issues in modern foreign languages teaching

Edited by
Kit Field

Issues in Modern Foreign Languages Teaching

Issues in Modern Foreign Languages Teaching draws together many eminent writers in the field to address the key issues associated with Modern Foreign Languages teaching and learning.

The issues addressed include:

- the development of Modern Foreign Language teaching
- the content and definition of Modern Foreign Languages
- how Modern Foreign Languages are taught in English schools
- issues concerned with pupils and their learning
- the relationship of the subject to the curriculum as a whole

Issues in Modern Foreign Languages Teaching will provide stimulating references for newly qualified teachers, student teachers and experienced teachers to build on existing good practice and to develop a theoretical perspective which may be lacking in Initial Teacher Training courses. It is important reading for students and teachers of Modern Foreign Languages at both primary and secondary level.

K**it Field** is a principal lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University College and the deputy director of Continuing Professional Development.

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Issues in Modern Foreign Languages Teaching

Edited by Kit Field

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Introduction to the Series

Modern Foreign Languages

This book, *Issues in Teaching,* is one of a series of books entitled *Issues in Subject Teaching*. The series has been designed to engage with a wide range of issues relaed to subject teaching. Types of issues vary among subjects, but may include, for example: issues that impact on Initial Teacher Education in the subject; issues addressed in the classroom through the teaching of the subject; issues to do with the content of the subject and its definition; issues to do with subject pedagogy; issues to do with the relationship between the subject and broader educational aims and objectives in society, and the philosophy and sociology of education; and issues to do with the development of the subject and its future in the twenty-first century.

Each book consequently presents key debates that subject teachers will need to understand, reflect on and engage in as part of their professional development. Chapters have been designed to highlight major questions, to consider the evidence from research and practice and to arrive at possible answers. Some subject books or chapters offer at least one solution or a view of the ways forward, whereas others provide alternative views and leave readers to identify their own solution or view of the ways forward. The editors expect readers of the series to want to pursue the issues raised, and so chapters include suggestions for further reading, and questions for further debate. The chapters and questions could be used as stimuli for debate in subject seminars or department meetings, or as topics for assignments or classroom research. The books are targeted at all those with a professional interest in the subject, and in particular: student teachers learning to teach the subject in the primary or secondary school; newly qualified teachers; teachers with a subject co-ordination or leadership role, and those preparing for such responsibility; mentors, tutors, trainers and advisers of the groups mentioned above.

Each book in the series has a cross-phase dimension. This is because the editors believe it is important for teachers in the primary and secondary phases to look at subject teaching holistically, particularly in order to provide for continuity and progression, but also to increase their understanding of how children learn. The balance of chapters that have a cross-phase relevance, chapters that focus on issues which are of particular concern to primary teachers and chapters that focus on issues which secondary teachers are more likely to need to address, varies according to the issues relevant to different subjects. However, no matter where the emphasis is, authors have drawn out the relevance of their topic to the whole of each book's intended audience.

Because of the range of the series, both in terms of the issues covered and its cross-phase concern, each book is an edited collection. Editors have commissioned new writing

from experts on particular issues who, collectively, will represent many different perspectves on subject teaching. Readers should not expect a book in this series to cover a full range of issues relevant to the subject, or to offer a completely unified view of subject teaching, or that every issue will be dealt with discretely, or that all aspects of an issue will be covered. Part of what each book in this series offers to readers is the opportunity to explore the inter-relationships between positions in debates and, indeed, among the debates themselves, by identifying the overlapping concerns and competing arguments that are woven through the text.

The editors are aware that many initiatives in subject teaching currently originate from the centre, and that teachers have decreasing control of subject content, pedagogy and assessment strategies. The editors strongly believe that for teaching to remain properly a vocation and a profession, teachers must be invited to be part of a creative and critical dialogue about subject teaching, and encouraged to reflect, criticize, problem-solve and innovate. This series is intended to provide teachers with a stimulus for democratic involvement in the development of subject teaching.

Susan Capel,
Jon Davison,
James Arthur and
John Moss
May 1999

Introduction

It is the intention of this book to stimulate thought and ideas which will enable student teachers and teachers to build on existing good practice, and to develop a theoretical perspective which may be lacking in current and recent Initial Teacher Training courses. Many of the issues contained within this volume are addressed in a range of texts, including books and journal articles. This book draws together many eminent writers in the field, and my role has been to invite them to develop their thoughts on a range of themes related to modern foreign language teaching and learning. This has led to a comprehensive list of topics being covered, but a thread of an argument running through each of the chapters. This permeating argument is a plea that theorists and practitioners join together to re-examine the so-called communicative approach to foreign language teaching and learning, which has developed and benefited learners over the last twenty years. My colleagues do not condemn and reject the approach, which has developed to the extent that it can be seen to underpin the recommendations contained in the National Curriculum documentation, but see a need to develop it further to prevent the devaluing of the subject as an academic discipline.

The book is divided into four sections. The first section, an *Historical Overview* contains two Chapters. Firstly, Field tracks the development of an approach to MFL teaching and learning, which, as it stands in the National Curriculum, represents an eclectic assortment of methods, which teachers have found to be successful. The chapter points out, too, how an approach to MFL teaching and learning has always led to heated discussions amongst educationalists. Pachler in the second chapter presents a critique of what he calls the British variant of communicative language teaching (CLT). He explains that teachers do have options and choices, and that even within the overarching label 'Communicative' there are alternatives available to the teacher.

The second section retains a theoretical perspective, yet focuses on classroom issues. *Issues Concerned with the Content of and a Definition of, Modern Foreign Languages* captures the content of many staffroom discussions, in which MFL teachers find themselves embroiled. Why are teachers of MFLs so committed to the teaching and learning of the subject in a Britain which appears to resist everything European, and why should the school system restrict itself to the main European languages when a large proportion of our population are already speakers of other languages? Lawes and Anderson address these questions with great authority and enthusiasm. Britain is almost unique in that it delays the learning of foreign languages until children are of secondary school age, and Sharpe and Driscoll question the impact of this policy decision, and the appropriateness of adopting secondary style approaches to teaching on a voluntary basis to younger children. Despite this array of issues, which weigh heavily on teachers, Lawes galvanises the views of many in a chapter explaining the unique contribution learning MFLs makes to young people's development.

In the section *Issues Associated with Pedagogy,* colleagues maintain a very positive and forward looking outlook. Schools make many decisions which impact upon the quality of learning. The grouping of pupils according to ability as opposed to mixed ability teaching remains a heated debate. Girls seem to be better at MFLs than boys. Many argue that able learners' needs have been neglected, as MFL teachers' doors have been opened to a wider range of learner types. The types of learners faced by teachers has also contributed to the development of a 'best fit' approach to the teaching of the subject. This section also includes an examination of issues which should not be forgotten. Barry Jones and Jane Jones provide timely reminders of the place of cultural awareness and grammar in MFL programmes. They do so in a way which does not look back to a golden age, but which presents exciting and stimulating methods and techniques which will appeal to both learners and teachers. Macaro questions the dogmatic approach to exclusive use of the target language, and recommends that teachers optimise the use, yet consider occasions when learners will gain form use of their native language in terms of learning, rather than in terms of expediency. Macaro provides a conceptual framework for all teachers. Bax considers an appraisal of the use of ICT and warns against viewing computers and technology as a salvation. He identifies the value of technology, and points out the need for teachers to be selective in its use. There has been a quiet revolution in assessment methods and external examination systems over the past decade, and Adams recommends careful analysis of pupils' needs and the matching of appropriate assessment methods. She carefully explains that assessment is part and parcel of the teaching and learning process, and therefore presents the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches on this basis. Pachler and Allford examine the potential of literature at a time when many teachers are lamenting the loss of extended reading in particularly A level classes. Harris notes the need for independent use of languages in all skills, and condemns over reliance on the teacher for the practice of receptive and productive language skills. Her response is to encourage teachers to build in a progression of autonomous language learning skills into programmes of study. Harris sees the need to teach how to learn, despite the pressure from assessment performance tables to teach what to learn.

The last section, *Broader Issues,* overlaps with the content of preceding sections to a degree. It picks up on many of the questions and issues raised, yet provides a positive look to the future. Coyle looks at ways of making MFLs more relevant and stimulating to the learner. Her position is that MFLs can and should link up with other areas of the curriculum more. The very content of the curriculum, taken as a whole can be seen to promote such an approach, rather than to require teachers to retain a rigid, compartmentalised approach to planning teaching and learning. Pomphrey adopts a similar stance, less from a 'content' point of view, but more in examining the transferability of skills and learning processes.

The book as whole does have a theme and a message; to re-examine the communicative approach. As yet, complete answers are not presented, but teachers should be aware of the questions posed. The book is not a manifesto; it is an invitation to engage in professional debate and dialogue.

How to use this book

Each chapter is focused on a particular issue. Section headings and chapter titles should assist the reader to identify those of interest. At the end of each chapter, their is a short summary of questions raised in the form of an *Editor's note.* The editor has also provided some guidance to readers, as to which chapters within this book are linked to the content of the chapter being read. This serves as a indicator for useful 'further reading' to enable the reader to develop a wider perspective on specific concerns. A reference list follows each chapter, again serving to acknowledge the source of ideas and information, but also to guide the reader to other relevant texts.

Readers should not feel obliged to read this book from beginning to end. It is a complement to practice, and also a means of informing practice. As issues arise in the classroom and outside the classroom, this text should serve as a way of informing teachers, and helping them to devise answers of their own. All the contributors are experts in their field, and each chapter provides an introduction to the key issues associated with MFL teaching and learning.

Part 1
An historical overview

1
The changing place of Modern Foreign Languages in the curriculum

Kit Field

Introduction

There is no tradition of pedagogy in the history of compulsory education in England and Wales. From Victorian times, when MFLs first appeared on the school curriculum, no formal teacher training was required, and native speakers were employed to service the perceived needs of the British upper middle classes. In a mood of desperation, and in face of pedagogical studies emerging from their home countries, native speaking teachers resorted to self help by forming their own 'Société Nationale des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre'. This legacy of eclecticism has remained a striking feature of education in the form of conflict and confusion of thought as theorists have striven to relate aims and purposes of education to teaching, learning and pedagogy (Simon, 1994 in Moon and Mayes). Judge (1974) states that the tensions between a traditional academic emphasis and a notion of communication and international understanding have never been more at odds than in discussions centring around MFLs. Undoubtedly there has been a series of trends and recommended methodologies, and within the field of MFL teaching and learning more than in most other subject disciplines. The pragmatic alternative to following a stipulated pedagogy has led to a polarisation of teaching and learning styles, linked inextricably to the perceived purposes of teaching and learning MFLs in secondary schools. Richardson (1981) asserts that recommended approaches to teaching foreign languages have always been linked to the perceived purposes. With no formal direction until 1988, teachers have been able to determine their own aims and objectives, resulting in the view that '…there is no such thing as a new idea in language teaching' (Swarbrick, 1994:1).

Reform and counter-reform movements throughout the century have led commentators to draw on the metaphor of 'pendulum swings' (see Hawkins 1987, Goodson 1985, Richardson 1981). In articulating recommended approaches, theorists make reference to general learning theories and theories of language learning and acquisition, which in turn are promoted and supported by governmental backing in the form of reports and education acts. At the same time, teachers have struggled to cater for an ever-changing 'clientele' relying on their own collective and individual intuition. The obvious need to motivate and stimulate learners is a key to success as a language teacher, in both a pragmatic and philosophical sense. Palmer (1922) a theorist with ideas before his time, attempted to identify features and principles from a range of methodologies, upon which teachers could build their own understanding of good practice. Palmer noted that no

course of language study could be designed until much is known about the students for whom the course is intended. However, a respect for practitioners' views, and the role of the professionals has never been formalised, although groups and movements have evolved. As a consequence methodological standpoints have become increasingly entrenched. As 'Action Research' (see Elliott 1991, McNiff, 1988 and others) is seen as individuals' and groups' means of improving practice, this notion of interpreting frameworks and guidance is perpetuated as the best way to progress.

New approaches develop as a reaction to existing practices, and lessons from the past have been incorporated into new recommendations. Periodically attempts have been made to crystallise thoughts and beliefs by institutionalising dogma associated with periods of time in the history of MFL teaching and learning. The most important such event has been the implementation of the National Curriculum orders. The national criteria for GCSE (DES/WO, 1985) represented a consensus between teachers, examiners and government. The confusion between different factions of the profession continued into the late 1980s and early 1990s, evident in the publication of the National Curriculum Statutory Orders. A set of purposes for teaching and learning MFLs emerged, and appeared to be a compromise between conflicting parties, rather than as a consensus. The purposes contain aspects which appeal to all teachers, yet at the same time, contentious issues to the very same body of professionals.

The purposes (DES/WO, 1990:3) attempt to be all things to all teachers. In an age of accountability and of inspection mania, one sign of good practice is the visible fulfilment of the stated purposes.

The place of a brief historical study is to analyse the validity, consistency and coherence of such a diverse set of aims. Again, electric pragmatism is the only solution for practising teachers. They are compelled to muddle through and to develop and interpret good practice in their own way. Each 'purpose' owes its presence in the National Curriculum documentation to the power of arguments justifying its position in conflicting theories and consequent ratification by government actions.

The educational purposes of learning foreign languages

The purposes (DES/WO 1990:3) listed below are subsequently explained. Their position in the official documentation is justified historically. The purposes are:

- to develop the ability to use language effectively for purposes of practical communication;
- to form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure;
- to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the target language is spoken;
- to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;
- to provide enjoyment and intellectual stipulations;
- to encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations;
- to promote learning of skills of more general application (e.g. analysis, memorising,

drawing of inferences).

To develop the ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication

The place of communication has not always been valued in MFL teaching and learning. Indeed the acceptance of what has been seen as a purely practical, functional purpose, has been treated as a devaluing of the subject in academic terms. This has placed the notion of practical communication in conflict with that of developing 'an awareness of the nature of language and language learning' (DES/WO, 1990:3). Nevertheless, philosophers throughout time have related foreign language learning to the acquisition of the mother tongue. John Locke (1690) applied the empiricist philosophy of learning through experience, and this recommendation for immersion techniques can be found in the views of (John Stuart Mill, 1867), and indeed (Bertrand Russell, 1940).

The acceptance of phonetics as a discipline worthy of study in the late nineteenth century placed sound systems at the core of language learning. The understanding and production of sounds, inevitably led to a belief that oral communication is at the heart of the language learning process. Viëtor's, (1882) seminal work *'Der Sprachunterricht muß umkehren'* criticised the prominent 'grammar/translation' methods, recommending the need to hear and speak the target language as a starting point. Native speakers of French, frustrated by the approach in schools formed their own society, demanding that French should be taught as a living language. The development of the Direct Method—instructions in the target language, and maximum exposure to it in the classroom—quickly became accepted as an alternative approach. The conflict between those promoting a functional approach with the universities representing academic centres quickly evolved. Progress was hindered by the non-acceptance of oral methods by the examinations boards. The works of (Palmer, 1917, 1921, 1922) influenced linguists in the mid-twentieth century. The insistence of many modern theorists that the learning of language should be based around the conveyance of meaning and that meaningless grammar-based drills should be abandoned, owes much to the works of Palmer.

The Direct Method did not go so far as to reject grammatical explanation, although Gouin (1853), representing advocates of *'The Natural Method',* did recommend the application of language in vocational, professional and personal contexts, which became accepted as the major motivational factor in the learning process.

The Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters' (IAAM, 1956) publication *The Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages* is another example of teachers acting independently in the face of adversity. The paper concluded that more able linguists were required in day to day workings in commerce. The 'vocational' needs gave even greater credence to the demand for effective communication skills.

Developments in technology in the period following the Second World War provided the advocates of communication with new ammunition. Tape recorders and language laboratories became commonplace and associated practices led to the formation in 1962 of the Audio Visual Language Association. Once again a greater emphasis was placed on the spoken word. In its early days, this behaviourist approach could be seen to recommend many techniques contained within the later communicative approach, which

in turn, would replace the audiovisual methods. The main tenets of the audio-lingual method were that there is a primacy of the spoken word over written text, that the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing could be separated, and that grammar is a set of structures which should be learnt inductively.

Audio-visual methods were not a natural precursor to the communicative approach. Indeed, in contrast to the post-war BBC broadcasts, audiovisual techniques did not draw on colloquial language in authentic situations. The stimulus/response approach received due criticism, even at the time. The Incorporated Association of Head Masters (IAHM) recommended in 1966, at their annual conference, that communication, not habit formation, should underpin discussions of method, course and materials design. Nevertheless the method did establish the spoken word and a sound system as a viable alternative to the study of grammatical rules.

These beliefs and values fed into the examination system. In 1962, the Secondary Schools Examination Council (SSEC) disbanded and was replaced by first the Curriculum Study Group, and in 1964 by the Schools Council. The Nuffield Foundation, which had pioneered audiovisual techniques and was assisted by the DES secured agreement that the vocabulary presented in courses such as 'En Avant', and 'Vorwärts' would be incorporated in the forthcoming CSE syllabuses.

Just as phonetics influenced the Direct Method, new linguistic theories in the 1960s eased the development of the Communicative Approach. *The Speech Act Theory* (see Searle, 1969) shifted attention from habit formation through rote learning to the conveyance of meaning by dint of an illocutionary force underpinning language use. Searle argued that speakers use language for a purpose, which is more powerful than simply the meanings of words. Utterances carry a force—whether it is an apology, a question, a demand, a request etc. This new description of linguistic competence led to the evolution of functional/ notional syllabuses, central to the communicative approach.

Entry to the Common Market, and subsequent analyses of British business' rate of success in Europe (e.g. Barclays Banks International *Factors for International Success (The Barclays Bank Report on Export Development in France, Germany and the UK, 1979),* and (BETRO *Language and Export Performance: A Study prepared for the BETRO Committee,* RSA, London, 1979), placed communication and language learning firmly in a functional context.

Work in the Council of Europe, led by John Trim, and the publication of Threshold Levels (Van Ek, 1972) led to a tighter definition of adult learner needs, and a system of credit transfer. Both of these developments were transferred to secondary education contexts in the form of short-term communicative goals and defined syllabuses. These in turn were the two key features of the Graded Objectives Movement, and the explosion of local organisations offering graded assessments in the late 1970s and early 1980s. GOML (Graded Objectives in Modern Languages) signalled a full implementation of the so-called communicative approach. Teachers took control of the syllabuses and assessment methods in an attempt to meet the needs of the ever-broadening range of learner types.

The audiovisual approach collapsed. In 1977 the Audio-Visual Language Association renamed itself the British Association of Language Teachers (BALT). The design and implementation of the statutory National Curriculum Orders acknowledged the work of GOML and institutionalised the communicative approach. Practical communication

became a formal purpose of modern language teaching. However the Direct Method, and the audio-visual revolution influenced developments. Strategies and teaching techniques have been drawn into the newer language teaching methods, and they have contributed enormously to the shift in emphasis from mental, linguistic agility to a focus on the message and the spoken word. Successful application of the communicative approach, and the fulfilment of the aim 'to develop the ability to use the language for purposes of practical communication' do, therefore, require a sound professional knowledge and understanding of a range of linked modern foreign language teaching trends.

To form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure

The Cartesian principles of logic and reason at the centre of meaning was applied to language teaching and learning in the sixteenth century. Swarbrick (1994) regards this philosophy as the root of the grammar/translation method. Grammar is a set of basic rules embedded in language. The manipulation of universals is consequently a basis for learning and mastery. Hawkins (1987) coined the phrase 'apprenticeship' in relation to language learning. Formal language teaching has only ever occupied a small proportion of curriculum time in England and Wales. The process of learning a foreign language is merely an introduction to strategies and techniques upon which s/he can draw at a later date, when proficiency in the given language becomes more necessary.

The learning of Latin, from the Middle Ages onwards fits in with this analogy. Swarbrick (1994) notes that it was not so much the lingua franca of Europe, but more the key to scholarship. The study of Latin was not valid in its own right, but in the sense that it was a means of disciplining the mind.

This vantage point has never been accepted blindly (Comenius, 1648), quoted in Jelinek (1953) presented a system and process for language learning. The recommended process involved the presentation of exemplars leading to a precept and imitation. Short chunks of language should be mastered before long, simple before complex, and general applications should be understood before the particular. Regular patterns precede the irregular. Such a pedagogy provides support to the learner as well as to the teacher.

It is interesting to note that the work of Comenius was not translated until 1896, at a time when pedagogy was on the agenda for educationalists. Whether or not teachers adhered to Comenius' philosophy is not the question. The very justification of a modern language as a curriculum subject, and the discussions on the merits of immersion and grammar/translation methods placed the issue on the agenda, and articulated the skills and strategies necessary for effective teaching and learning.

As early as 1862, a Royal Commission examined the value of foreign language teaching. Its conclusion that oral proficiency served no educational purpose, and that grammar and reading skills facilitated future study placed the mastery of grammar as a justifiable educational goal. Dr Hiley, in the Journal of Education responded to the newly formed 'Société des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre' by stating categorically that grammar is a mental discipline and is the 'pith and marrow' of a language.

On the other hand, the advent of the newer Direct Method presented a different picture. Grammar remained as essential, but language learning was self-perpetuating. Inductive

grammar learning was not a belittling of grammar, but of the traditional, systematic method of teaching it. Government reports from the 1860s confirmed this stance. The publication of the Clarendon Commission Report (Public Schools Commmission, 1864) and the Schools Enquiry Commission (1868) reaffirmed the superiority of Latin as a school subject, in that it provided less of a utilitarian outcome, and more of a mental discipline. Modern Foreign Languages could only justify its position on the curriculum if it could challenge Latin as a form of mental gymnastics. Evidently, the basis of skills for future study was a sound mastery of the grammar of a language at the turn of the century.

The assessment of learners of a foreign language at the beginning of the century served to reinforce the supremacy of grammar, Despite the advances made by the proponents of the Direct Method, the establishment of the School Certificate, and the Higher School Certificate perpetuated the triumvirate of grammar, translation and literature. This examination system lasted until 1950.

Indeed, as new GCE examinations replaced the existing system in 1952, the IAAM issued guidance in the form of *The Teaching of Modern Languages.* Whitehead, (1996) clearly feels that the advice to new examination boards to build on the practice of the School Certificate, ensured that the key skills required for language study were those of grammar mastery. Evidently the main purpose of language learning was to master the grammar, before attaining a high level of communicative competence.

Assessment techniques were overtaken by a series of events. The comprehensivisation of schools from 1965, and the development of audio-visual materials by the Nuffield Foundation meant that new learners, with new skills, had to be assessed. The fourteen CSE examination boards, consisting of panels of practising teachers broke the autonomy of the universities. Use of language and oral proficiency grew in status. The ensuing Mode 2 examinations and Mode 3 course work options led to learners being compelled to develop skills and to undergo different learning processes. Imitation, repetition and therefore exposure to the language became the buzz words. Audiovisual materials emanating from France (TAVOR), and increased opportunities for foreign travel offered the learner a new set of challenges.

Corder (1981) accepted errors as a natural part of the learning process. Experimentation was the key. Krashen's (1981) work continued to demote the place of grammar. Indeed a focus on grammar was seen to inhibit learning. A willingness to attempt to communicate, and an ability to learn from one's mistakes were now the key skills required for future continual language development.

The development of learning skills is inextricably linked to the shift towards communicative competence. Successful communication motivates, and learners' growing awareness of effective strategies is paramount if linguistic and communicative competence is to continue to develop. Two strands of development are clear. Both communication and grammatical knowledge form the basis for future study and language use. The challenge is, of course, to offer both to learners, when historically the two are presented as mutually exclusive.

To offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the target language is spoken

An understanding and appreciation of the culture of the countries where essentially French is spoken has never been high on the agenda. Cultural awareness has been seen as a by-product of learning a language. Early in the century advocates of the Direct Method stressed how improved French and German learning would contribute to international goodwill, if the subjects were regarded as part of a modern humanist curriculum.

The insistence in the first half of the century on grammatical accuracy removed the need for cultural understanding. Languages as a mental discipline did not include intentional presentations of cultural aspects. Nevertheless, the SSEC (Secondary Schools Examination Council, 1963, Examination Bulletin No. 1:62) assumed that as pupils embarked upon the new CSE he language. European studies courses offered the opportunity to learners to become acquainted with different cultures through formal study, as an alternative to language study.

As a progression from the graded objectives qualifications offered by St Martin's College, Lancaster, a vocational slant was provided by materials for older pupils. Such an approach provided a British context for language use. Pupils continued with a communicative approach, yet were situated in petrol stations, café's and tourist information offices dealing with imaginary French/ German/Spanish tourists to this country.

The opportunity to encounter insights to the culture and civilisation is now for the first time a fixed and set element of language study. Once again teachers are faced with fresh challenges. To date the extra-curricular opportunities associated with language study have become an entitlement to all. The need is, therefore, to incorporate new style materials and activities to meet such demands.

To develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning

One of the age old reasons for justifying MFLs on the school timetable has been that it offers an insight into the structure of language in general terms. Indeed, the move to introduce modern languages into the curriculum has not intentionally been to offer an alternative to the study of Latin. Even as early as 1632, Comenius (in *Didactica Magna*) recommended a sequence of language learning, first students should master the mother tongue, second a modern foreign language, and last Latin (and/or Greek). From the outset, a modern foreign language was deemed to be a useful, practical skill, which in fact widened its acceptance as an academic discipline. It was, in effect, the collapse of Latin as the lingua franca in Europe that had the effect of elevating MFLs as a school subject. Language teaching expertise had developed through the reading of Latin, and a conservative force to use Modern Foreign Languages to fill the vacuum created by the decline of Latin. In 1879, H.W.Eve, quoted by Hawkins, (1981:113) asserted at a Headteachers conference that 'your (MFL teachers) first object is to discipline the mind, your second to give a knowledge of French or German'.

Nevertheless, towards the late nineteenth century the Direct Method did gather force, despite considerable opposition from academics. Indeed in 1912 (Circular 797), the

Board of Education recommended the continuation of the grammar/translation method, as the staff in schools appeared unequal to the task of delivering a foreign language through the Direct Method. Gilbert (1953) in *'The Origins of the Reform Movement',* cites examples of exercises from text books published early in the century. Sentences designed for translation were presented in a disconnected way, in ways that learners can identify units of grammar in manipulating the language.

The acceptance of phonetics and the building of language study around phonetics clearly impacted on the learners' experience. With the emphasis on exposure to the target language inevitably learners were able to focus on the sound systems, including pronunciation. The approach was supported by practising teachers, and was reflected by developments in Europe, which also referred to the 'Reform Method' stressing phonetics, communication, and association of words with objects and ideas (Jesperson, 1904). Although writers, such as Jesperson were not denouncing the value of grammar, but recommending an inductive approach, the establishment view was still clearly that unless grammatical structures were not presented overtly, then the status and profile of MFLs was not on a par with Latin. Scholarships offered in classics at university outnumbered those offered in a Modern Language ten to one.

The continued decline of Latin did lead to concern being expressed at governmental level. The Crowther Report (HMI, 1959) noted that as Latin died out, the whole basis of language teaching needed a rethink.

Until very recently, of course, the study of Modern Foreign Languages was restricted to the most able. After 1944, the eleven plus served to segregate children who had scored highly on verbal reasoning tests from those who had not. The right to learn a language was earnt by those with high level language skills. It was therefore no real surprise that the study of MFLs was not viewed as a means of improving pupils awareness of language. However the newer methodologies, including audio-visual schemes presented a process of learning based on mother tongue acquisition in order to justify the approval.

Following the Crowther Report (1959), a programme entitled 'Linguistics and English Teaching' was set up under Professor M.Halliday. The outcomes of the project were not published until 1971, by Doughty, P., Pearce, J. and Thornton, G. (eds). The aim of the project was to develop in pupils an awareness of what language is and how it is used, and at the same time extend their competence in using it.

At the same time as attention was focused on children's language development, Chomsky (1957) challenged Skinner's behaviourist approach to foreign language learning. The mind numbing effect of constant repetition was denounced in favour of the belief that all speakers had an innate ability to generate language through the absorption of examples (Language Acquisition Device, LAD). This revolutionised the world of linguistics. Through experience of language, learners automatically developed a sense of creativity, and could transform samples of language into personalised outputs (Bruner, 1975) built on this discovery, developing a theory based around a 'Language Acquisition Support System'. Teachers are thereby encouraged to focus on strategies for learning to enable the LAD (Chomsky, 1957) to be activated. Inevitably learners are made more aware of the learning process as teachers strive to develop a communicative competence into an 'analytic' competence.

The academic establishment could not fail to be influenced. The change of examination

formats began in 1963 when the Modern Language Association Examinations Project, sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation designed experimental examinations, which through the inclusion of oral, pronunciation, multiple choice and aural comprehension allowed pupils to demonstrate skills acquired throughout the programme of study, as opposed to demonstrating a knowledge of course content. Otter (1968), the director of the project went as far as to recommend a separation of guided composition exercises from objective grammar tests. Learners following such courses, inevitably focused on the development of skills, and gained a different perspective in terms of an understanding of language.

The Bullock Report (HMI, 1975) continued the theme of needing to address learners' language skills, and the media reported outcries in response to ten years of comprehensivisation. The report recognised the 'horizontal' structure of a language curriculum, in that language is used in all subjects, and a consistent approach by teachers—all subjects was of immense help. It was, though, almost unbelievable that Modern Languages departments received no acknowledgements, and no recommendations in the whole report. Once again, it seems, the establishment did not recognise MFL departments as major contributors to the development of language skills.

Despite the demise of audio-visual techniques, the underpinning philosophy of second language acquisition skill holds firm. The paradigm of 'presentation, explication, repetition, exploitation' (CREDIF, 1963) does structure the process of language learning. One problem for learners was that the examination systems gave no credit for undergoing the process. In 1977, HMI commented that teachers should '…offer pupils a terminal objective that they can perceive for themselves' (HMI, 1977:2)

The Graded Objectives Movement in Languages (GOML) gave pupils the opportunity to recognise and use short-term learning strategies. The National Coordinating Committee (for GOML) circulated newsletters and disseminated the outcomes of research projects at annual conferences from 1979. The structures for developing learning strategies stemmed from the very negative HMI report on MFL teaching in eighty-three comprehensive schools (1977). A three year project, funded by Nuffield to identify good practice in response to the HMI report, identified aspects of good practice, included focused attention paid to general language development.

The Kingman (HMI, 1988) and Cox (HMI, 1989) reports recognised the influence of foreign language learning on pupils' language development for the first time. Clear recommendations were made that MFL teachers should join forces with English teachers to develop whole school language across the curriculum projects.

It seems almost absurd now that one could not recognise the value of learning a foreign language in terms of increasing language awareness and learning skills. However the supremacy of Latin early in the century, and the continued belief that Modern Languages were utilitarian failed to lead to a culture of interdisciplinary cooperation. Only from 1981 were MFLs seen as an entitlement to all pupils, and indeed was viewed by many as a hindrance to pupils with general language problems. Only now, following the National Curriculum Statutory Requirements is MFL teaching and learning seen as a means of improving the whole education of children.

To provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation

Modern Foreign Languages teaching has undergone periods of great enthusiasm, and subsequent periods of disillusionment. Indeed the short periods of time when the subject has enjoyed popularity and a sense of future hope share historical features. During the late nineteenth century, discoveries in the field of linguistics, technological inventions (telephone and phonograph) increased opportunities for foreign travel, and a broadening of the range of pupils to be taught the subject, mirror similar developments in the 1960s. The 1902 Education Act led to the growth of maintained grammar schools signalling a period of exuberance. The introduction and partial acceptance of The Direct Method, based on findings in the field of phonetics presented a form of a solution to the new pupils to be taught. The success of MFL teaching was acknowledged in Circular 7.97 (Board of Education, 1912), which Hawkins (1984) quotes as a major contribution to '… raising modern languages to a position of dignity in the curriculum' (p. 133).

The success, however was short lived. The First World War put a stop to educational development, and the introduction of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate reverted to the assessment of skills necessary to cope with a grammar/translation method. The insistence that Modern Foreign Languages contained serious academic rigour, perpetuated the belief that MFLs were a subject to be restricted to the most able of pupils. Expansion beyond the grammar schools was slow, and even as late as 1963, Newsom (HMI 1963) that only 30 per cent of pupils in half of the secondary modern schools studied French.

Anthony Crossland's Circular 10/65 (DES, 1965), launching comprehensive schools as the norm, triggered another period of development. Coupled with the technological boom, and what turned out to be false hopes for the tape recorder and the language laboratory, offered an exciting prospect for the growing number of pupils. CREDIF (1963) launched a series of materials for audio-visual methods which built on (Skinner, 1957) new behaviourist learning theories. All had confidence in the Nuffield Foundation/Schools Council Pilot Scheme, which further extended the study of French to pupils of primary and secondary school age. This (Nuffield Foundation Schools Council, 1969) and the establishment of the National Association of Language Advisors in the same year confirmed this feeling of confidence and hope.

All teachers recognise the importance of motivation. External forces (i.e. the proposed entry into the Common Market and easy access to mainland Europe), as well as the buzz of excitement within the world of education could not help but have an impact on the sense of enjoyment experienced by pupils.

However, by the end of the 1960s the popularity of the subject began to fizzle out. Despite the formal acknowledgement (HMI, 1949)—that MFLs were important for vocational reasons, little was done to improve provision. In 1967, the universities gave up the MFL requirement for degree study. The Schools Council Working Paper No. 28 recognised MFL study to be a middle-class prerogative, and that oral work in courses concentrated on potential home to home exchanges. Emmans *et al.* (1974) surveyed the career destinations of MFL graduates, and concluded that proficiency in a foreign language was a useful adjunct, but that there was little demand for specialists. Numbers of candidates for 'A' level study, particularly amongst boys, dropped significantly

between 1970 and 1975. Numbers entering French examinations dropped by 17 per cent but more significant was the drop in other subjects (German 31 per cent, Spanish 11 per cent, and Russian 46 per cent); reversing the hopes and aspirations articulated in the Annan Report (1962).

The Burstall Report (HMI, 1974) brought the Primary French Project to an abrupt end, citing the tape recorder as an object of detestation. Technological advances proved not to be the saviour of language learners. In 1977, the HMI report 'Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' discredited MFLs as a comprehensive school subject. The press jumped on allegations in the reports that the 'failures' were attributable in part to bad planning, the non-existence of schemes of work, unclear objectives and inappropriate teaching approaches. Amid such a climate, it is hard to imagine how pupils could feel inspired!

The advent of the Graded Objectives Movement offered some form of a rescue. Mitchell (1994) in Swarbrick suggests that the communicative approach was a pragmatic response to the failure of the two dominant approaches to date. Supported by new linguistic theories, the GOML movement gathered momentum. Page (1996) reported that in so-called GOML areas, the post-14 uptake rose to 66 per cent in 1981. Swarbrick (1994) attributed this success to GOML, and the new joint 16+ examinations, demonstrating that teachers themselves, working collaboratively were able to assess and motivate the whole ability range in schools. The success of a more student-centred, short-term goal-oriented and functional language programme is well documented in Buckby (1981) and the Graded Objectives for Modern Languages (Schools Council).

Due recognition to the movement was paid in the National Criteria for GCSE (DES/WO, 1985) and lastly in the production of the National Curriculum Orders (DES/WO, 1990).

Motivation comes in many forms. To oblige teachers to stimulate and provide enjoyment is a tall order. The effect of external factors must be taken into account, and teachers can learn lessons from the past. Teachers do have the expertise, and evidently carefully planned courses and programmes based upon realistic and authentic needs without an over-reliance on new technology do hold an appeal. Good practice involves the sharing of ideas and a flexibility of approach enabling a meeting of pupils' and society's needs.

To encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations

From 1882, and the formation of the 'Société Nationale des Professeurs de Francais en Angleterre', there has always been a sense of betrayal for the French in terms of how and to what level their language has been taught in England. Two outcomes of the first annual conference of the society sum up the views of French teachers. First, it recommended that the subject be taught as a living language, and second that it be taught by native speakers. The resistance by the academic institutions to accept French as a language worthy of academic status undoubtedly harmed international relations. Elsewhere in the world greater emphasis has been placed on the value of MFL learning, and particularly learning