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REPORT

on the Round Table on

New Approaches to the Teaching of
Modern Languages at University Level

held at the University of Reading, England,
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EDITORS' PREFACE

It will be appreciated that reducing two days of conference to fifty pages is no easy matter. We have tried in this report to be as faithful as possible to the written contributions presented by participants to the Round Table, but a great deal has had to be omitted for reasons of space, and as many of the participants took much of the background in their respective countries for granted, it is not inconceivable that we may inadvertently have misinterpreted someone's point of view; in which case we beg their tolerance and pardon in advance. For interested readers who would wish fuller information about a particular point, we would recommend direct communication with the person or centre concerned.

But within these material limitations, we have tried to concentrate our attention fairly and with due emphasis on the central problems which the Round Table was convened to discuss, and trust that we have caught the tone of what was a most constructive and stimulating meeting. The Conference, it seems to us, broke new ground in its application of theoretical and practical perspectives to what is an extremely complex and largely neglected area of applied linguistics. We hope this report will provide a basis for further investigation into the general question of teaching foreign languages at university level, as well as act as a stimulus for research into specific problems.

1. AIMS OF THE ROUND TABLE

Three broad aims could be distinguished:

1.1 To bring together experts from various European countries, who should discuss problems connected with the teaching of modern languages at university level, report on the attitudes towards this subject prevalent in their own countries, and review any new approaches which they or their colleagues are designing to meet these problems.

1.2 To provide an opportunity for the exchange of information or materials already available and to suggest means whereby such exchange might be facilitated in the future, in particular whether a project for a scheme of exchanges of recordings for use in language teaching at university level might be arranged.

1.3 To discuss certain of the fundamental, theoretical issues connected with language teaching at this level, in the hope that a clarification of pedagogical aims might result and an agreed perspective for future research be established.

2. PROGRAMME OF THE ROUND TABLE

The programme of the Round Table was organised by Dr. D. Crystal of the Department of Linguistic Science, University of Reading, in collaboration with Professor P. Strevens of the University of Essex, and the Division for Higher Education and Research of the Council of Europe, in terms of a series of working sessions, as follows:

- Sessions I and II : Reports and descriptions of new approaches in use, including questions and discussion.
- Session III : Introductory talk on Underlying Principles, followed by discussion.
- Session IV : Introductory talk on Testing, followed by discussion.
- Session V : Discussion of a project for a scheme of exchanges of recordings for use in language teaching at university level.
- Session VI : Conclusions and suggestions for future action.

We shall review the proceedings of each of these sessions in turn.

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3. REPORTS OF NEW APPROACHES IN USE

During the first two sessions of the Round Table, brief reports were presented describing the present situation in the teaching of modern languages in various European universities. The reports ranged from general descriptions of the organisation of courses in each country as well as in particular universities, to the more detailed description of specific pieces of teaching and research being undertaken at certain centres. Reports were given by the following:

Austria

Professor K. Baschiera : Developments in Austrian Universities

Belgium

Mr. E. André : Courses at the Ecole d'Interprètes, Mons.
Mrs M. Wajskop : Developments in Belgian Universities.

France

Mr. R. Bylinski : Courses at the University of Strasbourg.
Mr. D. Girard : On Franco-American collaboration for
the production of Language and Language
Behaviour Abstracts.

Germany

Dr. G. Nickel : Developments in German Universities
and at the University of Kiel.

Holland

Dr. R. Mossel : Developments in Dutch Universities.

Sweden

Mr. M. Gorosch : A self-instructional method in French
phonetics.

United Kingdom

Mr. M. Hughes : The work of the British Council
Mr. J. Kay : Courses at the University of Essex.
Mr. D. Lee : Courses at the University of Kent.
Mr. G.E. Perren : The Centre for Information on
Language Teaching.
Dr. D. van Abbé : Developments in British Universities.

We shall now present a summary of those reports which were presented. The summary is based on the written texts of the interventions deposited with the editors by the speakers. It also includes material from two texts which were not read at the Round Table, but whose authors were participants, viz. Miss V. Adamson on Courses in the University of Birmingham, and Professor B. Pottier on Modern Languages in Institutions of Higher Education. Hereafter, reference will not normally be made to individual participants, but to the country, university or centre whose work is being referred to.

A number of distinct themes emerge from the reports, and we shall discuss each in turn.

3.1 The Present Situation

Although the conference had as its subject new approaches to language teaching in the university, it is clear that these recent developments have left unchanged much of the traditional structure of university language teaching. In some cases, teaching still follows a pattern laid down as long ago as the nineteenth century, and the aims, content, methods and techniques of teaching follow long-established lines. This tradition varies only a little from country to country. There is a pre-occupation with philology, with the study of literary texts, and with language as an object of study rather than as a skill to be acquired. While modern equipment, such as the language laboratory, has been introduced in varying degrees, it usually constitutes an addition to the existing teaching structure and rarely produces any deep reconsideration of course organisation. Similarly, the results of the linguistic study of language have little place in language courses, either as simple description of the languages being studied or as providing better insights for the more efficient learning of the language. The university structure within which this teaching goes on differs markedly from one country to another, but this cannot obscure a further general truth, that these courses, as at present organised, are not efficient in preparing students for the uses to which they will put the language they are learning. Thus, although the majority of students taking a foreign language as a major subject at university will become school teachers, the content of their course will often take no cognisance of this. In Holland, the student may spend as much as seven years in acquiring his necessary teaching qualification - a doctorate. Yet, a major portion of his course is given over to philology, which will prove largely irrelevant to him as a secondary-school teacher. In Germany the development of practical ability in a foreign language is considered to be the function of the secondary school not the university, yet it is doubtful whether the secondary school can be expected to develop this ability to the high level that is desirable. While they retain their present course structure, therefore, the universities will produce teachers who are defective in some of the skills they need.

It can be seen, then, that the new approaches outlined below cannot be said to be representative of university foreign language teaching in general. In some universities, it has been possible to institute change within the existing framework (Holland), while elsewhere, the most radical changes can be found in new departments or universities (U.K.). But it has to be admitted that much language teaching continues unchanged despite these developments, although it is unlikely that any language teaching will remain for long uninfluenced by them.

3.2 Types of Courses

The above general remarks have obscured the fact that it is not possible to discuss this subject as if there was only one type of student and only one sort of aim that a university language course should have. The fact is that students at the university level study foreign languages for widely differing purposes and have received widely differing training in languages at the secondary school. In the first place, foreign languages may be the major component of their course - such students are often destined to become secondary school teachers. Secondly, the learning of a foreign language may be an integral but not a major component of the course. Thirdly, the foreign language may be acquired for strictly functional purposes - as a means of access to specialist literature in other languages, for example. The exact pattern of study will vary from country to country and indeed from university to university. Professor Pottier suggests that there are essentially two groups of courses - those for students who wish to acquire a deep knowledge of the language and of its culture (Group A), and those for students who need the foreign language to meet a precise, definable need (Group B). While this distinction would account for most university language courses and will be used in this report, there is an increasing experimentation in course structure at the university level which is producing degree structures which could not easily fit into either of these categories.

3.2.1. Group A Courses

Those courses which are provided for Group A students - the foreign language specialists, who are probably going to become language teachers - show the least influence from new approaches to language teaching. Generally, syllabuses have remained unchanged, except for an increasing use of such technological aids as the language laboratory, and some recognition that more attention needs to be paid to oral ability (U.K.). In some countries acceptance of even these small advances has been slow (Germany).

In Holland the degree course, as well as being philologically orientated, also demands a high practical command of the language. Since the schools impart a reasonable reading knowledge, the universities are able to concentrate on developing abilities which are often ignored at the higher level. This involves teaching of remedial pronunciation, oral comprehension and oral and written expression. To this end, the language laboratory is extensively used, and self-instructional techniques of programming are applied (Utrecht). The teaching of previously unlearned languages at this level does not differ greatly from that in the schools, and is basically audio-lingual.

At Strasbourg University, students of English (future teachers) spend an average of three hours a week during their three-year course in the language laboratory. Their programme here is divided between phonetics and grammar. The work involves remedial teaching on the students' own English, the study of general phonetics, and the grammatical and phonological structure of English.

In the United Kingdom there is a tendency in the newer universities to make a distinction between those language courses which have a cultural orientation and those which have a linguistic emphasis, while in both older and newer universities languages are being studied more in combination with other subjects. However, the traditional teaching pattern still predominates.

3.2.2. Group B Courses

A more radical rethinking of course content and structure has probably taken place with regard to the teaching of foreign languages to non-specialist students. In the first place, this is quite simply taking place on a larger scale than has happened before, which has meant the introduction of new courses where none existed. Secondly, although some such teaching has been carried out before, it was often done without any true understanding of the linguistic needs of the students, and therefore even existing courses are being transformed. It is true that some such courses - for example "English (or German) for Scientists" - have remained unchanged (Holland, Germany), but in general the absence of controversy over the aims of the students has made it easier to prepare courses with clearly defined goals in mind.

The exact nature of these courses is very diverse. Most universities have foreign language courses for scientists, though in some cases the content may be no more than the supervised reading of texts (Germany, Austria), and in others teaching does not take place under favourable conditions (Holland). There is, however, an increasing awareness that the linguistic needs of such groups can be closely analysed and the content of teaching restricted to that which is known to be necessary to them. Students in the Faculty of Science at Strasbourg spend four hours a week on English, half on an audio-visual course and half in the laboratory. Special attention is paid to the forms of the spoken language.

In Belgium, at several centres the teaching of foreign languages to Group B students is assuming greater importance. At Liège, the Service des Langues Vivantes aims to provide students with any linguistic skills that they may need for their own specialisation. This teaching is not considered a part of the regular curriculum and is not therefore examinable. A particular contribution of this Service, which concentrates on teaching the written language, is that it provides different courses according to the different scientific orientation of the students. Courses are available to university staff as well as students - a pattern that is found elsewhere (Holland).

The Institut de Phonétique of the Université Libre de Bruxelles has an Audio-Visual Centre which provides an inter-faculty service, teaching French, Dutch, English and German. The Centre, which produces its own material and teaches both spoken and written language, relies on native speakers as teachers. The teaching of this Centre has been so successful that it has now been asked to undertake the teaching of modern

languages within the academic programme of the Faculté des Sciences Sociales, Politiques et Economiques. At present, teaching time is additional to the students' normal timetable and makes great demands upon them, but it is hoped that eventually teaching will be fully integrated into it.

In the United Kingdom, courses are now much more tailored to the needs of particular groups of students and in some of the newer universities degree courses often consist of a combination of subjects, one of which may be a language. The technological universities, for example, provide for degrees in Language and Mathematics (Aston) and Language and Chemistry (Bradford). At Essex, students may take a degree in Comparative Studies. Since this involves specialisation in the study of a particular geographical area, one component of this course is the language or languages of that area. Latin American studies, for example, would involve the learning of Spanish and Portuguese, followed by the study of Latin American literature, government or sociology. Whatever the specialisation of the students, a language course is prepared for them that takes that specialisation into account. At Kent, the Language Centre undertakes to teach languages in all Faculties to ensure that students can follow their own subjects in the foreign language.

Essex and Kent in the United Kingdom and Liège and Brussels in Belgium provide examples of a particularly interesting development. The courses outlined for these universities above are undertaken by Centres whose function is above all to act as a service department, meeting the language needs of other departments and faculties. They bring together teachers of several languages and can probably provide a more expert and efficient teaching service than is possible in a situation where every Faculty has its own language teachers. They also usually have enough personnel to carry out useful research into basic problems of language teaching. The Centre at Essex, which does not yet prepare students for language degrees as such, extends its activities to the provision of specialist language courses for groups from outside the university - for businessmen, for example. At Kent, the teaching of specialist language students is still mainly in the hands of the modern language staff of the Faculty of Humanities, but the Language Centre does undertake some teaching for them. As was noted above, in Brussels the teaching of the Institut de Phonétique is becoming increasingly accepted as an integral part of degree courses.

3.2.3. Intensive Courses

At a number of universities, courses are taught intensively rather than extensively. At Utrecht, remedial pronunciation teaching is undertaken for four hours a day over a period of three weeks and it is suggested that, where the language being taught is new to the students, an intensive course would provide the most efficient means of instruction. In Amsterdam and Utrecht, elementary Russian is taught intensively for thirty periods a week for three months. At the Université Libre de Bruxelles, the course outlined above starts intensively at the end of August continuing for twenty hours a week until the beginning of the academic year and then switching to ten hours a week of evening instruction. At the Ecole Royale Militaire, also, very efficient courses in Dutch and French are run on an intensive basis. In the case of the languages required for Comparative Studies in the University of Essex, if the student has not already learned the language that he needs, an extra year of study is inserted into his course, which is entirely devoted to the intensive learning of that language - again for as much as twenty hours a week. That these arrangements may indicate a move away from the more traditional timing of courses is suggested by the recommendation of M. Bylinaki that courses at Strasbourg would be more effective if they concentrated more teaching - 100 hours a term - in the first year, rather than spreading it out evenly over the whole course.

3.2.4. Courses for Interpreters and Translators

These courses are clearly rather a special case, so much so that in some cases such study is scarcely considered "academic" at all (Germany). At the University of Vienna, the training of interpreters has gone on since 1945. Such courses must, by their very nature, be rather intensive, but teaching is by no means entirely occupied with language, as is indicated by the content of the course provided by the Centre Universitaire de Mons. Here the students spend some time studying their mother-tongue (French) and linguistics as well as acquiring and perfecting two foreign languages. Learning the foreign language is accompanied by study of the foreign culture. There is also, of course, specific practice in interpretation and translation. Teaching of the foreign language is based on the St. Cloud-Zagreb method and is distinguished by its concentration on speech. Indeed, the first 100 hours of learning are devoted entirely to the spoken forms of the language, and even thereafter language is heard before it is read or written.

3.2.5. Teaching the Medium of Instruction to Foreigners

Almost all universities provide courses for foreigners who have still to learn (or at least perfect their knowledge of) the language that is the medium of instruction (Belgium). In Austria such students must pass an examination in German before they are admitted as students to the university. To enable them to do this, formal and informal courses are provided both within and outside the universities. Birmingham provides a wide range of specialised courses for foreigners - for science students, social scientists, Commonwealth teachers and special foreign groups attached to the English department. All these courses make use of language laboratories.

3.2.6. Teacher Training

In all countries it is recognised that the majority of those students who study foreign languages as the major component of their university course (Group A) eventually become teachers of these languages in the secondary schools. However, practice varies in the degree of allowance that is made for this fact within the degree course itself. In some countries the degree course itself has no such vocational aspect, and any professional training is given only on completion of the degree. In Germany, for example, training in methodology is given to new teachers by means of special seminars run by experienced secondary school school-teachers. There is no university in Germany with a Department of Applied Linguistics. In the United Kingdom universities provide a year of professional training which follows immediately upon the completion of the degree course but is quite separate from it. Such courses are not mandatory and it is perfectly possible for university graduates to become teachers without any professional training.

However, elsewhere some allowance is made within the degree course for the fact that most students will become teachers. In Vienna, future teachers follow a university course which lasts four years and which includes lectures on phonetics, linguistics and the methodology of language teaching. At Utrecht, a beginning has been made with the introduction of a weekly period on methodology which is compulsory for intending teachers. The course for English specialists at Strasbourg has been deliberately constructed with the future occupation of the students in mind. Thus students are given both a theoretical and a practical knowledge of English, partly by means of the audio-visual techniques which the students themselves will eventually have to employ. In their final year, students are able to take an optional course in applied linguistics which is designed to prepare them for the particular problems involved in teaching English to native French speakers. The School of Interpreters at Mons, though not primarily concerned with the production of teachers, does give some training to its students so that they are then qualified themselves to use the methods employed by the School. The students spend a total of about 45 hours studying the theory of the method and undergoing practical training in its use. At the University of Louvain the Institut de Langues Vivantes has been created largely to provide for the needs of future teachers. Courses are run to familiarise teachers with modern methods and equipment, and experimentation is undertaken to discover means of making teaching more effective.

There are interesting developments too in the post-graduate field. At the Centre Postuniversitaire de Hasselt, a two-year part-time course in applied linguistics is available. This

involves four hours study a week - in the first year by means of seminars and lectures, and in the second year through individual research. Topics covered include structural linguistics, psycholinguistics and the descriptive grammar of Dutch. At Essex, a Master of Arts course in Applied Linguistics is offered through one-year of full-time study. The three components are general linguistics, the theory and practice of language teaching, and the descriptive and applied linguistics of one language.

3.2.7. Other Courses

In addition to the types of courses outlined above, there are certain other interesting innovations. At Louvain, students are able to follow courses designed to improve their language ability during the summer before they actually enter the university. At Mons, a one-year course leading to a Certificat Post-gradué de Phonétique Appliquée has been created, and it is hoped to establish a similar certificate in linguistics. Strasbourg provides its students with a "Phonothèque" which is open to students for six hours a week. Here students are able to select from a library of about 1,000 tapes, and work on their own. The tapes have both literary and linguistic subjects. One of the functions of the Language Centre at Kent is to give the students a reading knowledge of certain foreign languages, and to this end reading programmes have been developed. These occupy about four or five hours a week. The larger part of this time is spent working without supervision in the "passive laboratory", but some sessions are monitored in the "active laboratory".

3.3. Content and Methods

Some of the reports presented gave a fairly detailed description of the material and manner of teaching.

At Strasbourg, specialist language students spend a proportion of their time in the language laboratory. The pre-occupation here is with phonetics. In the first year all students carry out exercises involving the analysis of recorded material, phonetic transcription and practice in the use of contracted forms. In addition, each student is tested for defects of his own pronunciation, and given appropriate remedial drills. The emphasis is on sequential features. In the second year, attention is switched to prosodic features and to oral comprehension and training in summary writing. This involves specific practice in the intonation of English and in note-taking. In the third year, remedial teaching continues, and the study of phonostylistics is introduced. Grammar teaching in the first year is concerned to convey basic grammatical notions, and to provide practice in the forms of the spoken language. In the second year, the emphasis is on historical and descriptive study of the language. Throughout, work in the laboratory is accompanied by lectures.

At Mons, the learning sequence is seen as having three phases:

1. Study of the basic elements;
2. Transitional phase;
3. Perfecting phase.

In the first phase, priority is given to oral teaching and to the study of language "globally", i.e. in context - learning takes place through situations created by the use of audio-visual aids. Classroom activities include the repetition of dialogue, exploitation of the lesson material in new situations, exploitation of the laboratory material, guided conversation, correction of dictations, and oral and written summaries. The language laboratory is not used for drilling in the usual way, but for dictation and interpretation exercises and for the preparation of new texts. This first phase usually lasts about one year. The transitional phase is marked by the completion of the St. Cloud-Zagreb audio-visual material and the introduction of more complex texts which are longer and have more specialised vocabulary. In the third phase, activities include summary writing, the writing of press reports, debates, essays, dictations, and vocabulary and stylistic exercises. Altogether such a course lasts for four years, but it becomes less intensive as it progresses.

Dr. Mossel pointed out that a distinction could be made between those students who come to university to study a language they had previously studied, and those who come to learn a new language. For the latter group, a method can be employed which

differs little from the audio-visual method followed in secondary schools. For the former, the so-called "faux-débutants", the situation is more complex. At Utrecht, it is assumed that the students have already developed a reasonable reading knowledge, and therefore that teaching can be concentrated elsewhere. By means of the language laboratory, students are exposed intensively to the language. This is done mainly through oral comprehension which serves also to convey cultural information, build vocabulary, and provide material as a basis for free and guided expression. Remedial pronunciation teaching is also undertaken. Here the eventual aim is self-correction, and the techniques include the use of programmed discrimination and production drills. Although pattern practice is used to facilitate oral expression, it is found that it alone is not enough, as it does not carry over outside the classroom situation. Guided conversation is also included, therefore, and where possible free expression is encouraged through use of the laboratory. The teaching of written expression is fairly conventional, with the additional use of the language laboratory for practice in précis writing and note-taking. Such a programme can best be undertaken only if the whole first year of study is given over to the acquisition of practical command of the language, and if the more theoretical study of language is held over until the second year.

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3.4. Facilities

From the above it will have become clear that in most of the countries described the universities are making use of mechanical and electronic aids for language teaching. Any differences are of degree rather than of principle. On the one hand, in Germany very few universities have yet installed language laboratories; on the other hand, in Holland, for example, there is only one that has not done so. Not that the language laboratory is the only mechanical aid in use. In addition, cine, slide, strip and 8 mm. loop projectors, overhead and rear projection screens, radiograms, individual tape recorders and teaching machines are all to be found in different centres.

An example of a well-equipped university is that at Birmingham. There are five laboratories, one private study laboratory, a recording booth, a film strip projector, a radiogram and an overhead screen. The language laboratory of the Institut de Phonétique at Strasbourg has at its disposal two Opelem laboratories, each with eighteen positions and including a projection room controlled remotely from the console, which contains a slide projector, a 16 mm. cineprojector and a rear projection screen. There is also a recording studio with professional equipment, and two audio-visual rooms.

3.5. Research

In all the universities whose work was described, activity is not restricted simply to the teaching of languages, but also includes research into means of improving teaching. Those universities (Brussels, Essex) in which teaching is done by a service department are particularly well placed to conduct experimentation. The wide range of languages taught, the variety of aids available, and the difference in the types of course provided, creates a field in which fruitful research can take place. The production of teaching materials and the comparison of methods can themselves be done on an experimental basis (Strasbourg, Brussels), but other areas of research include testing (Essex, Strasbourg), programming (Strasbourg, Brussels) and contrastive analysis (Kiel, Brussels). Current research on testing reflects the growing use of systematic testing as a means of control of courses (Kent, Sweden, Brussels).

One sample of a piece of experimentation being carried out was at the University of Stockholm. Here the teaching of practical and theoretical phonetics - the pronunciation of French by Swedes - was compared in an ordinary classroom and in the language laboratory with self-instruction. Comparison of results on a written test showed the experimental group to be superior by 10%.

In Germany research is being carried out at the Sprachkybernetisches Forschungszentrum at Heidelberg and at the University of Kiel. An interesting research project at Kiel is PAKS (Project on Applied Contrastive Linguistics). This research is designed to have a firm basis in linguistic theory. Its starting-points are in the belief that what is difficult in learning a foreign language lies in the differences between the structures of the foreign language and those of the mother tongue and that the best linguistic basis for the analysis of this interference between languages is to be found in the generative transformational model. In particular, it is felt that this approach will reveal deeper differences than are apparent in the surface structures. Aims of the project include the following: the description and comparison of English and German, the development of a general theory of contrastive analysis, programming the teaching of English on the basis of this comparison, testing the programme and modifying it through use in schools and universities.

The attention of the conference was drawn to a new publication which would be of interest to those engaged in language teaching research and which would include abstracts of reports on research in progress and completed. The publication in question is Language and Language Behaviour Abstracts, the first volume of which appeared in January 1967. It is edited jointly by the Centre for Research on Language and Language Behaviour of the University of Michigan and the Bureau pour l'Enseignement de la Langue et de la Civilisation Françaises à l'Etranger (BELC).

3.6. Summary

A good deal of the teaching that goes on in universities remains unchanged by new approaches to language teaching. With a few exceptions, even the use of technological aids has not produced any systematic re-appraisal of existing courses. Some of the most interesting developments have arisen in new universities and in new departments within old universities. With no existing course structure to change, more radical solutions to teaching problems have been possible. In particular, there has been a more conscious understanding of the differing needs of students and a more rational use of teaching aids. The results have been especially beneficial to those students who are not language specialists, though some universities do make allowances within the degree structure for the fact that most graduates in foreign languages become teachers. The methodology now being employed reflects the current pre-occupation with speech and the fact that languages are learned basically as a means of communication. That a reconsideration of the form and function of language teaching in the university is now getting under way is suggested by the increasing investment in equipment for language teaching and by the extensive research now being undertaken by language departments.

4. TEXTS OF THE PAPERS PRESENTED TO SESSIONS III AND IV

4.1 Underlying Principles, by S. Pit Corder

There are two universally accepted principles in learning anything: firstly, that people will always learn something if they are sufficiently anxious to do so. This is the principle of motivation. And secondly, people will learn to do best what they are actually taught to do and given most practice in doing. This is the principle of method.

The corollaries of these two propositions are that the more a person wants to learn something, the quicker or better he will learn it, and that people will learn better the more appropriate the data and practice they are given.

It is the job of the teacher to maintain and, if possible, increase the motivation of the learner on the one hand, and, on the other, to present him with the relevant data and opportunities for practice. The teacher, in other words, is concerned with creating the conditions for optimal learning. We have been reminded recently of Von Humboldt's words that we cannot really teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way. I want to underline those last words particularly - in its own way.

Now all of this is rather obvious, but in discussion of language teaching it is a point which tends to get lost sight of; not surprisingly perhaps, because it is not always easy to discover what the motives of the learner are - he may not be able to put them into words - and secondly because we do not know how learners learn, or indeed what exactly they know when we say they have learned something.

It is a depressing fact that when we survey the history of language teaching in this century it has all the appearance of being subject to the random fluctuation of fashion, and it sometimes looks as if we now know no more about how to teach languages than we did sixty years ago. Lambert has suggested in a recent paper that, while it is possible that there may have been some improvement in the efficiency of language learning during the past ten years, some factor other than the methods employed in teaching was very probably at work. This factor is probably an increased general interest among the public in most countries in the learning of languages. While I think Lambert is almost certainly right, I do not agree with the suggestion that language teaching methods have been subject to random fashionable change. It is certainly possible to show that the changes have, all along, reflected developments in linguistic and psychological theory, that teaching methods have been sensitive to what we would call the climate of linguistic opinion.

In this sense we can characterise the present fashionable method - the Audio-Lingual Method or Fundamental Skills Method - as a concomitant of a "behavioural" psychology and a "structural linguistic". That is why we find ourselves beginning to doubt, at the present time, the bases of our faith, since, to quote Chomsky:

There has been a significant decline, over the past ten or fifteen years, in the degree of confidence in the scope and security of foundations in both psychology and linguistics It seems to me impossible to accept the view that linguistic behaviour is a matter of habit, that it is slowly acquired by reinforcement, association and generalisation The relevance of psychological theory to the acquisition of language is a highly dubious and questionable matter... Turning to linguistics, we find much the same situation. Linguists have had their share in perpetuating the myth that linguistic behaviour is "habitual" and that a fixed stock of "patterns" is acquired through practice and used as a basis for "analogy". What is more the fundamental concepts of linguistic description have been subjected to serious critique.

I would add only this. It little becomes the linguist, as one did recently in private conversation, to speak of language teaching method as a matter of fashion when the poor practical teacher must depend upon the underlying scientific disciplines of psychology and linguistics on which to base his teaching principles.

We are now in a state, therefore, of what Elton Hocking has called a "Counter-revolution in Language Teaching". This counter-revolution appears to be taking place at a time when the original revolution is far from completed, at a time when, for many, the audio-lingual method itself is still revolutionary. But, as with long skirts, evidently, if you wait long enough, they will come back into fashion.

I think this is the point at which to remind ourselves of the Wertheimer-Scherer experiment in Colorado in which matched groups of students were taught German by traditional grammar-translation methods and audio-lingual methods respectively. There it was found that there was no significant difference in the knowledge of the two groups when examined by a standardised test after one year. There was however an indication that those who had practised translation proved slightly better at translation and those who concentrated more on speaking were rather better at speaking.

It almost looks as if we were back where we started. But this I think is too discouraging an interpretation. As has often been pointed out, theories can only be disproved, not proved. The work of the last fifty years has evidently served to disprove a number of theories, and this is some gain. On the other hand, we can console ourselves with the thought that our students have at least not been the sufferers in our experiments since the evidence suggests that hundreds of thousands of students have quietly gone on learning languages as efficiently or inefficiently (whichever you like), in spite of changing methods. It is the saving grace of many practical language teachers that they have been prepared to say to the linguist and the psychologist "a plague on all your houses", while they have quietly got on with their jobs.

What must we do now? Follow the practical teacher and ignore henceforth what the psychologist and linguist may be saying? Yes and no. In the first instance: yes, because whether we like it or not we cannot wait for the next theory to develop. Students are there waiting in increasing numbers to be taught. We must go on empirically developing our methods, continuing to base them upon the simple and not very enlightening observation: that people learn best to do what they have been taught to do: that is, if people want to learn to translate, they should have plenty of opportunity of translating; if they want to read scientific texts, they should do plenty of reading of such texts. This means that, for the time being perhaps, we should take more account of the students' expressed desires and needs, and less account of what the teacher thinks is good for the student. I am glad to observe that this largely pragmatic course is the one which universities are taking, at least with students whose motivation is instrumental. But here I think research too is needed; descriptive rather than theoretical perhaps. We need to discover more exactly what language activities such students are going to indulge in. The sort of questions we should attempt to answer are, for example, not so much: What is the linguistic description of scientific English or French? but rather: What language activities will the budding doctor, anthropologist or physicist need to carry out in English or French? The answers will certainly be different in each case and in each language.

But secondly, we must still strive to develop new theories, based on a new sort of evidence. By "new sort of evidence", I mean data actually obtained from the study of people learning a language rather than from the second-hand data of the linguist's description of a language, or the psychologist's rats running through mazes or pigeons pecking at buttons. In doing so we must be prepared to discard old assumptions which may stand in the way of progress. I am thinking of such notions as "the four language skills" and the idea of language learning being largely a matter of habit-formation. These have never had anything but the most doubtful foundation in any modern psychological theory anyway.

Professor Pottier in his valuable paper (1) has pointed out that research of this sort calls nowadays for the collaboration of a number of specialist disciplines, linguistics, psychological and educational. I would add that it is more and more to the psychologist and sociolinguist that we shall be turning. This combined operation in a number of disciplines, having as its goal the elucidation of how language is learned, and how therefore we may teach it better, is for me the meaning of applied linguistics.

And now I want to propose, in outline, one hypothesis in this field which might be investigated. We have in the past often studied, discussed and experimented with language teaching. For example, the validation of new teaching materials has hitherto largely been done by the teachers' subjective reaction to their use in the classroom, and practically never by any experimental technique of differential learning established by objective tests. In other words, material has been adjudged good or bad by the criterion of teachability rather than its ability to promote learning. Teaching has been the object of our investigation rather than learning. It sometimes even looks as if the whole business of language teaching is carried on for the benefit and convenience of the language teacher and without much regard for the poor language learner. As Valdman has said "Obsessed by structure, the linguist never pondered over the process that takes place in the classroom, namely learning". In parentheses I would merely add here that I think Valdman is being hard on the linguist, who is not, properly speaking, concerned with language teaching. I think however it is true of the applied linguist.

What I am suggesting is that our starting point should be a study of language learning. Here we want to know two things: how does the learner learn a language, that is, what strategies does he adopt to learn the different aspects, systems, items or whatever, of the language? You will note that I have been vague in giving a name to what the learner may be learning. The reason simply is that although there is some, and perhaps increasing, reason to believe some of the categories that the linguist uses to describe the language may also be psychological entities, we have in the past too readily assumed that this is necessarily so. Secondly, we want to know what order he learns them in. If we abandon the theories which underlie the

(1) "Les langues vivantes dans les Universités et les Grands Etablissements", circulated before the Round Table and to be published in Modern Languages and the World of Today under the joint auspices of the Council of Europe and the Association Internationale d'Editeurs de Linguistique Appliquée (AIDELA).

audio-lingual method, and it seems now we must, then we must at least propose an alternative hypothesis. This is in essence the situation facing those who investigate child-language acquisition.

We are familiar nowadays with the hypothesis in child-language acquisition that the child has an innate predisposition to learn a language and that he possesses some capacity or mechanism of unknown nature which enables him to discover the rules or systems of his mother tongue from the mass of uncontrolled language material with which he is presented together with the contextual situations in which it occurs; that his acquisition probably follows a determined course, being in outline the same for each child. This at least is Lenneberg's hypothesis. Now as long as fifty years ago Harold Palmer proposed a similar notion in the case of second language learning. This is what he said:

We are endowed by nature with capacities for assimilating speech. Each one of us is a living testimony to this fact, for each one of us has successfully acquired that form of our mother tongue with which we have been in contact.

These capacities are not limited to the acquiring of our mother tongue, but also available for one or more languages in addition. The adult possesses the same capacities as the child, but generally in a latent state. If he wishes he may re-educate these powers and raise them to an active state. He will then by this means become as capable as the child of assimilating foreign languages.

The hypothesis which I am proposing is that all of us have such a capacity or mechanism and, given motivation (and of course this is an essential condition), all of us will learn a second language if we are provided with the data. Let us remember that this data is not simply linguistic, a fact which is consistently overlooked, but is language in a situational context. This hypothesis can be extended to claim that, if left to our own devices, the order, or sequence, in which we learn the systems, rules or whatever, of the second language, is determined by the characteristics of the acquisition mechanism. In other words, we have a built-in syllabus. It is therefore a matter for research to discover what this optimum learning sequence is. The syllabuses which we use in the classroom at present derive whatever logic they have (and it is a matter of doubt whether they have much) from the linguist's description of the language and from the limitations of the classroom situation. As Charles Ferguson has said:

Most grading of grammatical structures, even when done by competent and experienced linguists, has been based on impressionistic judgments and vaguely conceived theoretical principles or none at all!

Now there is no reason to suppose that our present syllabuses correspond in any simple way with the needs of the learner. Mager has pointed out in a different connection:

We pay verbal tribute to the business of taking the learner from where he is to some place else! We generally fail to consult the learner in the matter except to ask him to maximise the effectiveness of whatever sequence we (the instructors) have already decided upon.

And as a result of a small scale experiment which he undertook, he stated his conclusions as follows:

The results clearly suggest that the content sequence most meaningful to the learner is different from that guessed at by the instructor to be most meaningful to the learner. The next step will be to determine empirically whether the learner-generated sequence is in some way more efficient than the instructor-generated sequence.

Our first research task then is to discover if the learners have what we have called a built-in syllabus, and if it appears that they do, to attempt to describe it. Then, instead of presenting language data to the learner in an order which is perhaps contrary to his needs, or providing him with a mass of data upon which no structure has been imposed (the latter being preferable), we can actually help him to learn (which is what teaching means), by presenting him with the language material in the sequence which precisely fits his needs.

The second task is to discover the learner's strategies of learning. Here I would suggest that the study of his productive errors is crucial. (We may note in passing that his receptive errors are not readily investigable.) Learners' errors have hitherto been dismissed as largely caused by interference from the habits of the mother tongue, to be prevented if possible, by improved teaching techniques and to be drilled out if they could not be avoided. I suggest that the making of errors by the learner may be a necessary part of the learning process itself. The learner makes errors in order to learn. What he may be doing is, in fact, testing out his hypotheses about the nature of the new language and having them confirmed or disconfirmed by the teacher. There is considerable evidence from recent work in child-language acquisition that some process of this sort is an essential part of mother tongue learning. If this is also true of second language learning, then errors are evidently a major source of data not only about how the learner learns, but also about the built-in syllabus he is pursuing.

Both these research tasks: the discovery of the learner's syllabus and his learning strategies - involve longitudinal studies of individuals learning a second language. As far as I know, no such studies have yet been undertaken on second language learners, although they are of course routine in child language acquisition. They seem to me to be the only type of study likely to yield the data we are seeking. And yet we may note language teaching studies are traditionally carried out in the classroom with groups, not individuals. It sometimes seems as if teachers believe that it is a class that learns a language not an individual.

Let me now sum up. We find ourselves in the middle of a counter-revolution in language teaching. There is now a growing belief that the audio-lingual method has not proved itself more effective than earlier methods. The theoretical foundations of the method in linguistics and psychology are being seriously questioned by the linguists and the psychologists alike. This does not mean we need to abandon all the new techniques that we have developed over recent years, since they are at least no less effective than those they replaced and some may be more motivating to the learner.

But it does mean that we should adopt a critical attitude to them and not blindly persist in those which do not meet with the learner's acceptance, simply because they are believed to be theoretically supported. I have in mind particularly much of the drilling which goes on in language laboratories and classrooms. But, in any case, we should still press on with the practical studies of teaching specific language activities such as reading, translation, dictation, speaking, copying, taking notes, and so on, by actually practising these activities intensively, where we know that they are part of the functional language needs of the learner. Such methods make obvious sense to the learner and are not based on any particular language learning theory.

At the same time, we must undertake a renewed research attack upon language learning (rather than language teaching). We must discover how the learner learns and what syllabus he bases his learning on. To do this we must abandon the traditional notions of language skills and language habits. This I regard as the main task for applied linguistics in the future.

4.2 Testing Foreign Languages at the University Level,
by D. Wilkins

I should like to begin by making a disclaimer. I have not made any special study of the subject we are to discuss in this session, nor am I directly concerned with the teaching of languages at the university. I have been asked to introduce this session because the organisers of this conference discovered that, in this country at least, there appears to be no one with a special interest in testing at this level. There has been no general discussion of the particular problems of testing advanced proficiency. This alone suggests to me that insufficient thought is currently being given to the subject we are to discuss. My credentials for introducing this topic are that I am what is now commonly called an applied linguist. Like most applied linguists I have been more occupied with the problems of foreign language teaching at more elementary levels and the point of view that I am going to express might be termed that of the knowledgeable outsider. Most disciplines can benefit from listening to what the outsider has to say and I hope that my remarks will prove relevant enough to perform their function of stimulating discussion.

I am going to limit my discussion to the testing of those students who are taking a foreign language as a major subject in their final degree examination, where a very high standard of proficiency is presumably desirable. The testing of students on university courses which aim at some lower level of proficiency is presumably covered to a large extent by the existing literature on testing. I want to start by making one point about the general situation of foreign languages in the university and by a brief statement of the existing methods of testing.

By the time students take their examination for their degree they will probably have been studying the foreign language for about ten years. Those ten years will include six or seven at school and four at university, one of which, in the case of British universities, must be spent in a country where the language being studied is normally spoken. Even if a British student takes his final examination in a language which he did not study at school - and this is still not commonly done - he will be tested on the assumption that he will have been able to learn the new language to the same level as those students who did study it at school before coming to university. It can be seen therefore that a very high standard of proficiency ought to be attained. Only where a language is studied as a subsidiary subject is some lower standard required.

The methods of testing language proficiency are well-established and have not undergone any substantial change for many years. The language component of a final degree examination will consist largely of translation from and into the foreign language. This is the only part of the examination whose function is solely to test language skill. The student will usually be required to write an essay in the foreign language, but this will be marked as much for content as for language. There are varying requirements that some of the literature papers should also be answered in the foreign language. There will often be a paper devoted to the history of the language. This is almost always dischronic in approach and rarely deals with descriptions of the contemporary language. Where an oral examination is given, it is not so much concerned to determine an individual's proficiency in the spoken language as to test further knowledge which has already been tested in the written papers and to classify those students whose position in the final degree lists is in some doubt.

The language teaching field has been in a state of continuous revolution for decades. We have seen teacher-inspired revolutions in methodology and linguist-inspired revolutions in teaching materials. The dissatisfaction with results has led to a reconsideration of all aspects of language teaching. It has even thrown up a new breed of academics - the applied linguists. Yet the astonishing thing is that this process of re-assessment has been concentrated upon language teaching in the schools and even upon the first three or four years of language teaching there, and where investigators have concerned themselves with adults, it has only been adults who are beginning to learn a foreign language. Now it is probably true that what happens in those first years is of more crucial importance to the learner than what happens later, but it seems ironical that we should spend so much time discussing those who will make least use of a foreign language, while we neglect the learning of those for whom the practical command of the foreign language may remain important for the rest of their lives

Not that the universities show no signs at all of the changes in language teaching. Many modern language departments now make some use of language laboratories and native speakers have long been used in an attempt to improve oral proficiency. An indication of the growing interest in new ideas can be found in the University of Reading with the recent commencement of a research project into the teaching of French. But these changes seem to be no more than fringe effects of the much more comprehensive changes that have taken place in school language teaching. One senses a reluctance to undertake a thoroughgoing re-examination of the aims of foreign language teaching in the university. The result is a tinkering with the present system which cannot be expected to produce satisfactory results since it destroys the logic of the existing system without replacing it with a new one.

That it is no more than a tinkering is shown by the fact that while some change in methods has occurred, no related change in the methods of testing is apparent. Yet modern language teaching might as well be characterised by its methods of testing as by its methods of teaching. Critical examination of school testing techniques and content has produced radically new types of language test and a sound body of writings and research. As with much language teaching research, this has again been preoccupied with testing in the early stages of learning, but the principles established would be claimed to be of general application and not necessarily to be restricted to those levels of proficiency to which they have so far been applied. In fact, it is precisely here that the interesting questions arise. How far is it true that present testing methods in the university follow these principles? Is there any evidence to suggest whether or not recently developed testing methods can be applied at this level? What research is needed before we can resolve the problems that will arise when we try and answer this second question in particular?

First, however, we need to discover what the principles of language testing are held to be. It may be best to discuss these principles under two broad headings: reliability and validity. When we ask ourselves about the reliability of a test, we are asking whether marks assigned on the results of the test are assigned in a consistent fashion. That is to say, would two students of identical ability be sure to get identical scores if they both took the same test, or, alternatively, would the same individual always be sure to get the same score or might it be that taking the test in different circumstances, having the test marked by different testers or even by the same tester on different occasions might produce different marks? Any test or technique of testing that would allow variation in such conditions would clearly be less than adequate as a device for measuring an individual's proficiency.

To overcome the influence of such extraneous factors a test should be made as objective as possible. Tests where the personal judgment of the tester is important in determining the assignment of scores are termed subjective and are by definition inferior to objective tests, all other things being equal. Objectivity is marked by a clear indication of the degree of correctness of any possible response and a predetermined set of scores for all the predictable answers that the student may give. To make such a process possible, it is necessary that every test item should be designed to test one thing only. (In any case, an item which tests more than one aspect of the language will, from the point of view of validity, rarely be as suitable as a series of items testing the same items one at a time.) The result of this demand for reliability, and especially objectivity, is that a modern language test will typically not deal with units larger than the sentence and that, although the student may be expected to construct his answers, since such test items are difficult to write, it is more likely that he will have to select from multiple-choice answers which the tester offers him.

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However reliable a test may be in its scoring, it is always possible that it is not testing the skill or knowledge that we set out to test. To examine a test from this point of view is to examine its validity. Before we can judge whether a test is valid, we require a statement of exactly what it is supposed to be testing, and to obtain this, we need a statement of what the students are supposed to be learning. We need a description of the desired terminal behaviour. It is impossible to test achievement if we do not know what the achievement is supposed to be. In the case of language learning a description of the language activities in which the student should be able to engage, together with a detailed description of the linguistic skills that are necessary to those activities, are needed as a starting-point. This description will be most useful, of course, if it is linguistically sound.

The content of any test and the techniques the test employs can then be examined to see how accurately they reflect what appears in our description of the terminal behaviour. It is clearly impossible for a test to cover the whole of the terminal behaviour, so that any test involves some process of selection. The means of selection that applied linguists have most commonly suggested - indeed it has even been suggested as a principle of language testing - is to apply the results of the contrastive analysis of the mother tongue and the foreign language. This is, of course, based on the assumption that a contrastive analysis accurately predicts the difficulties a learner will have and that other non-contrasting areas of the language can be ignored as they will not present any learning problem.

It can be argued, however, that such a view of the problems of language learning is over-simplified and that there are difficulties that cannot be predicted in this way. What is more it may be felt that there is a danger in this approach of including more trivial areas in the test while excluding those that are behaviourally more important simply because no learning difficulties have been predicted for them. From this point of view it is more important that the sample tested should adequately represent the behaviourally most important parts of the terminal behaviour. In a word, it should be the most useful language that is rested rather than the most difficult.

Whichever process of sampling is adopted, the tester will break down the language activity into what he supposes to be the different skills that make it up. This will result in one level of language being tested at a time. This is necessary not only for the reasons of objectivity already mentioned, but because only by doing this can we be sure to test each of the skills. If the skills are all tested together, the interpretation of the results of the test becomes very difficult. If we can test skills and levels of language in isolation, we can ensure that all the ground is covered, and a more exact statement of the individual's proficiency becomes possible.

We would expect that a valid test would in its form resemble the behaviour that it is testing. If we are testing a person's ability to hear, we would expect the test to involve hearing rather than writing. This is not an absolute requirement. Techniques are used to test sound production, for example, which involve a written response. But such techniques do not seem to me to be very satisfactory, although they are administratively convenient. I do not mean to say that the best way to test a person's ability to speak the foreign language is simply to give him the opportunity to speak it and then assess his performance. This is subject to unreliability because it is not objective, and to invalidity because we cannot be sure in which skills the student is proficient. The sort of test that should be obviously invalid on this count is one which, while purporting to test proficiency in the language, actually test knowledge about the language or one that makes extensive use of the mother tongue - especially one requiring answers by the student in his mother tongue. A valid test of the student's ability to use language should consist of items that involve his responding to the language itself, in the language itself.

I have already mentioned the techniques which are most commonly used at the university level for the testing of language proficiency. These are translation, essay-writing, and oral interview. From my brief outline of what is involved in the concepts of reliability and validity, it is clear that each of these testing techniques is both unreliable and invalid. Indeed there is nothing new in this. Their shortcomings have long been known. However we are not here to establish the inadequacies of the present system, but to see whether it can be replaced by something that takes advantage of recent progress in testing. What we must do therefore is examine the principles of language testing and see whether they can be applied to testing at such an advanced level, what the implications may be and what further research needs to be done to provide us with the necessary knowledge to apply the principles.

It seems to me that the most significant of these principles are the establishment and the description of the desired terminal behaviour. From this all else follows. One cannot discuss the techniques of testing in a vacuum. One must know what should be being tested and to know this we must start by establishing the terminal behaviour. One might begin with a very general statement. We might decide, for example, that we could not be satisfied with establishing as a norm anything less than native-like accuracy and perhaps fluency in the four language activities - speaking, understanding speech, reading and writing.

In linguistic terms this presumably implies complete control of the phonetic, phonological, morphological and syntactic systems of the language. In a sense therefore a good linguistic

description of these systems is also a description of the terminal behaviour, and provides us with an inventory from which we may select items to be tested. Such descriptions however do not specify terminal behaviour completely. To establish the lexical inventory and the range of possibility of lexical collocation, for example, is a more difficult task, since not even a native speaker makes use of all the lexicon for productive purposes. But further questions also arise. Are there differences between the forms of the spoken language and those of the written language which may be a source of confusion for the student? What contextual use of the language can we expect the student to have mastered? What varieties of the foreign language should he be familiar with? In what situations should he be able to communicate like a native speaker? If we are going to make general statements about the kind of language behaviour that we are going to expect of our students, we must have the appropriate linguistic description to enable us to know what we should be asking in our test - indeed what should be the linguistic content of our teaching.

It is not the function of this session to discuss what the terminal behaviour ought to be - this is a matter for discussion elsewhere. What is important is that, for the purposes of efficient testing, it is necessary that whatever the answers to the questions above, each answer needs to be defined in detailed linguistic terms. The tester would then have available not only the sort of information about the language that is to be found in a grammar of the language, but also information about frequency of occurrence of lexical, grammatical and phonetic items in certain varieties of the foreign language, about situationally determined fixed phrases, about stylistic markers, relating, for example, to degrees of formality and about dialectal variations if it had been thought appropriate that the student should know more than one dialect.

I am suggesting that the tester must have available to him a massive amount of information as a starting-point. If he does not have this, his selection of items to test can scarcely be any more than impressionistic. The same condition needs to be met for testing at any level of proficiency. In some respects, the problem of establishing this information at the university level may present fewer difficulties than at the school level, where some restriction has to be placed on the degree of proficiency which the student can reasonably be expected to have attained. This involves, for example, establishing a phonetic proficiency which is well below that of the native speaker, or restricting the range of structural devices which the student is expected to be able to control. At the university level the greatest difficulty probably lies in specifying the contextually related features which the student should know. I have in mind here those students who are learning the language for general cultural purposes rather than those who require it for some specialised purpose. With the latter group there is no problem in deciding which variety of language should be taught.

Great difficulty will arise in trying to select a sample of this complex terminal behaviour. This sample will constitute the actual list of items which we will test. It will provide the content of the test. It is unlikely that we shall want to spend much time testing those areas of the language on which the student has been tested at an earlier stage in his learning. At the university level we must assume that the student has mastered the basic grammatical structure of the language. This was the point of my earlier emphasis on the length of time the student will have spent studying the language. At the phonetic level, for example, it is often suggested that the learner in the school should be able to make the phonemic distinctions of the L_2 , and that in testing we should be satisfied if we obtain that.² It might be that to do the same job at the university would be to waste our time, and that we should concentrate on the student's phonetic accuracy. Part of the function of testing is to discriminate between different levels of proficiency among students. I would suspect that to concentrate on the more familiar difficulties that the language presents would result in failure to discriminate between students. If we wish our test to produce scores that adequately represent the different proficiencies of the students, I feel that the content of our tests should be drawn more from aspects of contextual use of language, from the language that is necessary to communicate in given situations and from markers of formality between people in communication - what is sometimes called tenor. We would look for evidence that the student uses collocational features of the foreign language and does not simply transfer those of his mother tongue. Information that the linguistic description gives the tester in these respects might go a long way towards accounting for that Englishness that still pervades the French of many who may not be making grammatical errors in their speech or writing.

It is best to discuss the break-down of language activities into component skills and the principle of objective testing together. It is true at all levels of proficiency that one cannot be sure that the capacity to handle language skills in isolation is evidence of the ability to handle the integrated skills. It is conceivable that an individual may successfully discriminate sounds in relative isolation, may recognise grammatical distinctions and understand lexical items which are presented to him. Yet he may, in natural speech, not be able to do these three things simultaneously. With this reservation - and there is no relevant research that I know of - it is still true that it is much easier to exercise control over the content of a test if this process of isolating the elements to be tested is followed. If one wants precise information about the student's ability, it is essential. This is as true at this advanced level of learning as at any other.

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This breaking-down process must also be followed if we want our tests at the university to be objective. At the lower levels of language proficiency it may be that we are able to break down items in such a way that the sentence is the maximum unit which we need to use. It seems that an objective test can handle only with difficulty anything larger than the sentence. May it not be that in testing at the university level, we are interested in pieces of language that are much larger than the sentence and that cannot easily be reduced into smaller parts convenient for the application of objective techniques? Here is something which demands further attention - the suitability of advanced language ability to testing by objective techniques.

A further serious problem in objective testing lies in the great difficulty of constructing items to test language production as opposed to language reception. It is not at all easy to prepare unambiguous production items and many tests no longer attempt to do this. Lado, for example, has produced a number of "partial-production" techniques to get round this difficulty, but they seem to me to be little more than rather involved recognition items. If there are such difficulties at the lower levels, it seems that they will be more serious at the university level. It is often said in this connection that there is a fairly close relationship between the ability to receive language and the ability to produce it, and the results of a test of the former could be taken as evidence about the ability to produce language too, and that therefore we need not worry too much about our inability to test the latter directly. But we do usually expect of a test that it will give an accurate description of a person's ability or knowledge, and a test restricted to reception of language would not do this. I would suggest therefore that we need to develop techniques of testing productive and receptive language skill at this advanced level which take into account the concept of reliability and which will probably look therefore very different from any existing form of test.

I have restricted this introduction to fairly general comments on the testing situation as I see it. It may be that there are those present who will want to lead the discussion into more specialised areas that I have not attempted to deal with. I should like to finish by summarising what an applied linguist sees when he looks at the testing of languages in the university and then to offer some suggestions about research that would be relevant in making testing more efficient.

1. There is no clear statement of what the aims of university language courses are, i.e. the desired terminal behaviour is not established.
2. An accurate and comprehensive linguistic description of the terminal behaviour is totally lacking.
3. Present methods of testing are known to be both unreliable and invalid.

4. There is no evidence as to whether advanced language skills can be tested by reliable and valid techniques:
 - (a) Is advanced skill susceptible to objective testing?
 - (b) Can the skills that operate at this advanced level be isolated for testing purposes?
5. The language content being tested in current tests covers a very inadequate sample of what is supposed to have been learned.

These conclusions reveal considerable lack of information which the teacher should have. I have therefore drawn up an ad hoc list of research topics that would provide useful information for the tester and indeed for the teacher.

1. Research on describing situation-related varieties of language - including such work as usually goes under the name of register studies.
2. The establishment of exact norms of phonetic and grammatical performance. This is especially important if we wish to set up something less than native proficiency.
3. Determining the test content which will most successfully discriminate between students at this level.
4. The development of testing techniques to test aspects of language that are rarely tested at present.
5. The development of objective techniques of measuring advanced skill and particularly larger units of the language.
6. Lexical statistics that are valuable above the more elementary levels of teaching.
7. The development of good tests of language production rather than language reception.
8. The study of tests of isolated skills to discover how far their results relate to ability to handle the integrated skills.

5. PROJECT FOR A SCHEME OF EXCHANGES OF RECORDINGS FOR USE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Introducing the session on a projected tape exchange scheme, Mr. J.B. Kay (University of Essex) began by outlining what in his view were the current needs of language teaching departments in universities. Obviously needs will vary somewhat according to the type of courses offered at a given university, but in general almost all varieties of contemporary speech will be of interest to someone, whether for purposes of linguistic analysis or for providing material for guided listening, comprehension work, or any other kind of exercise.

As for the possible sources of recorded speech, these are of four main kinds. First, there is in existence already a large quantity of recorded material on disc and tape which has been collected by the various national institutions, university departments, broadcasting organisations and so on. Secondly, there are commercially available recordings on disc and tape, together with film sound tracks, which might be of great value for language teaching, even though a large proportion of such recordings will be of a literary nature in the form of poetry, drama and prose extracts from standard authors. Catalogues of recording companies are worth examining for material of other kinds also, however, such as speeches by political leaders and public figures, documentary items, songs and other items which can be of interest for their linguistic content. In the third place, recordings may be made of radio broadcasts, although there are often technical difficulties in making satisfactory recordings of broadcasts originating from foreign countries; the use to which the recordings will be put determines to a great extent the degree of tolerance to be applied to the quality of recording. Fourthly, it is open to the staff of language teaching departments to seize every opportunity of making live recordings for themselves when visiting foreign countries or when native speakers of other languages are resident or visiting their own country.

The time has certainly come for an attempt to be made to work out some kind of tape exchange scheme, not only for the purpose of tapping existing resources but also to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

The chief obstacle in any such scheme will be the question of copyright. Of the four sources of recorded material mentioned above, all are likely to include material subject to copyright protection and therefore not readily available for exchange purposes. Until such time as new copyright arrangements can be worked out between publishers and authors on the one hand and educational establishments on the other, the type of exchange which can be effected will be limited.

A beginning has at least been made in the United Kingdom to create the machinery necessary for the exchange of information about recordings held by different colleges and universities and their requirements. In July 1966 a meeting of teachers of French was held at the University of Reading which resulted in the setting up of a group for Research and Development in post-A level French language teaching (PALFRE). The object of the organisation is the co-ordination of information about recorded materials available in order to extend the possibility of exchange beyond the existing inevitably limited network of personal contacts. Mr. Walter Grauberg, Director of the Language Centre of the University of Nottingham, has undertaken the task of collecting and disseminating information, but arrangements for the exchange of material are then worked out by the interested parties. Since the inauguration of this scheme there has followed (at Cambridge in March 1967) the setting up of a similar organisation for German, which is also handled by Mr. Grauberg. It is likely that other language associations in this country will set up groups to pursue similar aims.

It would seem that the arrangement described above could well be extended to include the exchange of information and, eventually, recorded material with institutions in the countries represented at this conference. A lead has already been given by the Council of Europe itself which has made available recordings of the proceedings of the European Consultative Assembly and the European Parliament. It is appropriate that a tighter organisation should be set up with one body in each country responsible for the co-ordination of information about existing materials and future requirements.

After these opening remarks, members of the Round Table joined in a free exchange of ideas and made suggestions about the appropriate steps to be taken.

Mr. M. N. Hughes (British Council) indicated that the Recorded Sound Department (ELTI) of the British Council would provide on request a list of material available in English including dialogues and exercises, and also the scripts of structure drills. There was no problem of copyright involved here. Furthermore, the Educational Aids Department had produced a number of unit tapes for remedial purposes and these were to be published by Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd. Finally, the English Teaching Information Centre would provide lists of what was available commercially.

Dr. D. Van Abbé, representing AVLA, stressed the problems involved in any scheme for the exchange of recordings, not only where commercial copyright was concerned, but also in protecting the rights of the author of material developed for teaching purposes in a given institution. Other members also emphasised the need to get quite clear the legal position with regard to copyright material.

After some further discussion of this problem, it was proposed that a central organisation for a catalogue of recorded material available for exchange should be set up, and in support of this Mr. Sven Nord (Council of Europe) suggested that there should be liaison between the interested organisations in continental Europe and a responsible body in the United Kingdom for the purpose of exchanging lists of recordings used for language teaching. Mr. Nord invited CILT to undertake this co-ordinating role, and after some clarification of what would be involved, Mr. G. E. Perren, the Director of CILT, agreed that CILT would act in this capacity for the United Kingdom. It was agreed that contact would be established with one central organisation in each country or group of countries represented at the Round Table, or with a named organisation or individual until such time as a central organisation was established for the task of co-ordinating lists of material. The following tentative arrangements were made:

<u>France:</u>	D. Girard (BELC) and D. Coste (CREDIF).
<u>Benelux:</u>	AFLA, via Professor Pottier, and R. Mossel (specifically for the Netherlands).
<u>Germany:</u>	Goethe Institut, via H. Erk.
<u>Sweden:</u>	initially, through the Swedish Institute, via M. Gorosch.
<u>Italy:</u>	through CILA)
<u>Spain:</u>	through OFINES)

via Professor Pottier

The function of each country's organisation would be, at least initially, solely to provide information - more specifically:

- (a) to collect information on available tape recordings and research in progress with respect to material in the national language or languages of its own country and in the foreign languages taught in its own country;

- (b) to disseminate such information and to determine the priorities which should follow.

Each country should be responsible for organising pressure groups or making use of existing organisations to bring pressure to bear on the different national broadcasting authorities to reconsider their attitude towards requests for taped material for educational purposes.

These proposals having met with general approval, the Session was brought to a close.

6. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It was felt that future Round Tables on this or similar subjects would benefit from having more representatives of institutions currently engaged in modern language teaching. Fruitful discussion was restricted by the relative absence of British teachers of foreign languages at university level, and of English literature teachers from the Continent. It was recommended that a copy of this report should be sent to departments of modern languages not represented at the Round Table, for information and comment.

2. Members felt that it was becoming increasingly important to draw people's attention to the developing complexity of the different audiences for language teaching and learning at university level, and it was not always clear precisely what kind of terminal behaviour was envisaged for those taking the courses. Of particular importance was the extent to which awareness of other aspects of culture than simply literature ought to be included.

3. The term "applied linguistics" received some discussion. Members were clearly dissatisfied with it, as a general label, and there was disagreement as to precisely what should be subsumed under the term. It was agreed that clarification of its use by different individuals and bodies was desirable, in order to facilitate comparison of principles and procedures - different senses of "applied linguistics" were not being explicitly recognised in the reports to the present Round Table, for example. A suggestion that the Round Table make a general statement about the interpretation of the term was not, however, followed up, as it was felt that this lay outside the meeting's terms of reference and would sidetrack members from a discussion of more pressing practical problems. There was unanimous agreement that such a statement ought to be made by some larger body, and it was hoped to raise the question at the 2nd Internal Colloquium on Applied Linguistics, which would be held in September 1968.

A P P E N D I X

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