *ional students at the end of one year, with no difference*
> *after two.*
>
> *SPEAKING. Again, the audio-lingual were far superior after*
> *one year, and maintained this in the second.*
>
> *READING. Traditional students superior after one year, but*
> *no difference after two.*
>
> *WRITING. Traditional students were better after one year*
> *and maintained superiority over two.*
>
> *GERMAN TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION. Traditional students far*
> *superior after one year and maintained this over two.*
>
> *ENGLISH TO GERMAN TRANSLATION. Traditional students much*
> *better after one year but no difference by the end of the*
> *second.*'
>
> *(Scherer & Wertheimer 1964:243-244)*

The general conclusion 'that the two methods, while yielding occasionally strong and persistent differences in various aspects of proficiency in German, result in comparable overall proficiency', pronounces the result as a virtual draw as regards linguistic attainment. The only measurable superiority attributable to the use of audio-visual materials was that they appeared 'to produce more desirable attitudes and better habituated direct association' (Sherer and Wertheimer 1964:245), a more positive outlook towards German people and things German; small reward for a method so costly in equipment and materials.

In Britain, even with the introduction of a second generation of courses and materials, criticisms were to be heard. Changes to the courses included the addition of work books, to encourage language work in wider contexts, the removal of mimicry-memorisation work, more meaningful drills and a re-ordering of teaching phases. Still it proved possible to be critical of them.

> 'Longman's course, on closer examination, turns out to have a startling resemblance to another course published by the same firm, Whitmarsh's First French Book ... the items to be taught are staged and sequenced in very nearly an identical manner ... Is it truly audio-visual or are we being offered a menu (a prix eleve, if we take all the dishes) of Whitmarsh, a la mode, sauce audio-visuelle (facultative).'
>
> (Jerman 1967:81,82)

It must be admitted that this particular course, especially Stage 2, resembled the traditional series of grammatical hurdles so prevalent in grammar-translation courses and contained far too many of them.

In the primary schools also, where audio-visual materials were in use in the experiment to introduce French to young learners, pupils were experiencing difficulties with the methods in use:

> *'... large numbers of children failed to achieve even a modest and impermanent measure of success ... partly a consequence of teaching through the medium of French'*

and

> *'... children at all levels reject enforced passivity, repetition and incomprehension associated with the use of tape-recorders and the practice of reading French aloud.'*
>
> *(Burstall 1974:242)*

Findings such as these, in the report which heralded the end of the experiment, are revealing in themselves and received support from other quarters with the reminder of

> *'... the danger that the limitations of children's intellectual development at this stage may be invoked in support of teaching methods which are basically non-explanatory (and) leave children too unaware of the meaning or the structure of what they are saying'*
>
> *(Rapaport and Westgate 1974:74)*

and the observation by a member of the Inspectorate that,

> *'assumptions have been made about children's gifts for making correct analogies. Teachers are often unnecessarily reluctant to give explanations of grammatical points where these may shed light.'*
>
> *(Salter 1971:102)*

Some excuse may be found here for freshly trained primary teachers not wishing to go beyond the strictures of the methodology and give explanations of grammatical points instead of allowing them to be assimilated by analogy. Nevertheless, one more area for criticism had come to the fore.

It is all too evident, therefore, that the audio-visual method has been perceived to fail through defects in its basic concept of the nature of language learning and the transfer of the theory of mother tongue to the foreign language, the invalidity of many of its materials, or, simply, through the inability of many teachers to take the learning situation

outside the confines of those materials. The truth may well lie in the continual search by language teachers for the 'panacea' to their problems, and their readiness to embrace new methods as they come along. In this case,

> *'the structural linguists wished effectively to replace a system based on one limited view of language (the translation method) by an equally rigid and psycholinguistically invalid approach (the audio-lingual method)'*
> *(Spolsky 1979:167)*

in the expectation that it would be accepted and relied upon by language teachers generally, as they sought, once again, the 'universal' method. The more reflective of those teachers may well agree that,

> *'an eclectic and empirical approach may well produce the best overall results for a wide variety of teachers and learners, as long as that approach has the steady long-term and short-term aims of meaningful communication'*
> *(Cammish 1983:71-72)*

and by adopting such an approach, allow themselves and their learners the flexibility to explore and develop language rather than operate slavishly within the confines of one particular methodology. Many of the problems outlined in the earlier chapters of this thesis can be attributed directly to methodological approaches which were inappropriate to the needs of the learners in question.

This was undoubtedly so in the Primary School French project, allied to the questionable expertise in the foreign language of many teachers involved in that project. Equally, in the comprehensive school situation, the adaptation and 'watering down' of courses based on audio-visual methods proved invalid, particularly for less able pupils.

Part I of this thesis, therefore, concludes on a pessimistic note after examining aspects of foreign language teaching and learning in particular areas which have contributed to this malaise. In Part II, an

assessment will be made of some of the outcomes resulting from the above situation, along with an appreciation of recent trends in thinking in this subject area.

PART II

RECENT PRESSURES UPON, AND REACTIONS TO,

LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SCHOOLS : THE SUBSEQUENT RESPONSE

By the very nature of the teaching profession, it is not unknown for official reports emanating from DES or HMI to cause initial interest, even concern, and very often thereafter to be consigned to a shelf. At best, reaction to them can be sporadic and confined to the more dynamic school managements or individual departments who feel sufficient concern to seek to improve the situation.

Chapter 4A demonstrates that 'Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' (HMI(b) 1977) was not to be allowed to fall into either of the above categories. The shortcomings therein were far too serious for that. Effective action was needed and taken.

Similarly, certain methodological difficulties, such as those high-lighted in Chapter 3, were to be addressed by means of an approach to language learning by what came to be known as the Graded Objectives movement. Both these approaches are analysed in Chapter 4, which charts the early reactions to failure.

CHAPTER 4

LOCAL INITIATIVES AND THE GRADED OBJECTIVES MOVEMENT

A. *Local Initiatives*

Following the gloomy findings of the HMI report 'Matters for Discus-

sion 3: Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' (1977), and its

strictures that 'heads of school will often need guidance on the organis-

ational implications of modern languages provision and teaching' (HMI(b)

1977:46) and that 'heads of department can often benefit from the guidance

of LEA advisers in the running of their departments' (HMI(b) 1977:46), a

series of regional meetings was convened, initially between members of the

Inspectorate and Chief Education Officers, followed by a programme of two

day conferences at regional level, involving heads of schools and their

heads of department, together with two members of the Inspectorate. In

the Cleveland area, for example, conferences took place in November 1977

at Teesside College of Education and in January 1978 at Marton Sixth Form

College.

At the Marton gathering, HMI was represented by Mr. G.M. Hearnshaw

and the LEA by Senior Adviser, Mr. D.J. Spoerry, who dealt with the place

of modern languages in the comprehensive school curriculum and with the

role of the head of department respectively, by way of suggesting how the

shortcomings noted in the HMI report might be addressed. Nor was the

report itself seen to be complete. Mr. Hearnshaw, for example, noted what

he considered to be lacking in that document, notably that there was 'no

attempt to justify the inclusion of modern languages in the school curric-

ulum' and that it 'lacks the speculative, imaginative or innovative

approach' (Cleveland 1978:2), a fault soon to be tackled by H.M. Inspec-

torate in 'Curriculum 11-16: Modern Languages' (1977) with its wide-ranging

remarks upon the contribution of modern languages to the curriculum.

In the meantime, Hearnshaw selected four reasons for the inclusion of

foreign languages in the curriculum:

1. the widening of horizons which comes from opening pupils' eyes
    to the very existence of other countries and customs, leading
    ... to sympathetic interest and tolerant attitudes;

2. the mind-stretching nature of the exercise, even if at a modest
    level at first, of meeting and using a different vehicle of
    thought, which can shed a new light on existing concepts and
    even lead to new ones eventually;

3. the focussing of attention on language in its own right;

4. the opportunity it gives pupils to express themselves, unself-
    consciously both in words and actions.

                                                    (Cleveland 1978:3)

His themes of tolerance and self-expression were to be emphasised further

in 'Curriculum 11-16' and expanded, 'learning a foreign language affords

the possibility of acquiring a healthy curiosity towards foreign peoples

and of developing understanding of the unfamiliar in speech, customs and

manners through acquaintance with the people and their way of life', also

allowing 'the learner to communicate personally and directly with the

people and culture of another country, either through the spoken or written

word'(HMI 1977(a):68). Similarly, his reference to 'language in its own

right' is further extended to include 'the way in which language is organ-

ised' and 'understanding of language in its broadest sense by providing a

wider context for the study of the mother tongue' along with 'an insight

into the structure of language and into the processes of both thought and

language which the acquisition of English alone does not produce (HMI 1977(a):

68,69). Regarding conceptual knowledge, Hearnshaw's 'existing concepts' are euphemistically specified as 'number, weight, volume, dimension, colour, nationality and family relationships (which) have been familiar since the infant school. To express them in a foreign language can amplify, consolidate and refine them and indeed may modify them' (HMI 1977(a):68).

In this fashion, therefore, Hearnshaw was emphasising the major land-mark in HMI pronouncements upon foreign languages in schools, 'Curriculum 11-16', which sought a definitive justification for the inclusion of foreign languages in the school curriculum, as well as a framework for the whole curriculum. In fact, conference members each received a document outlining possible objectives for foreign language learning from the age of eleven (see Appendix B) which proved to be a facsimile of that included in 'Curriculum 11-16', along with a job description for heads of depart-ments (see Appendix A), in response to the criticisms of that group of teachers in the 1977 report. For the first time, and at grass roots level, teachers were presented with evidence of what differentiated objectives could be, away from the 'tacit assumption that all pupils studying a modern language have basically the same needs' (HMI(b) 1977:47). In the same way, heads of department were given the means of identifying the parameters of their area of responsibility. Hopefully, in the near future, no longer should HMI or anyone else 'have to go about the country - like men with a lantern on a dark night - searching for some evidence of effective language teaching' (Hawkins 1981:25).

B. *The Graded Objectives Movement*

With local initiatives under way, under the guidance of HMI, other
reactions were already taking place in response to a vital issue. In
particular, charges that 'no attempt was being made to cater for the
wide range of ability' and 'general failure to differentiate objectives
according to pupils' abilities and needs' (HMI(b) 1977:14), were leading
to the situation that 'very few pupils continued beyond the option stage,
and even these were relatively unsuccessful in public examinations' (HMI
(b) 1977:14). An answer to the appalling drop-out rate in foreign lang-
uages was the prime necessity.

Similarly, in line with HMI traditions of fostering and promoting
good practices, publication had already been made of 'possible language
learning goals' (HMI(a) 1977:70), both for those pupils likely to drop
the subject after two or three years and for those continuing to sixteen.
The Inspectorate had set the challenge and provided a base from which to
work.

Change, when it came, was far-reaching and took the form of a
complete re-appraisal of the content of accepted language teaching. This
had been based on the premise that all learners needed to know the same
basic grammar of a language, if they were to perform satisfactorily in it,
and that pupils of different abilities would cover this grammar at their
own pace, however slowly or quickly. Fresh thinking switched the emphasis
to a learner-centred approach, first of all identifying the learner, then
his needs and the functions he may need to perform in the language, and,
finally, the notions he should be able to communicate. As a result of such
thinking, the concept of a functional/notional syllabus came into being,
whereby the language to be studied could be divided into manageable sections
to be adapted to:

1. the social roles that the learner will play;

2. the psychological roles that the learner will play;

3. the settings in which the language will be used;

4. the topics that will be dealt with.

<div align="right">(Hawkins 1981:167)</div>

Council of Europe

Work along these lines had already been started as part of the language programme of the Council of Europe since 1971. Here, the search was on for a language learning programme for adults,

> *'to promote the development of individuals who combine self-awareness and self-reliance with social awareness and social responsibility'*
>
> <div align="right">(van Ek & Trim 1984:3)</div>

with the ultimate vision that,

> *'societies composed of individuals with these qualities are more likely to interact on the basis of mutual understanding and acceptance, and to maintain and develop strong, stable and yet dynamic democratic structures and processes.'*
>
> <div align="right">(van Ek & Trim 1984:3)</div>

These objectives, concerning autonomy of the individual and leading to political freedom, required a fresh examination of the role of the teacher.

Instead of serving the language to be taught, with its disciplines and literature and 'iniating' the learner into it, with the frequent problem of motivating many learners within the inevitable constraints of such an approach, the teacher would now be required to act as a facilitator for learning, concentrating on smaller units of language, tailored to suit the individual learner. For the adult learner, in the European context, this switch in emphasis could reasonably easily be adopted to vocational needs in adult, further and higher education. In the school situation, with

large classes to contend with, and where a didactic approach had been

commonly adopted for that very reason, a fundamental change would be

required in order to take cognisance of the learner's individual needs,

both present and future.

Yet, in the school context, just such a change was badly needed,

to increase pupil motivation and to encourage the continuation of foreign

language learning into the options stage. This was particularly so for

the slower learner, for whom, as Hawkins has stated 'motivation is all'

and for whom the long five-year slog to a public examination was a

seemingly unattainable goal and a daunting setback. For,

> '*the slower learner is by definition insecure. He does not
> enjoy the resilience and mental toughness of the faster
> intellect, confident that the task will yield to concentra-
> tion and effort, and relishing the challenge the harder it
> is. Insecurity makes for a short wind, intellectually. The
> slower learner needs objectives that are set over a shorter
> term, with rewards for each lap of the track accomplished.*'
>
> (Hawkins 1983:123)

For this category of learner the Council of Europe work, with its

insistence upon precisely defined objectives, could provide the necessary

motivation, with its approach to language learning based upon

    a.   establishing, and monitoring the development of, the
needs, motivation, characteristics and resources of
learners;

    b.   setting up, and keeping under review, optimally worth-
while and feasible learning objectives, especially in
terms of the knowledge and skills required in the pre-
dicted conditions and situations of language use;

    c.   selecting and developing appropriate methods and materials
which will bring the learners concerned to the appropriate
proficiency aimed at;

d. developing means of evaluation, both of the learners'
   achievements and of the effectiveness of the language
   teaching system, in order to provide appropriate feed-
   back to the various members of the 'partnership for
   learning' which will enable them to improve future per-
   formance.

<div align="right">(van Ek & Trim 1984:5)</div>

Evaluation, for the learner, would consist of a system of credits, to be

awarded after each unit or 'waystage' and it was also found possible to

delineate objectives for the 'lowest level of general foreign language

ability' called 'The Threshold Level' for modern-language learning in

schools. This 'Threshold Level' identified explicitly what a learner

would need

> *'to be able to cope, linguistically speaking, in temporary
> contacts with foreign language speakers in everyday situa-
> tions, whether as visitors to the foreign country or with
> visitors to their own country, and to establish and main-
> tain social contacts.'*
>
> <div align="right">*(van Ek & Trim 1984:114)*</div>

Beyond this basic stage, the supposition was that the learner could

continue further language studies, to be determined by the individual's

needs as they developed, thus providing the framework for the person

concerned to attain the 'self-awareness', 'self-reliance', 'social

awareness' and 'social responsibility' of the original objectives.

Indeed, by identifying basic needs, as a platform upon which to build

future development, van Ek was able to claim that,

> *'with the development and publication of "The Threshold
> Level" the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council
> of Europe has made a significant contribution to the prom-
> otion of foreign-language learning as a basis for inter-
> national understanding. "The Threshold Level" has generated
> numerous innovative developments in modern-language learning
> and teaching and, as a product of international co-operation,
> has stimulated intensive and fruitful interaction between
> those responsible, in whatever capacity, for language teaching
> in a large number of European countries. It has also contrib-
> uted to educational innovation at a more general level by*

*serving as an example of a tool that may effectively be used
to promote learner-centred and needs-oriented teaching and to
stimulate genuine learner participation, ultimately leading to
learner autonomy.'*

(van Ek & Trim 1984:84)

U.K. Developments

As this work was going on at the Council of Europe, a movement

along similar lines was growing in this country. Various working parties

of practising teachers were at work, devising ways and means of providing

reasonable objectives for early secondary school pupils. These evolved

as 'graded tests', offering the short-term motivation so badly needed

for those pupils whose expectations could not stretch over five years to

CSE or GCE. Further, motivation was increased, by the issue of a certifi-

cate, along the lines of the grades awarded in the learning of musical

instruments. Each certificate would indicate the areas of language at

which the candidate had been successful, so that, even if a pupil were to

discontinue foreign language learning after two or three years, evidence

of attainment would be available to him.

In the van of early development work were the Oxfordshire Modern

Languages Advisory working groups, established in 1975, whose brief was

to devise courses and materials for those pupils of moderate and below-

average ability who were following 'a shorter course which is complete in

itself' (HMI(b) 1977:49). They observed that,

*'Most secondary pupils now set out on a five year trek to
the distant peaks of O Level and CSE. After an initial
pleasurable experience, walking along the plains, they
soon lose their way in the foothills, abandon the subject
at the first opportunity and feel that they have derived
little satisfaction or benefit from the journey.'*

(OMLAC 1977:5)

This realisation has been given emphasis by others such as Page, with his insistence that,

> 'the 16+ time scale is far too long for most learners. It implies at least a five year course in a modern language. ... The less able and less motivated might accept more or less cheerfully a two or even three year course, whereas one of five years or so might well make them mutinous and at best unreceptive'
>
> (Page MLJ LV No 1 March 1974:2)

and that,

> 'a sense of aimlessness and frustration is still often apparent among both teachers and taught. This is largely due to the pressures exerted by public examinations at sixteen-plus, which represent the only overt aims of language teaching in schools.'
>
> (Harding et al CILT 1980:2)

The length of the course, as well as its nature and the 'prize' at the end of it, were in question.

The answer to this problem and to that of providing worthwhile goals in the early years of foreign language learning, was to design syllabuses at, initially, two levels. Level 1 'set a realistic target for pupils in the bottom 25% of the ability range who have taken French or German for two years' (OMLAC 1977:6) and Level 2 was to be 'the target for pupils in the 25-50 percentile range after three years' (OMLAC 1977:6), thus targeting those least able pupils who had least to gain from grammar-based work and the prospect of a long haul to public examinations at sixteen.

It was also envisaged that a pupil successful in Level 1 after two years could switch to Level 1 work in another language during his third year of study and that older pupils, sixth formers even, could work at the two Levels in 'their "minority-time" work' (OMLAC 1977:6) instead of being directed to a probably inappropriate 'O' Level. These provisos apart, there was no apparent application to the upper 50 percentile range at this stage.

Furthermore, the emphasis in assessment was to be upon success rather than failure, with an anticipated 90% pass and 10% failure rate. Success would be acknowledged by the presentation of a certificate signed by the Chief Education Officer and the Headteacher.

The syllabuses themselves were arranged in topics, six per Level, with a definitive list of vocabulary and language structures to be mastered for each topic, in each skill area: speaking, listening and reading. For Level 1, the topics were limited to the 'survival' situations of Travel, Cafe-Restaurant, Shopping, Accommodation, the Town, Personal Information and Conversation, each one 'laid out in such a way as to make it quite clear what pupils will be expected to be able to say, read and understand by listening' (OMLAC 1977:10), for example:-

TRAVEL

SPEAKING

Où est ... la gare s.v.p.?
            la gare routière
            le métro?

Est-ce qu'il ya ... par ici?
            un parking
            une station-service
...   francs/litres (de super) s.v.p.
            le plein s.v.p.

un aller (retour) pour ... s.v.p.

A quelle heure est-ce que

le train/bateau/car arrive (à ...)?
            part (pour ...)?

Où est le train de ... ?

Où est le car de ... ?

LISTENING

C'est ... à droite	à côté (de ...)
à gauche	en face (de ...)
tout droit	
là-bas	

Vous tournez ...

Vous allez ...

Vous prenez ...	la première rue ...
	la deuxième rue ...

C'est ... francs (nos 1-100)

à (+ time) heure(s), midi, minuit, et demi(e), et quart,

moins (le quart)

Voie no ...

Quai no ...

READING

Gare	Billets
SNCF	Renseignements
Gare Routière	Arrivée(s)
Métro	Départ(s)
Rue ...	Entrée
Boulevard	Sortie
Place ...	Correspondances
Centre-Ville	Accès aux quais
Toutes directions	Voie/quai no ...
Déviation	
Priorité à droite	Fumeurs
Autoroute	Non-Fumeurs
Péage	

(OMLAC 1977:11)

In the choice of topics, the compilers assume that the learner is the 'interpreter' on a family visit to France, hence the need to 'survive' as tourists. The 'tranches' of language as set out above assume 'that pupils will be able to understand aurally all the items that occur in the

speaking and reading sections of the topics' (OMLAC 1977:10), the prod-
uctive aspect of linguistic proficiency being limited to the speaking
section and purely receptive skills making up the bulk of the work.
Methodology does not merit a mention, thus leaving the topic areas to be
used as the teacher may feel fit, nor was an effort made to supply suit-
able materials, as 'several of the widely-used audio-visual courses
contain units which can easily be adapted to topics in the syllabus'
(OMLAC 1977:7).

The follow-up tests 'intended to mirror in word and spirit the
content of the syllabus' (OMLAC 1977:8) were weighted thus: listening 50%,
reading 30%, speaking 20%, the first two tests lasting 20-25 minutes, the
latter 5 minutes per individual pupil. The listening and reading elements
were to be tested by 'multiple-choice items, which use both the target
language and English as appropriate' (OMLAC 1977:8); thus further limiting
the use of productive French to the 5 minute/20% speaking test, and
increasing the emphasis on the passive skills of reading and listening as
the tests sought not 'to discriminate between pupils, but rather to cele-
brate their achievement' (OMLAC 1977:8).

Early results were reported thus:-

FRENCH	Level 1	Pass	93%
		Pass with credit	13%
GERMAN	Level 1	Pass	96%
		Pass with credit	18%
FRENCH	Level 2	Pass	86%
		Pass with credit	3%

a solid reflection of the original intentions of the working parties and
affording success to a section of the school population not in the habit

of gaining rewards for achievement in foreign language learning, yet leaving a question mark over the value of such results from tests lacking so much in the way of productive language.

However, in a later publication, the working parties were able to claim further concrete benefits following another year of experience. Results of a questionnaire of participating teachers on the effects of OMLAC on their pupils gave the following appraisals:

Marked improvement	22
Improved	21
No change	4
Reduced	NIL

(OMLAC 1981:3)

Other encouraging comments included:

'They could all see the point in the work, but also thought it was fun and frequently said so.'

'Some are so pleased with their progress in using the OMLAC syllabus that they wish to opt for French in the fourth and fifth years'

(OMLAC 1981:3)

a far cry from the 'boredom' and 'frustration' of earlier times. Included in this general feeling of 'improvement', was the effect noted on some teachers themselves:

'Greatly improved attitude of teachers to lower ability. It has also encouraged experiment and adventure.'

(OMLAC 1981:3)

The motivation was there, as hoped, for pupil enjoyment and a desire to continue studying foreign languages and an unexpected bonus in making teachers more aware of, and sympathetic to, the needs of pupils, particularly the least able.

Perhaps the most significant 'bonus', however, was the realisation that such syllabuses and tests could be relevant over a wider ability range than that first envisaged.

> *'It is now emerging that the language content of the various levels is relevant to all learners, whatever their ability, and that a valid test could, and perhaps ought to be set for more than just those of the lowest ability. This might reduce some of the social problems caused by mixed-ability groups'*
>
> *(OMLAC 1981:1)*

problems, no doubt, caused by those more able pupils not being allowed to take the tests! The answer, it was considered, lay in allowing the most able to take the tests when they were ready, a major concession to learner autonomy, as in the Council of Europe approach and a distinctive broadening of the scope of the scheme.

Indeed, the idea of Graded Tests has gained wide acceptance throughout the country and it has proved possible to vary their approach to cater for local needs. In this way, for example, it was possible in the York scheme to avoid defining the linguistic content of the syllabus, by simply 'listing the topics or tasks involved in the tests' which would appear on the back of the certificate to be awarded as

> *'... candidates must demonstrate an ability to ... ask the way and understand directions, shop for food, souvenirs, postcards, stamps etc., go to a cafe and restaurant, travel by rail or road, stay in an hotel, campsite or French home, youth hostel ... take part in a simple conversation with a French speaking person who is trying to get to know them ... read short stories and letters in simple French.'*
>
> *(Harding et al 1980:15)*

This widening of the definitions affords greater scope to the teacher in his choice of language to suit each individual topic and in his ability to ensure transfer of meaning across topics rather than assume it takes place at random as the pupil learns. This freedom, away from the behav-

iourist nature of the Oxfordshire Graded Tests, goes some way towards

alleviating one of the major limitations of this type of syllabus

approach, namely,

> *'the danger that pupils learn the language for a given situation but not the means to transfer this to other situations. They run the risk of being able to parrot a few phrase book language tokens but little else'*
>
> *(Harding et al 1980:10)*

a point which was given some prominence by the Inspectorate in their

report on the Oxfordshire scheme.

The HMI Survey, May-June 1982

In their assessment of the OMLAC programme, HMI found some grounds

for optimism in that,

> *'OMLAC had made pupils less passive and more ready to talk in the foreign language'*

and that,

> *'it was now very much easier to carry the less able pupils through to the end of third year with a real sense of purpose.'*
>
> *(HMI 1983:10)*

Indeed, some lessons were

> *'characterised by a vigorous pace, lively teaching evoking an enthusiastic response and use of the foreign language for most if not all of the lesson'*
>
> *(HMI 1983:12)*

and the concept of regular rewards by certification was worthy of praise,

as,

> *'the OMLAC certificate may be the only one gained by some pupils throughout their school career; it is not unusual for pupils to have their certificates framed and placed on the wall at home.'*
>
> *(HMI 1983:10)*

At last, pupils of low achievement could find pride in their own attainments. Even difficult to accommodate boys 'spoke of OMLAC lessons as being "good lessons"' (HMI 1983:10).

However, HMI also discovered areas of concern, such as an excessive use of English in class for routine communication, for

> *'the materials specifically devised for use with Level 1*
> *French and German, in which there is far more English than*
> *foreign language encourage this, as does at least one of the*
> *commercial courses widely used.'*
> *(HMI 1983:13)*

This theme was continued in criticisms of the progress cards in use upon which the items were in English, and, more significantly, the discovery that 'many schools have abandoned paired oral tests' and that 'OMLAC no longer entails a sustained oral test of any kind' (HMI 1983:8), casts grave doubts upon the whole ethos of the graded tests.

Moreover, concern was expressed at the very concept of dividing up the foreign language into manageable topics, with its distinct danger of removing learning from its context and the consequent inability to transfer meaning from one area to another.

> *'Where the hope is expressed that language learned in one*
> *context will be re-used in others, this is not facilitated*
> *in the syllabuses which have been devised ... progress from*
> *Level 1 to Level 2 is cumulative rather than linear'*
> *(HMI 1983:4)*

and,

> *'a weakness in the procedure is that a pupil can learn and*
> *be tested on a single item at a time, with minimal demands*
> *on his power of recall. Another weakness is that items are*
> *frequently learnt without being placed in context: many*
> *pupils have no idea of the meaning of the component parts*
> *of what they have learnt, with the result that transferability*
> *from one vocabulary area to another is greatly reduced.'*
> *(HMI 1983:9)*

If a learner is unable to conceive of any links between different topic
areas and their items of language, then the semantic elements of the
course are patently failing to do the job envisaged in the first place,
namely to move away from grammatical concepts to topic based language
learning. If this fails to give a coherent view of language, the
learners are involved in 'language-like behaviour' or 'memorised response
to verbal or non-verbal stimuli' ... 'whereas true language necessitates
a capacity to generate novel utterances from an underlying knowledge of
the grammatical and semantic potential of the language' (Byram 1984:10).

Further concern centred around the problem of administering tests
to suit the readiness of the individual pupil, a very pertinent problem
in schools with their tight timetabling and large classes. HMI discovered
that 'the timing of testing is more often related to the age of the pupil
than to their linguistic readiness' (HMI 1983:8) and proferred the hope
that 'the tests will be administered to ALL pupils when they are READY
for them' (HMI 1983:14). Young musicians do precisely this in their
instrumental work. They are able to work individually, whereas with
graded tests in the foreign language, often the only convenient way is to
enter whole forms at once. In this way, one of the essential elements in
the philosophy of graded objectives is lost, if it is impossible 'to break
the iron rule of end-of-year/term examinations being the only occasions
when formal assessment can be made, irrespective of the point reached in
the learning process by any particular pupil' (Harding et al 1980:6).

From the point of view of the teachers involved with the graded
objectives/testing movement in schools, whilst the Inspectorate did find
evidence that

'In some (schools) OMLAC has made teachers aware of the need to teach authentic language. In some it has encouraged funda- mental thought about the need for a more precise definition of aims and objectives'

(HMI 1983:13)

and that,

'OMLAC concentrated the mind on what was essential, it put more meaning into language teaching, it involved the use of more interesting teaching materials.'

(HMI 1983:9)

They also found that

'the influence of OMLAC outside the classes for which it was intended was found to be small, often non-existent.'

(HMI 1983:13)

As it was originally conceived for language learning by the less able,

it appears that teachers were unable to broaden thinking along OMLAC lines

to bring this 'authentic language' and 'more interesting teaching materials'

into use across the ability range. An opportunity to learn from the

strengths of the movement was being ignored.

Worst of all, HMI were able to conclude that,

'only a fifth of the schemes of work seen can be considered satisfactory, that in more than half the schools visited they were inadequate or non-existent and that in the remaining quarter they are only partially satisfactory'

(HMI 1983:15)

thus echoing an identical complaint from previous years (HMI(b) 1977:14).

Evidently, the impact of graded tests with their closely defined objectives

had yet to crystallise teachers' thinking, particularly as regards a real-

isation of their wider applications.

Since then, opinions generally have continued to be divided about the

validity of the Graded Objectives Movement. Improvements in attitude and

motivation, particularly among slower learners, have been noted, largely

due to the enthusiasm generated by certification. Yet this itself could, as time passes, pass into pupil mythology as just another test, as familiarity dims its appeal.

More fundamentally, the question of narrowing, indeed, trivialising the language process is pertinent. For, if

> 'the objective is always stated in terms of the learner's performance or behaviour ... this would appear to be treating language at a very superficial level and implies that the learning of a foreign language can be reduced to a number of small components that can be accumulated.'
>
> (Soles 1983:202)

At worst, this concept of language learning may be no more than a panacea for the problem area of the difficult, less able learner and for the more able, an inhibitor of in-depth learning.

Further, as Hawkins points out,

> 'Does concentration on a short-term performance goal squeeze out aspects of language study which are not measured by performance tests, such as understanding (which is more than knowledge) of the foreign country, its history, geography, institutions and the values of its way of life or insight into the way in which language works and how it contrasts with English?'
>
> (Hawkins 1981:171)

Performance skills are not the sole 'raison d'être' of language learning, the cultural, social and general linguistic aspects are necessary, in overall educational terms.

The fact that the Graded Objectives Movement has expanded from its narrow beginnings in Oxfordshire and York into more than fifty centres countrywide and that it now covers the full 11 to 16 age range, with Levels 3 and 4, CSE Mode 3 schemes and, in at least one case (NREB) a Mode 1 examination, testifies to the fact that it has catered for a perceived need in schools. Nor, as might have been the case, have ossification

and complacency, the dangers in any innovative course, set in. Re-

thinking goes on, for example, concerning learners' needs:

> *'Having been radical about so many aspects of the learning
> situation, have we really re-thought sufficiently the pract-
> ical and psychological needs of the learners? If Level 1 is
> largely taken by 12 year-olds and Level 4 by 16 year-olds, do
> we offer what they are likely to need at each of those very
> different stages of development, or aim at some theoretical
> endpoint?'*
> *(Schools Council 1981:78)*

Overall, in a critical period for language teaching, it can be

regarded as successful.

> *'The unit/credit and graded test movement must be seen,
> among some disappointments encountered by language teachers
> in the 1970s, as a promising approach to reducing and defin-
> ing the learning load, while motivating the learner, espec-
> ially the young and less able learner.'*
> *(Hawkins 1981:172)*

It has been of great pedagogical benefit:

> *'In theory behavioural objectives would appear to have their
> advantages. They enable teacher and pupil to understand the
> nature of the task. They both would seem to understand what
> they are trying to do and why ...'*
> *(Soles 1983:201-202)*

Yet, we must guard against regarding the Graded Objectives Movement as

a panacea. It may provide answers in terms of motivation and take-up of

foreign languages at option time:-

> *'The more positive attitudes of the experimental pupils were
> shown equally at all points of the aptitude scale ... Experi-
> mental pupils who failed a graded test proved to have attitudes
> as positive as those who had passed ... Significantly more
> experimental pupils expressed an intention to continue with
> French the following year and reports from the schools indicate
> that they did in fact continue.'*
> *(Schools Council 1981:24)*

However, it fails in one crucial area. 'It is the creative aspect

of language use that the graded test approach would appear to fail to

account for' (Soles 1983:203), and in order to allow a learner to 'create',

it is necessary to go beyond the pursuit of behavioural objectives per se, which, as will be determined in Chapter 5, are also the basis of a limited view of the curriculum as instanced by the Objectives Model, with its suitability for and emphasis upon the training of skills through instruction within a narrow, easily followed, set of objectives. In following such a model,

> *'a high degree of credibility must be ascribed to the belief that language is merely patterned behaviour and that the role of the language teacher is to manipulate pupils, so that they behave accurately and openly by the criteria of the test compilers.'*
>
> *(Soles 1983:203)*

That language teaching and learning need not be constricted in this way is the theme of Chapter 5, which seeks to place the subject area within a more meaningful concept of the curriculum, and which removes the necessity for over-reliance upon and confidence in such recent outcomes as the Graded Objectives Movement.

CHAPTER 5

THE PLACE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM
IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY CURRICULAR MODEL THEORY

In the earlier chapters of this work, predominance has been given
to the perceived failure of foreign language teaching and learning, both
at primary and secondary school levels in the course of the last twenty
years or so. Similarly, methodology, particularly in the form of the
audio-visual approach, has been seen as inadequate for the task in hand.
Nor has the Graded Objectives Movement, with its closely defined objectives
and performance-orientated syllabuses and tests proved to be anything like
a complete panacea for teachers seeking to provide 'education in modern
languages which aims to be more than mere instruction in performance
skills' (Hawkins 1981:172).

Indeed, in this climate of lack of achievement and with the limited
educational provision manifest in this latest approach to foreign language
teaching, it is appropriate, at this stage, to take a more positive approach
and to attempt to seek a justification for the place of foreign languages
in the curriculum of our schools today and, in particular, in that of the
comprehensive school. To do so would, at least, serve as a rebuttal to
the most trenchant critics of their inclusion in the curriculum, from
those who would have foreign languages 'as an option to be studied by
volunteers outside normal working hours, like the violin, or like pony-
riding' (Hawkins 1981:27); to others who see them as

> *'a good example of the Grammar School curriculum now being
> imposed on all in the Comprehensive School ... I am not
> persuaded that all pupils should spend so much time in
> learning the rudiments of a language they will soon forget.'*
>
> *(Hargreaves 1979:7)*

At best, such a justification can expose all that is best in the latest thinking in the subject area and provide signposts towards a more successful future.

The format for the search is based upon, in the first place, a study of curricular model theory and its implications for change, and secondly upon curricular pressures as manifest, mainly, in pronouncements by DES and HMI, linked thematically to present day theories about the nature and teaching of languages. In this way, a route should then be opened to the final section of this work, an overview of the way forward for foreign language teaching, with particular reference to suitable aims for this subject area as we move towards the end of the twentieth century.

Curricular Model Theory

The search for a definition of the meaning of the word 'curriculum' can be expanded from the Shorter Oxford Dictionary one, which sees it as a 'course; especially a regular course of study as at a school or university', to a multiplicity of personal definitions from commentators approaching the subject from their own viewpoint. In point of fact, the real definition should be divided into two areas of study, first as an aspiration of what might and should happen in schools and secondly as an analysis of what actually does go on in practice in our schools, for

> *'we appear to be confronted by two different views of the curriculum. On the one hand the curriculum is seen as an intention, plan or prescription, an idea about what we would like to see happen in schools. On the other it is seen as the existing state of affairs in schools. What does actually happen? ... I believe that our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions.'*
> *(Stenhouse 1975:2)*

There is a problem facing curriculum model theorists in their efforts to propound concepts upon which curriculum change may be effected, namely

how to change the form of the curriculum in a practical and meaningful way and to lead the basis of school learning away from traditional concepts and approaches. Such was the situation facing language teachers at the moment of reorganising secondary education along comprehensive lines, as seen in Chapter 2, namely the need to transform the teaching of foreign languages within a curriculum based upon the traditional subject areas inherited from the grammar schools. That they signally failed to do so in significant numbers is made clear by the findings of the Inspectorate in 'Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' (1977), which is analysed in the same chapter. The failure to create worthwhile schemes of work or differentiated objectives in the new situation of 'languages for all' is highlighted in that document and is the direct result of neglecting to alter perceptions of curricular needs to cater for the new situation. Since then, the major element of reform in language teaching has consisted of a tilt in emphasis towards communicative language as a prime objective and the use of Graded Objectives and Tests as a major means of attaining this objective.

This approach typifies the view of curriculum as,

> *'the planned experiences provided by the school to assist the pupils in attaining the designated outcomes to the best of their abilities'*
> *(Neagley & Evans 1967:2)*

or as,

> *'a structured series of intended learning outcomes. Curriculum prescribes (or at least anticipates) the results of instruction.'*
> *(Johnson 1967:130)*

Such opinions, in turn, typify the approach of protagonists of the Objectives Model or means-end model of curricular development, whose rationale evolves around the four basic questions formulated by Tyler in his interpretation of the curriculum:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organised?

4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

(Tyler 1949:1)

which, in their turn, provide the basic formula of the model:

Objectives —— content —— organisation —— evaluation

In this way,

'education is a means to an end which is expressed in terms of student attainment, using the terms INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOME OR BEHAVIOURAL OBJECTIVE (i.e. the student behaviour aimed at).'

(Stenhouse 1975:4)

Taba has expanded Tyler's postulations into a more thoughtfully conceived approach to the curriculum:

1. Diagnosis of needs.

2. Formulation of objectives.

3. Selection of content.

4. Organisation of content.

5. Selection of learning experiences.

6. Organisation of learning experiences.

7. Determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it.

(Taba 1962:12)

In her view, a statement of objectives is irrelevant and even deficient without reference to learners' needs, as

'an intelligent delineation of concrete and tangible curricular objectives can proceed only after some information is

> *obtained regarding the level on which objectives can be*
> *reached by a particular group of students and the emphasis*
> *that may be required in the light of their experience.'*
>
> *(Taba 1962:12)*

Needs analysis, in the area of language learning, has been a crucial

element in preparing courses for those involved in the English for spec-

ific purposes (ESP) work. Foreign students studying agricultural science,

chemical engineering or to be airline pilots, for example, follow

> *'courses where the syllabus and materials are determined in*
> *all essentials by the prior analysis of the communicative*
> *needs of the learner, rather than by non-learner-centred*
> *criteria such as the teacher's or institutions's predeter-*
> *mined preference.'*
>
> *(Munby 1978:2)*

This approach, given the advanced nature of the work students are prepar-

ing for, requires a precision that has not always been the case in the

formulation of objectives, for,

> *'in spite of the lip-service that objectives have received*
> *over the past several hundred years, few teachers have der-*
> *ived many instructional dividends from expressing their goals*
> *because, ordinarily, the objectives have been stated in terms*
> *too loose to allow the teacher to proceed effectively from*
> *them.'*
>
> *(Popham & Baker 1970:19)*

Just such a situation of vagueness is not unknown to foreign language

teachers preparing pupils for 'O' level examinations and being faced with

the flimsiest of examination outlines such as 'a composition of about 150

words based on a short subject outline' or 'a composition of about 120

words based on a series of pictures' (University of Oxford Delegacy of

Local Examinations GCE 1987. Regulations and Syllabuses:44-45), which

are followed by a list of grammar and structures including nouns and

adjectives through to prepositions and interrogatives. From this outline,

teachers had to construct their own syllabus outline, giving regard to the

needs of the examination itself before those of their pupils. Furthermore,

such a syllabus outline would be based upon objectives which would need

to be all-embracing as regards the language patterns and vocabulary

needed in the foreign language, as teachers and pupils alike became

players in a guessing game as to subject matter contained in the actual

examination composition on the day. Would those being examined be famil-

iar with the vocabulary and structures needed to tell the story?

For it is upon such arbitrary situations that a major criticism of

the means-end curricular model can be based. Either precision will be

lacking, as in the case mentioned above, or, if it is of paramount importance,

as in the Graded Objectives movement with its reliance upon behavioural

objectives, there exists the danger of reducing 'the content of education

to an instrumental role, to something that is used merely as a means of

realising an end' (Davies 1976:67).

Indeed, as Bruner points out when discussing the nature and structure

of knowledge,

> '... the curriculum of a subject should be determined by the
> most fundamental understanding that can be achieved of the
> underlying principles that give structure to the subject.
> Teaching specific topics or skills without making clear their
> context in the broader fundamental structure of a field of
> knowledge is uneconomical in several deep senses. In the
> first place, such teaching makes it exceedingly difficult for
> the student to ganeralise from what he has learned to what he
> will encounter later. In the second place, learning that has
> fallen short of a grasp of general principles has little reward
> in terms of intellectual excitement. The best way to create
> interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which
> means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking
> beyond the situation in which the learning has occurred.
> Third, knowledge one has acquired without sufficient structure
> to tie it together is knowledge that is likely to be forgotten.
> An unconnected set of facts has a pitiably short half-life in
> memory.'
>
> (Bruner 1960:31-32)

This thrust in the direction of transfer of learning, motivation and

retention, takes us back once more to the area of Graded Objectives in

Modern Languages, an analysis of which occurred in Chapter 4.

At this stage, taking Bruner's first point concerning generalisation and what a student will encounter later, HMI, in their survey of the Leeds area graded tests scheme, underlined the basic nature of the syllabuses there, as they found that 'the test syllabuses, setting out topics and vocabulary lists, are clear if limited but they can become teaching syllabuses offering a minimum number of structures and words beyond which schools might think it unnecessary to go' (HMI 1983:4). In other words, despite the clarity of objectives based upon 'topics such as personal information, house and home, leisure, travel, health, shopping, food and drink and language used for basic communication' (HMI 1983:3) by their very nature, they are limiting in their scope and render a general appreciation of language and its value in the future, difficult to attain for the average learner.

Similarly, by curbing the student's performance objectives to oral work, listening comprehension and reading comprehension, with no writing at all in the foreign language, the objectives in this scheme fall short of Bruner's 'grasp of general principles' and 'intellectual excitement'. They demand, in the areas of listening and reading, no more than 'the receptive skills of comprehension. Only in the oral tests and then on a moderate scale are the productive skills of supplying or seeking information or opinions expressed' (HMI 1983:3).

Yet, Graded Objectives generally are recognised as worthwhile and effective motivators of learners, at least helping 'to maintain the motivation of the least able pupils into the third year' (HMI 1983:10). However, it is also necessary to take into account the effect of certification upon learners. HMI noted that, in the Leeds scheme, 'the possibility of being awarded a certificate has a good influence on the attitudes of many pupils ... Most children are pleased to receive a certificate' (HMI 1983:8). The

danger is that the prospect of reward can, in the eyes of the learner, mask the real value behind the scheme of learning presented to him, and increase motivation for the wrong reasons. At best, the award of certificates is an effective motivation in the short term only. It is one of the least meaningful by-products of a course of study based on an Objectives Model of curriculum.

Furthermore, to take up Bruner's third point, concerning lack of structure and unconnected sets of facts, stating linguistic objectives by means of topic areas in which 'survival' language is the key element, robs the learner of a great deal as,

> *'the material of the syllabus does not appear to require, or even give opportunity for, any kind of analysis of grammar; reflective understanding of the functioning of the language ... What is then required by the syllabus and reinforced by the accompanying tests is an ability to perform.'*
>
> *(Byram 1978:204-205)*

Communication in a limited form is the aim, across an equally limited range of topics. 'We ask ourselves what are his communication needs and then teach him the language necessary' (Page 1978:97). Yet to deny a learner a wider view of language is to prevent him from gaining an insight into its structure and to rely upon him making sense of what can only be Bruner's 'unconnected set of facts', which form an incomplete basis for language learning.

It reduces language learning to the mere acquisition of skills and to a place in the curriculum alongside learning areas which require mere training and instruction in order to produce adequate performance. Stenhouse, for example, firmly places foreign language learning in just such a situation. For him,

> *'training is concerned with the acquisition of skills, and successful training results in capacity in performance.*

*Examples are making a canoe, speaking a foreign language,
typing, baking a cake and handling laboratory apparatus'*

(Stenhouse 1975:80)

and

*'instruction is concerned with the learning of information
and successful instruction results in retention ... of
German irregular verbs.'*

(Stenhouse 1975:80)

Once again, this view reduces the value of language learning and moreover,

leads to problems, when further assumptions are made in attempting to

justify language learning if it is to be placed within such narrow confines.

For example, to refer again to the Leeds area graded objectives move-

ment, it was felt necessary to site the topic areas of study into particular

contexts for the learners involved. The assumptions made were that they

would be 'relevant to

a. a person visiting France or preparing for an exchange
   visit;

b. a person receiving recordings from individuals or groups
   in France;

c. a person receiving letters in French from a penfriend or
   exchange partner;

d. a person receiving an exchange partner in this country.'

(HMI 1983:3)

Such prescriptions assume that the learner will, in fact, be in a position

to use his new-found communicative competence in such real-life situations

and call into question whether it is even honest to portray these objectives

as achievable, or pertinent to many of our pupils. This is crystallised in

Byram's approach when he states that,

*'I have often felt a certain unease when offering such reasons
for learning a foreign language to recalcitrant pupils and have
not been surprised by their sceptical reception. For, in prac-*

tice, how many of our pupils are ever going to "use" their foreign language as we encourage them to think? A very small percentage will continue their studies to 'A' level and beyond, and will in fact have direct and prolonged contact with the people and their culture. A few more will spend a holiday or go on a school trip - although the family holiday will more likely be in Spain, whose language we teach so little! For the sake of these, we should not of course reject totally the instrumental purposes of teaching and learning foreign languages. Yet where does this leave the vast majority of our pupils? They are trained in a skill, they acquire an instrument they will never use.'

(Byram 1978:205)

Admittedly, with the increase in positive contacts with the foreign country, along the lines of cassette exchanges and contacts with penfriends, some benefits can accrue to some learners, but, for the majority, such assumptions will rarely, if ever, be realisable. Along similar lines, Page sums up the situation even more horrifically:

'Even the hope that they will become more tolerant and understanding is confounded when their exasperation at having to acquire a skill they will clearly never use is twisted into prejudice and dislike for the innocent speakers of the foreign language.'

(Page 1978:97)

Of course, it is possible to rely on the learner's imagination and his ability to pretend he is a French shopkeeper or a client in a cafe and valuable, if limited, work has always been done in classrooms in 'pretend' situations, but the fact is, in an age when pupils have the opportunity to practise new skills in other areas of learning, for example with computers or indeed by 'baking a cake', sooner or later the novelty of pretending wears off and is replaced by boredom. The opportunity for using a foreign language in a realistic situation is too distant a prospect.

Too great a reliance, therefore, upon an objectives model for curricular planning in foreign language teaching can lead to a narrow view as to the nature and purpose of language learning. Even an apparently laudable objective such as oral communication can be limiting, damaging and liable

to produce the opposite effect from that intended. It can even be seen

as less than honest if it promises linguistic acquisition to learners

when there is little hope of them being able to put such acquisition to

use. As an example of this curricular model in action, graded objectives

and tests have encapsulated its very strengths and weaknesses. With

their limited goals embedded in 'survival' language and with regular

certification as a reward, they have gone some way towards providing

clear goals, and reviving motivation, particularly among the least able

pupils. Yet,

> *'there are many areas and registers of language not covered*
> *by the graded examinations syllabuses and in some schools*
> *pupils of high linguistic ability need to make swifter pro-*
> *gress than that suggested by the syllabuses. For such pupils*
> *the syllabuses are the kernel of a language course but are*
> *not the whole.'*
>
> *(HMI 1983:11)*

Some, as quoted earlier, would apply this summing up to foreign language

learning across a wider range than simply those pupils of high ability,

with reference to Graded Objectives as they exemplify the Objectives

Model of curriculum theory. In practice, they typify some of the more

contentious aspects of the theory.

Not least of these is the very behavioural nature of the definitions

of objectives. For example, in the Oxfordshire Defined Syllabuses and

Tests, six topic headings are given: Travel, Cafe-Restaurant, Shopping,

Accommodation, the Town, Personal Information and Conversation and 'each

topic is laid out in such a way as to make it quite clear what pupils will

be expected to be able to say, read and understand by listening' (OMLAC

1977:10). Such expectations comply exactly with Tyler's classic defini-

tion of a behavioural objective, namely that

> *'one can define an objective with sufficient clarity if he can*
> *describe or illustrate the kind of behaviour the student is*

> *expected to acquire so that one could recognise such behav-*
> *iour if he saw it.'*   *(Tyler 1949:59-60)*

This approach is far from new and reflects the use of such patterns in language teaching, particularly since World War 2 with their dominance of the audio-lingual methods discussed in Chapter 3. In that particular methodology, predominance was given to memorisation, mimicry and drilling since the language was to be learnt via habit formation, something akin to a military naming of parts exercise or to the precision and specificity of an instruction, i.e.

> *'Given a human skeleton, the student must be able to correctly*
> *identify by labelling at least 40 of the following bones;*
> *there will be no penalty for guessing (list of bones inserted*
> *here).'*   *(Mager 1962:49)*

Then, as in the Graded Objectives movement, the danger was that language-like behaviour in learners would be a result, rather than the ability to perform meaningfully in the language, for the 'ability to perform in defined contexts can lead to training in performance without any knowledge of grammar ... is it language or language-like behaviour?' (Byram 1985:121). If this is the case, then language teaching is no further forward than it was twenty years ago.

More seriously, however, the imposition of behavioural objectives into the curriculum raises the question of learner-autonomy and choice vis-à-vis what is accepted and approved by his teachers. Admittedly, Taba's conception of curriculum based on objectives places the learner at the head of her list:

1. Diagnosis of needs.

2. Formulation of objectives.

3. Selection of content.

4. Organisation of content.

5. Selection of learning experiences.

6. Organisation of learning experiences.

7. Determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and
   means of doing it.   (Op. cit.)

but the implication remains that 'diagnosis' is made by experts rather

than by consulting the learner. In the case of the Oxfordshire Defined

Syllabuses and Tests, for example, it is clear that objectives are being

formulated upon the identification of linguistic abilities among pupils

and the provision of goals so that 'pupils would have a more positive

approach to the learning of languages if the peaks they were asked to

scale were much nearer and lower' (OMLAC 1978:5). This supposition, that

by shortening the course (from 5 years to 'O' level or CSE), by simplifying

it and by offering regular rewards via certification, even begs the question

of individual democracy and leaves the situation open to Kliebard's harsh

criticism of the use of objectives. He claims that,

> '... *from a moral point of view, the emphasis on behavioural*
> *goals, despite all the protestations to the contrary, still*
> *borders on brain-washing or at least indoctrination rather*
> *than education. We begin with some notion of how we want a*
> *person to behave and then we try to manipulate him and his*
> *environment so as to get him to behave as we want him to.'*
>
> *(Kliebard 1968:246)*

This view is, no doubt, extreme, but carries a germ of truth applicable

to the use of behavioural objectives in the language teaching situation,

as some of those concerned with the Graded Objectives movement have begun

to realise. According to the Schools Council survey (1983),

> '*behind the search for realistic and practicable objectives*
> *and tests which characterizes the graded test movement, lies*
> *a key principle which needs to be made explicit here; needs*
> *analysis. Instead of bringing down the tablets of stone,*

> *structurally/grammatically inscribed, and dumping them on the*
> *heads of the waiting (or, more usually, distracted) multitude,*
> *Moses has taken to scrutinizing his tribe, perhaps conducting*
> *a poll, and to editing the message heavily. Both the scrutiny*
> *and the editing are still in their relative infancy, but the*
> *fact that they take place means that the message is no longer*
> *sacred and immutable.'*
> <div align="right">*(Schools Council 1983:28)*</div>

The requirements of those being taught are now being taken into considera-

tion rather more than before in this movement, even to the extent of

'conducting a poll'. The graded objectives movement will be the better

for it and more able to promote the 'development of individuals' as

envisaged by van Ek and Trim (cf. Chapter 4).

For, as an example of an Objectives Model of curriculum in practice,

it exposes many of the weaknesses inherent in the model. Language learning

can be reduced to little more than a skill to be mastered, requiring mere

training to reach such a point and affords little in the way of a knowledge

of language structure and forms. For the sake of foreign language teaching

in the future, it is as well to heed McDonough's words on the subject:

> *'... the complexity of language is such that one cannot say*
> *that a person knows a language when certain behavioural res-*
> *ponses have been strengthened: rather, knowing a language*
> *implies knowledge of complex structures and procedures which*
> *is a necessary prerequisite of practical performance'*
> <div align="right">*(McDonough 1981:13)*</div>

and look to other curricular models for a way forward.

One curricular model, which has played a large part in recent deliber-

ations about the curriculum, is based upon the concept that education is

concerned with taking part in worthwhile activities which contain their

own standards of excellence, rather than simply being a means to an end as

in the objectives model. It is argued that,

> *'a process framework ... is also important, not only as an*
> *end in itself, but also in terms of selecting a balanced and*
> *harmonious set of learning experiences. Activities or pro-*

*cesses involving enquiry, methodology, problem-solving,
critical thinking, creation, social interaction, and respond-
ing, all without reference to some established discipline or
subject, are intrinsically worthwhile activities'*

(Davies 1976:144)

and Stenhouse maintains that,

*'skills are probably susceptible to treatment through the
objectives model, which encounters its greatest problem in
areas of knowledge ... They can be selected as content on
grounds other than the scrutiny of their specific outcomes
in terms of student behaviours'*

(Stenhouse 1975:85)

despite his insistence that 'foreign language learning is just such a

skill requiring nothing more than training' (Stenhouse 1975:80). He

further contends that,

*'... it is possible to select content for a curriculum
unit without reference to student behaviours or indeed to
ends of any kind other than that of representing the forms
of knowledge in the curriculum.'*

(Stenhouse 1975:85)

This approach to the curriculum, leading to what has become known

as the Process Model, had led curriculum developers towards the concept

of making content the starting point instead of objectives when consider-

ing curricular change, as

*'it is quite possible to evolve principles for the selection
of content in the curriculum in terms of criteria which are
not dependent on the existence of a specification of object-
ives.'*

(Stenhouse 1975:86)

The main problem then, of course, lies in choosing the 'principles for

selection' and here Stenhouse cites Raths' list of criteria in his search

for meaningful judgements.

1. All things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile
   than another if it permits children to make informed
   choices in carrying out the activity and to reflect on
   the consequences of their choices.

2. All things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it assigns to students active roles in the learning situation than passive ones.

3. All things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it asks students to engage in inquiry into ideas, applications of intellectual processes, or current problems, either personal or social.

4. All things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it involves children with realia (i.e. real objects, materials and artefacts).

5. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if completion of the activity may be accomplished successfully by children at several different levels of ability.

6. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it asks students to examine in a new setting an idea, an application of an intellectual, or a current problem which has been previously studied.

7. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it requires students to examine topics or issues that citizens in our society do not normally examine - and that are typically ignored by the major communication media in the nation.

8. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it involves students and faculty members in "risk" taking - not a risk of life and limb, but a risk of success or failure.

9. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it requires students to rewrite, rehearse and polish their initial efforts.

10. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it involves students in the application and mastery of meaningful rules, standards, or disciplines.

11. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it gives students a chance to share the planning, the carrying out of a plan, or the results of an activity with others.

12. All other things being equal, one activity is more worthwhile than another if it is relevant to the expressed purposes of the students.

(Raths 1971:716)

The application of such principles removes the necessity for seeking objectives in subject areas and places the onus on justification by means of reference to the content matter. In varying degrees, foreign language teaching could fulfil all the above criteria, particularly areas 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Involving children with realia in active situations across the ability range, in new settings, by means of topics or issues that are not normally examined in their day-to-day monoglot existence, is at the very heart of such teaching. Furthermore, by broadening the issues, these criteria take the justification for learning a foreign language out of the narrow confines of its own discipline into a cross-curricular role and away from traditional aims and objectives based on accuracy in writing and speaking and an approach to the foreign country's culture through extensive reading of its literature, as in:

a. to understand ... clearly enunciated French or German;

b. to use readily and correctly spoken and written language;

c. to read, with ease, French or German prose or poetry.

(Board of Education 1912:15)

A similar approach is to be found in the work of Phenix with his realms of meaning, which seek to encapsulate the areas of competence envisaged for every learner. These are examined by Davies and presented in the following forms:

1. Symbolics   – ordinary language, mathematics – a formal
    means of expressing and communicating
    meaning;

2. Empirics   – the sciences of the physical world, of
    living and of man;

3. Aesthetics – the arts, music, movement, literature and
    painting;

4. Synoetics   – personal knowledge, insight and awareness;

5. Ethics   – moral knowledge, personal conduct;

6. Synoptics   – comprehensive and integrated meanings such
    as history, religion and philosophy.

Here, the position of foreign languages is somewhat obscure, unless it
is possible to make a case for them in the first realm, once again merely
as a form of skill-learning. McNair has compiled a complete curriculum,
including time allocation, using Phenix's realms as a platform.

Realm of meaning	Relative time allocation	Subject programme
1. Symbolics	2	Maths + either a foreign language or extra English and/or commercial subjects
2. Empirics	1	Integrated science
3. Aesthetics	1	Art or Craft or music or literature and drama
4. Synoetics	1	P.E. ($\frac{1}{2}$) + domestic sciences
5. Ethics	1	Religious and moral
6. Synoptics	1	(History $\frac{1}{2}$) + (Geography $\frac{1}{2}$)

(McNair 1977:170)

He arrives at this compilation, by taking the viewpoint that,

'it is probably hard to justify the learning of a foreign
language by pupils whose fluency in the mother tongue is
weak ... A tenable viewpoint is that being "bilingual" is
more a characteristic of specialised rather than general
education'
$\qquad$ *(McNair 1977:170)*

as he follows Hirst's theory that language is merely a 'tool for the

acquisition of knowledge in the different forms', rather than an area

of knowledge in its own right.

Indeed, the key element in such approaches to learning is that the

curriculum should be examined from a different angle. No longer are

traditional subject areas able to justify their existence simply because

they are there. By using criteria such as those cited above, it is no

longer desirable to regard subjects as a means to an end, but rather as

a process of learning to which each one can contribute in its own way,

taking into account its own subject matter and content. In this way,

foreign languages are afforded the possibility, if they are given the

chance, to avoid being regarded as simply skill-based and of breaking

away from their traditional position in the curriculum. Rather than be

a means to an end, they can make their contribution in areas of experience

across the secondary school curriculum, which has itself been under great

pressure recently.

For, in the course of the last ten years, attempts to influence the

content of the curriculum in the schools of Britain have been intense and

varied, with both DES and HMI in the forefront of such influences. Part-

icularly since Callaghan's Ruskin College speech, which is widely recognised

as launching what has become to be known as the "Great Debate", and in

which he gave his definition of one of the goals of education as the

necessity

*'to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively,
constructive place in society and also to fit them for a job
of work. Not one or the other, but both.'*

(Callaghan 1976)

Government has sought to play a greater role in the form of the curric-
ulum, both in general terms by means of DES reports such as 'Better
Schools' (1985) and in particular subject areas with the issue of
consultative documents along the lines of 'Foreign Languages in the
School Curriculum' (1983).

Similarly, HMI have sought to influence matters not only through
the presentation of reports of the results of their inspections such as
'Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' (1977) and of surveys on such
areas as Graded Objectives and Tests, Leeds area (1985), but also by in-
depth pronouncements of general importance such as 'A View of the
Curriculum' (1980) and 'The Curriculum 5 to 16. Curriculum Matters'
series.

However, it was in the report 'Curriculum 11-16' (1977), which sought
to link general observations upon education with the contribution of
individual subject areas to it, that HMI produced their 'checklist' of
areas of experience, namely,

1. The aesthetic and creative

2. The ethical

3. The linguistic

4. The mathematical

5. The physical

6. The scientific

7. The social and political

8. The spiritual.

(HMI 1977(a):16)

This checklist was offered to those responsible for curriculum matters

with the reminder that,

> *'pupils are members of a complicated civilisation and cul-*
> *ture, and it is reasonable to argue that they have nothing*
> *less than a right to be introduced to a selection of its*
> *essential elements'*
>   *(HMI 1977(a):5)*

and has remained, with slight variations of wording and the addition of

technology to the list, as a recommended way of analysing the curriculum,

through into the later documents, 'A View of the Curriculum' and 'The

Curriculum from 5 to 16'.

Their view that education has two roles,

1. to equip young people to take their place as citizens
    and workers in adult life, and to begin to form attitude
    to the prevailing patterns in standards and behaviour;

2. there is the responsibility for educating the "autonomous
    citizen", a person able to think and act for herself or
    himself, to resist exploitation, to innovate and to be
    vigilant in the defence of liberty,

                                                    (HMI 1977(a):9)

makes it 'necessary to look through the subject or discipline to the areas

of experience and knowledge to which it may provide access and to the

skills and attitudes which it may assist to develop' (HMI 1977(a):6), and

links directly with Raths' criteria and Phenix's realms examined earlier

in this chapter and suggests a closer affinity to processes in the curric-

ulum rather than means-ends objectives as a subject area's contribution to

it.

Furthermore, HMI observations upon the importance of language in

general, have implications for foreign language teaching in particular.

When they observe that,

'pupils also require experience of using language correctly in context, of discriminating between fact and fiction, between reasoned argument and prejudice so that they feel confident in making choices and decisions'

(HMI 1977(a):12)

whilst, on the other hand,

'we cannot be satisfied with the preparation we give to young people for the language needs of their lives'

(HMI 1977(a):21)

they open up the possibility that foreign languages can contribute to the curriculum in both the linguistic and social areas of experience.

Indeed, it is in their appreciation of the contribution of foreign language studies to these two areas of experience which can be a major liberating influence upon this subject area. They suggest that foreign language learning,

'1. allows the learner to communicate personally and directly with the people and culture of another country, either through the spoken or written word and enables him to meet foreigners at home and to travel abroad with increased confidence, enjoyment, interest and profit, whether for business or pleasure.

2. It directs the attention of the learner to the way in which language is organised and extends and reinforces his understanding of language in the broadest sense by promoting on a wider context for the study of the mother tongue.

3. He acquires insight into the language learning techniques which will enable him to learn other languages at a later stage and comes to appreciate how much concentration and effort the learning of a foreign language demands.

4. Learning a foreign language affords the possibility of acquiring a healthy curiosity towards foreign peoples and of developing understanding of the unfamiliar in speech,

customs and manners through acquaintance with the people
and their way of life and through study of their liter-
ature and cultural heritage. It can thus contribute
towards the development of international relationships.'

(HMI 1977(a):68)

In other words, the value is seen to lie in:

1.   Communicative language and social competence.

2.   Awareness of language.

3.   Apprenticeship and foundation for later linguistic needs.

4.   Cultural benefits for pupils' attitudes.

Already, there is a broadening of the contribution foreign languages can

make away from narrow communicative objectives, and the possibilities

that this affords to learners will be discussed in the following chapter.

Government, however, in its observations upon the curriculum in

general, takes a much more deliberate and narrow view of matters. As

regards general educational aims, for example, its policy evidently takes

cognisance of HMI thinking about preparation for adult life, but ignores

the needs of the "autonomous citizen", when proffering the following

objectives for foreign language teaching:

(i)   to help pupils to develop lively, enquiring minds, the
        ability to question and argue rationally and to apply
        themselves to tasks and physical skills;

(ii)   to help pupils to acquire knowledge and skills relevant
        to adult life and employment in a fast-changing world;

(iii) to help pupils to use language and number effectively;

(iv)   to instil respect for religious and moral values and
        tolerance of other races, religions and ways of life;

(v)   to help pupils to understand the world in which they
        live and the inter-dependence of individuals, groups
        and nations;

(vi)   to help pupils to appreciate human achievements and

aspirations.

(DES 1981:3)

It is possible to detect some connection with, for example, Phenix's

realms, namely symbolics, empirics, ethics and synoptics, but also a

distinct leaning towards 'tasks', 'skills' with 'employment' in mind.

Further observations move well away from areas of experience as the

'Secretaries of State ... have thought it most helpful to
express much of their guidance in terms of subjects, be-
cause secondary school timetables are almost always devised
in subject terms, they are readily recognised by parents
and employers and most secondary school teachers are trained
in subjects'

(DES 1981:6)

and curricular recommendations for secondary schools go no further than

criticising attempts to transfer the selective school curriculum over to

the comprehensive schools, with the suggestion that 'curricula of broadly

common character, designed so as to ensure a balanced education during

this period and in order to prevent subsequent choices being needlessly

restricted' are needed, with the further insistence upon the need 'to

equip young people fully for adult and working life in a world which is

changing very rapidly indeed' (DES 1981:12). Most, if not all, teachers

would support the concept of a broad curriculum up to the age of sixteen,

but equally, many would find difficulty in supporting the utilitarian

concept behind the idea of preparing 'young people for adult and working

life', with its vocational implications and its inherent suppositions that

pupils can be motivated by long-term goals and have clear ideas as to

their future careers.

For it is to this goal that government turns yet again in 'Better

Schools', presented to Parliament in 1985. In this document, the general

educational aims are the same as in 'The School Curriculum' (cf. p.103),

except for the removal of the emotive wish 'to instil respect for relig-

ions' in aim (iv), and its replacement by the more judicious statement

'to develop ... respect for religious values' (DES 1985:14). However,

the requirement that the curriculum should reflect breadth, balance,

relevance and differentiation is used to support the contention that the

future working life of pupils is of paramount importance. In this way,

breadth is necessary to 'introduce the pupil to a wide range of areas of

experience, knowledge and skill'; balance is required so that 'each area

of the curriculum should be allotted sufficient time to make its specific

contribution, but not so much that it squeezes out other essential areas';

relevance is needed to that subjects might 'make plain their link with

the pupils' own experience and to bring out their applications and contin-

uing value in adult life', and differentiation has its place because 'what

is taught and how it is taught need to be matched to pupils' abilities and

aptitudes' (DES 1985:14-15). This mixture of the self-evident and down-

right vague is regarded as important as,

> 'A curriculum founded on these principles will, in the Govern-
> ment's view, serve to develop the potential of every pupil and
> to equip all for the responsibilities of citizenship and for the
> formidable challenge of employment in the world of tomorrow. It
> is vital that schools should always remember that preparation
> for working life is one of their principal functions.'
>
> (DES 1985:15)

In the present economic climate, with the pressing need to reduce unemploy-

ment, and, as government policy continually states, with the need to

produce school leavers sufficiently skilled to be employable in the new

industries upon which future prosperity is to be built, it is understandable

that such references to 'working life' and 'citizenship' should be prominent

as part of this policy. Such a position, however, can prove difficult to

defend in terms of the tradition of liberal education in this country.

For, as White points out in his trenchant critique of 'The School Curriculum' (1981),

> 'If ('The School Curriculum') is intended as a liberal rather than an illiberal document, the government should make this plain, despite what is surely a balance of evidence to the contrary. A diet of the basic skills, plus science, a modern language, religious education, physical education and vocational guidance is not going to help the older secondary pupil to understand herself (or himself), her own life and its possibilities and the complex social world in which she lives. It may, on the other hand, help to remove any angularities which might prevent her fitting into a round hole somewhere in the economic structure, both by overt vocational steering and by covertly getting her used to the mechanical and meaningless tasks which much of industry contains by engaging her in endless mechanical exercises in French, English and arithmetic.'
>
> (White 1981:14)

Much the same could also be said about 'Better Schools' as a blueprint for the curriculum in our schools, for such documents reflect a view of education in general which affects the position of foreign languages in the curriculum, both from the point of view of the nature of this subject area and the contribution it can make to the education of children. For if foreign language learning is to maintain a meaningful position in the curriculum of the schools of this country, as the government would wish, by affording it a 'key position' alongside English, Mathematic and Science (DES 1983:14), it is only by taking into account the needs of those children and the contribution of this subject area to their needs which will ensure this. An appreciation of such needs is the theme of Chapter 6, where they are examined alongside a wider perspective of language learning.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNERS' NEEDS AND LANGUAGE AWARENESS

A recurring theme throughout this thesis so far has been that of learners' needs. In Part I, this was the background to the unflattering situation discovered in both Primary and Secondary school provision for foreign language learning. They surfaced again in Part II in the brief overview of the Council of Europe project and, more strikingly in assessing the impact of the Graded Objectives movement. Similarly, they have emerged in Chapter 5 as being of prime importance in justifying the position of foreign languages in the curriculum itself.

At present, pupils' needs continue to hold a prominent position in the thinking of both professional educationalists and government alike. The latter, for example, in the consultative document, 'Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum' (1983) perceive the following aims for foreign language teaching:-

'a. To enable pupils to understand speech at normal speed.

b. To enable them to speak the language intelligibly.

c. To enable them to read with ease and understanding.

d. To enable them to express themselves in writing.

e. To give them a knowledge of the foreign country and an insight into its civilisation and culture.'

(DES 1983:5)

Here, it is as well to remind ourselves that such propositions are formulated from a stance of perceived national needs, which may in no respect correspond with those of the learner as an individual. Rather they are, not unexpectedly, bound up with ideas of increasing trade and

commerce, by familiarity with the customer's native tongue and with the concept of the nation's standing within Europe and throughout the world.

At the same time, it is necessary to take cognisance of the nature of our own society and, in particular, of the situation in which the English foreign language learner finds himself. For example, in his everyday environment, it is as well

> *'to acknowledge regretfully that most English children have little motive for learning a foreign language once the initial appeal of novelty has worn off. It is widely accepted that English is spoken everywhere; teenage culture is dominated by the English-speaking world - in Germany pop-singers are only taken seriously if they sing in English and ABBA could hardly have expected international adulation had they sung in Swedish.'*
>
> *(Hornsey 1981:36)*

It is natural for most British teenagers not to perceive an urgent need to pursue foreign language studies, as their own culture makes few or no such demands upon them. For them, just as for ourselves as teachers, it is difficult to foresee 'the use to which the pupil might put his learning' (DES 1983:5) or to forecast precisely what any given learner may need to know in the course of his life after school.

> *'In most cases the future learner has only a very vague idea of the objectives he would like to achieve by learning a foreign language and above all, he is unable to specify them.'*
>
> *(R. Richterich & J. Chanceval 1984:36)*

Indeed, for the great majority of comprehensive school pupils, everyday, here-and-now needs predominate, particularly for those without career objectives, either because they have not yet made up their minds or because the present day economic climate renders job prospects bleak. Only in the context of the school journey to a foreign country, usually available to a minority of pupils, is any immediacy brought to the prospect of contact with the people of that country and, therefore, to the

needs 'to speak the language intelligibly' or 'to understand speech at normal speed'. The foreign assistant is a further contact, often under- or mis-used and equally too stretched within his or her twelve hour working week, when shared between two and sometimes three schools, to make an effective contribution to any one of them. Moreover, because of local government spending cuts, provision of assistants has ceased in many areas.

In this context, therefore, it is difficult to reconcile the DES aims for modern language teaching with the actual needs of learners in our schools, all the more so, in fact, if teachers' perceptions go no further than slavish acceptance of such aims. In particular, the current vogue of the pursuit for communicative competence among learners, is a recipe for disenchantment and de-motivation among their ranks and hints at the impossible goal that language teachers have set for generations, namely ultimate comparison with the native speaker. Indeed, in historical terms, there is little to choose between the wish to have pupils 'understand speech at normal speed', 'speak the language intelligibly' and 'read with ease and understanding' and those aims cited some thirty years ago in the Ministry of Education Pamphlet No. 29:-

> *'to enable pupils to understand and use with a fair degree of accuracy the simple spoken language: to read at sight, and with good grasp of meaning, straightforward modern prose in the foreign language.'*
> (Dept. of Ed. Pamphlet No. 29 1956:21)

Such aims, in fact, have played a major part in the failure of modern foreign language teaching, as instanced in Chapters 2 and 3, for they imply that the pupil is to attain at least a semblance of native-speaker control of the foreign language, in much the same way as he has 'mastered' his mother tongue, even though foreign pupils of his own age practise and make

errors in many 'first' declension verbs which (our) own pupils are

expected to have mastered three or four years ago' (Byram 1984:7). They

force teachers into the position of either burdening adolescent learners

with the intricacies of preceding direct object pronoun and perfect tense

agreements in French, even the subjunctive tenses, when such linguistic

complications are often not at the command of the native speaker or of

confusing average ability pupils with feeble extrinsic aims, such as

completing a chapter, a topic or even a textbook in a specified length of

time. The certification element in Graded testing is only a limited step

in the right direction. Moreover, personal experience suggests that as the

novelty has waned, with older brothers and sisters already possessing

certificates, certification lacks much of its appeal as a motivator as the

years go by.

Despite the proliferation of the Graded Objectives movement, there-

fore, with its 'way-stage' certification, learning a foreign language is

still perceived, if communicative competence is to be the main aim and the

most significant element for assessment, as a five year course, often

combined with the 'drip-feed' approach of a single period per day.

> *'But a five-year course is irrelevant to most language learners
> in the new secondary schools. It is wasteful and illogical to
> start pupils off on a course which two thirds of them will not
> complete. Moreover, it is pernicious as well, as most give up
> with the negative feeling that they are not good enough to
> continue.'*
> *(Harding et al 1980:3)*

As a result, HMI have recorded some inevitable reactions:

> *'language lessons were noisy and sometimes quite out of control;
> very few pupils continued beyond the options stage, and even
> these were relatively unsuccessful in public examinations.'*
> *(HMI 1977(b):14)*

Nor should it be forgotten that,

> *'one of the results of the introduction of Primary French has*
> *been the lengthening of the period leading to external examina-*
> *tions at 16+ from five to seven or even eight years. Pupils*
> *are now exposed to French for a longer period than their pre-*
> *decessors, but are still aiming for public examinations of the*
> *same standard as in the past, that is, they are covering the*
> *same distance in a longer time.'*
> *(Morris 1978:177)*

- a little-discussed drawback to the whole issue of the introduction of a

foreign language to young learners. Moreover,

> *'the drip feed method has come to be questioned. The metaphor*
> *was false. In hospitals the dripping blood, carefully matched*
> *to suit each patient, gives life. In schools, four or five*
> *drips a week of French administered from the same container to*
> *all varieties of pupil often ensured the dearth of interest*
> *long before the three year sentence expired.'*
> *(Rée 1978:126)*

Certainly, the lengthy five year course and the single period per

day have served the learner's needs very badly indeed and have had much

to do with lack of motivation amongst learners, in this case at the crucial

age of adolescence. For, as Hawkins reminds us, whereas

> *'children from six to nine show a capacity for empathy'*

- the ability to see the world from another person's point of view -

> *'this declines with the approach of adolescence, especially*
> *among boys.'*
> *(Hawkins 1983:109)*

Thus, foreign language learning with its

> *'emphasis on oral skills becomes doubly threatening to the*
> *adolescent (shy, voice breaking, clumsy) who is called upon*
> *to make the ridiculous noises for his mates to hear.'*
> *(Hawkins 1983:110)*

It is precisely this emphasis on communicative language, particularly with

its emphasis on 'mastery' by speaking 'intelligibly' and listening to speech

'at normal speed', which is a mistaken concept, even a dishonest one, as it

makes for what Eustace sees ad doubtful extrinsic motivation,

> '*i.e. the benefit the student will receive from "knowing" a
> particular language (apart from any satisfaction gained from
> language learning itself). Motivating pupils is thus usually
> a means to an end: we try to maintain their interest in order
> to prevent them becoming bored or disruptive, to persuade them
> not to opt out at the age of fourteen (as 60% still do), to
> help them to obtain better grades at external examinations and
> so on.'*
> (Eustace 1984:7)

In other words, in terms of the curriculum, the learner's needs are
still regarded as definable in terms of a means-end approach via behavioural
objectives, as discussed earlier in this chapter and found to be inappropriate
to the teaching of foreign languages. Such an approach is meaningless also
in the context of a learner's needs. For the majority of such learners, as
has been seen, it can be a positive disincentive, despite the obvious, if
limited, claims for motivational success in the communicative approach of
the graded objectives movement:

> '*the majority (of headmasters) feel that OMLAC has improved the
> attitudes, behaviour and motivation of less able pupils.'*
> (HMI 1983:13)

More fitting is the point of view that,

> '*Communicative syllabus design seems often to be preoccupied
> with redefining content to improve learners' motivation, at
> the expense of really thinking about how children learn in
> their different ways.'*
> (Partington 1984:76-77)

To this might have been added such questions as when? and where? as
in Hymes' classic definition of communicative competence:

> '*We have ... to account for the fact that a normal child,
> acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but
> as appropriate. He or she acquires competence, as to when to
> speak, when not, and as to what to talk about, with whom,
> when, where and in what manner. In short, a child becomes
> able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part
> in speech acts and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.'*
> (Hymes 1972:277)

For linguistic competence is of great social importance to the learner

so that what he does utter is appropriate as to timing and content. This

takes language acquisition away from providing the means by which a learner

can pick up simply the skills of language learning in order to attain

'mastery', towards

> *'a major objective that by, say, the end of statutory schooling,
> our pupils will have been given every opportunity to become
> fascinated (as we are) by language-learning and keen to pursue
> language-learning as adults. Part of this process will be the
> imparting to them of knowledge about how languages can be learned.'*
>
> *(Eustace 1984:8)*

To do this, it will be necessary to move away from the idea that

learning a foreign language in the secondary school is a five year slog,

albeit with early rewards in the form of Graded Test certificates, eventually

for the minority, with the distant goal of the public examination at the

end of it. Nor should it be entertained that learners' needs are being met

by an insistence upon communicative competence, which, again, will not be

attainable for an even greater majority of our pupils. Neither will refer-

ence to the national economic need for competent linguists 'if Britain is to

trade successfully in the world and play its full part as an effective

member of the European Community' (DES 1983:2) or 'The country too can

benefit economically and culturally: opportunities will be opened in trade,

tourism, international relations, science and other fields' (DES 1986:1) go

very far towards motivating young learners at a difficult age. Even

unfavourable comparison with practice on the Continent where 'generally

speaking, young people in other West European countries are better able to

communicate in a second language than are their British counterparts' (DES

1983:2) is unlikely to act as a spur, especially as they have their problems

too:

'After six or seven years of being taught a foreign language,
99% of pupils are incapable of forming an original sentence,
of reading a newspaper article or of conversing with a foreign
child of their own age in his language ... If parents imagine
that their children learn a foreign language at school in
order to be able to use it later in life they are totally mis-
taken.' (translation from 'Le Monde' 30:1:81:11)

Rather, if learners' needs and, eventually, national requirements

are to be met, language teaching needs to consider what it is able to

offer the learner alongside its primary aim of communication in the foreign

language, if teachers are to remain honest with themselves. Admittedly,

it is not possible to be as flexible as, for example, when providing for

adult needs in Council of Europe scheme with its 'courses closely geared

to the needs, motivations and characteristics of learners and enabling

them so far as possible to steer and control their own progress' (van Ek

and Trim 1984:4). Nor could we be so precise as those working in the area

of English for Specific Purposes which provides 'courses where the syllabus

and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the

communicative needs of the learner, rather than by nonlearner-centred

criteria such as the teacher's or institution's predetermined preference'

(Munby 1978:2), for such people as airline pilots and students in agric-

ultural science or chemical engineering, where the needs can be analysed

and pre-determined in a reasonably straightforward manner. Foreign language

teaching must offer its learners that which, at least, approximates to their

needs and which does not offer goals for all which are beyond the majority

of our pupils. As Hawkins has so aptly stated:

'we should resist the temptation to grasp at any more panaceas.
Instead we should try to construct a coherent programme of
language education. This would begin in the primary school and
might have the following four components:

1.   *a deliberate attempt to give all pupils the tools for*
     verbal learning in the primary school;

2.   *the provision of a course in 'awareness of language'*
     in the secondary school bridging the space between
     mother tongue and foreign language(s);

3.   *closely linked with the language course and with the*
     study of English in the secondary school, an apprentice-
     ship in learning a trial language, frankly accepting that
     no English-speaking pupil's adult foreign language needs
     can be predicted before the age of career choice is
     reached;

4.   *the opportunity to acquire at the post 16 stage in sixth*
     forms and in further education the language of choice by
     intensive methods.'

                                            (Hawkins 1981:228)

By pressing forward with work in the areas of the second and third compon-

ents, we will then be improving the linguistic provision for our learners

and, at the same time, placing foreign language learning in a cross-

curricular situation, away from the isolation of the past, which encouraged

methodological experimentation, even dogma, the quest for impossible

objectives, the acceptance of panaceas and the aura of failure.

Awareness of Language

    In 'Curriculum 11-16', HMI state that,

    'Modern Language study can offer the opportunity for growing
    pleasure in the use of words and can develop sensitivity to the
    sounds and rhythms of language. It directs the attention of the
    learner to the way in which language is organised and extends
    and reinforces his understanding of language in the broadest
    sense by providing a wider context for the study of the mother
    tongue.'
                                            (HMI 1977(a):68)

There is, therefore, a double benefit from such an exercise, on the one

hand the enjoyment to be had in using a foreign language with its nuances

of sound and rhythm and on the other a yardstick for comparison with the

learner's first language.

Such objectives have been evident in other areas of thinking, for example at the local level, as instanced in the aims of the West Sussex Education Authority Working Party when they refer to 'a deepening awareness by pupils of the nature, functions and structure of language (including the properties of their language by comparison and contrast' (Modern Languages 11-18: 19). Similarly, in the European arena, specific aims for a learner include the necessity 'to raise his general level of language awareness, i.e. the characteristic properties and make-up of his own language in relation to those of another language and of the uses to which language is put in everyday life' (van Ek and Trim 1984:128).

This contrastive element in a commitment to awareness of language, is concisely argued by Hornsey when he asserts that:

> *'the learner gains insights into how human language works. His own language is part of him: the foreign language can be looked at more objectively ... Coping with different ways of using tenses, different rules of word-order or different semantic categorizations (why do Russians make such fine distinctions when all they want to say is "went", why do the French need to distinguish between cahier, carnet, livre, how do we know who or what does the biting when a German says den Hund beisst der Mann?) will require use and practice but should also give rise to discussion about language. The language-saturated world ... will be made more comprehensible and approachable if the arbitrariness of its symbols (the word does not equal the thing!) has been examined and norms have been challenged. I suspect that today's secondary school pupils will benefit when, as adults, they are less bemused than their parents by the word-play of government, bureaucracy, the advertising industry or even the academic world.'*
>
> *(Hornsey 1981:37)*

It is an essential element for the learner in a world dominated by the media, with its welter of opinions and exhortations, its pressures and confusions, and foreign language learning can make its contribution in a variety of ways.

Hawkins, for example, places such a contribution in a wider perspective, as he categorises the following benefits:-

'The opportunity to recategorise some areas of experience that the primary schooling has left imprecise, such as the calendar; telling the time; mental arithmetic ... the foreign language offers a neutral medium in which to rehearse such basic concepts without appearing to call attention to the weaker pupils' shortcomings.'

(Hawkins 1981:56)

This use of the foreign language as a reinforcing agent for badly learned conceptual knowledge lends powerful emphasis to such study. He also sees 'a useful "re-education" of the ear. Children need to listen for meaning' and, more importantly, 'the ... challenging apprenticeship in matching sounds to written symbols ... (which) feeds back upon reading English' (Hawkins 1981:57), thus reinforcing the skills of literacy in the mother tongue. Furthermore by 'exploration of structures which contrast with English' Hawkins sees awareness of language as a 'help in discriminating nuances of meaning in English by exploring alternatives in the foreign language which do not exactly match the English' (Hawkins 1981:57) and so expands the early premise of 're-categorizing' known concepts into new areas of conceptualisation from what he calls the 'intrinsic' to the 'extrinsic', forms of conceptual knowledge considered to be at the disposal of the able child at quite an early age. Less able children lack forms of 'extrinsic' knowledge and can be encouraged in this direction by an approach which deals with the more subtle elements of language, in a contrastive way.

All this, in turn, contrasts vividly with the latest trends in foreign language teaching theory and, in particular, the heavy bias towards communicative methodology. An insistence upon awareness of language as a worthwhile part of the curriculum suggests that time for its inclusion will

be taken, at least in part, from provision for foreign language teaching.
However, even if this were so and in depth study of a foreign language
were delayed as late as third year in the secondary school, one cannot
help but feel that the benefits to learners would be immense. For, hope-
fully, pupils would be more proficient learners if they already possessed
the techniques for learning before the process in the foreign language has
begun and their interest in language for its own sake more developed. With
these tools to hand, pupils would be in a position to make rapid studies in
those communicative skills which, in the early years of secondary school

> 'need to be subservient to the need to understand the distinctly
> human phenomenon of language. From that understanding will
> follow an improved capacity to function as a member of a society
> which is dominated by linguistic communication.'

> (Byram 1982:147)

For it is precisely this dominance in society of linguistic communica-
tion which handicaps large sections of our school communities, particularly
those children who arrive at school and are rapidly categorised as 'slower
learners', precisely because they do not hold the key to this world of
linguistic communication, as Donaldson has summarised:

> 'In the early stages, before the child has developed a full
> awareness of language, language is imbedded for him in the
> flow of events that accompany it. So long as this is the
> case, the child does not interpret words in isolation, he
> interprets situations. He is more concerned to make sense
> of what people do when they talk and act than to decide what
> the words mean ... What is going to be required in our educa-
> tional system is that he should turn language and thought in
> upon themselves ... He must be capable of manipulating
> symbols ... the first step is the step of conceptualising
> language - becoming aware of it as a separate structure,
> freeing it from its embeddedness in events ... Some children
> come to school with this step already taken, or at least with
> the movement already begun. They come with an enormous initial
> advantage ... in some homes awareness of the spoken word is
> greatly encouraged. Some parents talk about words to their
> children, play word games with them and so on. But most talk
> only with words. Indeed a great many children come to school

*not even aware that separate words exist - that the flow of
speech can be broken up into these units.'*

<div align="right">

(Donaldson 1978:88)

</div>

This 'initial advantage' for some, as opposed to the disadvantage

of others, has, in the past, formed the basis for doubting the necessity

for including a foreign language in the curriculum, particularly in the

primary school, at the time of the Primary School French experiment, as

> *'... there will be a proportion (of children) who, because of
> difficulties in development or unfavourable backgrounds, are
> likely to lack fluency or have difficulty in making themselves
> understood. The psychological trauma of placing a child with-
> out adequate powers in a new social situation (foreign language
> learning) can be serious,'*
> <div align="right">*(HMI 1967:19)*</div>

and

> *'in some areas where parents are not providing much general
> education in the homes, the school finds it hard enough to
> teach a wide English vocabulary and a basis of clear speech
> without starting a second language. If learning a second
> language becomes standard, the working class child will be
> at a further disadvantage.'*
> <div align="right">*(The Fabian Society 1964:18)*</div>

In political terms foreign language learning was seen as a means of main-

taining privilege among the more able, at the expense of the rest of the

school population. Happily, Hawkins has laid this to rest when he poses

the question, 'But in a polyglot world, and a European Community, must the

curriculum remain static simply to avoid challenging narrower home horizons?'

(Hawkins 1981:28), and then gives the fundamental response:

> *'Even the slower learner in the earliest stages can enjoy the
> experience of liberation from the monoglot's "magical view of
> language": it can be a school experience which in itself is
> fun though difficult and leaves pupils with a sense of achieve-
> ment, lighting fires of curiosity about the polyglot world
> which will blaze through adult life.'*
> <div align="right">*(Hawkins 1981:47)*</div>

To ensure that such stirring events should happen, Hawkins links the

language awareness course to mother tongue and foreign language learning

to form his 'trivium' and sees it in these terms:

> '1. *to offer a bridge linking English with the foreign*
>   *language and a neutral or common ground for the*
>   *discussion of language. In schools whose pupils speak*
>   *a variety of mother tongues or non-standard dialects*
>   *the need for such a common ground is urgent but its*
>   *usefulness is not restricted to such schools;*
>
> 2. *to equip pupils with aptitude for language learning*
>   *by deliberately fostering the capacity to 'process'*
>   *verbal messages;*
>
> 3. *to provide a firm base, a responsible board of studies,*
>   *library resources and prestige for the teaching of*
>   *'language across the curriculum' which will languish*
>   *unless built into the timetable and given status.'*

(Hawkins 1981:237)

By promoting awareness of language in this way and by using foreign

languages as a contrast to the mother tongue, learners will widen their

linguistic competence, be more tolerant of what is strange and therefore

threatening, particularly in our modern multi-cultural society and cultivate

the learning the skills necessary for in depth study of a foreign language.

This makes sense in the context of a curriculum regarded as stretching from

five to sixteen: from verbal learning in the primary school through to an

awareness of language course, and to in depth learning of a foreign lang-

uage or languages once the apprenticeship is over. This is a coherent base

upon which to found the linguistic learning experiences of young people

today. Hopefully, external pressures to embark upon foreign language

learning for all from the age of eleven 'and that up to 60% of pupils might

in future study a foreign language throughout the secondary phase' (DES

1986:11) and hollow caveats in this most recent document:

> *'Some secondary schools offer courses which can contribute to linguistic development such as "language awareness" courses. The time needed for such courses often comes from that of the first foreign language and schools need carefully to weigh the benefits of the former against the disadvantages of eroding opportunities for practice in the latter'*
>
> *(DES 1986:21)*

will not divert enthusiasm and resources away from language awareness courses and all that they can offer to the learner as a liberating influence and a solid foundation for meaningful studies in a foreign language. For 'Language Awareness' is a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life' (NCLE 1984:7) and, as such, plays a key part in a child's general education.

Without some grasp of the 'nature of language', a child will be at a permanent disadvantage in life generally and, more to the point, will find himself ill-equipped to benefit from learning a foreign language. Consequently, it will be all the more difficult for him to find fulfilment of his needs through attempting to learn another language. In this way, many of the problems besetting the subject area will be perpetuated.

However, in the climate of a heightened perception of learners' needs and a realisation of the value inherent in awareness of language as a prerequisite of successful foreign language learning, it is apposite to move on, in Chapter 7, to other aspects of such learning which are often taken very much for granted.

CHAPTER 7

THE NON-LINGUISTIC CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING:
THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

The assumption that foreign language learning contributes culturally and socially to the development of pupils has a long history. For example in 1912 the Board of Education expressed the hope that cultural benefits would accrue from the 'ability to read, with ease and intelligence, French and German prose and verse' (Board of Education 1912:15). Similarly, it has been seen that,

> 'many sixth form masters and mistresses are inspired by the ideal of humane learning and regard their subject as an instrument of culture which can be used to develop the higher faculties - imagination, a sense of beauty, fine judgement and intellectual comprehension. By their example they are giving proof that the modern language course in the Sixth Form can be distinguished not only by its practical value but by its breadth, its scholarship and its dignity'
>
> (Min. of Ed. Pamphlet No. 29 1956:94-95)

and that during the 1960s

> 'the cultural value of learning a modern language also received a new emphasis, for it was hoped that some knowledge of the way of life of a foreign people would help to create in pupils a less insular and prejudiced outlook.'
>
> (HMI 1977(b):3)

Now, in the 1980s, it is appreciated that foreign language study

> 'offers insight into another culture and as such is concerned with the human and social area of experience: concepts such as number, weight and time can be reinforced in foreign language learning. Throughout the course pupils can be encouraged to view the familiar from a different angle, not least in terms of people's behaviour, and thereby widen horizons and break down feelings of insularity.'
>
> (DES 1985:23-24)

In the first two quotations above, the assumption that pupils could broaden their outlook and cultural appreciation of a foreign people by means of extensive and intensive reading of a country's literature, had much to recommend it in the context of teaching able linguists at sixth form level, in that they could be expected to have sufficient ability and interest to do so, even with enjoyment. The last two instances, however, form their assumptions in somewhat different circumstances, in the era of comprehensive education in which communicative language teaching is of major importance and where foreign languages are to be taught across the ability range. We have moved from the intellectual cultural pursuits of the selective school sixth form, to the topic-based communicative situation of survival language. Yet the position does not vary. Somehow, the learner's mind will be broadened and his insularity lessened, as foreign culture 'rubs off' on to him in some undefined, chance manner, either via great literature or as a by-product of prolonged contact with authentic materials and text books in the typical comprehensive school classroom, as,

> 'learning a foreign language affords the possibility of acquir-
> ing a healthy curiosity towards foreign peoples and of developing
> understanding of the unfamiliar in speech, customs and manners
> through acquaintance with the people and their way of life and
> through study of their literature and cultural heritage. It can
> thus contribute towards the development of international relation-
> ships.'
>
> *(HMI 1977(b):68)*

Furthermore, this outlook has found official backing. In 'Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum', the fifth and final goal of foreign language teaching is perceived as the need

> 'to give them a knowledge of the foreign country and an insight
> into its civilisation and culture'
>
> *(DES 1983:5)*

and, in the most up-to-date document of the same name,

> *'It contributes to an understanding of the cultures, attitudes and ways of life in other countries, which is an important part of citizenship in a country with complex and extensive international relations.'*
>
> *(DES 1986:1)*

Yet there is no proof offered that it does, in fact, contribute or how, nor is any guidance given as to how to foster such insights into good 'citizenship'. Yet again, strong cultural aims are firmly included in those set out in the NEA GCSE French syllabus for 1988, namely:

1. To develop the ability to use French effectively for purposes of practical communication;

2. To form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure;

3. To offer insights into the culture and civilisation of French-speaking countries;

4. To develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;

5. To provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation;

6. To encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations;

7. To promote learning skills of a more general application (e.g. analysis, memorising, drawing of inferences)

> (NEA GCSE French Syllabus 1988:1)

but with the following caveat:

> *'The examination will reflect Aim 1 of the syllabus and, throughout, the emphasis will be on the use of French for purposes of practical communication. Aims 2-7 are not in any order of priority and are not all intended to be tested in the examination.'*
>
> *(NEA GCSE French Syllabue 1988:1)*

The implication is that not all these aims are 'intended to be tested in the examination', either because it is impossible to do so, as the research has not been done, or because 'insights into culture' and 'positive attitudes' will somehow be assimilated in the process of following a communicative language course and that this will be reflected in the nature of the examination questions. The concept is vague and less than satisfactory, yet it reflects the situation in which foreign language teachers have for so long found themselves:

> *'whether dealing with GCE grammarians or Mode 3 communicators, teachers concern themselves above all with language'*
>
> *(Byram 1983:114)*

despite the fact that

> *'the contribution which the understanding of another culture and civilisation should make to the reduction of prejudice and the encouragement of tolerance is one of the unchallenged beliefs of language teachers.'*
>
> *(Byram 1983:116)*

In affect, cultural or background studies have always been suspect in the eyes of teachers, something· to be turned to for those pupils who find foreign language work beyond them. As a result, their status has remained low and rightly so as very often,

> *'facts are handed out to be learned – often insignificant facts by any standards – without any sense of purpose or any didactic or epistemological framework. The methodological weaknesses betray a failure to establish a theoretical foundation for cultural studies; there is no theory to guide the sorting of the significant from the insignificant.'*
>
> *(Byram 1983:116)*

French Studies or their German and Spanish equivalents with their economic slant (the wine-growing regions, agricultural products, industrial output, tourist attractions, etc.) have always tended to be nothing more than 'timetable fillers' and of little cultural value.

Nor have many textbooks proved to be worthwhile purveyors of foreign

culture. Too often course books for beginners have presented 'something

like the Enid Blyton world of la famille Marsaud' (Byram 1983:118) in

which

> 'the learner is presented with a picture of a France populated
> by unworried and friendly middle-class people: they have no
> economic problems, no housing problems. The learner does not
> see the French at work: shopping and spare-time occupations
> preponderate. In all the textbooks the relationships between
> the persons are very friendly, almost idyllic; there is no
> generation gap, no conflicts. There are no social or political
> problems; there are no negroes, no Arabs, no immigrant workers,
> no unemployment, no minority groups of any kind. To sum up,
> all the course material gives a socially and ideologically one-
> sided picture of France and the French.'
>
> (Risager and Andersen in Byram 1983:117)

This bland, cosy world has little relevance to the everyday world of many

pupils and serves to heighten impressions of the stereotyped middle-class

foreigner as,

> 'the image of the Frenchman with a black spade beard, dressed
> in morning suit and spats, still survives in the minds of many
> middle-aged Englishmen from the textbook pictures of their
> schooldays ... The teacher must beware of imprinting inexact
> notions of the foreign country on the child's mind.'
>
> (Halls 1970:39)

Furthermore, in the later years of foreign language learning involv-

ing the minority of learners who have survived, when the real world does

present itself as they study magazine and newspaper articles in which

'the minorities have become standard topics of Sixth Form work' (Byram

1983:117), it is purveyed by means of dry, intellectual journalese which

can destroy empathy by its very style, and through the context of their

presentation - crime, crisis, strife, etc. This has been described by

Tucker and Lambert as the 'echh reaction', a 'term that helps describe a

student's disgust or shock when exposed to certain novel values, traditions

or customs associated with a foreign people (Tucker and Lambert 1973:249).

However, it must be accepted that whatever reasons there are for 'believing that positive attitudes towards other peoples and cultures might come from a close understanding of one of them' (Byram 1983:118) and that 'learning a foreign language involves direct contact with a foreign culture, not talking about things French or German but actually operating with them' (Hornsey 1981:37), it must be said that none of these can be taken for granted as a natural outcome from the study of a foreign language. They require fundamental changes in all areas of teaching a foreign language and, in particular, in methods of examining and testing, which, experience suggests, tend to be the mainspring for change. If the GCSE aims could all be tested, foreign language teaching and learning would take on new dimensions, with benefits for the attitudes of learners regarding foreign cultures generally.

However, one area in which positive steps have been taken in this respect is the non-literary 'A' Level course in which an alternative to, or replacement of, the requirement to study set texts across the range of literature in the foreign language has been provided. This not only removes what can be a daunting prospect for post 'O' Level learners, but also provides a distinct initiative for intensive study of the foreign country's culture and civilisation as well as enhancing the student's command of its language.

For example, the AEB state as one of the three aims of a course based on their syllabus, the wish to 'encourage an interest in the contemporary culture of the foreign country' (AEB A Level Syllabus 1985:5) alongside the continued aim of 'language for the purpose of communication' and 'the ability to collect, analyse and exchange information, ideas and attitudes' (AEB A Level Syllabus 1985:5). Furthermore, a prime assessment objective

is that 'the examination will assess the candidate's ability to: ...
demonstrate knowledge of, and insight into, aspects of civilisation and
culture, the candidate should be able to write in the foreign language
on two topic areas that will have been studied during the course' (AEB
A Level Syllabus 1985:5).

The examination board offers eight topics from which the candidate
is to choose the two for study and they are wide-ranging, from:

Une région de la France.

1. Aspects géographiques
   - le climat
   - le rebit
   - la situation.

2. Aspects historiques
   - les traditions (la langue)
   - le folklore
   - le patrimoine culturel.

3. Aspects économiques contemporains
   - l'économie (industrie, agriculture)
   - les transports .
   - les changements récents ou prévus (croissance urbaine,
     dépeuplement régional)
   - le tourisme.   (AEB A Level Syllabus 1985:12)

to:

'Paris vu par les écrivains', 'L'avion et les aviateurs vus
per Saint-Exupéry', 'L'Urbanisme en France', 'Troisième Age',
'François Truffaut (1932-84)', 'La Résistance 1940-44' and
'L'année 1987',
                           (AEB A Level Syllabus 1985:12-18)

thus providing a cross-section of economic, literary, historical and social
aspects from which the learner may make a choice. The study of Paris and/
or St. Exupéry offers possibilities to these learners with literary leanings,

whilst those with a taste for contemporary social and economic aspects are provided for in other areas, and the inclusion of the French cinema as a major cultural influence should be a particularly rich area of study.

This section of the examination, worth 20% of the total marks, instances a complete break from literary-based sixth form studies and goes some way towards providing a creditable alternative field of study able to introduce students to insights of culture and civilisation previously considered as by-products of studies at this level.

Other examination boards, with similar notions have approached the situation in varying ways. JMB, for example, offer an alternative to a written paper based on prescribed texts, in the form of internal assessment of course work. Here, although the student must still write an essay on each of two works of French fiction or non-fiction, it is possible to opt, in place of another literary essay: 'French spoken and/or written material equivalent in scope to a second work of fiction/non-fiction. Candidates may use, as the basis for one essay, information gained from staying abroad in a French-speaking environment' (JMB A Level GCE Revised Syllabuses 1985:8). This relaxation of the regulations, plus the lack of any prescription in the choice of 'areas of interest within which topics for study *may* be found' (JMB French (Advanced) Internal assessment of course work, July 1985:3) give the school and students more autonomy and the possibility of meaningful study in the crucial areas of the social and cultural background to the language being studied and are to be welcomed as a positive move away from traditional 'A' Levels.

Similarly, in higher education, alongside or in place of traditional degree courses which combine linguistic studies with the study of literature possibly over the broad area from the Middle Ages to the present day and the

view of foreign culture this affords, one finds 'newer modern language
degree courses which ... place the emphasis upon political, social and
economic aspects of the relevant country' (Thomas and King 1986:62) or
'European Studies courses which involve an interdisciplinary study of
contemporary Europe based on the social sciences' (Thomas and King 1986:
62). In addition areas such as accountancy and business and management
studies can be combined with a foreign language or languages and include
a period of study or work abroad.

An example of a contemporary university course which combines
literary study with area background studies is to be found at the Univer-
sity of Stirling where in the fourth term, it is compulsory for single
Honours students and optional for Honours and General degree students to
study 'Contemporary France'. This course

> 'sets out to establish the historical and geographical basis
> of post-war France, analysing the human response in terms of
> economic and social change, and culminating in the examination
> of certain key areas of French life (the education system, the
> mass media, religious life, the place of women etc.) seen
> against the background of the so-called revolution of 1968.'
>
> (University of Stirling Prospectus 1986-87:76)

By siting such studies in the recent past, the contemporary social, econ-
omic and cultural situation in France is transmitted to the students in
meaningful terms and able to add greatly to their general awareness and
appreciation of the foreign country.

Similarly, at Ealing College of Higher Education, a four-year BA and
BA Honours in Applied Language Studies degree course is offered to students
where,

> 'in each of their languages, students follow, throughout the
> course, a Regional Studies programme which provides the contem-
> porary economic, cultural, political and social background of
> the countries concerned and forms a basis for much of the
> language work'

and which aims

> *'to provide the student with a good understanding of the*
> *societies in question through a study of the interaction of*
> *the geographical, social, cultural, historical, political*
> *and economic forces which have shaped these societies.'*
>
> *(Ealing College of Education,*
> *General Prospectus of Courses 1986-87:34-36)*

Such intensive and, at the same time, extensive study on a regional basis

once again makes for heightened awareness and provides a context for lang-

uage study itself throughout a four year period. It may well not promote

the ideal of the bi-lingual's view of societies and may actively encourage

them to be looked at from the point of view of the 'outsider', but at least

it affords the possibility of making comparisons with the nature of the

native society and culture as well as the language and, as such, is a

worthwhile advance.

Here, then, higher educationists are breaking new ground and moving

away from the idea that social and cultural appreciation is to be shaped

solely by studying the great literature of a foreign country or to be

assimilated in some indefinable manner through linguistic study. By

insisting upon, or actively encouraging, such area studies as exemplified

above, they point the way forward for others to follow further down the

educational hierarchy.

This is not to say that work along exactly the same lines could be

undertaken in schools catering for the eleven to sixteen age group, as the

demands placed upon learners would be beyond their abilities and maturity.

Further, the dangers of offering 'watered-down' forms of such an approach,

perhaps in the guise of 'French Studies', have already been noted earlier

in this chapter.

It is, however, certain that a proportion of students currently following degree courses along the lines of those described above will become teachers in our schools and will possess a fund of knowledge and experience which they will wish to make use of in their work. This implies that during the time they are being trained to teach, cognisance must be taken of the background study they have undertaken, so that student teachers are able to develop the methodology and courses needed to make use of such experience. Then, when they become established in schools and the research has been done, foreign language teaching and learning can be enriched and developed so that their non-linguistic, cultural and social aspects are no longer a matter of assumption and peous hope, but an integral part of foreign language courses.

On this optimistic note, it is appropriate to conclude the second part of this thesis, in which have been examined some of the practical outcomes to the problems outlined in Part I as well as many of the contemporary theories regarding the curriculum, pupils' needs and the non-linguistic aspects of language learning. Much has been attained, as in the area of Graded Tests, but a great deal more is attainable if the contemporary situation allows. In Part III, therefore, is to be found an analysis of the present-day situation and suggestions as to the ways in which foreign language teaching and learning in comprehensive schools might develop.

PART III

CONTEMPORARY PRESSURES : A PERSONAL RESPONSE

CHAPTER 8

THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

In the previous sections of this thesis, it has been the intention to trace the situation of modern foreign language teaching and learning over the course of a precise segment of time in the history of that subject area and to examine many of the more prominent outcomes during that period. In Part I, therefore, the unsatisfactory nature of much of the foreign language work done in our schools has been a prime feature. In Part II, the reactions to this situation, particularly as regards the re-formulation of objectives and syllabus content as well as changes in perspective due to recent research developments in curricular thinking, perceptions of needs and the cultural social aspects of language teaching, have been prominent.

At this stage, therefore, it is appropriate to take stock of the contemporary situation and to establish a cohesive basis from which to draw implications and upon which to lay foundations for practice in the future. For much has been found to criticise and to find fault with, although, equally, a great deal that is positive and valuable has emerged from contemporary thinking in this subject area, as exemplified in Part II.

Inevitably, however, in any appraisal of the contemporary situation, one is confronted with the realisation that whatever the logical conclusions may be, ever since the introduction of the 'Great Debate' in education, constraints and pressures have been applied from outside subject areas which can render appraisal and apparently straightforward suggestions difficult to implement.

This is particularly true today where, increasingly, 'the public is invited to tell educators not only how to do their job, but what that job

really is' (Perren 1977:34) and where professionals, who may have a
perfectly clear idea what the needs of their specialism are, find it
increasingly more difficult to implement new concepts without constraint
from outside that specialist area. For, although idealism must be
tempered by realism, it is apparent that a great deal of what appears in
this analysis may, in the present climate, be of limited consequence in
terms of possible implementation.

Be that as it may, it is possible to arrive at certain conclusions
from the analysis offered in this thesis. First of all, it is evident
that much of the criticism chronicled in Part I of this work was justified,
and could be laid at the door of inadequate, confused aims and objectives,
as well as unsuitable methodology. Secondly, it is possible, by means of
a re-appraisal of objectives and content, to interest and motivate, more
particularly those pupils of moderate and lower ability, by means of courses
such as those found in the Graded Objectives movement. Thirdly, and most
importantly, by recognising that foreign language learning is able to make
a wider contribution to learners' needs in cultural and social terms and
to his or her general linguistic awareness, it can have wider curricular
importance than ever before in its history, particularly in the context of
all-ability schools.

A prime reason for this optimistic conclusion lies in the honest
realisation among language teachers that we operate anyway within certain
constraints, as summarised by Hornsey under four headings:

> 'First, there is no evidence that in Great Britain we could
> possibly teach the majority of the school population to
> understand, speak, read and write a foreign language at a
> level even approaching the needs of everyday communication,
> if the latter is understood as anything more than the simplest
> formulae of survival. The time available, the lack of inten-
> sity, the size of teaching groups and the absence of any kind

of urge to learn a foreign language which might be present outside the English-speaking world together present virtually insuperable problems.'

(Hornsey 1983:4)

'Second, if language teachers can persuade their pupils to persevere in the subject, they need not feel frustrated by the very limited skill which their pupils acquire provided that, in acquiring it, they arrive at some understanding of a foreign culture and gain a modest insight into language itself.'

(Hornsey 1983:5)

'Third, it is inevitable that slow progress in the skill area and the decline of novelty value will lead to frustration and that pupils will opt out. The numbers opting out will be considerable reduced if learners are engaged on courses which have clear and attainable short-term objectives so that they can have clear and attainable indications of success and therefore wish to continue.'

(Hornsey 1983:5)

'Fourth, a humanistic aim is not helped by compulsion. Pupils ... must be allowed to taste the subject but then allowed to withdraw. It is better for them to return later, by choice, if more intensive courses are made available ...'

(Hornsey 1983:5)

In other words, by coming to terms with the limitations imposed by the nature of learners' needs as perceived by themselves, by the reality of the situation in our schools, which itself limits communicative acquisition (cf. Hawkins' 'gardening in a gale of English') as well as early opting out and the dangers of a 'French-for-all' policy, foreign language teachers are in a position from which we can be honest with ourselves and with those we are to teach.

No longer should it be necessary to seek to motivate via long-term goals, by the promise of eventual linguistic competence or by the prospect of examination success at the age of sixteen. Rather, teachers of foreign languages have it in their grasp to withdraw from their position of isolation, from which it has been too easy to criticise the failings of other

subject areas such as the omission to teach 'grammar' in English lessons, and to ensure that their subject area makes a curricular contribution on humanistic grounds. A more precise definition is proposed in Chapter 9 and needs no further exposition here. Suffice it to say that the way is open for contributing across a broader range of the curriculum.

At the same time, it is as well to consider, when looking at the present-day situation, constraints which have come about, either as a result of the criticisms outlined in Part I of this thesis and the reactions to those criticisms analysed in Part II, or imposed from outside sources. In the former category, one can firmly place Graded Tests whose benefits and disadvantages for language teaching and learning were analysed in Chapter 4. As a major outcome during the last decade, they have done much to improve motivation by means of certification and short-term behavioural objectives, albeit as a limited means to an end, affording few, if any, links with other areas of the curriculum. As such, courses based on the ideals of the Graded Objectives movement impose their own restraints upon foreign language teaching and its ability to contribute in humanistic terms to the linguistic development of learners in our schools. Moreover, such a limited approach has come from within the profession itself.

On the other hand, and perhaps the most important outcome of all, has been the advent of the GCSE examinations, imposed upon schools in what many regard as indecent haste given the present state of turmoil in the education world and based upon national criteria governing all syllabuses. Under this umbrella, individual subject areas were to tailor their own specific criteria to the national criteria which

> 'represent a consensus between the teaching profession, the
> Examination Boards and Groups, the users of the examination
> results, the Secondary Examinations Council and the Govern-
> ment'
>
> (GCSE French: A guide for teachers 1986:5)

and which seek

> *'to create a greater commonality in aims, objectives, content and assessment methods for the benefit of candidates, teachers and users alike, while still allowing for development and experimentation.'*
>
> *(GCSE French: A guide for teachers 1986:6)*

'Consensus' or not, it is difficult to see how 'commonality' or downright prescription as to aims and objectives can allow for the avowed freedom 'for development and experimentation'. By its very nature and dependence upon behavioural objectives along the lines of a 'means-end' curricular theory, the entire basic concept of this educational reform is suspect.

This judgement is borne out in the NEA French Syllabus outline for the 1988 examination with its emphasis on communicative skills:

1. to understand the spoken language;

2. to understand the written language;

3. to communicate in the spoken language;

    and, for those candidates who opt to do so;

4. to communicate in the written language.

> (NEA GCSE French Syllabus 1988:1)

in this context, 'the language and skills expected of candidates will be those which may be needed by a person

1. visiting a French-speaking country as a tourist or on an exchange or extended visit;

2. meeting, assisting or acting as host to a French-speaking person visiting this country;

3. establishing and maintaining contact with French-speaking countries;

4. wishing to explore their own interest through the medium
    of French.

Emphasis throughout will be on practical communication.

(NEA GCSE French Syllabus 1988:2)

Once again, unrealistic assumptions are made about learners' needs and expectations, thus increasing the likelihood of de-motivating pupils. Furthermore, even if communicative proficiency in the above context is attainable and gives insight into language learning, it fails to encourage understanding of language as a phenomenon in learners' everyday lives. Once again we are 'turning away from the heart of language teaching as a part of general education' (Byram 1982:146).

There is also a distinct relationship here with topic-based courses based on graded objectives, which, as has been proposed earlier in this work, create their own problems. The syllabus content for GCSE, for example, comprises

1. Settings and topics

2. Language tasks

3. Language functions

4. General notions

5. Structures and grammar

6. Communication strategies

7. Vocabulary – lists by topics

    Vocabulary – alphabetical list

with Section 1 listed thus:–

SETTINGS	TOPICS
Home	Personal identification
Town	Family
Country	House and home
Seaside	Geographical surroundings and weather
Public transport	
Accommodation	Travel and transport
Restaurant, cafe	Holidays
Shops, markets, department stores	Accommodation
	Food and drink
Public buildings	Shopping
Places of entertainment	Services
Sports Centre	Health and welfare
Places of interest	Free time and entertainment
School, place of work	Relations with others
Social venue	Education and future career
Hospital, chemist, doctor's or dentist's surgery	Foreign language
	Money

and with candidates 'expected to cope with the topics ... within any

relevant setting' (NEA GCSE French Syllabue 1988:7). They are to show

competence within the above framework, using at least three of the four

basic skills with assessment summarised thus:-

LISTENING	READING	SPEAKING	WRITING
Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic

The minimum requirements for the lowest grades E, F, G, include entry for

at least Basic Listening, Basic Reading and Basic Speaking, and for grades

A and B, Basic Listening, Basic Reading, Basic Speaking, Basic Writing and

any two other tests (NEA GCSE French Syllabus 1988:4) to ensure clear

discrimination between good and weak candidates, although all are intended

to be 'rewarded for their positive achievements (i.e. for showing what

they know, understand and can do)' (GCSE French: A guide for teachers

1986:7).

This intensely prescriptive approach merely serves to negate the

avowed intention that

*'subject-specific criteria ... leave much freedom to syllabus
developers - particularly in the choice of content and in the
use of techniques of assessment.'*

(GCSE French: A guide for teachers 1986:7)

The content of the NEA GCSE Syllabus lies within such a narrow framework,

that, once again, other aspects of language learning (awareness of language

and particularly its social and cultural implications) are not given the

impetus they deserve, purely because they are not, as yet, adaptable to

assessment.

In this way, therefore, foreign language teaching is constricted, at

present, within confines largely of its own making. Over-reliance upon

the short-term motivational benefits of the Graded Objectives movement has

found further expression in the NEA GCSE Syllabus outlines and teachers and

learners alike are restricted to an approach based on communicative compet-

ence defined in terms of behavioural objectives. Looking back over the two

decades covered by this thesis, there will be many who welcome such a

planned approach, especially if they follow the outlook as expressed

recently by a local colleague that 'foreign languages is now a technical

subject'. It will only become so if we allow it to.

At the present time, therefore, two of the main influences in foreign language teaching are Graded Tests and the new GCSE examination, which have emerged as tangible outcomes of the dissatisfaction of the seventies. Another is the influence that government seeks to exert by means of consultative documents and statements of policy. In this subject area, examples are to be found in 'Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum: A consultative paper' (DES 1983) which has been analysed in Chapter 5 and 'Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum: A draft statement of policy' (DES 1986) which was touched upon in that same chapter and which is to lead to a definitive statement of government policy.

As such, it must be said the latter appears to be a more balanced document than the former in that it acknowledges, for example, that it is not

> 'possible to predict the future needs of individual pupils for particular foreign language skills. Most who will make use in various ways later in their lives of a knowledge of foreign languages will need to take advantage of facilities in further and higher education, in adult education or by employers.'
>
> (DES 1986:3)

It further concedes that,

> 'Learning a foreign language brings educational benefits beyond the attainment of practical skills. It affords insights into the nature of language and learning. It contributes to an understanding of the cultures, attitudes and ways of life in other countries, which is an important part of citizenship ...'
>
> (DES 1986:1)

These statements encourage an enlightened approach to the realities of learners' needs, in the light of their unpredictability, and to the question of awareness of language, despite the limiting reference to 'insights' rather than understanding. Indeed, this concept is taken even further with the reminder that,

> *'The presence in a locality of significant numbers of people*
> *whose mother tongue is not English provides a climate of*
> *awareness of language and opens up interesting and challeng-*
> *ing opportunities for language learning'*
>
> *(DES 1986:4)*

without, however, outlining ways of implementing such resources within

the curriculum.   In fact, later in this document, there occurs the

following caveat,

> *'Some secondary schools offer courses which can contribute*
> *to linguistic development such as "language awareness"*
> *courses.   The time needed for such courses often comes from*
> *that for the first foreign language and schools need care-*
> *fully to weigh the benefits of the former against the*
> *disadvantages of eroding opportunities for practice in the*
> *latter.'*
>
> *(DES 1986:21)*

This in itself, upon closer inspection, hints at the true nature of this

paper.   For, whilst apparently encouraging contemporary thinking on the

contribution foreign languages could make to the curriculum, it effectively

promotes dated concepts combined with an element of compulsion and with

needs of a more utilitarian kind.

For example, it is perceived that the 'drip-feed' method of timetable

organisation is necessary to maintain progress, so that,

> *'to maintain pupils' concentration in the early stages of*
> *language learning, particularly in communicative work, an*
> *even spread of single lessons over a week is likely to be*
> *more effective'*
>
> *(DES 1986:20)*

to support the contention that,

> *'a foreign language should be included in the curriculum*
> *of virtually all pupils and should start no later than the*
> *first secondary year ... We reaffirm our view that once*
> *pupils have embarked on a foreign language, they should*
> *continue with it for at least three years.'*
>
> *(DES 1986:7-8)*

Furthermore it is envisaged that,

> 'LEAs and schools should take steps to make a foreign lang-
> uage one of the compulsory elements of the 14-16 curriculum
> for those pupils who can benefit from it'
>
> (DES 1986:8)

with

> 'the assumption that up to 60 per cent of pupils might in
> future study a foreign language throughout the compulsory
> secondary phase.'
>
> (DES 1986:11)

So, we are to perpetuate and somehow improve upon the concept of a

five year drip-feed course, based on communicative skills, for almost

two thirds of the intake in secondary schools, with its inherent problems

of maintaining motivation and interest and emphasis on skills and perform-

ance.   As this thesis seeks to prove, some contemporary thinking on this

matter goes against such prescription.

Indeed, the primary aim of the DES document is to place the study of

foreign languages in the context of a particular kind of relevance in

stating that pupils

> 'may need to use a foreign language in a wide range of
> occupations and situations in their adult lives'
>
> (DES 1986:18)

and

> 'worthwhile skills in foreign languages are a lasting
> asset which can be developed and put to use by people at
> work ...'
>
> (DES 1986:1)

This is a return to the theme of the world of work and utilitarian skills

and away from the humanistic benefits of such study.

Furthermore, the ultimate relevance for learners is perceived in

national economic terms, as

*'the country too can benefit economically and culturally:
opportunities will be opened up in trade, tourism, inter-
national relations, science and other fields. The
development of such opportunities can make a practical
contribution to improving Britain's effectiveness as a
member of the European community'*

(DES 1986:1)

and

*'compared with many trading nations, ours has a damagingly
small proportion of people who understand and speak a
foreign language. Although our prosperity depends on
trade overseas, many companies attempting to export, con-
duct all their business in English.'* *(DES 1986:2)*

The expectation is that this malaise in our trading performance can be
remedied to a great extent by ensuring that work done in our schools is
relevant to the country's needs as well as to those of the individual.
Such an outlook suggests that the autonomous individual and his or her
development as a young person may well be sacrificed in the nation's
interest.

As a statement of government policy, therefore, this document, whilst
apparently addressing in an open-handed manner the problems associated
with foreign language learning in our schools, does no more than perpetuate
the unsatisfactory situation it seeks to remedy. Moreover, it seeks to
compel learners to undertake methods of study far removed from their own
needs, all of which mitigates against development of the individual and
against contemporary developments in language learning. Indeed, as the
third element in the contemporary situation outlined in this chapter, such
a policy statement stands to be the most influential of the three, coming
from the main source of power and finance in this country. Its interpret-
ation could spell the end of much of the development work as described in
Part II of this work. It merely enhances the probability that foreign

languages remain a skill-orientated subject area offering little to the development of the individual.

As such, it also complements a similar danger inherent in the two other major contemporary influences analysed earlier in this chapter. Graded Objectives and the GCSE examinations also encourage the trend. Yet it is to be hoped that, assuming that an element of curricular freedom does remain in the hands of teachers, some of the more enlightened of contemporary developments may be permitted to flourish within our schools, perhaps along the lines described in the ultimate chapter of this thesis. If so, the implications could be far-reaching as I shall now seek to demonstrate in concluding this work.

CHAPTER 9

THE WAY FORWARD

Following two decades of criticism and change, what, therefore, is the way forward? First of all, it is necessary for foreign languages to rediscover a place in the curriculum commensurate with their worth as an area of study alongside all the others. Furthermore, that worth will, in turn, depend upon the nature of the curricular model adopted as, most certainly, foreign language study will not progress, if it is required to continue a reliance upon a "means-end" form of curriculum, requiring clear statements of and adherence to, behavioural objectives in order to ensure compliance with such a curricular model. A more appropriate approach could be taken along the lines of the process model of curriculum, aspects of which were examined in Chapter 5.

Here, we are able to move away from reliance upon the definition of precise objectives towards the principle that the content matter of a subject area provides the starting point for making judgements as to its worth and its contribution towards the learner's general education. At the same time, such a move makes it necessary to define the nature of the discipline of language learning, its procedures and outcomes, if it is to be assimilated into a curriculum of this sort.

Looking back, it is not difficult to discover widely accepted reasons for the inclusion of modern foreign languages in the curriculum of the day. For example, the grammar- translation method, with its rigorous demands upon learners in both the mother tongue and the foreign language gave reality to the notion that,

*'Years ago it was argued that the study of a foreign language
provided a mental discipline which could be transferred to
other activities. Thus for example practice in the writing
of classical verse would imbue the mind with powers of combin-
ation sufficient to deal with the most intricate problems of a
managerial board.'*

(IAAM 1956:3)

This idea, that foreign language learning encouraged 'mental discipline',

was the outcome of the struggle by foreign languages to attain a place in

the curriculum alongside, even in competition with, the classical languages

in the latter half of the last century. Its protagonists

*'would insist that the grammar drill, the parsing, the picking
to pieces of the texture of the foreign language and the repro-
duction of it in literal English, the analysis of constructions,
the practice of reconstructing these constructions when turning
English idioms into their foreign equivalences, provide the very
highest training for the logical faculties. They would further
argue that these analytic processes furnish an unrivalled train-
ing in clearness and accuracy ... And, finally, they would contend
that the close study of the structure of a foreign language would
alone make a man a scholar in the true literary sense of the
word; in short, that a grammatical and critical study of the text
was an indispensable aid to an appreciation of literature.'*

(Brereton 1905:15-16)

In this way, wrestling with the intricacies of language would train the

mind and fit the individual for a high level position in the diplomatic

service or industrial management.

This, then, was perceived as the 'discipline' of learning a foreign

language and a prime reason for its inclusion in the curriculum. Indeed,

this perception has carried through into the present day, despite apparent

methodological change, for

*'in many and probably most Sixth Forms, the influence of
"grammar-translation" is strong: Whitmarsh lives and "Actual-
ités Françaises" begins to lose its "actualité".'*

(Byram 1983:111)

It is part of the long tradition of language teaching and learning that much of its value lies in the 'intellectual discipline' imposed upon the learner with the consequent training of the mind which that involves.

Furthermore, the tradition has been strongly maintained even during the last fifteen years, as teachers trained in universities where the emphasis was firmly placed on high levels of linguistic accuracy and literary appreciation, have prepared pupils for GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels and CSE Mode 1 examinations where they

> *'study as grammarians and acquire through such study, the (written) language of an esteemed nation, which will allow them access to the culture written in that language.'*
>
> *(Byram 1983:111)*

For, as a result of his own training, the language teacher

> *'really values the grammarian's study, ... he really values the pupil who can tell him whether and why a sentence is grammatically correct, irrespective of whether it is communicatively appropriate.'*
>
> *(Byram 1983:111)*

The effect has been to concentrate, not always successfully or appropriately, upon the perceived linguistic needs of the more able pupils and to offer to the majority of pupils, so often regarded as lacking in basic linguistic skills and therefore unable to cope with established public examinations, courses such as CSE Mode 3, French Studies and, more recently, tests in survival language originating from the work done in the Graded Objectives movement. In the case of the former courses, the linguistic element was limited, sometimes non-existent and in the latter, narrow in scope as befits the concept of a communicative approach confined to the practice and memorisation of 'tranches' of 'survival' language with little grammatical knowledge required of the learner.

Indeed, the influence of Graded Tests has spread with many of their topics to be found, in extended form, in the GCSE Language Tasks such as Personal Identification, Family, House and Home, Geographical Surroundings and Weather, Travel and Transport, etc. (NEA GCSE French Syllabus 1988:10). In effect, the pendulum has swung, from the wish 'to give a mental discipline of the best possible kind' (Brereton 1905:15) to an insistence upon 'the development of practical skills of communication and especially the ability to understand and use the spoken word' (DES 1986:15).

Moreover, in both cases, the learning processes involved can be less than attractive in the situation where 'most English children have little motive for learning a foreign language once the initial appeal has worn off' (Hornsey 1981:36), if, on the one hand, they are required to learn vocabulary and rules of grammar, to memorise or translate passages and exercises and on the other, to memorise dialogues, absorb new vocabulary and perform in the foreign language with as much native-like fluency as they can command. The demands upon the learner are rigorous in both approaches and, even though grammar-based learning can be effectively considered as a thing of the past, the danger persists that,

> 'if a foreign language in school is conceived only in terms
> of skilful communication, then drilling, memorising and re-
> peating could become the order of the day'
>
> (Hornsey 1981:38)

thus perpetuating outcomes of failure and lack of attainment, as documented earlier in this work and the continuation for most pupils, even amongst the most linguistically able, of a drift away from foreign language learning at the earliest opportunity.

Yet such outcomes are not inevitable, if language teachers can be weaned away from the perpetual search for ideal behavioural objectives

linked to a means-end concept of the curriculum and, in particular, from
comparison with the ideal of native speaker competence. The process of
learning a foreign language can be expanded beyond the limits set by such
an approach, if the nature of the process is re-assessed and more meaning-
ful outcomes are sought, along the lines of Stenhouse's approach to the
curriculum. For, although in his curricular model language learning is
looked upon as little more than a skill to be perfected through training,
it is possible to take his and others' principles quoted in Chapter 5, as
a starting point for a re-assessment of the contribution of foreign language
learning within the confines of such a curricular setting.

First of all, it is necessary to appreciate that, as well as seeking
a measure of communicative competence for learners of a foreign language,
other aspects of the discipline can contribute to the general education of
such learners. If, for example, a move is made away from the time-worn
principles of justifying foreign language learning - such as its usefulness,
how it will make us better Europeans, or the fact that it just may be
vocationally useful - towards the contribution it could make to the total
language education of its learners, then new processes and outcomes could
be brought into play.

Pupils could be encouraged to approach their learning task much in the
way that innovative history teachers encourage their learners to be histor-
ians in their own right, by treating the topic in question as a detective
would, by researching original sources for evidence and drawing conclusions
from them, rather than accept the fashionable interpretation of historical
events. In this way, they are stimulated to discover for themselves and
to be curious about the work in hand. In foreign languages, learners could
approach their task in much the same way, concentrating upon investigations

into language much as linguists do, by comparison with the mother tongue or with other European or worldwide languages as and when they are available to the school, by doing their own personal research into vocabulary, ways of speech or grammatical structures. In this way, language acquisition would take on personal meaning and importance for the learner, as opposed to an over-demanding, and often unrewarding, pursuit of purely linguistic competence.

Furthermore, by careful selection of the learning processes, along the lines of the Process model, it is possible to include in them, not only the communicative competence which is widely conceived as the main element in present-day foreign language learning, but also aspects of language awareness along with the cultural and social appreciation which form such a crucial part of contemporary thinking. With this curricular approach it is possible to take meaningful account of learners' needs and to satisfy their existing subjective desires in foreign language studies at whatever level of attainment may be appropriate, from the budding professional linguist downwards, as opposed to the notion of emphasising external national needs for competent linguists and the necessity of equipping individuals to fulfil these requirements.

Thus, a move can be made away from the time-worn principles for justifying foreign language learning, such as its usefulness, how it will make us better Europeans or more effective competitors in the field of commerce, or that it just may be vocationally useful (in any case, the limited amount of language required for, say, holidays or business travel can be readily assimilated from phrase-books or intensive crash-courses), towards a more valuable contribution to the general humanistic education of learners.

Just such an approach could be included in Brown's "radical" suggest-
ions in which a new subject area is proposed which combines mother-tongue
teaching, language awareness and "taster" modules of two foreign languages
and which would be allocated seven periods in a twenty period week. As a
foundation course over the crucial first three years, it would appear thus:

1st Year - All pupils:
   3 English, 2 'language' { 2 1st FL - 6 months = 7 periods
                               { 2 2nd FL - 6 months

2nd Year - Potential linguists:
   3 English, 2 1st FL   2 2nd FL = 7

       - Others:
   3 English, 3 1st FL   1 language = 7

3rd Year - Potential linguists:
   3 English, 2 1st FL   2 2nd FL = 7

       - More able of 'others':
   4 English, 3 1st FL = 7

       - Less able of 'others':
   4 English, $1\frac{1}{2}$ 1st FL $1\frac{1}{2}$ 2nd FL = 7

                                         (Brown 1984:52)

Here, the investigative approach could be harnessed in comparison
work done in Year 1 in both language awareness and foreign language "taster"
time and continue for 'others' in Years 2 and 3 first of all in the single
'language' period and then in the two foreign languages offered to the less
able. Potential linguists, with the benefits of two foreign languages
throughout this time, would have similar opportunities. Also, under this
umbrella, the mother-tongue could be integrated into the total language
education. Such a proposal could also serve to break down the "specialist
ethos" among staff by increasing demands for teamwork and flexibility.
Furthermore, it could be adapted to allow for opting out of the foreign

language elements by taking on extra periods of English and coming back
in during the third or even fourth years.

A similar model has been proposed for Sheffield schools, thus:-

Phase 1   Language Foundation - 2 or 3 terms (Language Aware-
                                  ness and Language Tasting)

Phase 2 FL^1, FL^2, FL^3 - 4, 5 or 6 terms with more
                                  protracted work on some lang-
                                  uages introduced earlier perhaps
                                  on a rota basis or using inten-
                                  sive elements

Phase 3   FL. FL. FL.   - 5 terms (optional). Continuing
                                  work in a number of languages
                                  with a variety of targets.

<div align="right">(Eustace 1984:13)</div>

Varied targets would include, presumably, GCSE or Graded Tests.

The benefits accruing from these approaches would include increased
learner motivation due to the more stimulating variety and nature of the
tasks placed before him and a more profound linguistic and cultural
awareness. These, in turn, could be turned to advantage later on in the
secondary school as pupils embarked upon intensive foreign language
courses. Such a solid foundation from the early years of their secondary
education would make for more meaningful and rapid acquisition at this
later stage, the completion of which would mark the end of their appren-
ticeship in language learning by the age of sixteen. From then on, further
language study could be undertaken with more certainty as to its intel-
lectual or vocational usefulness. Sixth Form or Higher Education studies
could, as shown in Chapter 7, cater for the actual perceived needs and
requirements as these become more overtly prominent at this stage of a
student's career. Foreign language learning could then be directed towards

the learner's vocational, intellectual and career needs in such areas as regional, business, secretarial, travel and tourism, the requirements of science students as well as those who will continue in-depth advanced language studies or simply volunteer to continue out of interest. The entire spectrum of language studies between the ages of eleven and eighteen and beyond would then be meaningfully and soundly based as well as flexible, as learners opted in and out of the system as they needed to.

The consequences for foreign language teaching would be both revolutionary and beneficial. On the one hand it would mark the end of such established concepts as the five year 'drip-feed' course, the obsession with, and search for, methodological panaceas and the isolationism of foreign language departments battling for linguistic competence amongst their learners in an inimical atmosphere. On the other, it would release foreign language teachers from self-imposed obligations and permit them to contribute fully in a wider role. Their expertise could be fully utilised in the first two years of secondary education, by their contribution to the language and cultural awareness work and even more so in the later years of intensive foreign language study. However, their role would also change. Rather than be the sole source of language as far as their students are concerned, they would become facilitators and organisers of materials in the process of language learning based upon discovery through research. They would direct learners towards the necessary resources and develop ways of learning to suit the new approach.

Modern foreign language teaching and learning would, therefore, be enabled to overcome the doubts and criticisms which have surfaced all too often during the last two decades. The principle of 'a foreign language for all' would be nearer attainment as the needs of learners were accom-

modated at the correct moment in their development and as it became an

element in their appreciation and acquisition of language generally.

There would still be a place for a measure of communicative competence,

to be encouraged, where appropriate, by means of the methods developed

through the Graded Objectives movement and the requirements of GCSE.

But such competence would not remain the unique 'raison d'être' of

foreign language learning. Hopefully research will reveal ways of

successfully examining some of the other GCSE criteria such as the

nature of language, culture and civilisation, learning skills of a more

general application and, most importantly, the encouragement of positive

attitudes, a sympathetic approach to things foreign or different and of

enjoyment and intellectual stimulation. A broader approach would encom-

pass all these requirements and place foreign language learning on a

sounder footing as this century approaches its end.

APPENDIX A

Head of Modern Languages: Job Description

1. To identify the aims and objectives of the Modern Languages Department in consultation with colleagues and to formulate the overall Department policies in a written scheme of work, constantly reviewable. To issue a copy of the scheme of work to each member of the Department and other colleagues as appropriate.

2. To advise the Head and Governors of policy for the Language Department.

3. To coordinate the staff teaching languages and to assure good relationships within the Department and with other Departments. Frequent departmental meetings should be convened on a formal basis, with a published agenda and published minutes made available to the Head and senior colleagues as appropriate.

4. To give help and guidance to language teachers and students in training in good classroom practice, the organisation of work (including the setting and marking of written work and examinations) and the setting and checking of homework. In the interests of high standards, every effort should be made to watch lessons conducted by colleagues, to swap classes occasionally and to sample exercise books of children taught by colleagues.

5. To give help and guidance to Foreign Language Assistants in the preparation and presentation of their work and to ensure that they have satisfactory working conditions and an appropriate base.

6. To keep abreast of modern development and thinking in modern language teaching and to keep colleagues informed: this will involve establishing formal procedures for reporting back on in-service courses and conferences.

7. To ensure good and effective liaison in modern language matters between the school and other schools in the area.

8. To make every effort to keep parents informed about the aims and methods of the Department.

9. To choose and order modern languages teaching materials, with special reference to the scheme of work, and to ensure equitable provision of them to modern languages staff and children. To ensure further and constantly updated supply of supplementary resources and classroom display materials.

10. To ensure and effect continuous evaluation of materials and assessment of childrens' progress with reference to 1. above.

11. To ensure that contacts with appropriate European countries are organised and to conduct and accompany a fair share of study visits and exchanges.

12. To teach modern languages to a wide range of classes appropriate to the structure of the school curriculum and the strength of the Department.

13. To afford to colleagues opportunities for their professional growth and career advancement. This will involve delegation of responsibilities.

14. To ensure that up-to-date and effective advice is given to children on career prospects and possibilities in modern languages.

APPENDIX B

OUTLINE OF POSSIBLE OBJECTIVES FOR PUPILS STUDYING A FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FROM THE AGE OF ELEVEN

	Objectives for pupils likely to terminate their study after			Objectives after 3 years of study for pupils likely to complete a 5 year course.	Objectives for those completing a 5 year course	
	3 YEARS		3, 4 or 5 years depending on local circumstances.			
Listening	Understanding of concrete everyday language used in specified situations; ability to identify subject matter of speech so as to respond in English or by action.	Understanding of concrete language within wider range of lexis and structures.	Understanding of every-day language in an increasing range of situations.	Greater understanding of everyday language spoken at near normal speed.	Detailed understanding of concrete language spoken by a native at near normal speed and involving familiar language; gist understanding of language similarly spoken over wider range of lexis and structure.	Detailed understanding of language spoken by a native at near normal speed within areas of language already encountered but including abstract forms; gist understanding of language containing some unfamiliar lexis.
Reading	Recognition reading of a simple routine nature; shop signs, labels, products, signs etc.	Wider range of vocabulary and structure; gist reading of a more consecutive nature.	Understanding of simple items such as letters, notices and short narrative texts.	Detailed reading of items such as letters, notices and simple foreign texts; gist understanding of a wider range of reading material.	Detailed and gist understanding of concrete language in newspapers, advertisements, formal and informal letters and possibly adapted foreign texts.	Detailed and gist understanding of fiction and of non-fiction studied intensively or extensively.
Speaking	Two-language communication with each speaker using his own language.	The ability to ask for simple information in the foreign language; further speech in English.	The ability to ask and answer specified questions satisfying simple routine needs and minimum courtesy requirements.	The ability to ask and answer questions concerning everyday needs and including simple narrative and description (In tenses other than the present)	The ability to ask and answer questions in a wider variety of situation and involving increasing complexity of structure and breadth of vocabulary.	Relatively fluent flexible and accurate use of language; some measure of confidence in initiating language and in expressing interests, feelings and ideas.
Writing	Of no significance as a goal but practised as an aid to memorisation and to teacher security.		Reproduction of language encountered in speech (above); very simple letter writing.	Writing of dialogue, narrative and simple letters of a personal type.	Personal writing about family home and interests; letters and simple compositions.	Accurate and fluent personal writing about family, home and interests as well as narrative and descriptive composition.
	less able pupils.	below average pupils	pupils of average ability		able pupils	very able pupils

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