

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA USED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

by
Joyce Sixberry

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ABSTRACT

Which media are most effective in teaching modern language is a problem which concerns every language teacher. The purpose of this study is to analyze the different media and to suggest improved teaching methodology.

The principal research instrument used was an opinionnaire administered to French students in a selected high school in Oregon. Current literature was also consulted for the opinions of authorities and the latest developments in technical media.

Foreign language teachers are often confused when confronted with the many media (technical, visual and non-technical) which are used in language teaching. They want to know which are most effective for which area (reading, oral skills, writing and comprehension) of the subject. This paper combined the opinions of experts and students and analyzed their answers to the above question.

The study made a number of recommendations to improve foreign language teaching in the future. It has been recommended that language instruction should begin earlier than junior high school; that the aims of the teacher should dictate the methodology; that as much contact as possible with the foreign country should be maintained; that interdisciplinary studies should be taught in the foreign language as soon as students are capable of understanding such courses.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the birth of Sputnik in the mid-1950's, foreign language teaching in American schools has been greatly accelerated. Technical advances have also been responsible for some of the drastic changes in the methods of teaching these languages in schools today. Many language teachers in the field are liable to become confused trying to decide what each method accomplishes and the advantages and disadvantages of the various teaching aids.

Reviewing the literature related to this study, one finds that most comprehensive studies of language teaching date back to the 1930's and 1940's. Many modern articles and books have been written on such topics as language laboratories and programmed learning, but these are usually to be found in technical books discussing teaching of all subjects and which, therefore, do not deal with other media used in foreign language teaching. A considerable number of comparisons have been made between students who have been taught by the traditional methods and those taught by more modern methods and their success in carefully constructed tests analyzed. However, relatively few or no authors seem to have gone to the students to ask how they effectively learn, what they find to be helpful, confusing or boring in a foreign language.

PROBLEM

The intent of this investigation is to review the most useful media for teaching French to selected high school students; as such, improved French teaching methodology should result from the study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are certain specialized terms common in language teaching which will be used extensively in this paper. They are as follows:

- a. A.L.M. Audio-lingual method, i.e. students learn primarily by repetition, speaking and listening to dialogues and pattern practices on tapes. The role of deductive thinking is very small.
- b. Traditional Method. Method used extensively until the last ten years when A.L.M. became the vogue. Students learn by translation, memorization, and application of grammatical rules with very little attention paid to oral skills.
- c. Eclectic Method. Method of teaching language which is partially based on the oral approach and partially on the traditional approach.
- d. Language lab or laboratory. Booths where students listen to tapes and practice speaking and listening by repetition of the voices on the tapes.
- e. F.L.E.S. Recently developed program to teach languages in the elementary school.
- f. Target language. Foreign language being taught.
- g. N.D.E.A. National Defense Education Act.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations to be considered in this study, namely that only a select group of students from one geographical area and socio-economic background were studied. Secondly, in answering the questions the French II students would, to a certain extent, be influenced by the personalities of the two teachers as well as the methods used to teach.

This study does not imply a definite program for use of media in French instruction, but suggests general guidelines which might be observed by teachers of French.

OVERVIEW

The study begins with an overview of the historical development of language teaching in the United States from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present time. The interest in the topic developed out of a paper on "A comparative study of the teaching of French in selected schools in France and the United States of America" written for a comparative education class at Montana State University under the direction of Dr. L. L. Kavich, Winter Quarter, 1967. From the historical development, follows a survey of the recent literature concerning modern language teaching.

The study continues with a section on selected media used in teaching French and the main section of the paper describing the instrument of research used in this particular paper. The instrument

chosen was an opinionnaire consisting of eight questions and administered to thirty-one French II and thirteen French I students in a small (500 students) high school in Myrtle Point, Oregon.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been a considerable amount of literature written on various aspects of language teaching during the past thirty years. Most of the articles in journals discuss one single aspect of learning a foreign language or report on tests which have been given mainly to university students. The majority of the books on language teaching are written either to extoll or to disparage the audio-lingual method. Few give a balanced account of both methods, the audio-lingual and the direct. Several monographs published by educational agencies reporting on various meetings of language teachers have been of use in this study.

Books

One of the books giving an overall picture of language teaching with many practical examples of how one could teach literature, vocabulary, composition and other areas is Huebner's How to Teach Foreign Languages Effectively¹. In this book there is a short chapter on visual aids and a useful chapter on games and their uses in language teaching. Hirsch's book Audio-visual Aids in Language Teaching² is complementary

¹Huebner, Theodore, How to Teach Foreign Language Effectively, New York, New York University Press, 1959.

²Hirsch, Ruth, Audio-visual Aids in Language Teaching, Washington, Georgetown University, 1954.

to Huebner's as her whole book is devoted to the audio-visual aids which can be used in teaching languages. There is also a detailed critical bibliography of films and filmstrips. However, some of these are outdated as they were made before 1954 when the book was published. Books by Trow and Stack were useful in compiling this paper as they gave many technical details concerning language labs and making tapes.

Periodicals

Relatively few articles in periodicals were of much help in writing this paper although many were read. Those in the Modern Language Journal were, for the most part, concerned with teaching languages at the university level. Many of the articles in other periodicals covered subjects that have been covered in books or monographs. One article which merits mention was found in Audio-visual Instruction³, a non-language journal, and was entitled "Strengthening International Friendship Through Tapes and Slides". This was an account of how the visit of a foreign student can be made more profitable to both the home town and the host town.

Monographs and other texts

"What Do We Know About Foreign Language Instruction?"⁴ published by the Texas Educational Agency provided a very detailed explanation of the audio-lingual approach with a very useful section on how to evaluate the

³Young, Kenneth, 'Strengthening International Friendship Through Tapes and Slides', Audiovisual Instruction, October 1961, pp388-9.

⁴Texas Education Agency, What Do We Know About Foreign Language Instruction? Texas, Texas Education Agency, 1962.

use of the lab. A collection of lectures given at a conference of leaders in the modern language field of education was published by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. In this text important issues which related to languages were discussed and a general evaluation of how languages are taught, what could be improved and what should be aimed at was presented.

Two unpublished Master of Education papers⁵ from Montana State University were consulted but neither was particularly relevant as one was limited to languages in the elementary school and the other was mainly concerned with teaching English as a foreign language in Japan.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a general introduction to the paper and to the literature researched in it. Many books and articles other than those mentioned here were consulted in writing this paper but much of the same basic information appeared in three or four different books. Most of the books consulted could be divided into two groups: those in favor of the A.L.M. and those in favor of the grammar-translation method but as Huse points out: "A few ambitious experimenters have tried to prove the advantages and disadvantages of the direct method by comparing results in different classes. But, since the method itself is an abstraction, the attempt is like trying to weigh a ghost."⁶

⁵Hosone, Noriko, "Review of Literature on the Direct Method in Foreign Language Learning", unpublished M. Ed. paper, Montana State University, Bozeman, 1960.

⁶Huse, Howard, Reading and Speaking Foreign Languages, Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press, 1945, p. 65.

This paper will not try to "weigh a ghost" but to find out which techniques and methods of language teaching are most conducive to learning according to a selected group of students. Before doing this, however, it is important to have a brief glimpse at the history of language teaching in the United States to understand how these methods evolved.

CHAPTER II

MEDIA USED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Historical development

Until the Twentieth Century the only acceptable foreign language for entrance to university was Latin or Greek. The Modern Language Association of America (MLA) was founded in 1883, and for thirty years did little to change the status of modern language in the high school. Modern languages were taught as a discipline of the mind like the classical languages. In 1910, forty-nine percent of the students in grades 9-12 were still enrolled in Latin.⁷ After the first World War, in spite of the efforts of the American Classical League, the popularity of Latin dropped considerably (to 27.5 percent of high school students). By 1954, Latin classes only enrolled 6.9 percent of the high school population and French, German and Spanish had gained considerably in popularity.⁸

At the beginning of the twentieth century German was the first modern language taught in American schools. The effects of two wars against Germany put French in the lead as first modern language by 1940. When France fell to the Germans, however, a feeling of resentment against France was prevalent in the United States and Spanish became the language adopted by most high schools, according to Childers.⁹ By 1954,

⁷Childers, J. Wesley, Foreign Language Teaching, New York, Center for Applied Research in Education, 1964, p. 2.

⁸Ibid., p. 3.

⁹Ibid., p. 15.

the gap between French and Spanish had closed somewhat and the figures for 1960 show that Spanish enrolled 49.9 percent of modern language students, French, 39.9 percent and German, 8.1 percent.

Methods of teaching French, 1900-1930.

During this period, the aim of teaching French was to teach students to understand the structure of French sentences and to be able to read French. This aim was fulfilled by drilling students in grammar structures which became an end in itself. Literature was thoroughly dissected and translated, not regarded as a work of art in its original language. This method of teaching was purely deductive and had the advantage that it could be easily tested through verb endings, vocabulary or sentences.

After 1918, when American soldiers returned from Europe, interest arose in the spoken language and teachers tried to add more oral skills to their teaching, but it was not until the 1930's that the "direct-method" really gained much support as language teachers could not change their whole outlook and method overnight. In addition to the method changing, text books had to be redirected toward the oral skills, too.

The "Direct-Method"--1930-1955

As the "direct-method" gained in stature 2) more attention was paid to phonetics and pronunciation, b) the mother tongue was excluded as far as possible, c) grammar was taught indirectly through oral work, and d) translation into English was reduced to a minimum. This method was taken to the extreme where pupils were not allowed to see the printed word, nothing was explained in the vernacular and learning was accomplished by repetition and associating certain sounds with certain pantomime on the part of the teacher. This method is still used today

all over the world, but it is especially flourishing in Germany where it is known as the Berlitz method. The teacher uses charts, pictures and objects and the pupil forms a mental image as he repeats phrases.

"In America, the direct method has had a great vogue at least in theory. It has compelled lip-service, even though in practice it has not been entirely satisfactory. The theory is sound but conditions in American schools make its use difficult."¹⁰ Cole goes on to say that it is easier to employ this method in Europe as teachers have longer training and it is easier to get natives to instruct in their own language. According to various authorities in the field, this method has possibilities if it is started in elementary schools. Out of the direct method the eclectic method evolved which is a compromise between the direct and grammar approaches.

During this period, text books were improved and began to have stories about France, French customs and French people which paved the way for courses on culture as well as language. Films and slides began to be used to show pictures of life in France, important places, customs and costumes.

Language laboratories and programmed learning--1955-1968

As it became more important to speak languages, in 1958, which proved to be a turning point in foreign language teaching, the NDEA provided language teachers with vast sums of money to be used for language labs. The lab was not intended to replace the teacher but as a reinforcement. Lab materials were designed to supplement class work

¹⁰ Cole, Robert, Modern Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, New York, Appleton, Century Crofts, 1937.

and provide pattern practice by native speakers on tapes which could be used as often as the teacher deemed necessary.

Much experimentation is still going on in the field of programmed learning and results have been varied. Basically, a programmed course in French consists of minute steps gradually building a knowledge of vocabulary and sentence construction by which the student can progress himself as each answer is immediately corrected or reinforced. Most of the programs now in existence do not have any provision for oral work and those which are used in coordination with language laboratories are not capable of informing the student whether his pronunciation is correct or not. They can only supply the correct pattern and it is up to the student to tell if his pronunciation is the same as the pattern. Until the former is possible, this may remain a handicap to teaching foreign languages with programmed materials. Details of media development will now be pursued.

Media development

Until the 1930's, media used in language teaching were the textbooks and a few pictures used by the more imaginative teachers. In the last thirty years, the importance of varied media has been recognized and educators and publishing companies are constantly exploring ways to make language teaching more effective and more interesting. The most common media used today can be broadly divided into three categories: 1) technical media (language labs, television, programmed learning and records); 2) visual media (movies, filmstrips, slides, pictures and the overhead projector); and 3) non-technical media (pen-pals, exchange students and teachers, lingua camps, songs and games). According to

Kinder, the Army Language Training School at Monterey, California, employs in its training every audio-visual-verbal device known.¹¹

Technical media

The language laboratory. By 1962, according to a United States Office of Education survey¹², approximately 2,500 secondary schools and over 700 colleges and universities were equipped with some kind of language laboratory. There are many different kinds of laboratories ranging from the very simple where each student has headphones and hears a tape played on the master control where he repeats phrases after the speaker and his pronunciation is monitored by the teacher to the elaborate laboratory where each student sits in a separate booth and is equipped with a microphone and his own tape so he can record his pronunciation and then play it back. According to Locke¹³, the latter is the best way for a student to improve his pronunciation but many language specialists feel that the most important thing to be gained from a lab is listening to native speakers.

Advantages of the lab are as follows: 1) all students can participate simultaneously; 2) the teacher can give individual help where needed; 3) she can correct students without embarrassing them in front

¹¹Kinder, James, Audio-visual Materials and Techniques, New York, American Book Company, 1959, p. 253.

¹²Trow, William Clark, Teacher and Technology, New York, Appleton Century Crofts, 1963, p. 69.

¹³Locke, William, "To Record of 'Not'", Modern Language Journal, 64:October 1960, p. 279.

of the class or disturbing the rest of the class; 4) it provides a facility for group testing or oral material; and 5) it is an aid to teachers in improving their own audio-lingual proficiency. The language lab is a supplement to teaching, not a substitute¹⁴. New material should be introduced in the classroom first, then practised in the lab. With the new modular scheduling, the language lab is an invaluable aid to the teacher. In a pamphlet put out by CEEB, teachers are warned that they should not expect "to reap maximum benefits by superimposing a language lab on a program in which the objectives, the administrative framework, the teachers, the materials or the methods are not adjustable to or coordinated with the basic principles in accordance with which the language lab was developed."¹⁵

Programmed learning. The behavioral scientists who developed programmed instruction regard learning as a change in behavior. The principles of programmed instruction are used to control or shape behavior through techniques called operant conditioning. According to the above-mentioned CEEB pamphlet:

A considerable amount of promising experimentation is going on in foreign language programming. Some of it is exploring ways to exploit these principles as a means of breaking the lock-step in learning caused by conventional administrative and pedagogical patterns.¹⁶

¹⁴Hocking, Elton, "Language Laboratories", Nation's Schools 67: February 1961, p. 83.

¹⁵College Entrance Examination Board, Curricular Change in the Foreign Languages, Washington, 1963.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 60.

One of the simplest teaching machines is a box in which the program, one item at a time, shows through a window covered with transparent plastic or glass. The student reads the item and writes his answer on the tape through an open slot. A knob moves the correct answer into view and slides his answer under the transparent glass or plastic. He compares the answer with the correct one but cannot erase it.

In Denver, a research project was conducted in which a Spanish teacher was given two years to produce a program in Spanish for Denver schools for sixth grade classes.¹⁷ Teachers were given very careful training in the use of the program during a series of Saturday workshops and it was reported that the project was so successful that one in French is now being devised. Careful planning of this program was done over two years, writing and testing, until it was deemed satisfactory, then special training was given to the teachers who were to use it. Foreign language programs cannot be adopted overnight; much careful planning is necessary.

An experiment was introduced at Harvard¹⁸ to test the effectiveness of programmed instruction for modern language and it was found that with a mean time of 47.5 hours, six subjects learned an amount comparable to that presented in a first semester course. In a semester one spends about forty-eight hours with the instructor plus time spent outside the classroom on assignments. This fact is not mentioned by

¹⁷Fund for the Advancement of Education, Four Case Studies of Programmed Instruction, New York, 1964.

¹⁸Lumsdale, A., and Glaser, R., Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning, Washington, N.E.A., 1964.

Ferster and Sapon,¹⁹ but students' gains could be offset by the fact that as they worked on their own at this, they would not have heard one word of the spoken language.

Television. Television is a comparatively new medium for language teaching which has been most widely used in elementary schools. In 1960-61, 7,500 elementary schools were offering some television teaching in a modern language to an estimated 3,500,000 children.²⁰ One of the reasons it is more prevalent in elementary schools is because of the NDEA FLES program to encourage languages in the lower grades but where there is a shortage of qualified language specialists. The Texas Education Agency warns, however, that "television should not be considered the answer to the shortage of foreign language teachers".²¹ They do not admit though that one inspired teacher in a city can, by means of television, greatly help a hundred others.

Hocking criticizes American foreign language television programs as too amateur and is of the opinion that they are more skillfully handled abroad where government backing ensures a bigger budget, better organization and higher quality. In making a direct comparison, he states, ". . . not only did our T.V. performance look bad, our subject itself

¹⁹Ibid., p. 96.

²⁰Childers, op. cit., p. 91.

²¹Texas Education Agency, op. cit., p. 54.

suffered and our reputation was tarnished as a result of amateur T.V. programs."²²

Despite these comments on specially produced language programs, language teaching can benefit from television. Often programs of a cultural nature are shown over regular television stations and if students can be persuaded to watch these, they might gain considerable motivation in their language study. Last spring, for example, a program on Monaco was shown. In the Oregon classes referred to in this paper, students listened to records in class of the two singers (Francoise Hardy and Gilbert Becaude) who were to appear on the program and Monaco and its relationship to France were discussed. According to oral reports the next day, eighty-five percent of the students had watched the program and judging by comments made, had been proud to be able to tell their families who the singers were and what they were singing about. Students react positively to the evidence that what they learn in class is the everyday speech of people in another country.

Records. In comparison with the other technical media just mentioned, records have been used the longest but this is not to deny their usefulness. In class, records can be used to listen to folk songs and classical music from the country of the target language. With more advanced classes, records of poetry, stories and plays can occasionally be used to advantage. As Kinder²³ points out though, slower, longer

²²Hocking, op. cit., p. 142.

²³Kinder (1959) op. cit., p. 254.

playing records would be advantageous for the above. This need is slowly being met by the production of 16 2/3 rpm records.

Several schools now also provide record kits for each student to take home to practice orally what has been learned in class. If the student uses these consistently and conscientiously, he can reduce the necessity of "unlearning" incorrect pronunciation by pronouncing the word out of class when he has no pattern to follow.

Summary of technical media

The CEEB pamphlet sums up very succinctly the place of technical media in language teaching as follows: "If one cannot teach well without equipment, one should not expect to be able to teach well with it."²⁴ Technical media often encourage the lazy or indifferent teacher to turn on the switch and sit back. To get the most out of any media the teacher should be actively involved helping individual students, seeing that boredom does not set in or explaining things which are not clear.

General criticism of technical media would be that it may become too impersonal if over-used and technical problems can totally disrupt a lesson if the teacher is not prepared with an alternative. Students need the opportunity to hear native speakers which is especially important if the teacher is weak in the spoken language and with programmed learning, instruction is individualized so that each student can progress at his own rate.

Visual media

There are many forms of visual media which can be utilized in language classes, namely, movies, filmstrips, slides, pictures, postcards,

²⁴ CEEB, op. cit., p. 52.

flashcards, blackboards and overhead. As these media are more commonplace than technical media they will not be commented upon in detail in this paper. Most books on visual aids, e.g. Kinder, Hirsch and Rosselot (See Bibliography) provide adequate commentaries on the individual uses of these media and language teachers will be able to adapt these techniques to their own classroom situations.

Non-technical media

Non-technical media are the most versatile of all media as the term is used to cover such diverse areas as songs, games, pen-pals and foreign exchange visitors. It is by the use of these media that the teacher can show the scope of her imagination as she is not bound by the limits of an object as with both technical and visual media.

Songs and games. The most commonly used non-technical media in language teaching are probably songs and games. Most teachers introduce some songs into their language classes even if it only amounts to carols at Christmas time. It is not even necessary for the teacher to be able to sing well, although this helps, as most of the common songs learned in school can be bought on records. It is a good idea to have the words to the song on the overhead projector so the students can follow as they listen to the record. Students should never attempt to sing a song until they are thoroughly familiar with the spoken words.

Games are generally thought of as frills to the language lesson but depending on the type of game these can become a vehicle for reviewing or oral work and this an integral part of the lesson. Huebner²⁵ has many

²⁵Huebner, op. cit., p. 81.

suggestions to make concerning games and the imaginative teacher will find many more which become special favorites with her classes. The following are a few suggestions of games which were best liked by the students answering the opinionnaire on which this paper is based:

1. Tic-tac-toe--this game is played exactly like the standard American version with the divided into two teams except that in each square there is a French word and to earn the X or O the student must pronounce the word correctly and know its meaning in English. This game has many variations as idioms could be used instead of single words, verbs, numbers or time. Ideal for reviewing!

2. Hangman--one student goes to the blackboard and places the number of blanks there are letters in the word he has chosen, e.g. _ _ _ _ _ for LIVRE. The rest of the students then in turn guess at letters. If they guess correctly, the letter is put in place; if not a gallows and hangman are drawn step by step and when this is completed and the word not guessed, the player has won.

3. Who am I? or What am I?--this game can be played on any level and is excellent for practising question forms. The teacher thinks of someone or something and by asking questions, the students guess who or what she is representing.

4. Simon says--the French version of this, "Michel, dit," is especially popular with younger children. All instructions are given in French which provides good listening and comprehension exercise.

5. Jeopardy--many teachers will discover that their students know very little about the world or even America outside their own state. Jeopardy is played like the popular television quiz game except that the

questions are all in French and answers must be in French, too. Each time the game is played, a panel and a scorer are chosen. If the panel cannot answer the question, it is thrown open to the other members of the class who can earn bonus points for correct answers. Students quickly assimilate facts divulged in this manner.

6. Another game to play with vocabulary is scrambled words. The teacher writes ten or twelve jumbled words on the blackboard and the students working in pairs hold a contest to see who can unscramble them first.

7. A good game to practise using everyday words is the familiar "My grandmother went to market" (in French) where the first player says, "My grandmother went to market and bought _____." The second player then repeats this and adds to it with another item. If a player fails to repeat an item, he is out. The repetition involved makes this a valuable aid to pronunciation.

8. Students enjoy making up their own crossword puzzles within the limits of their vocabulary with both clues and answers in the foreign language. These should be checked by the teacher to see that the clues fit the number of spaces, then the best can be put on a ditto sheet and given to the rest of the class to solve.

Activities. Depending upon the area in which the school is located there are various activities which can be undertaken either by the French classes or the French club. Last year, after talking about the differences between French and American food, the students in the selected school in Oregon became interested in how some typical French dishes were prepared. Consequently, arrangements were made to take over the

home economics room and the class was divided into five groups. Each group made something different (fondue, crêpes, bûche de Noël, mille feuilles and soufflé) then everybody sampled each dish. Several students reported that they later made the dishes at home for their families.

Field trips to movies and plays in the foreign language can be undertaken if the school is in the vicinity of a large city or university town. Other cultural amenities are also often available in a large town.

Kinder²⁶ mentions that the "speakerphone", a telephone device with amplifier so that the whole class can hear, and the microphone can be used in language classes to interview people such as a foreign consul or native who would not have time to come into the classroom. With careful planning and cooperation the possibilities for this relatively new medium are endless, especially if it became possible to call contacts in the foreign country itself.

Pen-pals. Many students, when learning a foreign language, are anxious to obtain pen-pals in the country of their target language. This is an excellent idea as it provides an opportunity for the practical application of what they have learned in class whether they write in the foreign language or whether the pen-pal writes in his own language. Students are also interested in learning about the lives of girls and boys their age in another country. This is basically what Huebner²⁷

²⁶Kinder, James, Using Audio-visual Materials in Education, New York, American Book Company, 1965, p. 254.

²⁷Huebner, op. cit., p. 93.

means when he says "fundamentally most of our troubles are due to prejudice and hatred based on misunderstandings". By providing the opportunity in language classes to communicate with other nationalities the language teacher can do much to alleviate this prejudice.

Foreign exchange teachers and students. Useful to counteract misunderstandings between nations are foreign exchange teachers and students. It can be arranged through the Amity Institute in Ohio, for a school to have a native French, German or Spanish assistant teacher for a period of six, twelve, eighteen or thirty-six weeks. The assistant is there to aid the teacher in any way she might wish, not to take over her job. If possible, one could have them bring slides, tapes and realia of their own country to display to the students. There are endless possibilities for using this kind of a resource person both in the classroom and also in extra-curricular activities.

A similar situation is the student exchange program under the auspices of the American Field Service, if individual school districts have enough financial support. Under this program the student usually stays in the community one year. Esther Eaton considers it to be the duty of each state to "assume its share of the responsibility of acquainting all students with some knowledge of another country and its language at an age when national prejudices can be forestalled."²⁸

Becoming more popular is the "twin" town system where a town in America is linked with a similar town in another country. The idea of

²⁸Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Modern Foreign Languages in the High School, Washington, 1962, p. 110.

this project again is to promote international understanding at a personal level.

Summary

Since foreign language teaching was introduced into American schools in the seventeenth century, there have been great strides in the methods used. At first, French was taught as a discipline of the mind, an exercise in logic, not as a spoken language. Today, students are taught to speak French and to appreciate a people and a culture different than their own. French teachers today may be devotees to either the direct or audio-lingual method but due to better training of teachers and more opportunities for travel abroad, most teachers provide more oral work than formerly.

Three types of media are used in language teaching today: technical, visual and non-technical. The first two are self-explanatory in that they are limited by machines or realia while the latter calls upon the innovative powers of the teacher. The main purpose of non-technical media is twofold. On the personal level (exchange visitors and 'twinning') it is to overcome prejudice, misunderstandings and intolerance. On the level of games and songs it is to add interest and to motivate students to learn the target language. According to Huebner, "for lively, snappy oral work permitting much activity on the part of the pupils there is nothing superior, especially in the lower grades, to the game."²⁹

The next chapter will discuss the development of the opinionnaire. The students' comments and reactions to various media and techniques will be dealt with in detail.

²⁹Huebner, op. cit., p. 93.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF THE OPINIONNAIRE

It was decided to use an opinionnaire as the research instrument for this study to find out how students reacted to various teaching techniques and media aids. The opinionnaire was administered in May, 1968, to two classes of French II students and one class of French I students all of whom had the same teacher, this researcher, for French for one year.

The opinionnaire consisted of eight questions concerning the learning of French. The questions were developed after talking and listening to students discussing what they thought helped them most in French and questioning the purpose of other assignments and exercises. The literature in the field was first consulted to discover whether studies had been done where students' opinions were sought and as the results were negative, the questions on the opinionnaire were formed. Most of the questions could be answered with single words although some of the students went into more detail as will be seen in the discussion of the results. The students were told not to put their names on the papers and not to discuss the answers with each other. It was also stressed that an honest answer was to be given rather than an answer which would appeal to the teacher.

The French II students had been taught strictly by the ALM method during their first year of French and primarily by the grammar method their second year. However, the latter was enlivened by many vocabulary

and culture games, movies and records. These students, therefore, have experienced several techniques of teaching French and have a basis for comparison. The French I students had been taught mainly by the grammar method but with quite a heavy stress on free conversation (as opposed to the stereotyped dialogues of the ALM method). They had also movies, filmstrips, listened to records and tapes and played games to stimulate oral skills. At the beginning of the course they had also been exposed to dialogues which they had to memorize but these were dropped as the teacher felt that the interest of the class was waning and that more learning could be elicited with a different technique.

Discussion of opinionnaire results

There were forty-four students who handed in an opinionnaire. However, some gave more than one answer to a question as they considered two things to be equally important. This accounts for the extra numbers on the Table I for some questions.

In question Number 1, the majority (twenty out of forty-four) thought they learned vocabulary best by taking it home and repeating it or writing it out until they knew it. Quite a large percentage (fifteen out of forty-four) thought they learned best by using the vocabulary in sentences and despite the alleged unpopularity of tests both in this question and the next, several students said they could learn best if the words or verbs were constantly tested. Although only five students said they learned vocabulary best through games, eight more commented that once they had learned the words, games helped to review them. The comment from one student that "games in French help us more than the teacher realizes" seems to sum up the general feeling of all the students.

TABLE I. RESULTS OF OPINIONNAIRE

	Questions	Answers				
		Sentences	Repetition and Memorization	Word Games	Tests	
1.	What do you think helps you learn vocabulary best?	15	20	5	5	
2.	What do you think helps you learn verbs best?	18	13	8	5	
3.	Do you think listening to tapes and repeating the speaker helps your pronunciation?		Yes	No		
			21	23		
4.	What do you think is the most important aspect of learning a foreign language in school?	Speaking 23	Reading 11	Understanding 35	Culture 8	
5.	What do you dislike doing most in French lessons?	Oral Work 11	Reading 5	Grammar-Sentences 14	Tests 5	Nothing 10
6.	What do you like best about French lessons?	Oral Work 9	Reading 8	Sentences 16	Games 16	Culture 8
7.	Do you think it is important to have an explanation of <u>why</u> you say a certain thing in French or can you accept it and learn it without an explanation?	Explanation Necessary 37	Not necessary 7			

TABLE I. (Continued)

8. What would you say was the most important thing you learned in French class this year?	How to write Sentences	Culture	General understanding of the language	Grammar
	8	5	22	10

In question Number 2, contrary to the beliefs of the proponents of the AIM method the majority of students found that they learned verbs best by using them in sentences either by filling in the blanks or translating from English into French. During the year students asked several times for tests on verbs to practice but not to be graded.

The results of question Number 3 were very close as twenty-one were of the opinion that listening to tapes and repeating the speaker helped their pronunciation and twenty-three thought that it did not help. Many of the students qualified their answers to this question with comments on when they found it useful or why they did not find it helpful.

Students' comments are listed below:

Pro tapes

1. Yes to a certain extent, but usually they go too fast.
2. Because you hear just how the French people say it.
3. You can get the way the words are said more easily.
4. You have to practice some way.
5. If you have the written material at the same time.
6. It helps because they say it over two or three times, but they are very dull.
7. If the tapes are slow and you can hear each word.
8. They shouldn't be relied on completely.

Anti tapes

1. You can be thinking of something else while it's playing but when you're replying in class you have to know what's going on.
2. If no one is listening to you, you don't know if you're saying it right or not.
3. You just repeat without really knowing what you're saying.
4. It doesn't do you any good to say the words if you don't know what they mean.
5. If you have questions you can't ask them of the person who is speaking.

The main objection to the tapes seemed to be that they were monotonous and most of the time too fast to be able to be understood.

Many students gave two answers to question Number 4 as they thought that understanding and speaking were equally important in learning a foreign language. Only eleven considered reading to be the most important aspect and eight put culture first.

In reply to the question, "What do you dislike doing most in French lessons?" the results were varied. Ten students could think of nothing they disliked particularly, eleven disliked oral work and fourteen disliked doing grammar and sentences. Five disliked reading and five more disliked tests. What students liked doing least was what they were least at ease with as several students commented that they didn't like translating sentences because they made a lot of mistakes, but they admitted that they needed the practice, and they could see why they had to do sentences and grammar drills.

In defining what they liked best, sixteen chose games and the same number opted for sentences. It was noted during the year that in general those students who excelled at translating sentences would not be so good in oral work or reading and vice-versa except for the few exceptional students who were good all around. This could explain the fact that sentences headed the list both for the most liked and the most disliked parts of French.

The great majority (thirty-seven out of forty-four) of the students answered question 7 in the affirmative, i.e., that they thought it necessary to have an explanation of a grammatical construction rather than just learn a phrase parrot-fashion. The ALM advocates no grammatical explanation as is evidenced in the fact that in the second lesson they introduce a subjunctive into the dialogue, "il faut que j'aille à la

bibliothèque." Many students find it confusing to say "j'aille" for "I go" one time and then the next time to say "je vais" for "I go" without any explanation.

In evaluating the most important aspect they learned in French last year, almost half (twenty-two) considered it to be a general understanding of the language. As this question was open-ended, it would seem that the media used to teach must have been reasonably effective as the aim of the course was to teach the students to speak, understand, read and write French as well as to increase their awareness of another culture. One of the most profound statements came from a French II student who commented, ". . . I also learned it takes patience, time and an alert mind to learn a foreign language and one has to work to achieve a goal."

Summary of results

The diversity of opinion in most of the answers illustrates how hard it is to teach a class so that everyone gets the maximum benefit. Some prefer one techniques, others another so that, ideally speaking, instruction should be individualized. However, this is rarely possible so the only other alternative is to use a wide variety of media and techniques so that each student is catered to for at least part of the time. The disadvantages of using either the ALM or grammar method alone are relatively straight forward.

With reference to the results shown in this chapter, several ideas emerge which could lead to adjustments in the future. Practice sentences using new vocabulary, idioms and verb forms seem to be generally accepted as a good way to learn new material even by the students who dislike doing them. Maybe with more of these those students who are weak in this area

would become more proficient.

MacKeigan sums up the disadvantages of the oral approach in the following words:

Despite the wishful thinking of the proponents of conversation, evidence rolls in that most students who travel made such brief visits as to cast serious doubt upon the wisdom of emphasizing oral fluency and labored pronunciation at the expense of a richer reading program. Furthermore, much of what passes for conversational French (or any other modern language) is in reality prattle unworthy of the educated mind.³⁰

Brooks, on the other hand, is just as much against the grammar method, maintaining that, "the most serious of all false objectives is translation."³¹

In the final chapter of the paper, conclusions will be subjectively drawn; also recommendations will be made for future French teaching under similar conditions.

³⁰C.E.E.B., op. cit., p. 48.

³¹Brooks, op. cit., p. 107.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the literature and students consulted it can be seen that there is no agreement as to how a foreign language should be taught. What will be a success with one teacher and one class may be exactly the opposite with another teacher and another class. As Brooks³² points out also, there is a difference between teaching different age groups. Younger children are more willing to accept things without an explanation, whereas older children often want to know why and to see words written.

The teacher who uses the ALM should have entirely different aims in mind than the teacher who prefers the grammar-translation method and as Huse maintains, "there should be no quarrels between methods that involve different purposes."³³ From this paper one can draw several general suggestions which could be used to upgrade French teaching in any school with any teacher using any method.

Firstly, in learning a foreign language, there is a great deal of plain drudgery, i.e., memorizing and it seems immaterial whether the work is repeated ad infinitum on tape or in writing. The end result should be the same, namely that the work is committed to memory and how this is accomplished is the prerogative of the teacher involved.

³²Ibid., p. 110

³³Huse, op. cit., p. 66.

Secondly, most students enjoy a little variety, so advantage should be taken of as many different media as is feasible. Students also enjoy games which help them to recall words, facts or structures. However, games are best used for review rather than to teach for the first time as according to Huse: "If it takes an hour with play and indirection to accomplish a certain task and five minutes without the amusement, most students will prefer the second method."³⁴ This fact is also borne out by the responses of students who answered the opinionnaire.

Thirdly, according to all the literature and results of experiments reviewed, it seems to be of relatively little importance what method was used to teach the language. The end result of students who study the language for a minimum of four years will be the same whether they first learned to speak or to write the language as eventually both skills have to be mastered.

As approximately twenty-five percent of the students found oral work difficult, a new approach should be envisaged in this area. Rather than make the students memorize dialogues, it could be more beneficial to have each one talk for two minutes at first on simple topics, e.g. "Ma famille", "Mon lycée," then gradually work up to slightly more advanced subjects towards the end of the second and beginning of the third year.

If the teacher has contacts in the foreign country, an interesting project with tapes can be undertaken whereby both teachers tape various lessons in their schools then exchange tapes. This can then be extended to tapes of local events, spoken letters from individual class members, etc.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 81.

This exchange is more meaningful to students than a lecture from the teacher as they are able to participate actively.

If the teaching of foreign languages in grade school with a follow-up through high school could become an accepted practice all over the United States, this probably more than anything would upgrade the standards of language teaching as teachers in high schools would have to have more preparation in the language. To satisfy accreditation standards a teacher with a minor (thirty quarter hours) may now teach a foreign language in high school. If the children had had three or four years of the language in grade school and junior high, thirty hours would be insufficient to teach at high school level.

Experiments have been carried out with students in college who have had an adequate language background to teach interdisciplinary studies in the foreign language.³⁵ In some cases history has been taught in the target language; in other cases geography or even biology. In Europe business courses are offered in a foreign language. Whatever the subject, students are forced to think in the second language. Although this is extremely difficult at first, most students become accustomed to it and become bicultural as well as bilingual. The tremendous advantage to students and the possibilities of this kind of program are unlimited. Therefore, the question is not so much how to teach but to find the right method for the individual teacher and class and to increase the amount of time allotted to language instruction.

³⁵Cullen, A. J., "New Option for Foreign Language Students,"
N.E.A. Journal, 57: April 1968, p. 13.

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