THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSEBOOK:

A STUDY OF ITS ROLE IN LEARNER MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

Motivation is the driving force behind successful learning. It is especially crucial in a curriculum area such as foreign language study. This investigation aims to explore the motivational role of the central teaching and learning resource used in schools - the coursebook.

The opening Chapter reviews major theories of motivation and learning from behaviourism to cognitivism with the aim of establishing a theoretical base.

Chapter Two examines mother tongue acquisition and foreign language learning. Theories of both are discussed, compared and contrasted with the emphasis on identifying compatible features. Key aspects of learning theory and motivational factors related to foreign language learning are presented. The motivational function of the teacher is reviewed with particular reference to the planning and management of learning.

The role and the nature of the foreign language coursebook are reviewed and reappraised in Chapter Three. The main aim of this study is identified and, in the light of previous discussion of motivation and learning, an evaluation instrument for coursebooks is drawn up.

Chapters Four and Five report and discuss surveys of the views of pupils and teachers on three widely-used coursebooks. Although reactions are generally positive, clear areas of unfulfilled need emerge, as do shortcomings in coursebooks' effectiveness in motivating learners and promoting successful learning. A broad consensus of views between the two groups is revealed.

The most popular coursebook of the 1980s is used as a case study in Chapter Six. Application of evaluation criteria established earlier reveals some commendable features but a rather larger number which fail to generate motivation or promote effective learning.

The final Chapter sets an agenda for a reappraisal of coursebook design based both on findings of this study and on the impact of sweeping change and reform of the education system which will take effect in the 1990s.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Note: Gender Issues:

I subscribe wholeheartedly to the widely-held view that sex discrimination has been underpinned by such apparently innocuous factors as the use of masculine pronoun and adjective forms. From a stylistic and aesthetic point of view, I do not favour the use of forms such as s/he and his/her. In this study I have used the masculine and feminine forms alternately and, I hope, equitably.

INTRODUCTION

The development of modern foreign language teaching in schools, since its establishment of an initially somewhat precarious foothold in the curriculum last century, may fairly be described as sporadic. The unevenness of its evolution has been well documented by such writers as Mackey (1965)[1] and Hawkins (1987).[2] A history emerges which is characterized not so much by consistent forward progress as by a series of what have been aptly described as pendulum swings between various "orthodoxies" representing contrasting or conflicting views of the nature of foreign language learning. The principles and strategies of the different movements have not all been new: more sophisticated resources such as tape recorders have only streamlined approaches to teaching and learning whose history can be traced back at least to the Middle Ages; visual aids can be traced to Comenius and the seventeenth century and the current vogue for 'communicative' teaching is enjoying possibly its third renaissance in the last hundred years. There has been, in short, a good deal of recycling of a limited number of ideas.

Underlying this history of reform and counter-reform, a sense of uncertainty may be detected as to what is being aimed at. Aims and objectives have been proposed ranging from mind-training and intellectual discipline to more utilitarian social and vocational considerations. These have usually been allied, with some attendant dogmatism, to one teaching method or another. Meanwhile, in the background, there has hovered an ultimate goal not usually explicitly stated - native or near-native fluency for large numbers of learners.

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Implicit in all the debate and movement seems to be the notion that somewhere there is A method of teaching which will captivate learners and make possible a mass realisation of the various aims and objectives. A significant contribution to debate on aims and objectives was made subsequent to the start of this investigation by HMI (1987).[3] The Inspectors wrote of the distinctive contribution of foreign languages to the curriculum and identified broad aims embracing linguistic, literary, human and social areas of experience.[4]

The search for a 'panacea' method of teaching has at times generated an atmosphere of self-doubt, self-criticism and even recrimination amongst practitioners. Criticism of national levels of attainment in foreign languages has extended to the suggestion that the insular heritage of the British has engendered an inability - or at least an unwillingness - to learn other languages. Unfavourable comparisons have been drawn with the performances of other young Europeans and there has often been a lobby suggesting that foreign language study should be 'de-schooled' or even abandoned. It must be said, however, that there have been no research findings to suggest that British foreign language teachers, learners or learning materials are demonstrably inferior to their European counterparts, nor does even subjective observation lend support to such a view.

A growing awareness of the central position of the learner in the educational debate and an increased interest in the psychology of learning traceable to the influence of key figures such as Piaget and Bruner has led to a realization that motivation - the force which

energizes all human behaviour - is the key to successful learning. Pupil motivation was a central theme in a recent major speech (January, 1986) by the Secretary of State for Education. Focus on the learner and motivation has arisen from moves begun in the 1960s to widen the ability range to be encountered in teaching groups. Learner motivation has frequently been proclaimed as a matter of priority, particularly in relation to foreign language study. Nevertheless, as a previous enquiry (O'Sullivan, 1983)[5] established, there has been a general wariness of tackling a complex issue, with most of the thrust of research and serious thinking coming from Canada and the United States.

My previous enquiry attempted to draw together from psychological theory and empirical research a series of propositions which constituted a basic model for foreign language teaching with some regard for the importance of psychological factors and the true nature of motivation. I inclined in particular towards acceptance of the views of the Canadians, Gardner and Lambert (1972)[6] on the importance of social-psychological factors in foreign language study - specifically, the superiority of integrative as opposed to instrumental motivation. (The learner's motivation is said to be "integrative" if his attitude to the target language community extends to wishing to become accepted as a member and "instrumental" if his goals are linked to the more utilitarian values of achievement and vocational advantage). This in turn led me to a consideration of extrinsic and intrinsic factors and to the feeling that, although the former tend to produce short-term benefits (among which I would include success in public examinations and the currently popular

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Graded Tests), it is to the latter that teachers should look if any lasting benefit is to accrue from foreign language study as part of a broad and balanced programme of education.

The problem with any attempt to relate psychology to teaching is that it is susceptible to 'theory versus practice' dichotomy, provoking strained relations between researcher and practitioner. Many foreign language teachers see themselves engaged in a demanding day-to-day exercise coping with teaching across the ability range to groups with a wide spread of ability with limited time and resources and against a background of professional and public criticism of their lack of success. They also have to contend with the argument that, as English is a world language, there is little point in the mass teaching of foreign languages. Nevertheless, they equally find that public expectation of results remains high and any failure to produce them would simply reinforce the critics' position. In such an embattled position, teachers are not very impressed by theory: they want practical guidance.

My concern at the comparative lack of attention to, and research on, motivation in this country has led me to pursue my investigation into the field. Mindful of the position of the teacher outlined above and aware of the extensive work already done in the realms of attitude and motivation by the Canadians and others, I am now undertaking a study of the role of the foreign language coursebook in motivating learners and promoting successful learning. I focus specifically on the coursebook as it is widely regarded as the central, indispensable resource for teaching and learning.

Curriculum development and new patterns of examination in foreign language study have seen much development of new course materials. Their bright and busy pages have made a powerful bid for the attention and enthusiasm of a greatly enlarged learning population covering the full secondary ability range. They have been marketed with the notion, sometimes implicit but latterly explicit in advertising material, that they have the capacity to motivate the learner. Used in such contexts, the word "motivate" has little more than the quality of a slogan: this study aims to show that it has a number of important features which may be clearly defined. Many teachers (c.f. Varnava, 1975[7]) seem to perceive motivation as something akin to class discipline which can be controlled. Psychology, on the other hand, perceives it as something essentially intrapersonal and subject to complex forces.

My aims in this study will be firstly to draw up an evaluation instrument for course materials based on a review of relevant aspects of psychological theories of motivation and learning theory. The nature of foreign language learning will be reviewed and contemporary practice will be examined. Central to the study will be surveys of the perceptions of learners and teachers on some contemporary coursebooks. In the light of the above, some proposals and recommendations for change and development will be presented.

The initial thesis is that, given the central role of the coursebook in foreign language teaching and learning, it is open to speculation whether sufficient research has been done or sufficient account taken of psychological factors associated with the presentation of learning

materials and, consequently, whether there is a reasonable degree of match between the perceptions of writer, teacher and learner - that vital partnership for effective learning - as to what is 'motivating'. This study thus sets out to examine a small corner of a large field, but hopes to go beyond pious acknowledgement of the importance of motivation in successful foreign language learning.

<u>**Notes and References**</u>

1. Mackey, W.F. (1965): <u>Language Teaching Analysis</u>, Longmans.
   See especially Chapter 5, Sections 2 and 3.

2. Hawkins, E.W. (1987): <u>Modern Languages in the Curriculum</u>, CUP.
   See especially Chapters 4, 5, 6.

3. DES/HMI, (1987): <u>Modern Foreign Languages to 16</u>, HMSO.

4. DES/HMI, (1985): <u>The Curriculum for 5 to 16</u>, HMSO.
   In this important discussion document, HMI define the curriculum
   in terms of areas of learning and experience which stretch the
   "broad lines of development which should feature in a rounded
   education" (p.15). These are listed as:

aesthetic and creative	human and social
linguistic and literary	mathematical
moral	physical
scientific	spiritual
technological	(p.16).

5. O'Sullivan, A.V. (1983): "Aspects of motivation in foreign
   language learning in secondary schools". Unpublished MA
   dissertation. University of London Institute of Education.

6. Gardner, R.C. and Lambert, W.E. (1972): <u>Attitudes and
   Motivation in Second-Language Learning</u>. Newbury House.

7. Varnava, G. (1975): <u>Mixed-Ability Teaching in Modern Languages</u>.
   Blackie.

CHAPTER ONE : SOME VIEWS OF MOTIVATION AND LEARNING

1.1 Introduction

Humanity's pre-eminent position on this planet can be attributed to its possession of species-specific strengths, notably a large brain and the capacity for sophisticated communication through language, which match a drive towards knowledge stimulated by, among other factors, curiosity. All human behaviour and attitudes, including the capacity for learning, derive their energy from this fundamental internal driving force which is identified by the term motivation. Motivation has become a central area of investigation for psychology, especially in the course of this century.

'Motivation' and 'learning' are two concepts firmly linked by psychology, the latter providing direction and purpose for the former. Hebron (1966) asserts:

> "Since motivation and learning are so closely integrated
> in a continuous process, the two concepts must be considered
> together. It is obvious that the learning of today enters
> into the motivation of tomorrow." (1)

A significant area of psychological research has concerned itself with human learning processes and various theories have been advanced. There is a clear parallel between these learning theories and the various theories of motivation that have been proposed.

It cannot be the aim of this Chapter to provide a comprehensive view of theories of motivation and learning. A selection of both will therefore be reviewed with the intention of producing a 'template'

against which language teaching procedures and learning materials may be viewed and analysed. I have tried in particular to identify aspects which seem of particular relevance in the light of my own experience as a foreign language teacher in schools and latterly as an adviser and teacher trainer.

1.2 Psychological theories of motivation

Although the term 'motivation' did not come into use until the beginning of this century, the causes and motives of human behaviour have preoccupied thinkers since time immemorial. Behaviour was for long a philosophical concern. Both early Greek and Christian ethical systems were based on a 'dualist' principle, according to which behaviour was determined by two forces, which we may identify as 'body' and 'soul'. The body was controlled by passion - a characteristic shared with animals - but the soul was directed by reason and was able, through the exercise of knowledge and free will, to choose the good and the beautiful. For Aristotle, wisdom was the way to happiness.

Throughout history, however, there have been tensions between schools of thought which postulated the dominance of one or the other force: 'rationalism', with the soul as the dominant force and its concept of spiritual energizing factors, was opposed by (among other) 'hedonism', which saw behaviour as determined by more mechanistic, physical strivings for well-being.

1.2.1 <u>Instinct</u>

The emergence of biological science, notably in the work of Darwin, brought new perspectives to bear on the subject: Darwin's 'survival' model had adaptation to environment as a key feature with instinct - a characteristic shared with animals - as its energizing force. Instinct and biological adaptation provided the bases for significant early theories of motivation such as those of McDougall (1908). McDougall produced a taxonomy of instincts (such as flight, curiosity and reproduction) each accompanied by the appropriate emotion (fear, wonder, sexual desire). Other instincts for food, water, gregariousness, acquisition and construction were less clearly emotionally-backed, but corresponded to later theorists' (including Freud's) concept of Homeostasis - the need to maintain a relatively stable environment. For Freud himself, behaviour was the surface feature of the individual's struggle to gratify instinctual impulses and often incorporated unconscious motives.

1.2.2 <u>Drive</u>

This biological-scientific view of behaviour was given further substance in the thinking of Hull, whose name is the one most commonly associated with the concept of "Drive". Specific biological needs were the sources of internal drive stimuli and led to the formation and reinforcement of habits. Hull expressed his view of behaviour in mathematical terms in the formula

"Behaviour is determined by Drive x Habit" (2)

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The eventual shortcoming of the theory proved to be the denial of mental processes as determinants of action. Hull appeared to conceive of humans as merely complicated robots. What he and his school did bring to psychology was the systematic and precise exploration of motivated behaviour, albeit from an entirely mechanistic position.

1.2.3 Field Theory

Drive, or need-reduction, theory had neglected cognitive processes - the province of that remarkable organ, the human brain. Lewin (1935) built what has been described as "a bridge from past to present" (Weiner, 1980)[3] with his "Field theory". He perceived behaviour as a joint function of the person and his environment, which he referred to as "life-space". Motivation is based on a continuing interaction between forces in the environment impinging on the individual and motivational forces within him which are conceived of as tensions set up by internal needs. A person's level of activation is determined by his estimate of the chances of satisfying need and by the importance of the satisfaction - the "valence" (or, more simply, the attractiveness) of the object. Valences can be positive or negative and generate attractive or aversive motivation. The forces associated with goals can be conflicting, leading to the need to choose between two desirable alternatives, to heighten motivation in the face of difficulty or to choose between undesirable alternatives. The need for excessive effort or excessively painful conflict would lead to the person's trying to "leave the field", as Lewin terms it. This may be only temporary at first, but with further lack of success and increased negative valence, "leaving the field" leads to giving up on

activity. In the educational context, it is now generally accepted that success and failure influence valence and raise or lower the level of aspiration. Field theory separated stimuli and perception and provided explanation and understanding of more complex human behaviour: it was concerned with the individual's level of aspiration based on his ego-involvement.

1.2.4 Achievement

Implicit in Lewin's theory was a need for fulfilment which was given a more precise connotation in the Achievement theory of McClelland et al (1953). Incentive was a factor in common with Lewin's theory and the qualities necessary for achievement include intense effort, singleness of purpose, determination, will-power, resilience and stimulation in the face of competition and the presence of others. Motivation was based on the arousal of "need for achievement" (referred to in the theory as nAch), but could be either positive (motives to succeed) or negative (identified by the phrase "fear of failure"). The incentive value of an achievement task is thus determined by the individual's view of the probability of success.

1.2.5 Social Factors

The admission of environmental and social factors broadened the base of motivation theory: Social Learning theory perceived human behaviour as learned, situationally specific and influenced by the organism's links with the external world and, in particular, other humans, who become "models" of behaviour. This notion was particularly significant in the thinking of Soviet psychologists such

as Luria and Yudovich (1956). Behaviour was seen as an outcome of
life in determined social circumstances. Language plays a vital role
in development from the first months of a child's life.

> "Intercommunication with adults is of decisive significance
> because the acquisition of a language system involves a
> reorganisation of all the child's basic mental processes;
> the word . . . forms mental activity, perfecting the
> reflection of reality and creating new forms of attention,
> of memory and imagination, of thought and action." (4)

Motivation has now developed from:

> ". . . the picture of an organism being pushed around by
> forces and habits to the alternative of one capable . . .
> of taking in information from its internal physiology,
> its physical environment and, most of all in Man, its
> social environment." (Evans, 1975) (5)

The premise that humans strive to understand themselves and their
environment brought the role of the mind into the foreground: mental
events intervene between "input" and "output": thought influences
action.

1.2.6 Maslow's Hierarchy

The two major poles of psychological and learning theory are thus
identified: Behaviourism (Watson, 1919 and Skinner, 1938) saw human
behaviour as a series of responses to stimuli, while Cognitivism
admits the crucial role of the mind. The latter now dominates,
especially in learning theory, but a crude dichotomy of the two would
hardly be scientific. Earlier theories tended to be behaviouristic
but, rather than discarding them, psychology has incorporated them
into larger frameworks. The "humanistic" psychology of Maslow (1954)
and Rogers emphasises man's potential for self-direction, freedom of

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choice, positive self-concept and, ultimately, self-enhancement.

Maslow conceived of a hierarchy of fundamental motivational tendencies
in which "lower" (physiological, safety, emotional) needs, which are
concerned with removing deficits, remain below the level of
consciousness as long as they are reasonably satisfied but may emerge
and dominate behaviour if not. "Higher" needs (esteem, cognitive,
aesthetic, self-fulfilment) appear and function consequent upon at
least partial satisfaction of the lower. Maslow's view of
motivational tendencies thus subsumes much mechanistic and cognitive
theory in a view of human motivation that is positive and optimistic.

1.2.7 A Continuum View

Another way of presenting Maslow's integrative analysis would be to
perceive human motivated behaviour on a continuum having instinctual
or stimulated behaviour as one pole and autonomous, conscious self-
direction as the other with maturation as a key contributory factor
and, between the poles, a range of intermediate behaviour in which
impulses are modified by learning, although the most mature adult is
still susceptible to impulsive behaviour confronted with sufficiently
basic need. Needs, as Lewin puts it, have the character of
"organizing behaviour". In short, motivation is a highly complex and
variable individual characteristic which cannot be expressed in a
single formula and which continues to preoccupy psychologists. Its
role in energizing any human behaviour makes it of particular concern
to those who investigate another fundamental human characteristic -
learning.

1.3 Aspects of learning theory

> "The single most characteristic thing about human beings
> is that they learn. Learning is so deeply ingrained in
> man that it is almost involuntary." (Bruner, 1966) (6)

The desire to learn is present from birth. Babies learn to behave in ways which produce results: they do so by modifying their behaviour in the light of experience and on the basis of interaction with the external environment. The environment external to the young human is one created by a culture that conserves and transmits past learning. It stimulates and supports the fundamental human urge to make sense of the world and bring it under control. This urge, which has been termed "learning to learn" (Hebron, 1966) is described by the same writer as:

> "an elemental orientation: a concept nearer to motivation
> than to thinking" and appears to be acquired "at a time when
> motivation is mainly autistic . . . (the immature organism's
> total preoccupation with itself) . . . and is consequently
> based on spontaneous desire and impulse." (7)

In other words, the earliest manifestations of the will to learn are physiologically, rather than psychologically, paced. As this review will show that motivation theory is mirrored in learning theory, the continuum view of motivation (1.2.7) must be borne in mind. I begin the review with an appraisal of physiological aspects of learning.

1.3.1 Human Biological Perspectives

The human body is set up to respond to environmental stimuli through the senses and the neural system, whose operations are monitored by the brain. One of the major organs of motivation and learning is

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Attention (or Arousal). Brain activation necessary for optional attention is calibrated through a neural channel in the brain stem called the Reticular Activating System (RAS). It regulates level of arousal and is activated by:

"the novelty, meaningfulness, surprisingness, ambiguity
or complexity of stimuli rather than by their amount or
intensity." (LeFrançois, 1972) (8)

Internal arousal involves physiological responses linked with assertive and withdrawal action. Such arousal and reaction are linked with instinctive drives and responses and stem for the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). This section of the total nervous system, controlled and co-ordinated by the hypothalamus, is dominant in infancy and is to be distinguished from the Central Nervous System (CNS), controlled by the cerebral cortex, which is paramount in maturity and mediates voluntary action and sensory reception. The two systems, however, are functionally integrated at all levels in the mature organism. Although the ANS becomes subordinate to the CNS, it has its own system of push and pull regulation and may become super-ordinate at any time, particularly in response to a novel situation or stimulus. In other words, more basic responses to unusual or unexpected phenomena mirror what is said to happen in motivational terms. As experience increases, motivation becomes associated with sensual and bodily satisfaction and needs are differentiated into feelings. Motivation thus moves its main seat of operation from the spine and brain stem towards the cortex without shedding any of its more primitive aspects.

Hebron postulates a model of "learning to learn" as a series of stages

in childhood, each representing an increase in integration among the various strata of the nervous system. Initial, rudimentary learning at the hypothalamic level evolves into cortical processing with mental schemata integrated. The key function of language then intervenes, making possible more complex forms of cognitive (information-processing) functioning. Some learning is non-intentional. Mental events are dependent on the dynamics and structure of the nervous system. Individual differences are thought to be related to characteristic patterns of regulation imposed on the RAS. Most characteristic patterns are wrought by experience, thus experiential structuring ('feedback') is responsible for style in behaving. With increasing maturity, motivation becomes more directional, but voluntary and conscious powers never negate the role of involuntary and unconscious ones in a well-balanced and efficient organism.

Theories of learning have developed in the mainstream of psychological research: it is suggested that 'learning' and 'behaviour' are synonymous in psychological literature. Learning theories have become increasingly complex but, in contrast with the rather unscientific pendulum-swinging of educational practice in some areas, early theories are often incorporated into more complex frameworks. Major theories will be examined in loosely chronological order and in an hierarchy of increasing abstraction.

1.3.2 Behaviourism

One of the first significant theories was, one feels, based on a conscious attempt to provide an objective, quasi-scientific base for

the relatively new discipline of psychology. When J.B. Watson coined the term "behaviourism" in 1913, he, in common with others, such as Pavlov, was trying to develop a science of behaviour. The basis was Stimulus-Response theory. Stimuli (conditions that arouse the organism and lead to behaviour) and Responses (actual behaviour) are observable aspects of behaviour and can be seen, in scientific terms, as objective variables. Pavlov's "classical conditioning" explains our automatic responses to regularly-occurring phenomena. Conditioning techniques featured in Guthrie's (1952) view of learning: the stimulus, or combination of stimuli, that have led to a response will tend to lead to that response again if repeated. Learning is a process of acquiring S-R bonds (referred to as "habits"). This contiguous linking of S and R did not, however, explain learning: what was missing was attention to the possible effects of the consequences of behaviour in learning - the notion of "reinforcement". This was brought into behaviourist theory by one of its most notable proponents - B.F. Skinner. Skinner (1938) contended that classical conditioning explained a limited variety of behaviour.

Most significant behaviours are what Skinner described as "operant" - acquired as a result of reinforcement. Reinforcements can be classified as either positive or negative. In the former instance (when a response or behaviour would be praised or rewarded, for example) repeating the stimulus would increase the probability of recurrence of the positively-reinforced response. In the latter case, following a negative reinforcement such as some form of sanction, a desired response might be attained through an attempt to avoid the negative reinforcement. Skinner identifies three sources of

reinforcement:

1. Primary: stimuli that reinforce without learning taking place, satisfying basic, unlearned needs;

2. Secondary: these become reinforcing when paired with a primary reinforcer: they can become a substitute for it;

3. Generalized: these reinforce a wide range of behaviours through repeated pairing with primary or secondary reinforcers.

Many of the latter, such as prestige, social status, power and intelligence, are culturally determined. Skinner set up 'schedules' of reinforcement based on investigations of animal learning extrapolated to human learning. An important concept in learning is the process of "shaping" - the differential reinforcement of successive approximations to a desired response. The teaching technique of 'programmed instruction' is based on principles of "operant conditioning" and audiolingual foreign language teaching methods drew some of their principles from Skinner's analysis of language - verbal behaviour. Skinner and the behaviourists have subsequently been criticized for the mechanistic nature of their view of human learning, for failing to take sufficient account of awareness and cognitive processes and for the fact that conditioning is not an adequate explanation of much human behaviour. This is especially true in the case of linguistic behaviour - as Chomsky (1959) points out in his critical review of Skinner's book Verbal Behaviour.

1.3.9 Neobehaviourism

Some of the above-mentioned criticism was countered by 'neobehaviourists' such as Hull, Spence, Hebb and Osgood: they

concerned themselves with mediating events between S and R. These included level of drive, habit strength, reactivity and - a key concept in Hebb's theory - level of arousal. Hebb perceived this as a central variable in human learning and behaviour. The optimal level of arousal, which humans behave in such a way as to maintain, is moderate: the organism is neither under- nor over-stimulated. There is a clear and significant parallel here with the concept of Homeostasis (Chapter 1.2.1). This notion was the central feature of an earlier, classical view of motivation for learning - the Yerkes-Dodson Law (1908). Clearly, behaviour has to be stimulated or aroused, but excessive arousal or pressure on the organism creates a detrimental effect. This concept links with fundamental physical human characteristics such as the need for food and water: a moderate amount is necessary, but an excessive amount has counter-productive effects. A further example of the law in operation may be seen in the case of over-trained athletes, in particular those who are now seen to have been exposed to excessively rigorous schedules too young. The effects of over-arousal in intellectual terms can be seen in the frustration of effective performance which can arise if too high a premium is attached to success in, for example, an examination. Osgood offered an explanation of meaning in his theory, based on two stages: interpretation of the environment ("decoding") and behaviour ("encoding"). In the latter, intentions are expressed and turned into events. Meaning is accounted for when the concepts of semantic decoding (acquisition of meaning) and semantic encoding (production of meaningful speech sounds) are applied to language. The significant advance of neobehaviourism was that it began to analyse the processes

that obviously intervene between stimulus and response.

1.3.4 Cognitivism

> "Cognitivism is concerned with perception, decision-
> making, information-processing and understanding."
> (LeFrançois, 1972) (9)

Returning to the parallel - or complementary - evolution of theories

of motivation and learning, it has been established that more recent

motivation theories have been based on the notions of self-direction

and self-fulfilment with thought playing a key role in influencing

action. Granger (1953) asserts that:

> "Motivational levels are to a large extent geared to
> cognitive efficiency through the individual's perceptual
> impact on the environment." (10)

The emphasis here on learning taking place within the individual is

underlined in Gagné's (1975) definition of the term:

> "Learning is a process of which men and other animals are
> capable. It typically involves interaction with the
> external environment (or a representation of this
> interaction). Learning is inferred when a change or
> modification in behaviour occurs, which persists over
> relatively long periods during the life of the
> individual." (11)

Cognitive learning thus focuses on sensory and mental processes, past

experience and the fundamental urge to come to terms with and make

sense of the environment. This latter point was central to the

thinking of one of the earliest "cognitivist" schools of thought - the

German "Gestalt" movement. The word itself - meaning "shape" -

expressed the movement's concern with whole aspects of behaviour. The

sensory processes organise what is perceived into patterns with the

aim of creating a satisfying environment based on regularity, symmetry and simplicity. We tend towards complete concepts and behaviour situations, stability and continuity - in short, towards, 'making sense'.

Lewin, whose Cognitive Field psychology has already been discussed as a motivational construct, was a notable member of the Gestalt school. His "life-space" is defined in terms of the individual's own perception of his environment. The individual reacts to his own world in a unique manner and perceives it in terms of valence (1.2.3). A person's level of activation and aspiration (in the present context, the capacity and will to learn) are determined by the valence of an object. Negative valence - occasioned by the object's failure to satisfy the organisational criteria detailed above - leads to attempts to "go out of the field". In the overall context of this enquiry, this point assumes a key significance, as it could be seen as a reasonable analysis of the 'drop-out' phenomenon which affects many areas of the education process and continues to be a cause for concern in modern foreign language study.

Bruner (1966) expresses a similar view: his theory of learning maintains that people interpret the world largely in terms of detected similarities and differences among objects and events. Human cognitive activity is seen as a process of categorizing: incoming information is organised in terms of pre-existing categories or causes the formation of new ones. Bruner identifies three kinds of category:

- Affective: concerned with equivalent emotional reaction

- Functional: establishing common functions of objects

- Formal: categories defined by convention, law or science.

Information-processing is both perceptual and conceptual: it involves physical and mental events.

Piaget's major contribution to learning theory was the "stage" model of cognitive development. His theory states that children learn to cope with their environment by a progressive - "staged" - restructuring or modification of previously-acquired networks of concepts. These are acquired through action upon, and interaction with, people and things. In Piaget's terms, "adaptation" - the ability to deal with the environment - is a product of "assimilation", in which experience acts as "aliment", combined with "accommodation", in which the child internalizes his environment, modifying his scheme of things through imitation and experience. An optional balance of these contributing elements leads to "intelligent adaptation".

The qualitatively different stages through which the child's development progresses - sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational - have become synonymous with Piaget and his followers.

LeFrançois (1972) summarises the position:

> "The sophistication of a child's representation of the
> world is a function of his stage of development. That
> stage is defined by the thought structures he then possesses.
> Maturation, the environment, equilibration and socialization
> are the forces that shape learning." (12)

The notion of developmental stages and consequent cognitive ability has clear implications in the structuring of teaching and learning. Material should be carefully selected and graded to present an optional level of difficulty to the learner.

Whilst recognizing Piaget's achievement in structuring a coherent model of cognitive development, Donaldson (1978) is critical of the degree of arbitrariness evident in the taxonomy of stages. She argues that children relate to the world in a conscious and active way from an earlier stage than is envisaged in Piaget's schema. Humans are by nature "questioners", not only of others but of themselves, as they devise a "model of the world" by a process of hypothesis-making and testing.

The view of learning as a product of a constant process of hypothesis-making and testing was proposed by Kelly (1955). His "Personal Construct" theory moved against the contemporary tide of behaviourism by rejecting the notion of humans as creatures, impelled by drives, incentives and habits, responding mechanically to various stimuli in terms of their habit systems. Human behaviour is essentially no different from that of the scientists or, more specifically, the psychologists who study it by constructing theories and deriving hypotheses which they test and modify according to the results. This process reflects every individual's vital interest in making sense of life and relationship to other persons and values. As Kelly puts it:

> "Might not the individual man, each in his own personal way, assume more of the stature of a scientist, ever seeking to predict and control the course of events with which he is involved? Would he not have his theories, test his hypotheses and weigh his experimental evidence?" (13)

Human behaviour is basically anticipatory rather than reactive. We try to anticipate the future by erecting conceptual frameworks ("constructs"). Each person has a personal construct system, organized into a complex hierarchical network. Related to learning, the theory brings individual differences to the fore: we all inhabit differing subjective worlds as a result of the differing construction we put on events. The notion of learning as a process of hypothesis-making and testing will recur in the writings of two cognitive psychologists whose work is seen to be of particular relevance to this enquiry - Gagné and Ausubel.

1.3.5 Social Learning

Before proceeding to an assessment of their work, however, it is important to discuss the social dimension to learning. Cognitivism has been criticised for its 'mentalist' stance: learning is not simply the acquisition of information and strategies for dealing with the environment. However, a number of writers discussed in this section refer specifically to interpersonal relations. Humans are fundamentally gregarious. It is a truism that language would not exist without society. Vygotsky (1934) asserts that:

> "The child's intellectual growth is contingent on his
> mastering the social means of thought, that is, language." (14)

Luria and Yudovich (1956) perceive it as a higher regulator of behaviour:

> "Acquisition of speech allowed man to rise above direct,
> visual perception to analysis of its data, to the relation
> of perceived objects to certain categories, so enabling
> him to organize his behaviour, not according to the visually
> perceived situation, but according to a deeper, 'categorized'
> reflection of the world." (15)

whilst for Bruner (1964)

"the process of internalization depends upon interaction
with others, upon the need to develop corresponding categories
and transformations for communal action. It is the need
for cognitive coin that can be exchanged with those on
whom we depend." (16)

Miller and Dollard (1941) made an early attempt to explain social

learning, postulating a model based on the role of imitation:

learning involves cues (stimuli), drives, responses, and rewards. The

suggestion is that most child learning is imitative (the term

"spontaneous apprenticeships" has been aptly used by Frank Smith) and

tends to be rewarded when learned.

An integrated view of social learning is presented by Bandura and

Walters (1963). This view admits that behaviour is controlled by

several "systems":

1. Stimulus control: a "behaviouristic" concept, in that
    behaviour is controlled by external factors - reinforcement,
    conditioning and reward.

2. Outcome control: behaviours are controlled by their
    consequences - a position more in line with operant
    conditioning and more specifically connected with
    reinforcement or non-reinforcement.

3. Symbolic control: a cognitive concept: behaviour is
    influenced by internal mediation processes such as
    verbalization of rules (self-instruction) and imagining
    consequences.

Although Bandura and Walters distinguish the three classes of

behaviour on theoretical grounds, they suggest that, in practice, much

human activity is probably directed by a combination of the three.

Another of their major contentions is that a great deal of learning of

social behaviour takes place through the observation and imitation of

others. Bandura's subsequent elaboration of his views (1977) stressed the concept of "observational learning", which subsumed familiar teaching techniques such as verbal instruction and demonstration by a "model performer". After observation, performance is refined by practice and differential reinforcement (feedback). All this has clear implications for teaching and in no area more so than foreign language teaching. Observational learning is essential to effective sound reproduction and appropriate socio-cultural behaviour in the target language community. This imparts to foreign language teaching and learning a 'teacher-centredness' which, in the writer's view, it will always retain.

Discussing the significance of social learning theory, Bower and Hilgard (1981) assert that:

> "Social learning theory provides the best integrative summary of what modern learning theory has to contribute to the solution of practical problems. It also provides a compatible framework within which to place information-processing theories of language comprehension, memory, imagery and problem-solving." (17)

1.3.6 Integrated Views

It became apparent in the discussion of motivation theory that the various accounts of motivated behaviour proposed all accounted for some aspects of a complex issue but, to quote the view expressed by Lewin (1940):

> "Psychology cannot try to explain everything with a single construct. A variety of constructs has to be used." (18)

Hence the interest of theories like that of Maslow, which point to a continuum view of motivated behaviour, Bandura and Walters adopted a parallel position in their social learning theory and I now propose to devote a substantial section of this Chapter to a discussion of the views of two leading cognitive psychologists - Gagné and Ausubel. Their work assumes a particular significance in the context of this enquiry as their analysis of human learning characteristics is set in the field of education.

Gagné (1970) postulated an integrated view, describing eight types of human learning presented in an hierarchical taxonomy. The simplest, most basic learning is necessary before the learner can progress to more complex types. Each type relates to one or more of the theories already described.

1. Signal learning: simple Pavlovian conditioning

2. S-R learning: formation of a single connection
   between S and R

3. Chaining - Motor Chains: connection of a sequence of
   motor S-R behaviours

4. Chaining - Verbal Associations: connection of a sequence
   of verbal S-R behaviours

5. Discrimination learning: learning to discriminate
   between highly similar stimulus input: establishing
   numbers of different chain

6. Concept learning: opposite of S. Responding to a set
   of objects in terms of their similarities

7. Rule learning: a rule is an inferred capability that
   enables the individual to respond to a class of stimulus
   situations with a class of performances.

8. Problem-solving: The application of rules in the
   generation of "higher-order rules": the inevitable
   outcome of applying rules to problems.

Gagné's integrated view of learning seems to reflect very well a model
of foreign-language teaching along the lines:

1. Teacher enters classroom: "Levez-vous" accompanied by
   appropriate gesture

2. "Bonjour la classe" . . . eliciting "Bonjour monsieur/
   madame"

3. "Asseyez-vous. Ouvrez vos cahiers. Prenez vos
   stylos . . ." etc

4. Paired practice or simple role-play: "Comment
   t'appelles-tu? Je m'appelle . . .

5. Learning verbal chains in the foreign language and
   discriminating between them and those already existing
   in the mother tongue

6. Presenting cognates and cultural features of the language
   which are similar to those identified in the mother
   tongue

7. Acquiring knowledge of the workings of the foreign-
   language verb system: tenses, forms, agreements, etc.

8. Tackling creative writing assignments in the foreign
   language or engaging in tasks with unpredictable
   outcomes.

Gagné refined his learning model in a later edition (1977). He
emphasizes the cumulative character of learning based on an elaborate
set of internal processes. These may be presented as a learning
hierarchy that describes an efficient way of attaining an organised
set of intellectual skills. Such a set represents "understanding" of a
topic. Developmental readiness for learning any new intellectual
skill is based on the presence of relevant subordinate skills. Thus
discriminations form the basis on which concepts are built. Concepts
contribute positive transfer to the learning of rules which in turn
support the learning of more complex rules and the capabilities of
problem-solving. The more practical aspect of Gagné's revision of his

earlier work is that he identifies a series of different "outcomes of learning" or capabilities, each requiring different conditions but capable of inter-relation. The five main varieties are:

1. intellectual skills - interaction with the environment
by using symbols (such as language)

2. verbal information - being able to state (verbalize)
information

3. cognitive strategies - controlling the learner's
internal processes
- techniques of thinking, analysis
and solving problems

4. motor skills - organizing motor acts to execute movements

5. attitudes - acquiring mental states which influence
choice of personal actions.

The particular relevance of this taxonomy to the present enquiry is that the learning of a foreign language requires performances in all the categories, from the motor skills involved in tackling different pronunciation through the key areas of attitude (and motivation) to the intellectual and cognitive capabilities necessary for sustained, autonomous use of the target language.

The significance of Gagné's views of learning lies in the acknowledgement in his hierarchy system of the value and importance of basic strategies as prerequisites for higher-order forms. This seems to me to point the way towards a global theory of foreign language instruction which would break the mould of unscientific pendulum-swinging that has proved debilitating and detrimental to the discipline. As a variety of learning outcomes are involved, each accessible through an interdependent hierarchy of forms of learning, such a global theory will subsume various methods and approaches which

have all too readily been made the objects of unfruitful dichotomy. This theme will be returned to later.

1.3.7 Ausubel

> "Valid theories and methods of teaching must be related to the nature of the learning process in the classroom and to both the cognitive and affective-social factors that influence it." (Ausubel, 1978) (19)

Ausubel's explicitly "cognitivist" view of learning in the educational setting is based on his view that the predominant task of school learning is the acquisition of knowledge. His primary concern is to distinguish the principal kinds of learning that can take place in the classroom: he identifies two kinds of learning tasks:

1. "Rote": the short-term acquisition of single, somewhat contrived concepts, the solution of artificial problems or learning of arbitrary associations.

2. "Meaningful verbal": the long-term acquisition and retention of a complex network of interrelated ideas characterising an organised body of knowledge that learners must incorporate into their cognitive structures.

Meaningful verbal learning is seen as the principal means of acquiring large bodies of knowledge. Like Gagné, Ausubel perceives a continuum of learning activity, but his has two dimensions: the rote-meaningful (which is essentially similar to Gagné's "hierarchies"), and another ranging between "reception" and "discovery" learning. In reception learning (which can be either rote or meaningful), the entire content of what is to be learned is presented to the learner in its final form. The learner is required only to internalize or incorporate the material presented. In discovery learning, the learner must in fact

discover the content, rearrange information, integrate it with existing cognitive structures and generate a desired end product. The important points to be borne in mind in planning and managing learning are:

1. rote learning, based on arbitrary associations, is only really suitable for short learning tasks: it can be made more meaningful by giving it the shortrange contexts which Miller (1956) referred to as "chunking".

2. meaningful learning is essentially the assimilation of new information into existing cognitive structures (the phenomenon referred to as "subsumption"); the learner's existing attitude and knowledge must thus be borne in mind.

3. the meaningful cognitive process enables meanings to be combined to generate less arbitrary and more meaningful ideas.

4. discovery methods are not an efficient primary means of transmitting content but clearly emerge with an important role in the generative, autonomous application of meaningful learning.

Meaningful reception learning has a particular importance in education because:

> "it is the human mechanism par excellence for acquiring and storing the vast quantity of ideas and information represented by any field of knowledge." (20)

Ausubel establishes his own set of types of meaningful learning:

> 1. Representational: the most basic type, for which we have a genetically-determined potentiality: it involves learning meanings of single symbols (typically, words) or learning what they represent. Vocabulary learning

should, however, be a meaningful and active cognitive
process, not just a rote-learning exercise if it is to
have lasting value. All learning depends on the
establishment of cognitive processes in representational
learning which enable the combination of meanings to
generate less arbitrary and more meaningful ideas.

2. Concept: concepts are generic or categorical ideas.
    In the young, the emphasis is on concept formation
    through direct experience, hypothesis forming and
    testing and generalisation. In older learners, new
    concepts can be defined by use in new combinations of
    referents available in existing cognitive structure,
    thus leading to assimilation. Ausubel notes that, in
    foreign language learning, pupils have only to learn
    new concept words, not new concepts. (Although partly
    true, this assertion must be considered cautiously:
    it assumes a match between word and concept which is
    not invariably there - or, alternatively, a complete
    separation of word and concept. Words such as the
    French "sympathique" stand as warnings against over-
    simplistic analysis).

3. Propositional (or Subsumption): learning the meaning
    of a new composite idea: new information is linked or
    anchored to relevant aspects of an individual's existing
    cognitive structure. "Subsuming" ideas have maximum
    relevance for subsequent learning tasks. They possess
    explanatory power to render the arbitrary more meaningful
    and are stable and integrative.

Ausubel sums up his position as follows:

"Acquisition of new information is highly dependent on
the relevant ideas already in cognitive structure;
meaningful learning in humans occurs through an
integration of new information with relevant existing
ideas in cognitive structure (assimilation)." (21)

There is evident in Ausubel's schema the same sort of hierarchical

view of learning as was postulated by Gagné and the same underlying

principle that "higher orders" of learning are founded on more basic

learning experiences. 'Simpler' learning theories are thus subsumed

into a more global and integrative model. This will provide a

template for the evaluation of teaching materials and their

effectiveness in motivating the learner which is the central theme of this investigation.

1.4 Motivation and Learning Theory Aligned

An examination of learning theory has identified clear parallels with the evolution of theories of motivation. The most significant feature of both appears to be a development from basic forms which are impulsive or reactive through a middle range in which impulses are modified by intervening mental processes to a more self-conscious, directive state in which the individual pursues goals rationally and with insight. The complexity of human motivation and learning do not admit a simplistic, one-dimensional analysis, hence the particular relevance and validity of the work of Maslow, Gagné and Ausubel.

As a summary conclusion to this Chapter, it seems appropriate to align the motivation and learning continuums discussed. The essence of the continuum is that the human characteristic it depicts between its poles can range from one to the other dependent on need and circumstance. It also, of its nature, depicts an integrated view of the human behaviour in question.

Motivation:

Instinct	S - R	Achievement	Humanistic
Drive	Field Theory (Expectancy-Value)	Social Learning	Self-enhancement

Learning:

Instinctive Drives	S - R	Shaping	Decoding Encoding	Social Learning	Information Processing
Classical conditioning	Reinforce- ment	Arousal	Gestalt	Construct Theory	Meaningful Verbal Learning

In the next Chapter, the theoretical base established by this review of views of motivation and learning will be used in a consideration of the acquisition and learning of language. It will be necessary to distinguish between the terms 'acquisition' and 'learning'. Specific areas of concern will be motivational factors in language learning, the motivational functions of the teacher and the planning, organization and management of learning through teaching materials with a view to arousing and sustaining learner motivation.

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CHAPTER TWO : SOME ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE, LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND
LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1 Language

Motivation would appear to be the energizing force behind all human
behaviour. It could be argued, however, that certain behaviours are
sufficiently instinctive or species-specific as to be engaged by basic
drives that have their origins in the earliest stages of development.
The acquisition of language, specifically of the 'mother tongue',
would appear to fall into this category of behaviours. This Chapter
begins with a brief review of the nature and value of language and
proceeds to an assessment of the applicability of principles of first
language acquisition to the planning and organisation of foreign
language teaching in secondary schools.

It seems appropriate to begin with one of the best known and most
comprehensive definitions of language:

> "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of
> communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a
> system of voluntarily-produced symbols. These symbols
> are, in the first instance, auditory and they are produced
> by the so-called organs of speech." (Sapir, 1921) (1)

The value of this definition lies in its explicit view of language as
a human attribute, acquired or learned as a means of communication.
In this function, it can cover the whole range of human behaviour from
cognition ('ideas') to more fundamental aspects ('desires'). Its key
role in human development is underlined by Sapir when he asserts:

> "I am inclined to believe that it antedated even the
> lowliest developments of material culture, that these
> developments in fact, were not strictly possible until
> language, the tool of significant expression, had itself
> taken shape." (2)

2.2 Language Acquisition

The acquisition of language is a field of human development which is yet to be fully explained. Much of what is known about mother tongue acquisition is derived from the work of psychologists and is, at best, circumstantial. A number of different theories have been proposed which are reflected in some of the key motivation theories discussed in the previous Chapter. These will be reviewed briefly.

2.2.1 Language development: innately programmed or environmental?

This question has fuelled one of the major debates in linguistics for some years. All human beings acquire a language. This may vary for historical, geographical, social or even political reasons, but is nevertheless accessible to every member of a given community. Any human being is capable of acquiring a mother tongue whichever of the several thousand languages in the world is used in the speech community in which he is brought up. The debate has centred on whether the capacity to acquire language is the result of innate potential or of a process of conditioning by the environment. Major protagonists have based their theories on behaviourist or cognitivist platforms. This has tended to polarize the debate and has provoked some counter-productive dichotomising. A more integrated view of the various theories' contribution to our understanding of a complex process must be aimed at.

2.2.2 The "environmental" view: behaviourist theories

In 1957, B.F. Skinner published Verbal Behaviour - the celebrated extrapolation to human language acquisition of his theory of operant

conditioning (which was largely developed through animal research).
The concept is developed as follows:

> "Behaviour alters the environment through mechanical
> action . . . Much of the time, however, a man acts
> only indirectly upon the environment . . . His first
> effect is upon other man." (Verbal behaviour is thus)
> . . . "effective only through the mediation of other
> persons . . . shaped and maintained by mediated
> consequences."

> "The process of operant conditioning is most conspicuous
> when verbal behaviour is first acquired. The parent
> sets up a repertoire of responses in the child by
> reinforcing many instances of a response.

> In teaching a young child to talk, the formal
> specifications upon which reinforcement is contingent
> are at first greatly relaxed. Any response which
> vaguely resembles the standard behaviour of the
> community is reinforced. When these begin to appear
> frequently, a closer approximation is insisted upon." (3)

There can be no doubt of the significance of social factors in
language acquisition and Skinner's analysis of the teaching-learning
situation is a fair reflection, as far as it goes, of early stages of
child language acquisition. It will be seen to have a degree of
relevance to the early teaching of foreign languages and to merit a
place in a global theory of foreign language instruction.

Another behaviourist view of language acquisition came from Jensen
(1968). He listed a sequence of types of verbal learning:

1. The child begins to distinguish human speech from other
   environmental sounds. It acts in response to verbal
   stimuli.

2. The response becomes verbal as well as physical:
   certain sounds become associated with particular
   objects. Objects are named.

3. The capacity to say and think various words directs the child's behaviour.

4. Reinforcement, particularly self-reinforcement, contributes to the development of verbal behaviour.

5. Connections are established between verbal responses themselves, as well as between environmental stimuli and verbal responses.

6. Relationships are established between words leading to the establishment of verbal hierarchies.

The shortcomings of behaviourist theory have been forcefully exposed. George Miller dryly pointed out that, if language is a question of S -> R learning, given the number of twenty-word sentences possible in a language, it would take a person 1,000 times the estimated age of the earth to learn them. Clearly missing from both Skinner and Jensen's theories was any reference to linguistic structure and to the structural competence (grammar) which must be acquired to make possible the most vital and significant attribute of language - the power to generate original and infinitely variable utterances. The relationship between thought and language was not discussed in any depth. However, behaviourist views of language acquisition should not be dismissed out of hand - they represent a fair analysis of linguistic behaviour at the 'basic' end of the motivation-learning continuum and firmly establish the relevance and importance of social and environmental factors. Behaviourism had achieved pre-eminence in Western psychology and had seen its sphere of influence extend into the education process. This has been particularly the case in the realm of foreign language teaching. Military training methods had provided the basis for language-learning programmes constructed around the notion that language was a series of S -> R induced habits and

that a teaching programme should be based on a S -> R "conditioning"

process. The irony of the eventual failure of these programmes is

twofold. Firstly, a groundswell of critical unease about wholesale

and exclusive extrapolation of behaviourist theory was apparent as

early as 1951. In that year, Bernard wrote that the oral objective of

the Army Specialized Training Program was:

> ". . . too limited an aim and its scope too narrowly
> utilitarian to be directly applicable to educational
> institutions. Likewise, the situational and motivational
> factors, as well as the factor of time allotment,
> generally do not exist in the peace-time pursuit of
> foreign language study." (4)

Secondly, the behaviourist-based "audio-lingual" movement came to

prominence at a time of economic growth and increasing prosperity.

Funding was consequently available for the technological hardware that

was needed to implement the new approach - tape recorders, language

laboratories and, in the subsequent "audio-visual" variation on the

approach, projectors and other visual media. Its introduction was

thus given the backing of unparalleled resources and many speculative

claims were made for its prospects. Bernard's critical comment

contained perceptions of serious and obvious shortcomings, notably

concerning time. Preoccupation with using (and being seen to use)

'the equipment' led to failure fully and properly to exploit a valid

teaching model which was available from the early 1960s. This was the

French CREDIF model with its four instructional phases of

Presentation, Comprehension, Manipulation and Exploitation. Failure

to use the model to best advantage generally took the form of a full

allocation of time for Presentation and Comprehension, a tendency to

cut corners on Manipulation and, the crucial weakness, a tendency to

relegate Exploitation to cursory activity - or not to reach this stage at all. In terms of developing generative linguistic competence, this latter tendency was particularly damaging. The Exploitation phase of the model was intended to provide precisely that autonomous and meaningful individual use of language which enables the learner to make sense of or change her world. The inadequacy of behaviourist theory lay principally in its neglect or dismissal of the power and capability of the human mind. Speech (language) is more than "verbal behaviour" - it is the mediator between the world of physical stimulation and that infinitely complex and restless 'world in the head': the world of thought.

2.2.3 Cognitive models of language acquisition

The parallels already established (Chapter 1) between the evolution of psychological theories of motivation and human learning theory find further reflection in the evolution of theories of language acquisition. Systematic research into the child's acquisition of language dates back only to the mid-nineteenth century (Edmonds, 1976) and the same writer reminds us that:

> "We are still far from a complete understanding either of
> language or of language acquisition." (5)

The progression from mechanism to cognition already identified has, however, been followed in developing theories of language acquisition. The term "cognition" has often been linked with "information processing". However, whether in the realms of language structure (grammar/syntax) or meaning, leading "cognitivist" theories point to

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mental forces whose working is much more substantial and dynamic than can be encompassed by that term. Seminal work on the cognitivist position was done by L.S. Vygotsky (1934). Having established that the primary function of speech is communication (social intercourse), Vygotsky takes his argument beyond what was the contemporary position of, for instance, Piaget by identifying human speech as a mediating system for conveying experience and thought rationally and intentionally. A child's "egocentric" speech soon becomes:

> "an instrument of thought in the proper sense - in
> seeking and planning the solution of a problem." (6)

As the child develops, speech begins to serve intellect - thought becomes verbal and speech becomes rational:

> "Thought development is determined by language, i.e. by
> the linguistic tools of thought and the sociocultural
> experience of the child." (7)

Concepts are formed not simply by the interplay of associations, but by intellectual operation. Vygotsky's most significant - and probably most quoted - statements on the inextricable link between language and the mind are:

> "The relation between thought and word is a living
> process, thought is born through words. A word devoid
> of thought is a dead thing, and a thought unembodied
> in words remains a shadow . . ." (8)

> "Thought and language, which reflect reality in a way
> different from that of perception, are the key to the
> nature of human consciousness. Words play a central
> part not only in the development of thought but in
> the historical growth of consciousness as a whole.
> A word is a microcosm of human consciousness." (9)

One of the most aggressive proponents of a cognitivist (or mentalist)

position has been Noam Chomsky. His much-quoted review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour (1959) not only subjected the thinking of one of the leading behaviourists to incisive criticism but also gave Chomsky a platform for disseminating his own views on language acquisition. The behaviourists' "habit formation" view of the process was dismissed in favour of a postulated universal, inborn capacity in human beings which enables them to acquire language in the process of normal maturation. Chomsky developed his own position in such passages as:

> "As far as the acquisition of language is concerned, it
> seems clear that reinforcement, casual observation and
> natural inquisitiveness (coupled with a strong tendency
> to imitate) are important factors, as is the remarkable
> capacity of the child to generalize, hypothesize and
> 'process information' in a variety of very special and
> apparently higher complex ways we cannot yet describe
> or begin to understand, and which may be largely innate,
> or may develop through some sort of learning or through
> maturation of the nervous system." (10)

This hypothesis acknowledges the validity of certain behaviourist constructs, but sharply rebuts the "stimulus-response" construct, which sees the individual as:

> "merely the locus of behaviour and not its cause." (11)

The best-known features of Chomsky's own acquisition model (1965) is the so-called Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which the child is said to possess. This device is specific to language acquisition, is an inborn capacity and is universal. It is said to be:

> "capable of utilizing primary linguistic data (the
> language of the speech community the child is born
> into or reared by) as the empirical basis for
> language learning." (12)

The device constructs a theory of a language (a grammar) which has been exemplified by the "primary linguistic data" and processed by the device. This theory of "tacit competence" constitutes the child's knowledge of the language. The child knows a great deal more than she/he has "learned", however, since the structural competence embodied in the "grammar" permits autonomous, creative generalization of a practically infinite ("all and only") range of sentences in the language.

There is no doubt that Chomsky's views represented a major advance in thinking on the acquisition of language. A problem arises with the application of the theory in a pedagogic context. Chomsky's preoccupation was with the acquisition of structural "competence", which was viewed in rather theoretical terms. He was less concerned with actual "performance", which was viewed as the often imperfect external realisation of the internal competence. Chomsky himself admitted frank scepticism as to the applicability of his work to day-to-day language teaching situations - his level of theory was more concerned with the construction of "pure" models. His formulation of "linguistic competence" was too abstract for those whose concern was precisely with the world of "performance" - meaningful language use for social interaction. Chomsky's views were critically appraised by the anthropologist and linguist Dell Hymes (1971). His concern began where Chomsky's diminished - in the realm of actual language performance. The

> "ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous
> speech community" (Chomsky, 1965) (13)

is seen as a denizen of the Garden of Eden. For Hymes, the major concern is the construction of a theory of "communicative competence" which is based on the integration of (essentially abstract) linguistic theory with the more down-to-earth areas of communication and culture. Grammatical knowledge is just one of several factors which influence real language behaviour. Hymes expresses "communicative competence" in terms of four underlying principles:

whether something is
1. formally <u>possible</u>

2. <u>feasible</u>

3. <u>appropriate</u>

4. actually <u>done</u>

Individual differences such as knowledge, ability, attitude, motivation and context are acknowledged. Savignon (1983) sums the position up:

"The performance of a person in any one context reflects
the interaction between the person's competence, the
competence of others, and the nature of the event itself
as it unfolds." (14)

Interpersonal communication with the transmission and reception of meaning recalls Vygotsky's earlier view of language. Purely formal or structural preoccupations that had dominated linguistic theory became synthesised with the social function of language. It will be seen that such a model of language has many more concrete implications for the school language-teaching situation and it is not surprising that the teaching of "communicative competence" has become a central aim of contemporary programmes of instruction.

2.2.4 A biological perspective: E.H. Lenneberg

Lenneberg gave scientific credibility to the "innate" view of language acquisition. His hypothesis (1964) is that

> "language is a species-specific trait based on a variety of biologically-given mechanisms." (15)

The biological endowments and other factors in humans which make linguistic communication uniquely possible for us are:

- the evolution of the vocal tract and respiratory systems

- the dominance of the left hemisphere of the brain

  (directly related to language capability)

- the regular onset of speech in all normal children even

  in the face of dramatic handicaps

- the fact that language cannot be taught

- linguistic universals: all languages are based on principles

  of phonology, syntax and semantics: any human being can

  learn any language.

> "The basic skills for language acquisition are as universal as bipedal gait." (16)

Language is thus a manifestation of species-specific physical attributes and cognitive propensities to categorize and establish similarities. These cognitive processes are brought to a state of "language readiness" by maturation. The mind creates a place for the "building blocks" of language. Lenneberg postulates a notion of "universal grammar" which reflects the regularity of language acquisition strategies. All languages are so constructed as to conform to the stringent requirements imposed by cerebral language

data-processing mechanisms. Social settings are required to trigger off the language reaction - the child's linguistic behaviour is activated by social contact. It constructs language, the "outer form" adopted being that of its "language community". (Lenneberg, 1967).

An important aspect of Lenneberg's theory was that "language readiness" is a state of limited duration - from about two years until the early teens - characterised as the "critical period". This view gave considerable impetus to moves to introduce foreign language teaching in primary schools, but subsequent research and writing have questioned the notion of the "critical period". Krashen (1982) argues that the LAD can be reactivated in adult learners of second or foreign languages. Account must also be taken of the much greater degree of cognitive development present in the adult. Nevertheless, much of Lenneberg's theory has an appealing quality, notably its emphasis on deep universalities of language and on the importance of social dimensions. These aspects have clear pedagogic implications.

2.2.5 Syntax acquisition

In a thesis which recalls Vygotsky's view of the central role of the adult (specifically, the parent) as model and chief informant for the child's acquisition of language, Brown and Bellugi (1964) list three processes in the child's acquisition of syntax:

1. Imitation and Reduction: word-order of the parental
    (or other) model is preserved but reduced (the model
    sentence is processed as a total construction rather
    than as a list of words). Forms likely to be omitted
    are "functors" - inflections, auxiliary verbs, articles,
    prepositions and conjunctions.

(Even a cursory analysis of the errors of foreign
language learners provides many examples of exactly
this phenomenon).

2.   Imitation with expansion: the parental role: the
     parent expands the child's utterance to include the
     missing functors whose meaning accrues to them in
     context: this includes notions of time, possession,
     relational concepts and classes (article use).

        "It seems to us that a mother, in expanding
        speech, may be teaching more than grammar;
        she may be teaching something like a world
        view."

3.   Induction of the latent structure: some mistakes
     "externalize the child's search for regularities of
     syntax". Discovery of latent syntactic and semantic
     rule is

        "the greatest of the processes involved in
        language acquisition and the most difficult
        to understand." (17)

2.2.6   Towards an integrated view of language acquisition

The thinking of a number of "cognitivist" theorists embraces factors

which had been associated specifically with behaviourist views of

language acquisition.   Lenneberg emphasizes social dimensions,

Vygotsky stresses the roles of imitation and instruction in child

development, while Piaget identifies communication as a key aspiration

in the affective domain.

Edmonds (1976) points to an essential deficiency in the "nativist"

hypothesis:

        "In essence, the nativistic hypothesis reduces early
        language to a set of preformed, static relationships
        which still require explanation. (Piaget, 1970). It
        appears that the nativism of the 1960s was the product
        of both an exclusive concern with syntax as the aspect
        of child language and a disenchantment with empiricism
        as embodied in S-R chains and operant theories." (18)

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She proceeds to a reconceptualization of the problem. Recent research

suggests that meaning and contexts are as important as syntax in the

language-acquisition process. Children's earliest utterances seem to

intend relational meanings. Fillmore (1968) postulates a "deep

structure" made up of semantic, rather than syntactic, concepts.

Edmonds returns to Piagetian theory to suggest that

> "In terms of language acquisition, it now seems clear
> that children at first acquire words that have a limited
> set of meanings, seemingly the meanings implicit in
> sensori-motor intelligence." (19)

Further following Piaget, the symbolic function of language emerges

through a balance between "assimilation" (integration into cognitive

structure of objects and events) and "accommodation" (alteration of

existing structure on the basis of new assimilation). Edmonds' main

point is that

> "focusing on only one aspect of language can give a
> distorted picture of the acquisition process." (20)

She goes on to examine the use of language for purposes of

communication:

> "Language develops into a communication system par
> excellence with social rules for when, where and how
> to use it appropriately." (21)

In short, the nativist view of a species-specific predisposition to

acquire language is highly probable, but greater account must be taken

of cognitive theory, semantic features and social interaction as well

as of pure linguistic theory.

It is clear to me that, whether postulated from a behaviourist or

mentalist standpoint, all theories acknowledge the central and indispensable role of language. Each offers partial explanations of language acquisition: convincing arguments are advanced for an innate capacity to develop a grammar (Chomsky, Lenneberg) but social settings are a prerequisite for triggering off the language reaction (Lenneberg, Hymes). Parents and others provide powerful models of stimulus and reinforcement (Skinner), syntax acquisition (Brown and Bellugi) and, ultimately, the organisation of perceptive behaviour and mental activity (Vygotsky). Language acquisition and development are closely linked to general cognitive development (Piaget).

Bruner's view (1964), already cited in 1.3.2.2., represents a more integrated position and, appropriately enough in the context of this investigation, highlights needs as a factor in language acquisition.

Edmonds summarizes the situation:

> "A multidiscipline approach . . . should help provide a
> more satisfactory account of how the child acquires
> language." (22)

2.3 Acquisition and learning

The terms themselves appear to represent a conceptual gap. The former implies 'random' and 'unself-conscious' while the latter suggests 'organized' and 'self-conscious'. My contention is that, subject to a number of significant constraints, there are aspects of the acquisition process that have a place in a theory of language learning which may be related to pedagogic practice in the teaching of foreign languages. A broad-based theory of language learning is as essential

as an understanding of motivational factors in the production of effective teaching and learning materials. Breadth of vision is the key factor: just as motivation cannot be explained with a single construct (Chapter 1) and the way forward in developing insights into language acquisition lies in a multidiscipline approach (Chapter 2.2.6), so we should look for a more global theory of language learning than those which have served as bases for past "schools" of language education.

2.3.1 Acquisition and learning in perspective

> "The term language acquisition is used for the process
> where a language is acquired as a result of natural and
> largely random exposure to language, the term learning
> where the exposure is structured through language
> teaching." (Wilkins, 1974) (23)

Language 'acquisition' is thus equated with the development of a 'mother tongue' or 'native language', while language 'learning' relates to processes of language development in other tongues undertaken subsequent to the acquisition of the mother tongue and for a variety of reasons and uses. Attempts have been made to bridge the conceptual gap alluded to above. These have ranged from Gouin's "natural method" in the 1880s - a teaching technique based on a "series" of logically associated actions with verbs and sentences as the cornerstones of developing linguistic competence - to the audio-lingual school's large-scale (its critics would say ill-conceived) extrapolation of behaviourist views of learning to foreign language teaching in the 1960s.

Many arguments, however, underline the distinction between the

processes. Mackey (1965) asserts that, whereas acquiring a first language is "an inevitable process", learning a second language is "a special accomplishment".[24] Wilkins (1972) discusses possible parallels between the processes and concludes that, fundamentally,

> "The learner does not need the (second) language in order
> to regulate his behaviour and his mental processes or to
> organise his perception. When he comes to learn a new
> language his modes of behaviour are already set in the
> ways that are appropriate to his first language culture." (25)

Nevertheless, there has emerged in recent years a consensus of opinion on major aims of foreign language teaching running parallel to 'communicative' methodology. In addition to the conventional pursuit of excellence by learners with the aptitude so to do, this consensus of aims sees foreign language learning as part of a broader process of language development with greater awareness of the nature, form and function of language, recognition of socio-cultural differences by the acceptance of the validity of other cultures and, through the experience of language learning, at least a long, hard look at the diverse, polyglot world beyond the confines of the monoglot's cultural stockade. Such aims as these represent a substantial further contribution to bridging the conceptual gap between acquisition and learning.

Perhaps the issue is put most sharply into perspective by Hornsey (1982). He presents a continuum view of language activity whose two poles are the mother tongue (acquired) and the foreign language (learned). The intervening stages show various possible instances of language development which may take place between the extremes of unconscious acquisition and self-conscious learning.

Mother Tongue	Second Language	Lingua Franca	Foreign Language	Foreign Language Learning
(acquisition)	(immigrants or members of bilingual communities)	(business, trade, commerce)	(special cultural status - eg English for European teenagers)	(school)
				(26)

The foreign language is thus on the same continuum as the mother tongue, but is distanced from it in that it is taught. The lack of 'need' highlighted by Wilkins (above) must be acknowledged and compensated for in the education process, which must provide the learner with a rationale and motivation. This key theme will, of course, be returned to.

2.3.2. Acquisition and learning: comparison and contrast

It would be both naive and potentially disastrous to dismiss too easily the real distinction between the two poles of the continuum. Hawkins (1981) makes a detailed comparison between mother tongue acquisition and foreign language learning and concludes that diverse factors favour both in different contexts.

Clearly favouring language acquisition are:

-   time: the infant is exposed to a rich diet of linguistic

    input almost every waking hour: it is worth noting that,

    notwithstanding this, it takes on average one year for

    the first utterances to appear, a considerable number of

years more before really fluent speech is established,

five years or more for reasonably fluent reading and

ten years or more before reasonably fluent writing is

achieved;

- ratio of models to learner: the young child is

    surrounded by (mostly benign) models in the persons of

    parents, relatives, siblings, etc; their physical

    presence is generally reinforced by strong emotional

    bonds;

- concept formulation: this key developmental phase,

    part cognitive, part linguistic has as its impulse

    the child's basic motivational urge to make sense of

    the environment; learning language involves "categorizing"

    the environment;

- parallel evolution of conceptual frameworks and

    linguistic competence: simple primary concepts are

    matched by immaturity of language; error is accepted

    as normal and not merely tolerated but often perceived

    as an endearing characteristic;

- psychological factors: the young child has a capacity

    to empathize, to imitate and mimic and has none of the

    inhibition which is characteristic of later developmental

    stages - as is the decline of empathy and willingness

    to "apprentice" to adults.

In   short,   the encouragement and facilitation of language acquisition

is an essential part of the process of nurture. The fundamental cognitive drive, whose outward expression is the growth of language, is stimulated by the child's socio-cultural environment. Any shortcoming in this environment - lack of adult time, lack of affection or tolerance or lack of role models - is seen as an aspect of deprivation.

Learning, particularly at the secondary education stage, is not so favoured. Attempts to implant foreign language skills in (optimistically) four teaching sessions per week appear little short of derisory compared to the time available for mother tongue acquisition. Learners are still characteristically taught by one teacher in groups of 25-30. Revisiting elementary semantic categories (such as naming familiar objects, telling the time and learning to count) in the foreign language can be a demotivating experience for the relatively sophisticated young adolescent. Censorious attitudes to inaccuracy and error are equally damaging to confidence and motivation and it must be accepted that adolescence brings a decline in empathy, particularly to non-peer group models such as teachers, and an increase in inhibition.

On the other hand, learning is supported by:

- memory: this capacity grows with maturity and responds to the training given in the education process, including the development of good 'retrieval' techniques;

- concentration: another maturational factor which is underpinned by the teaching of good study habits;

- expectation: having acquired the major conceptual
  networks in the mother tongue, learning another
  language is more a question of transfer than of
  ab initio discovery;

- cognitive development: this includes the capacities
  to infer, to hypothesize, to deduce, to categorize,
  to generalize and to handle abstractions;

- pedagogic and other intervention: teachers can help
  economize effort by grading and selection of material;
  they, together with parents and peers, can provide
  incentives to spur and direct motivation to learn. (27)

Notwithstanding these positive features, it must be acknowledged that
the 'learning' situation is deficient in two vital areas: these are
exposure to the vast quantity of language and interaction which
support mother tongue acquisition and motivation - the urgent
emotional, socio-cultural and cognitive drives to control and make
sense of the environment which ensure mother tongue acquisition in all
normal humans. The viability of teaching and learning foreign
languages depends considerably on the planning and organization of
instruction with due regard to the nature and function of language,
learner motivation, cognitive strategies and the establishment of
worthwhile, feasible goals. I shall now turn to these issues.

2.4 A model of language

"Speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts
such as making statements, giving commands, asking

questions, making promises, and so on; and more
abstractly, acts such as referring and predicating;
and, secondly, . . . these acts are in general made
possible by and are performed in accordance with
certain rules for the use of linguistic elements."
(Searle, 1969) (28)

The "speech act" is intrinsically linked with social behaviour. A
model of language must thus feature a "communicative" element or
system composed of the functions (things we 'do' with language such as
asking, explaining, deciding and expressing opinions) and notions
(concepts such as time, space and possession) which impart sense and
reference to pieces of language. The model must also take account of
the fact that, for any language to be readily comprehensible to a
speech community, it must be composed of conventional forms and
structures (sounds, words, combinations of words) which must enjoy
universal acceptance by the speech community. It must, in short, also
have a "formal" system because, as Searle further reminds us, it is

"a rule-governed form of behaviour." (29)

Such a model might be presented as follows:

```
                      ┌──────────────────────────┐
                 ╱────│ Communicative system     │────╲
              ╱       └──────────────────────────┘        ╲
           ╱                                                 ╲
  ┌───────────────┐                                    ┌───────────────┐
  │ Functions     │ ◄──────────────────────────────►  │ Notions       │
  └───────────────┘      ╲                  ╱           └───────────────┘
        ↕                    ╲            ╱                     ↕
  ┌───────────────┐            ╲        ╱              ┌───────────────┐
  │ Structures    │ ◄──────────────────────────────►  │ Lexis         │
  └───────────────┘        ╲                  ╱         └───────────────┘
              ╲              └──────────────────────────┘       ╱
                 ╲────│ Formal system            │────╱
                      └──────────────────────────┘
```
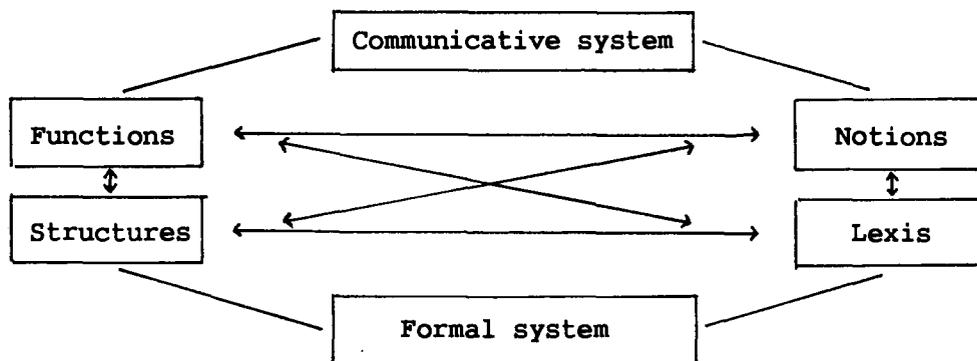
The key feature of this model is the total integration of its
component elements - to express a language function, for example, it
is essential to use appropriate structures and lexis. Integration of

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the components must be further emphasized in the application of the model to language teaching. Over the past hundred years in particular, the development of language teaching has been characterized by a series of pendulum-like swings from one prevailing orthodoxy to another. These orthodoxies (grammar-translation, direct method, audio-lingual method, communicative approach, to mention some of the most significant) may in general be characterized by their excessive emphasis on one or the other half of the model. Grammar-translation and audio-lingualism (which was based on structural linguistics) emphasized the formal system at the expense of interpersonal communication and even of meaning, while the direct method and the communicative approach, especially in their most extreme forms, have tried to eliminate any conscious reference to grammar. It must be said that, for reasons connected with early attempts to install modern foreign language teaching in the secondary curriculum, teaching approaches have been dominated by emphasis on the formal system. Such emphasis was felt to impart greater academic credibility to the subject. The formal system was pre-eminent in the linguistic theories of leading figures such as de Saussure (langue was considered a more proper vehicle for serious study than parole) and Chomsky (competence was similarly of greater significance than actual performance). An effective pedagogic model must, however, incorporate the integration of the components of language as detailed above. It is interesting to note the view of Searle (1969), who was perhaps more of a philosopher than a linguist:

> "Now (language) being rule-governed, it has formal features
> which admit of independent study but . . . any such purely
> formal study is necessarily incomplete. It would be as if

baseball were studied only as a formal system of rules and not as a game." (30)

2.4.1 Some theories of language learning

I do not propose to undertake an historical review of major trends in language teaching - this has been done elsewhere (notably in Hawkins, 1981, Krashen, 1982 and Stern, 1983). I am, however, concerned to identify salient features of trends which have 'transfer value' in subsequent consideration of a global or consensus model of language teaching and learning. I have already expressed concern (Introduction and elsewhere passim) at the deleterious effect on the evolution of perspectives on modern language pedagogy of the process of reform and counter-reform which has characterized the last hundred years. Carroll (1971) is forthright about the situation:

> "Our field has been afflicted, I think, with many false dichotomies, irrelevant oppositions, weak conceptualizations and neglect of the really critical issues and variables." (31)

According to Stern (1983), the problem has been compounded by an emphasis on what he calls the "method concept". Theories of language learning which, as we have seen (2.4), tended to focus on formal aspects of language were conceptualized in terms of a prescribed "methodology". Thus "grammar-translation" emphasized the teaching of target language grammar through the presentation of "rules" of grammar which might be exemplified in highly synthetic "texts". The main learning activity, other than rote learning of rules, paradigms and vocabulary, was the translation from and into the foreign language of sentences or texts designed to test the learner's ability to apply

grammatical rules. There was little or no attention to listening to or speaking the target language. The "direct method", in contrast, involved extensive (nearly exclusive) use of the target language as a means of instruction and communication in the classroom. Translation was proscribed and the linguistic emphasis moved from the literary - or quasi-literary - which underpinned grammar-translation (and probably represented its most coherent objective) to spoken, everyday language. The basic unit for presentation remained the short text in the target language, however. The audio-lingual and subsequent audio-visual movements, whose protagonists (notably Brooks, 1960 and Lado, 1964) emphasized their derivation from linguistics and psychology (see Chapter 1.3.2.1 and 2.2.2) and claimed to be providing a scientific basis for language teaching, were quite self-conscious about the 'method' aspect. The new courses and their attendant technology were introduced with a good deal of dogmatism about their use - and about the nature and objectives of language learning. Thus the four language skills were seen as discrete with primacy being awarded to listening and speaking. The language was presented through dialogue and, with the help of audio technology such as the tape recorder and the language laboratory, extensive drilling took place involving mimicry, memorization and pattern practice. The "audio-visual" development of audio-lingualism pioneered by CREDIF (1961) featured the most prescriptive "methodology". New users were given training in its principles (see 2.2.2). Its important advance on audio-lingualism was in its use of visual stimuli to put language into a social context, thereby underpinning the 'meaningful' element in its major goal of spoken communication.

Hindsight - and the evolution of thinking on language pedagogy - now inform us of the shortcomings of the "method concept". Writing about various "methods", Mackey (1965) asserts that

> "Such terms . . . can only be vague and inadequate because they limit themselves to a single aspect of a complex subject, inferring that any aspect alone is all that matters." (32)

The problem with a "method" is that, of its nature, it starts as one person's (or a group's) view of

1. what a language is

2. what learning a language involves

3. what are suitable notional objectives for a course of language learning.

On these bases, a 'package' of instructional materials is selected and assembled and (perhaps) a set of teaching strategies compiled. The limitations of this, I feel typical, scenario emerge when it is compared to Stern's (1983) analysis of the variables which have to be accounted for in a model of language learning. These are:

1. Social context - cultural, linguistic and economic factors

2. Learner characteristics - age, aptitude, motivation, personality

3. Learning conditions - exposure, resources, procedures

which are represented as determinants of

4. Learning process - strategies and techniques

5. Learning outcomes - competence or proficiency.

Until very recently, it seems to me that "methods", because of their largely unidimensional and prescriptive nature, have tended to ignore or at best make assumptions about 1, 2 and 4 above and have operated from a fairly narrow view of 3 and 5. Stern's verdict on a number of widely-propagated "methods" is

> "All . . . have in common two major weaknesses. One is
> that they represent a relatively fixed combination of
> language teaching beliefs, and another is that they are
> characterized by the over-emphasis on single aspects as
> the central issue of language teaching and learning.
> This characteristic has made historical sense and has
> contributed new insights but eventually has formed an
> inadequate basis for conceptualizing language teaching." (33)

Since the 1970s in particular, there has been a distinct movement away from the "single method concept". Practitioners have come to realize - if they were not already aware of - the futility of the seemingly endless search for a panacea based on a notional 'new' method which would solve the frequently-reiterated problems seemingly endemic in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in this country. The effective collapse of the audio-lingual and audio-visual "methods", symbolized by the stark verdict of HMI (1977) that

> "attainment was in no way commensurate with the human and
> material resources expended." (34)

was initially marked by a sense of crisis (generated, it must be said, by university rather than school teachers at the King's College London Conference of November, 1976). Subsequently, however, new attitudes developed based on

1.   a more universal recognition of the important variables
     identified by Stern;

2. greater emphasis on semantic, social and communicative aspects of language;

3. greater interest in, and emphasis on, the learner's affective and cognitive characteristics.

The generic term applied to the realization of these new attitudes is the "communicative approach". It is interesting to note that the term 'approach' is used instead of 'method'. There has not been an attempt explicitly to formulate a communicative method. The approach has evolved on a broad base, having as significant characteristics

1. Focus on the learner: needs, attitude, individual differences

2. Syllabus specified in terms of functions and notions rather than structures

3. More scope for individual/experiential learning: greater emphasis on group and pair work and role-play to promote practical communication

4. Language seen as a socio-cultural phenomenon rather than as an intellectual discipline

5. Revised attitudes to error: the essentially creative dimension of language presupposes hypothesis-making and testing and consequent learning by making mistakes.

Two writers who have examined the theoretical basis of language teaching and learning from standpoints not linked to method and whose work seems to me to have a significant contribution to make to this investigation are Krashen and Gardner. I shall now review some of their writings.

2.4.1.1   Krashen: An 'acquisition' model for learning

Stephen   Krashen's basic premise (1982) is that language acquisition -

which   has already been identified as a more natural   phenomenon   than

language learning - occurs

> "when language is used for what it was designed for,
> communication."   (35)

In   occurs   when real messages are comprehended without the   extensive

application of conscious grammatical rules.   It does, however, develop

slowly and speaking skills emerge significantly later than   listening.

It is important that the learner should feel at ease - the lowering of

student anxiety is, in fact, a primary goal.

> "The best methods are therefore those that supply
> 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations,
> containing messages that students really want to
> hear.   These methods do not force early production
> in the second language."   (36)

Discussing various language learning "hypotheses", Krashen suggests

1.   Adults can still use the LAD.   This factor, combined

with their greater degree of cognitive development,

tends to dispel the notion that "younger is better".

2.   Acquisition and learning strategies are used in very

specific ways: acquisition initiates utterances and

is responsible for fluency, while learning plays an

editorial or monitoring role.

A much-quoted assertion of Krashen's is that

> "Learning does not turn into acquisition."   (37)

The term "monitor" which has become associated with Krashen, relates
to the self-conscious process whereby the learner, given time, applies
knowledge of linguistic form and grammatical rules to second language
output. In real communication, there is not time for effective
monitor use, which can be said to account for learners failing to
reproduce language they have apparently been effectively taught.

3. The key to an acquisition-based model is "comprehensible
   input", significant aspects of which are

   (a) that its linguistic aspects (speed and articulation,
       vocabulary and syntax) be simplified to promote
       comprehension of a "message"

   (b) that it be interesting and/or relevant to the
       learner, with the "message", rather than
       exemplification of linguistic form, as its
       primary goal (in this latter respect, Krashen is
       against traditional grammatical sequencing in
       which the focus on form is always at the expense
       of communication)

   (c) that it be provided in sufficient quantity:
       Krashen argues, with justification in my view, that
       past methods have not provided enough input.

4. Due note must be taken of "affective" variables -
   attitudes and motivation. If good attitudes are not
   nurtured, the learner will put up a barrier to
   instruction - thus

"The effective language teacher is someone who can provide
input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety
situation." (38)

Krashen's views tend to gloss over some of the serious problems
already identified in the previous comparison of acquisition and
learning (2.3.2), notably time and resources. In the context of this
inquiry it must also be borne in mind that he is writing about the
American situation. American success in foreign language teaching
has, if anything, been even more sparse than British. One feels that
he is too glib in his dismissal of the need for some grammatical
sequencing to be built into linguistic input, again mainly because of
the need to use cognitive strategies to cut corners and partly offset
the enormous deficiency in time available, but many of his ideas take
much greater account of the variables discussed by Stern and offer a
broader base for a theory of language learning. His emphasis on the
importance of affective variables leads me to the second writer whose
views merit special attention in this investigation - Gardner.

2.4.1.2 Gardner: Social psychological perspectives

Richard Gardner is one of an important group of Canadian writers on
language teaching and learning. Usually in association with Wallace
Lambert, he has done much to promote the importance of attitudes and
motivation in successful second language learning. In a recent (1985)
book which synthesizes much of his earlier work, he develops a theory
of language learning which he terms the "socio-educational" model.
Basic premises are that language and society are interdependent, that
cognitive representations are important mediators between language and
social context and that second (foreign) language learning is mediated

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by a range of cognitive representations. Attitudes and motivation are
crucial factors in successful language learning. The recent focus on
"behavioural" (communicative) aspects of language, in which language
learning involves a culture as well as a code has underlined this
latter aspect, a point emphasized by Gardner as follows:

> "Language courses are different from other curriculum
> topics. They require that the individual incorporate
> elements from another culture. As a consequence,
> reactions to the other culture become important
> considerations. Furthermore, because the material is
> not merely an extension of the student's own cultural
> heritage, the dynamics of the classroom and the
> methodology assume greater importance than they do
> in other school topics. Such considerations place
> considerable emphasis on the concepts of attitude
> and motivation in the learning of second languages." (39)

Gardner discusses a range of theories of language learning, each
offering insights but having limitations (c.f. Stern's discussion of
methods). Some focus on the linguistic process - Krashen's "monitor"
(q.v.), Carroll's "conscious reinforcement" model (according to which
"reinforcement" is seen not in terms of behaviourist response-
strengthening, but as a more conscious, cognitive process, in which
the learner operates a "performance grammar" to bring about
appropriate language use by controlling and processing linguistic
input and output) and Bialystok's "strategy" model (in which any
linguistic input is processed by explicit, implicit or "other"
knowledge which mediates output in the form of spontaneous or
deliberate responses). Other models focus on the social process with
consequent emphasis on attitudes to the target language community
(Lambert's "social psychological" model and Schumann's "acculturation"
model), motivation (specifically, Gardner and Lambert's well-known

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"integrative" motivation through which the learner progresses through developing positive feelings towards the target language community and culture) and self-concept. Gardner identifies four salient themes in all models discussed. These are:

1. Motivation: every model assumes goal-directed purposeful behaviour.

2. Situational context: inevitably, "artificial" situations (such as the classroom) are less conducive to second language acquisition.

3. Social adjustment: this concerns the learner's values, attitudes, self-concept and general view of the world.

4. Individual differences: attitudinal and aptitude-linked.

These themes cover most of the same ground as Stern's list of variables (2.4.1). Gardner's own model contrives to subsume both sets. In keeping with Gardner's overall "social-psychological" stance, a major concern in formulating a model of learning is the role of individual differences. This role is highlighted in the following succinct expression of the model in which language learning is seen to be based on:

> "dynamic causal interplay of individual difference variables
> interacting with environmental and acquisition contexts
> resulting in both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes." (40)

The full model focuses on four classes of variables:

1. Environmental: the "social milieu": this reflects the basic premise that learning another language involves

taking a conscious step outside the learner's cultural

community. Language learning can be encouraged or

discouraged by attitudes to the process within the

cultural community. Individual differences in

achievement can thus be considerably influenced by

national, regional, parental and peer-group attitudes

to foreign language learning and, of particular

significance in the context of this investigation,

by the status of the activity within the school

community.

2. Individual differences: those that directly affect

   achievement are intelligence, aptitude, motivation and

   situational anxiety. Intelligence and aptitude

   (defined by writers such as Carroll and Sapon, 1959,

   as a series of verbal and cognitive abilities) clearly

   provide a significant base for successful learning, but

   motivation, which has always preoccupied Gardner and his

   associates, and is central to the theme of this

   investigation, must be considered a crucial factor.

   It determines the individual's level of commitment to

   the task of language learning expressed as attitude,

   level of desire and level of effort. It is an intra-

   personal force, but is susceptible to external

   manipulation, notably by the learner's environment, and

   is partly controlled by the fourth key individual

   difference - situational anxiety. High levels of

   anxiety were identified by Krashen as detrimental to

effective language learning. In an age of increased

focus on the learner, traditional attitudes to error

and insistence on unrealistic standards by excessive

imposition of the native speaker as the only acceptable

model can now be seen to have done much to foster

anxiety and undermine confidence.

3. Language acquisition contexts: the two previous variables

inevitably influence how well learners perform in a

learning situation. Gardner distinguishes between formal

and informal contexts. In formal contexts, instruction

- teaching, explanations, organized and structured

practice - is the primary aim. In informal contexts,

the primary aim might be entertainment or interpersonal

communication - that is to say, the development of

language skills is incidental. The language classroom

may appear to be an obvious example of the former and

the school journey abroad an obvious example of the

latter. Many language teachers nowadays would, however,

question this assertion as being simplistic and even

inexact. A significant manifestation of the

'communicative approach' has been the informalization

of many classrooms so that instruction is subordinated

to more learner-centred experiential learning. The

notion of enjoyment in the classroom is no longer regarded

with misgiving or suspicion by teachers. Individual

differences do, however, tend to interact differently with

different contexts. All four bear on achievement in

formal contexts while learning in informal contexts is
more susceptible to motivational intensity and
situational anxiety. Much depends on the quality of the
learning experience provided in any particular context,
however. Poor presentation places intelligence at a
premium while interesting and attractive presentation can
greatly enhance motivation. This may be seen as a crucial
point in this investigation.

4.   Outcomes: two outcomes are identified - linguistic and
     non-linguistic. Linguistic outcomes refer to proficiency
     in the foreign language and relate to cognitive
     development while non-linguistic outcomes relate to
     affective characteristics such as attitudes and values.
     Sustaining successful language learning over the length
     of time necessary to develop a substantial command
     involves attention to both outcomes. This is because
     both linguistic and non-linguistic experiences feed back
     through the other sections of the model to promote the
     "dynamic interplay" previously referred to.

For me, Gardner's model conceptualizes the language learning process
in a way which has considerable reference to the British foreign
language teaching and learning situation. Initial attitudes generated
in the home, cultural group or school community may or may not provide
a good motivational stimulus and language teachers need to be ready
either to capitalize on positive attitudes or provide effective
counters to negative attitudes. Individual differences must be

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recognised and processes of grading and selection of input and differentiation of goals employed to nurture intelligence and aptitude, improve motivation by making success attainable and reduce anxiety brought on by monocultural insularity and fear of failure. Learning contexts, which focus on the planning and organization of exposure to the target language, play an important role in mediating between individual differences and the social milieu on the one hand, and linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes on the other. These outcomes themselves are important in that successful learning brings linguistic and non-linguistic benefits which feed back into the learner's personal evaluative base and influence subsequent learning. Consistent with the main thrust of this investigation, which focuses on motivation as a crucial factor in successful foreign language learning, I shall now briefly examine motivational factors which can be identified in the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

2.5 Motivational factors in foreign language learning

Discussion of motivational factors in mother tongue acquisition has been rated by some writers as almost superfluous - all normal humans acquire a mother tongue as part of the process of maturation, so why analyse the process? Apart from the fact that failure to do so would have seriously diminished our as yet incomplete view of the language-learning process and how and why it is energized, I feel that our ability to establish a conceptual base for discussing motivation for foreign language learning would have been impaired. The fact, as Hornsey's continuum (2.3.1) demonstrates, is that, although outwardly similar, the processes, and the motivation which energizes them, are

significantly different. This is especially so in the case of the very large number (more than 90% of the secondary school population - DES 1985) of young learners whose curriculum includes a foreign language learning experience. For many of these, the experience is initially involuntary (there is no 'opting out' for some time), non-essential (in comparison to members of bilingual communities or immigrants, for example) and often emotionally and culturally fraught. Small wonder, then, that overviews of the foreign language teaching-learning process (HMI 1977 and Hawkins, 1981, for example) tend to depict large scale resistance and a willingness to opt out as soon as the system permits. I might add that this situation is found throughout the English-speaking world. I have no wish to accentuate the negative, but certain areas of sources of 'consumer resistance' must be acknowledged as a prelude to remedial proposals. These include:

1.   Xenophobia and insularity: the influx of large numbers
      of multi-ethnic immigrants to these islands has brought
      sharply into relief socio-cultural characteristics which
      span many centuries, promoting the need for positive
      "multi-cultural" and "anti-racist" education programmes.
      Foreign language teachers are more than familiar with
      endemic monoculturalism and the stereotyped, pejorative
      view of persons and things 'foreign' that it engenders.

2.   The dominance of English: this has, of course, undermined
      need for skills in other languages - identified as one of
      the key motivational factors in first language
      acquisition. English is now a world language of

considerable magnitude and, rightly or wrongly, from politicians and business people down, there is a widely-prevailing view that someone will always speak English. This point is linked to 1. above in that British world colonialism was linguistic and cultural as well as territorial and political.

3. Unrealistic expectations: it has taken many years of debate and discussion and the advent of GCSE for feasible outcomes of foreign language learning to be articulated. The traditional model has implicitly been the native speaker and the whole teaching-learning process has been geared in a linear manner to produce (essentially by attrition) a linguistic 'élite' whose performance approximates to that of the native speaker. This exclusive process has been underpinned by norm-referenced assessment procedures designed to discriminate between learners and which have promoted non-learner-friendly teaching styles. In these, the elimination of error has taken precedence over the stimulation of the desire to communicate and schemes of assessment have been based on destructive criticism rather than on a positive recognition of what the learner can actually do. Goals have been long-term and fundamentally imperfect. Practical communication with a "sympathetic native speaker" may have ingenuous overtones, but, as a viable objective for a mass learning population, it represents a significant breakthrough.

4. Group pressures on the learner: these can be many and varied and were graphically expressed by Allwright (1977) as a series of some twelve arrows converging on the central figure of the learner. Notable among them are peer-group attitudes, parental views (Gardner and Lambert noted that parents' _own_ attitude to language learning is more significant that the extent of their encouragement of their children) and the status of language learning in the school (often as expressed by 'pastoral' and other subject teachers who can contribute, intentionally or unwittingly, to 1., 2. or 3. above). A new dimension to negative pressure seems to have emerged in recent years with the dramatic fall in the number of boys compared to girls who pursue foreign language study.

All the above are nettles which have to be grasped in the process of promoting learner motivation.

In addition to 'resistance' factors, certain inbuilt disadvantages facing the foreign language learner must also be acknowledged. Arising from the discussion of acquisition and learning in 2.3.2, I would especially identify lack of time, poor teacher-learner ratios and psychological factors, some of which have emerged earlier in this section. These include lack of "need", loss of empathy and, often through well-intentioned but heavy-handed teaching strategies and demands, the stimulation of negative attitudes such as fear of failure leading to blocked responses, a sense of helplessness and an overwhelming desire to "leave the field". These problems are to a

considerable extent symbolized by the demands foreign language oral work places on adolescents and the reaction of many learners to such demands for public performance.

The combination of these negative factors makes for an unpromising environment in which the teacher must try to operate. In foreign language instruction, as in no other subject in the curriculum, the medium of instruction (hopefully the target language) and the message conveyed (the target language) are one and the same. Successful learning depends not only on intellectual adjustment but also on a cultural reorientation. Given the crucial role of motivation, especially in self-conscious activity, the teacher must bear a heavy responsibility for fostering positive attitudes and stimulating willingness to learn. It would not be productive in this investigation to pursue, as Allwright (q.v.) does, the question of whether or not it is reasonable for the teacher to bear such a burden. What seems to me more important is that the situation outlined above be acknowledged as practical reality and that, through a judicious combination of theory and practice, we approach a task of acknowledged difficulty from the best conceptual base. This must be supported by resources and materials which likewise are not based on speculation, assumption or sheer expediency and offer maximum support in the vital area of learner motivation.

2.5.1 Motivational functions of the teacher

"A primary function of education should be to stimulate the development of motivations and interests that are currently non-existent." (Ausubel, 1978) (41)

The motivational functions of the teacher are encapsulated by De Cecco and Crawford (1974) under four headings - arousal, expectancy, incentive and disciplinary. Stimulating the first three involves direct access to the learner's attitudes, values and personality, while the fourth is concerned with the organization of the learning environment.

Arousal relates to the general state of alertness of the individual. The view already expressed (1.3.2.2 - the Yerkes-Dodson Law) regarding the optimum level of arousal is reiterated and its relationship with anxiety and frustration is discussed. These apparently negative factors will not necessarily impede, and may even facilitate, performance where the learner possesses sufficiently strong "entering behaviour". Strength of entering behaviour is linked to IQ and level of arousal. Thus the able learner may profit from a state of anxiety and perform well under pressure. Similarly, frustration can become a challenge to greater achievement. Where entering behaviour is weak or lacking, however, increased anxiety and frustration merely have a punitive effect. It is therefore incumbent on the teacher to arouse the interest and attention of the learner without putting her "on the defensive" (keeping the "affective filter" low, as Krashen would put it). This involves a greater familiarity with the character and needs of each learner in a group and a basic attitude which involves leading by example and encouragement rather than by prescription.

Expectancy is defined as

> "a momentary belief that a particular outcome will
> follow a particular act." (42)

Expectancy is linked with valence, the motive to achieve, competence, the broader cognitive desire to organize perception and experience and self-realization. A crucial factor in the creation of positive expectancy must be a clear identification of the objectives and possible outcomes of learning in terms of enhanced skill, capability or 'pay-off'. A major contribution of the 'communicative approach' and, more notably, of GCSE syllabuses in modern languages, has been the provision, in terms of defined content, of clear goals for the learner linked to specified topics, situations and tasks. Expectancy alone is not enough, however.

Incentive relates to actual goal objects. The vigour of activity is affected by the nature of any incentives associated with it. Incentives are stimuli which trigger off anticipations and responses. They are a fundamental motivator of behaviour and incentive, an offshoot of drive motivation, is a pervasive force in society. Incentives are rewards for present achievement provided in a way which stimulates future achievement. In education, goal-objects have long been the stimulus for learning activity - academic qualifications have been the greatest incentive to sustained effort and progress. Much incentive has focused on long-term goals, however - a fact especially true of foreign language learning, where the incentive of a basic qualification was characteristically the end product of five years' study. For many learners, the need for the provision of short-term goals was seen to be crucial by HMI (1977). The enhanced incentive value and more tangible pay-off of the short-term goal has been a motive force behind the development of "graded objectives" in foreign language learning, which appear to be promoting significant changes in

attitude and greater perseverance among many learners.

De Cecco and Crawford include in their analysis a "disciplinary" function, providing for the regulation of behaviour. Maintaining a disciplined framework for learning, particularly with the large concentration of learners in a typical teaching group, is, of course, a basic necessity in an educational institution. In terms of the foreign language classroom, however, traditional (authoritarian) control strategies appear to militate against much of what has been written concerning not only the other main motivational functions of the teacher, but also the prevailing view of language as a social phenomenon. It is probably more appropriate to think in terms of an organizational function for the teacher. This aims at the creation of an ordered, warm, non-threatening atmosphere with good working conditions. The teacher takes responsibility for careful and thoughtful control of a social structure in the classroom, which permits healthy interpersonal relations - both pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil - and for effective deployment of resources to sustain all pupils' interest. Ausubel et al (1978) discuss practical implications of increasing classroom motivation. Motivation is seen to be as much an effect as a cause of learning. It is thus not necessary to wait for motivation to develop before engaging a learner in activity. They stress the need to make objectives as explicit and specific as possible and to relate learning tasks to other kinds of knowledge and capabilities. Existing interests and motivations should be exploited but should not limit the scope of activity. Cognitive drive should be stimulated by arousing intellectual curiosity, using materials which attract attention and by so arranging lessons as to ensure ultimate

success in learning. This latter point is linked to the setting of tasks that are appropriate to each learner's ability level and involve learners in setting themselves realistic goals. Generously informative feedback must be provided on goal attainment, developmental changes and individual differences in motivational patterns must be kept under review and extrinsic and aversive motivation should be judiciously used.

Extrinsic motivation merits a word in passing, especially in an age of increased extrinsic reward for successful learning in the form of graded test certificates and similar forms of validation of success. Extrinsic motivation (working towards a goal or symbol of achievement not directly connected with the task in hand) is held to be distinctly inferior to intrinsic motivation (working towards an outcome directly linked to the process of learning whose attainment brings its own reward in terms of self-realization, skills, etc.). It must be acknowledged, however, that intrinsic motivation is, strictly speaking, linked to autonomous, voluntary activity which, as we have seen (2.5), may be far from the case in many classrooms. Deci (1975), a proponent of the virtues of intrinsic motivation, nonetheless acknowledges that if schools fail to inspire sufficient genuine interest in children, extrinsic reward may be the only viable gambit to sustain the process of education.

Bruner (1966) emphasizes children's intrinsic will to learn, supported by powerful motives such as curiosity which, cultivated by the process of education, becomes a sustained and active aspect of another identified motivational concept - the drive to achieve competence.

The third intrinsic motive to learn is identified as reciprocity:

> "It involves a deep human need to respond to others and to operate jointly with them toward an objective." (43)

If the preceding paragraphs might appear to represent an idealized prescription for the teacher, Bruner's views are a timely reminder of innate potential and orientation waiting to be tapped. Central to the teacher's motivational function are the planning, design and organization of instruction. To conclude this Chapter and build a bridge to the central theme of this investigation, I shall review this fundamental aspect of the promotion of learning.

2.6 Planning and managing instruction

The teacher is, by definition, a designer, manager and evaluator of instruction. Instruction may be defined (Gagné, 1975) as external events planned for the purpose of supporting learning. As a manager of instruction, the teacher plans, designs, selects and supervises events with an aim of activating learning processes. The promotion of learning is widely accepted as the central purpose of any education programme. To be effective, designed instruction must be based on an awareness of how human beings learn and must take into account the prerequisite learning conditions. Gagné and Briggs (1979) discuss principles of learning which are external to the learner - i.e. under the instructor's control. These include contiguity of stimulus and response, the key roles of repetition and practice (not favoured by modern learning theory, but still central to language learning whether at mother tongue or foreign language level) and reinforcement (another traditional concept now superseded by the notion of contingency - the

juxtaposition of an old, enjoyed and learned act with a new one to be learned). Every bit as important in the process of learning, however, are events internal to the learner, beginning with an aspect apparently neglected in older theory - what the learner brings to the learning situation. This will include factual information, intellectual skills - probably recalled from prior learning and experience - and learning strategies. The focus in learning theory has switched from the external to the internal events of learning in noticeable parallel with theories of motivation. Motivation and "self-concept" are seen as essential for successful learning, to such an extent that initial stages of a sequence of instruction are often concerned with the establishment and channelling of motivation (cf 2.5.1).

Gagné and Briggs' ideal scenario for learning is based on a "systems approach". This involves considerations such as needs analysis, determination of course outline and sequence, the setting of target objectives and the provision of "performance statements" aimed at showing the learner tangible outcomes to the learning event. In short, the approach is much more learner-centred and co-ordinated than has been the case in the past.

Gagné (1975) details the processes of learning: these are listed as -

(i)   motivation (linked to expectancy),

(ii)   apprehending (linked to arousal and attention),

(iii)   acquisition (the encoding of information),

(iv)   retention, recall (the ability to retrieve material
         learned),

(v)   generalization (the ability to transfer material
       across contexts),

(vi)   performance (the learner's response) and

(vii) feedback (the reinforcement of learning). (44)

It is no coincidence that Gagné's taxonomy of processes has a clear link with the continuum of learning identified in 1.3.2.4. The first five processes reflect a hierarchical view of learning from elemental motivation through quite mechanical encoding and storage stages to the more abstract realm of cognitive organization for effective autonomous use. It must be assumed that a series of learning experiences will be based on a process of continuous cyclical development ranging along the learning continuum. Learning may be said to have taken place when a "performance" (a response) is forthcoming - i.e., in terms of the definition of learning in 1.3.2.2, when some significant modification in behaviour has occurred. "Feedback" (reinforcement, which may be of a positive or negative nature) serves not only to consolidate and corroborate the learner's own perception of successful progress, but also to complete a circle by stimulating motivation to embark on another phase of the learning process. Having regard to previous comments on unprofitable dichotomising in teaching and learning, it is salutary to note that Gagné's "system" is essentially an elaboration and amplification in cognitivist terms of a basic Stimulus - Response - Reinforcement model of learning. Thus, what must be recognised as a sound basic theory which can be identified in the experience of any human being is subsumed into a broader theory. The process of learning is thereby given the cognitive dimension lacking in S - R theory, whilst the latter's ever-present role on the learning

continuum is acknowledged.

The nature and role of teaching materials becomes critical in a "systems approach". Whereas previously materials were designed and produced, often linked to a prescribed teaching method (see 2.4.1) for the teacher to select, a more learner-centred approach calls for teacher specification of materials to be produced. An important feature of subsequent discussion of teaching materials will be the extent to which they have moved in the latter direction.

Gagné lists five capabilities as the "outcomes of learning". These are intellectual skills (ranging from simple discriminations through concepts and rules to "higher order" rules), cognitive strategies (intellectual skills oriented to the learner's own environment), verbal information (the organization and transmission of accumulated knowledge), attitudes (linked with values) and motor skills (the executive routines of performance). Foreign language learning, unlike many subjects in the curriculum, makes substantial demands on the learner in all of these areas.

The design of instruction involves matching the events and processes of learning to the outcomes in a harmonious and integrated process. It begins with an analysis of the learning task - identifying the performance outcomes from the learner's point of view, classifying the task according to the varieties of learning capability involved and defining the performance objectives. This, Gagné and Briggs suggest, will involve sequencing instruction by working backwards from the target objective to establish the sequence of subordinate skills to be

learned.   Thus,   the   ability   to produce a consecutive oral   written

statement   in   a   foreign   language will have its roots   in   groups   of

ideas,   single ideas and the oral or written components of the simple,

single idea.   The   actual   events of instruction link   with   matters

already   discussed   (2.5.1)   beginning   with   gaining   the   learner's

attention,   informing the learner of the objective, stimulating recall

of prerequisite learning,   presenting the stimulus material, providing

guidance,   eliciting   performance,   providing   feedback,   assessing

performance and enhancing retention and transfer.   To aid this complex

and   exhaustive   process,   language teachers   characteristically   rely

heavily   on commercially-produced course materials.   It is because of

the crucial role that these materials have assumed,   coupled with   the

equally   crucial   role established for learner motivation that I   have

focused   this   investigation   on   the   motivational   function   of   the

'coursebook'.   This   will   be   analysed in   terms   of   psychological,

linguistic and learning theory.   These opening Chapters have aimed to

provide me with a sound evaluative base in those three areas.

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CHAPTER THREE : CONCERNING COURSEBOOKS

3.1 Introduction

Writing in general terms on school textbooks, Richaudeau (1980) identifies them as:

> "the most economic medium for instruction and the method of instruction which is by far the most widely used." (1)

The purchase of textbooks absorbs 85% of world budgets for educational equipment.

I can state from many years' experience as a teacher, and latterly as a teacher trainer and adviser, that the foreign language coursebook is perceived as central and indispensable to the teaching and learning process by teachers, pupils and parents. Probably the most common question asked by students and teachers is "Which course do you use/ recommend?" A coursebook is still almost universally the central feature of the most progressively 'communication-orientated' courses. A visit to any major gathering of language teachers such as the annual conference of the Joint Council of Language Associations gives an immediate indication of the scale of commercial involvement in the production and marketing of coursebooks. A leading publisher indicated to me (April, 1987), that his company's French course was now in use in over 50% of UK schools. This course is based on five substantial volumes, not to mention supporting audio and visual software and other resources. Recent developments and initiatives at all levels of secondary teaching - notably the "graded objectives" movement, GCSE and new departures for the 16-19 age group - have led

to a positive flood of new titles, including the first significant purpose-designed courses in German and Spanish for many years.

Against this apparently dynamic and healthy situation, however, must be set the view of many experienced practitioners that a coursebook is at best a resource or aid and at worst a positive intrusion into the teacher-learner relationship. This sentiment is echoed by teacher-trainers who constantly exhort their student teachers to step outside the confines of the coursebook, to adapt it freely to their situation and generally to mediate between book and learner to the greater benefit of the latter. The constant search for the 'best' coursebook which preoccupies many teachers could be said to be reminiscent of the "method concept" fallacy discussed in 2.4.1. Mackey (1965) polarizes the discussion further with his rather sombre assertion that:

> "It is significant, perhaps, that the first complaints about bad methods of teaching (Latin) appear after the invention of printing." (2)

Given the central role of motivation in effective language learning and the key function which may be ascribed to the coursebook in that process, the main aim of this inquiry may now be identified: I shall investigate and evaluate aspects of coursebooks in respect of their potential contribution to learner motivation. This investigation will involve a survey of the views of learners and teachers and the use of findings from my previous discussion of motivation and learning. This Chapter aims firstly to trace briefly the evolution of the form and status of the coursebook, to examine justifications of its role and to set up a precise instrument for evaluating coursebooks in terms of

motivation, theories of language and theories of learning.

3.2 Coursebooks: an historical perspective

Critical and analytical literature on coursebooks is sparse. A survey
of major British Foreign Language teaching journals from their
foundation reveals remarkably little discussion or comparative
evaluation of such a central component of the teaching-learning
process. New coursebooks are reviewed, sometimes critically, but
reviewers' opinions tend to reflect the prevailing consensus of
acceptability rather than take a genuinely objective view of the
coursebook in question. Thus a reviewer of Whitmarsh (1948) writes:

> "All teachers of French know and admire Mr Whitmarsh's
> excellent series of books . . . and the clarity with
> which the grammar is set forth . . . the introduction
> of translatorial exercises in a book intended for second-
> year pupils . . . (some) will welcome this feature." (3)

The reviewer of Tomlinson (1959) writes:

> "It is a pleasure to be able to say that this is an
> excellent book . . . later on there are some really
> good proses." (4)

Whilst conceding that Hadley and Howson's (1967) course clearly
contained some of the pitfalls of audiolingualism (unimaginative,
repetitive, decontextualised drills, for example), the reviewer
nonetheless asserts that:

> "There is much to commend in this course." (5)

More recently (1982), Buckby's Action! series is praised as:

> "attractive and useful communication-based courses,
> with realistic targets which will give both teacher
> and pupil a sense of achievement." (6)

Returning to Mackey's observation (3.1), the basis of the criticism of early printed materials was the familiar antipathy between 'grammar' (until fairly recently prescriptive rather than descriptive and whose study was perceived as an educational activity and objective in its own right) and language use. Thus di Marinis (1532) published a brief grammar designed to produce

> "Latinists not grammarians." (7)

It does seem fair to suggest that whilst the ability permanently to record and classify the 'rules' of language gave greater stability to the various vernaculars that had evolved from (for instance) Latin, it also promoted the totemistic attitude to 'the grammar'. The study of grammar as an academic exercise became coterminous with the study of 'the language'. The various works of Comenius laid many foundations for modern pedagogy by contextualisation, extensive repetition and practice, inductive acquisition of grammar and teaching through pictures. For many years, however, foreign language teaching in Europe was dominated by the methods of Meidinger (1783), who advocated translation into the target language through the application of rules of grammar and, subsequently, Plötz (1865), whose method consisted of the presentation of rules and paradigms and sentences for translation into and from the target language. Plötz exercised a particularly strong influence on the European language-teaching scene and, despite the inroads of the Reform movement and "Direct Method" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Foundations of the

"grammar-translation" approach to language teaching were solidly built. The role of the coursebook in the grammar-translation approach was paramount. Though not necessarily explicitly stated, the overall aims of the approach were:

(i) to promote a form of mental training derived from the intellectual discipline of grammar-based study;

(ii) to give access to the literature of the target language in the original.

The main source of input was text, usually of a quasi-literary nature, or possibly adapted from the works of a significant author (see figures 1 and 2). Texts of this nature were characteristically abstruse as well as being of little obvious interest to the learning population. They could be heavily contrived to exemplify particular structures or grammatical rules currently under scrutiny (figure 3). Initially, these "textbooks" were separate from the explanatory grammar, providing a collection of texts to serve as a basis for learning. The grammar book was often a free-standing volume from which self-tuition was claimed to be possible. Discussing early Spanish grammars, Jump (1961) cites a typical example by McHenry (1812), the approach to which encapsulated as follows:

"The student was expected to read the rules and examples
again and again until they were firmly fixed in his memory,
as the author gives no exercises for practice." (8)

Subsequently, grammar books incorporated reading passages (to obviate the need for two books) and exercises (figure 4). Thus was established the classic formula for the coursebook which, with detail

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

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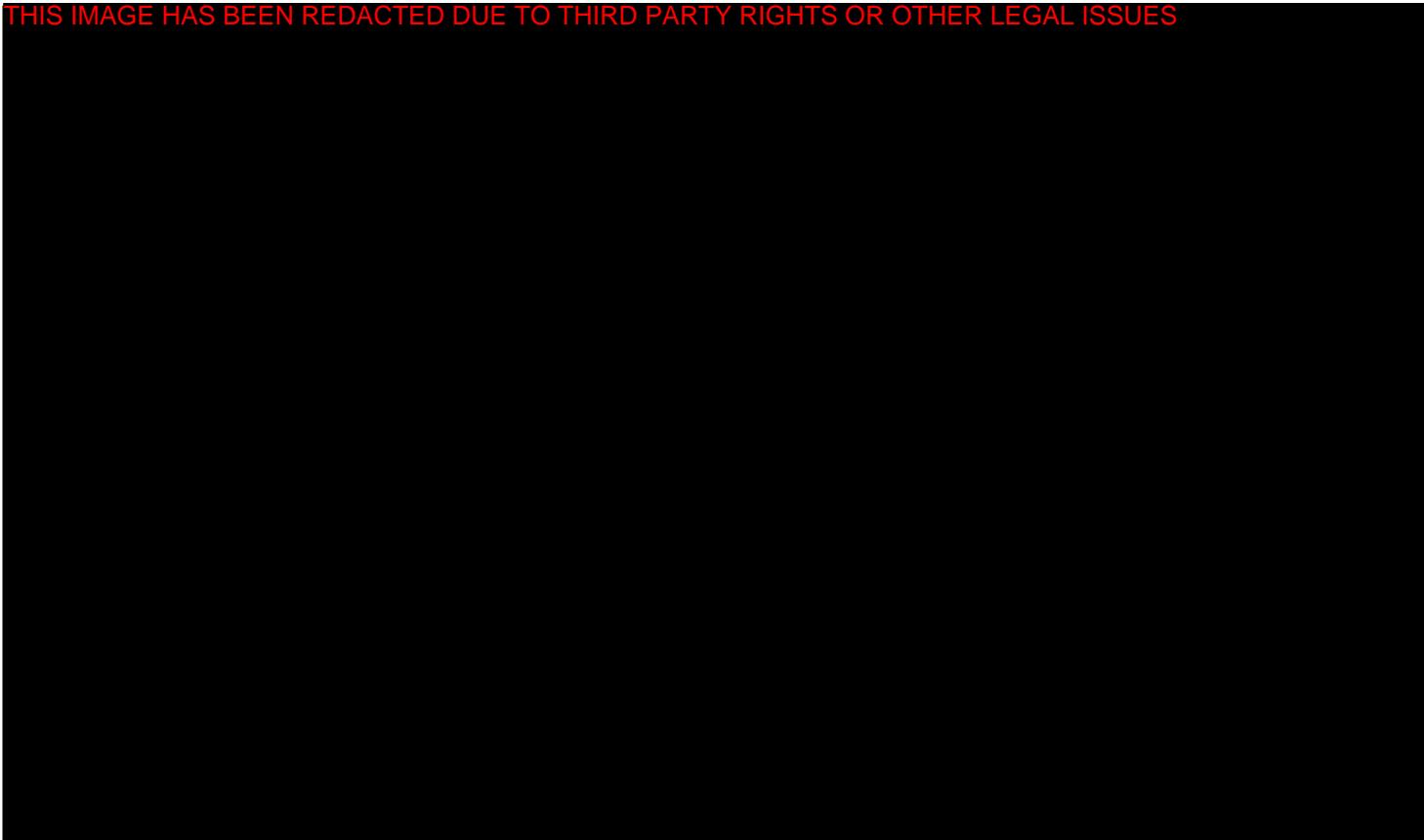
Figure 3:

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Figure 4:

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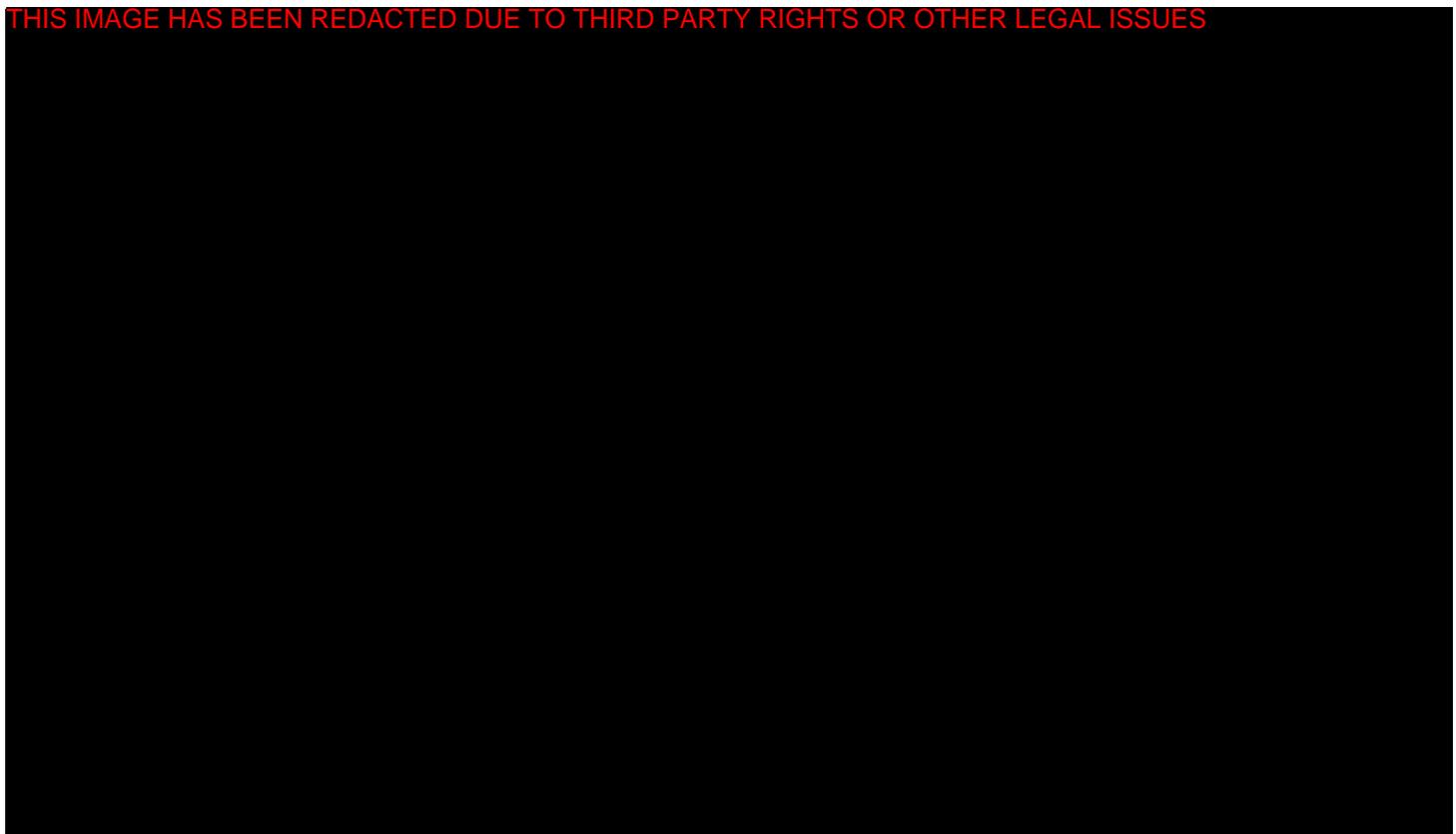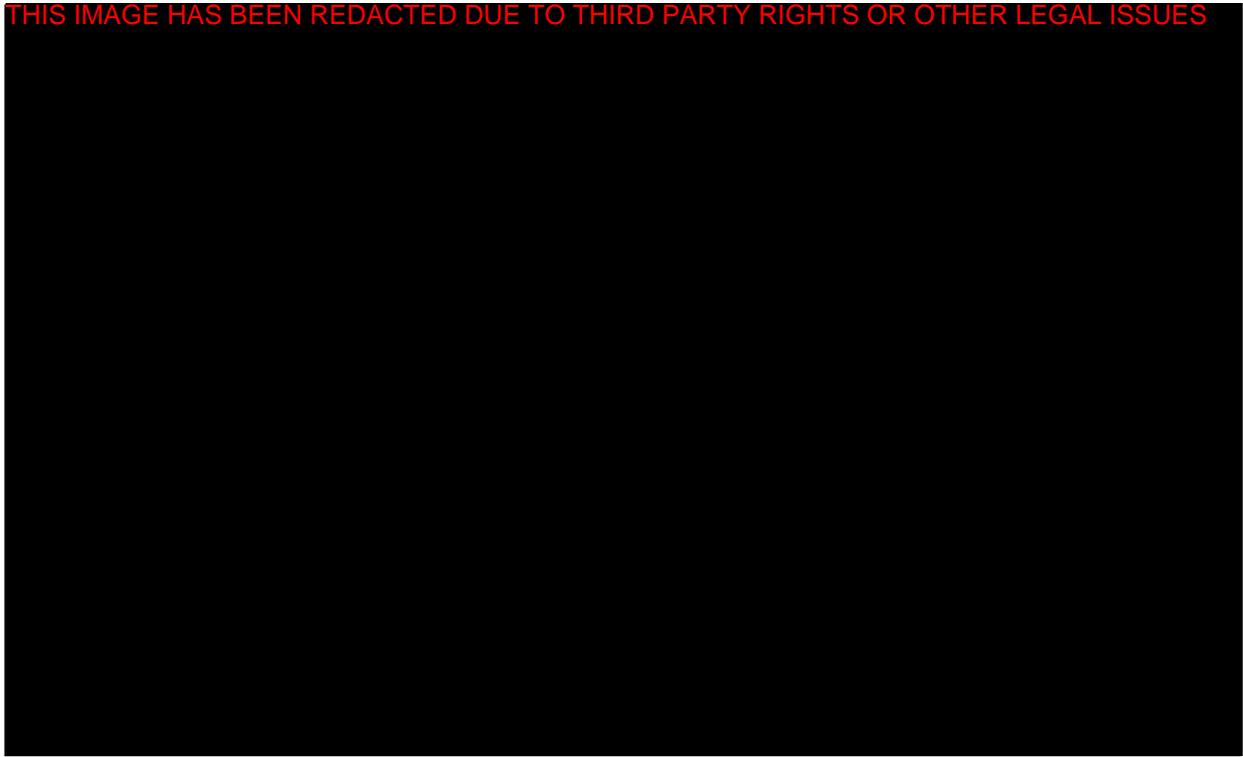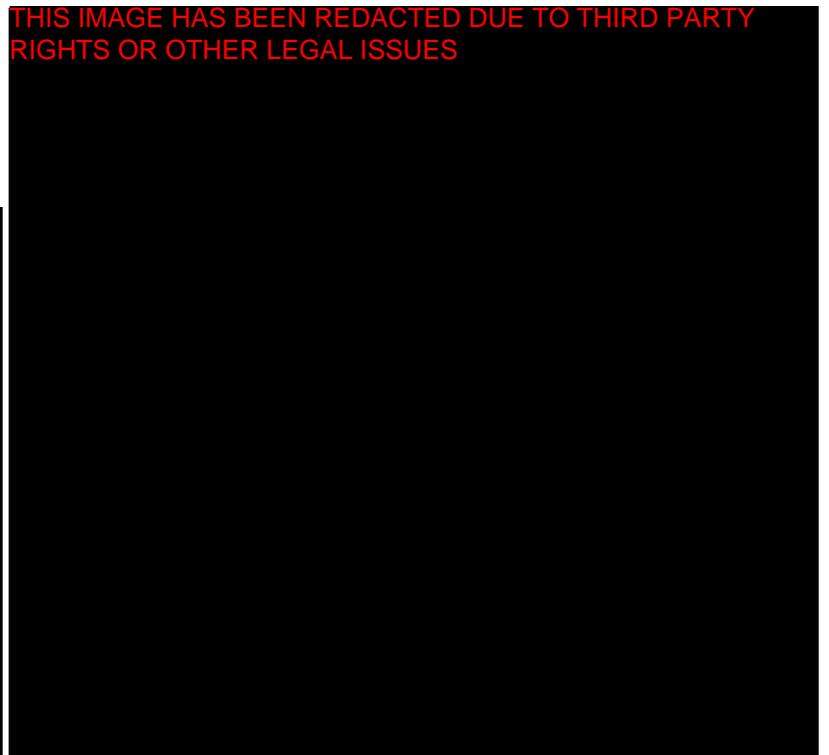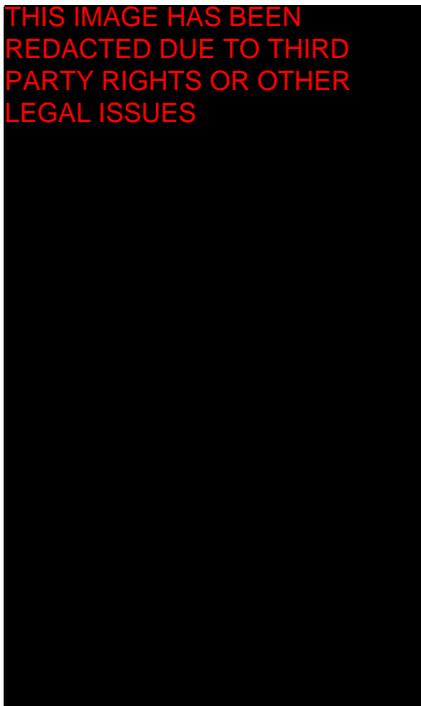
variations of order, would run:

(i)   elaborate explanation and exemplification of the
         point(s) of grammar to be covered in a particular
         chapter/unit;

(ii)   a text, contrived to illustrate the above in (written)
         use;

(iii)   a vocabulary to be learned;

(iv)   a series of exercises on discrete grammatical points
         (including passages for translation into the foreign
         language) intended to test the effectiveness of the
         learning of (i) and (ii).

Typical examples of this layout and structure are shown in figures 5
and 6. It was presumably with the structure and economics of the
school year in mind that French courses in particular would tend to be
split into five parts - one to be covered per year of the 11-16
secondary course (cf. the modern _Tricolore_ and _Action!_).

It might be reasonable to expect that the Direct Method - based
essentially on the spoken language with the sentence as the basic unit
of speech - would seriously alter the nature and function of the
coursebook. Direct Method coursebooks did introduce modern prose
texts which presented the daily life and culture of the target
language community, but the success (or not) of the Direct Method was
inextricably linked to the skill, energy and commitment of the
teacher. The need for "measurable standards of accuracy" (Mackey) led
to the slide into the so-called "compromise method" of the 1920s, 30s
and onwards, in which vocabulary and grammar drills were incorporated,

Figure 5

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Extract from Rivers, J. (1949): A New German Course, Part 1.
Macmillan.

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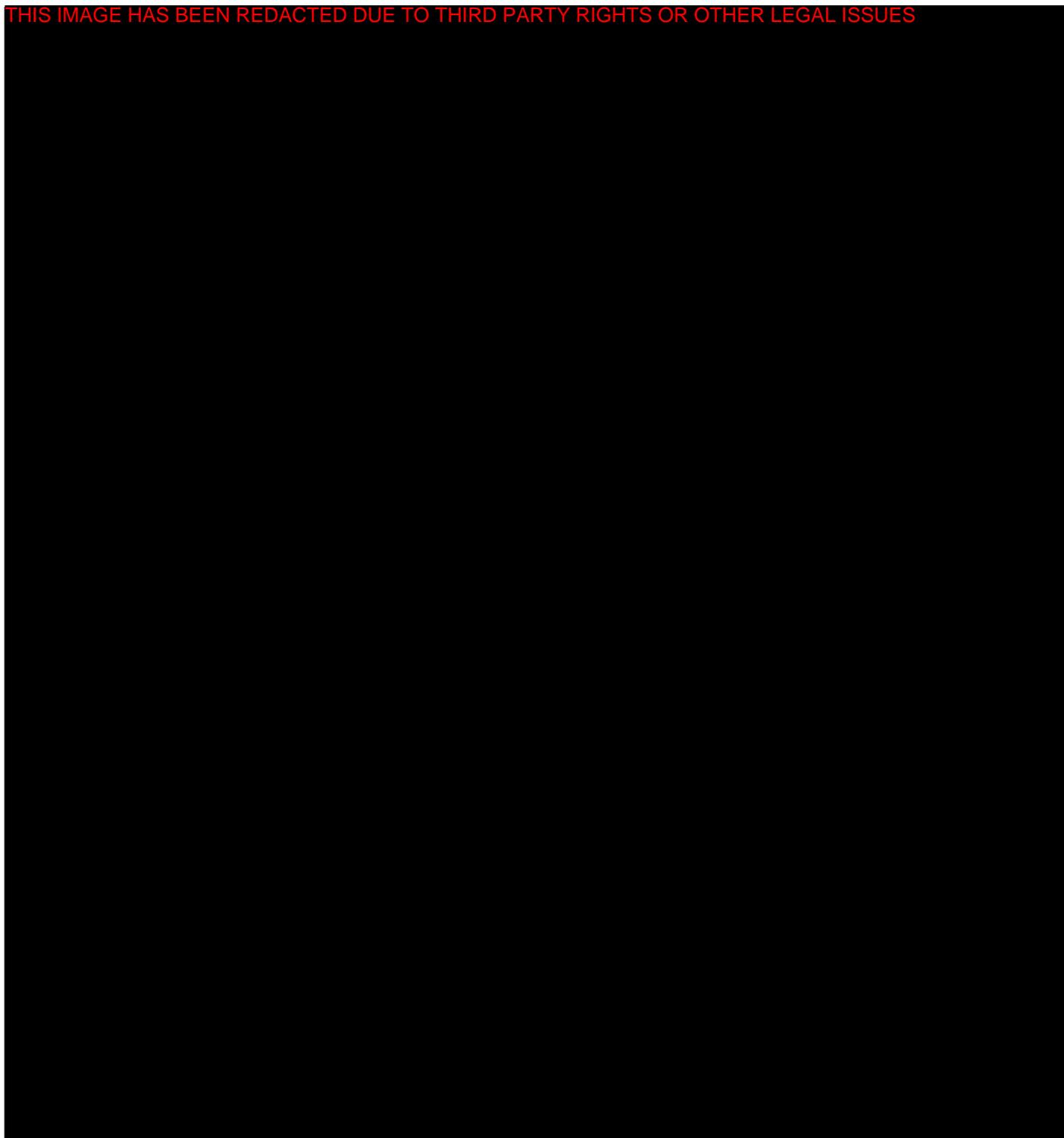
together with translation passages. Token respect was paid to Direct Method principles by exercises designed to be carried out in the foreign language which consisted of (for example) changing singular forms to plural and replacing nouns by pronouns. Their validity was, however, sharply and justifiably criticized by Gilbert (1961):

> "They are often very fine 'jig-saw puzzles' and even tickle the intellectual palate of the 'A' forms, but for other children they spell confusion and inadequate learning, and they certainly do not avoid translation." (9)

Determined and enthusiastic teachers continued to strive to keep the language alive in the classroom, but the eventual reassertion of "grammar-translation" as the most widely-used method was powerfully reinforced by the requirements of public examinations. These were based on translation and written production, with a derisory few per cent of marks allocated to oral skills. This situation created a large 'backwash' effect on classroom practice, with the study of grammar and learning of paradigms and vocabulary as the order of the day and accurate written production with no particular regard to context or culture as the main aim. Not surprisingly, only Gilbert's "A forms" could really cope with the convoluted intellectual demands of this approach, with the result that barely a quarter of the school population were learning a foreign language in the early 1960s. The 'successful' products of the process may with some justification be considered as victors in a war of attrition rather than the possessors of communication skills to broaden and enrich their adult lives. Once again, the coursebook reigned supreme and teachers would frequently adhere slavishly to the principle of 'doing' the required volume-a-year leading to the 16+ examination.

Possibly the most serious challenge to the primacy of the coursebook came with the so-called "1960s revolution" in language teaching. This was based initially on the American-inspired audiolingual method and subsequently on its audiovisual variant (cf 2.4.1). These methods reasserted the Direct Method preoccupation with the primacy of spoken language and courses such as the BBC French for Beginners (1964) had no pupil's book. Even audio-visualism bowed to the seemingly endemic need for compromise, however, and the (in its time) popular and widely-used Longman's Audio-Visual French had tapes with dialogues and drills, but also a series of substantial coursebooks. These contained transcripts of the tapes, grammatical presentations, reading texts, drills and exercises (together with a vocabulary). It was thus possible to teach without the tapes (as many financially hard-pressed or simply ill-equipped departments did) and, with written production continuing to be the main objectives of language teaching, there was plenty of material in the Longman series for written exploitation.

Language teachers were, in fact, hit by two revolutionary waves in the 1960s and early 1970s. The first, detailed previously, was methodological. The second, following hard on its heels, was socio-educational. This was the widespread move to stop educational selection testing at 11+ and to introduce comprehensive schools on a strongly egalitarian platform. From language teachers' point of view, the principal effects of this process of reform of the secondary system were the considerable enlargement of the language-learning clientele and the introduction of wide or mixed-ability teaching groups. The problems these posed for language teachers are well documented, notably in the HMI report (1977) (see 2.4.1).

Nevertheless, while "mixed-ability" retained the quality of a 'bandwagon', publishers were ready to respond to perceived needs for course materials. Courses designed for slow learners such as Échanges (1979) drastically cut the amount of printed material, while the traditional coursebook mould was temporarily broken by the ILEA Éclair "multi-media" course, designed specifically for wide-ability groups. The course used flashcards, slides, visual display material, tapes, video or film and, for the relatively small amount of written word incorporated, an innovation: the disposable workbook. This could be coloured and personalized in other ways by its owner. The aim of Éclair was clearly to appeal to a broad spectrum of learners by presenting foreign language learning as a "fun" activity, in fulfilment of which aim it re-cast the "exercise" or "drill" as a "game". The shortcomings of the course - its lack of substance and coherence - led to many departments (of which my own was, I suspect, a typical example) initially trying to amplify it and impose some sort of organization on its rather random approach and, subsequently, abandoning it. This was partly because of the compounding cost of keeping hundreds of learners supplied with disposable workbooks (which have since been abandoned in favour of textbook-style compilations of the learning material) and partly because of the appearance in the early 1980s of a new generation of coursebooks.

The 1977 HMI document had pointed to the need for reappraisal and redefinition of goals for the broader-ability learning population. These should be expressed in tangible terms with the emphasis on feasibility. This prescription mirrored significantly those developments in linguistics which led to the evolution of the

"communicative approach" (2.4.1). Another important influence on the new generation of coursebooks was the Graded Objectives movement of the late 1970s, which echoed the sentiments of the HMI document in setting out clearly-defined goals for study with the incentive to regular, positive assessment, usually linked to some form of achievement certificate. Language learning was firmly linked to practical communication - social contacts and interchange, transactions and the exchange of information. The need for authentic examples of the target language to enable fulfilment of these learning objectives became paramount and the appearance of coursebooks changed significantly. The changing face of the coursebook can, in fact, be charted principally through the number and quality of illustrations and 'realia' incorporated. Apart from Comenius' remarkable <u>Orbis Pictus</u> (1658), coursebooks tended to be entirely verbal. When illustrations were introduced, they took the form of line drawings of variable artistic quality, apparently designed to punctuate texts or provide a little light relief rather than to fulfil any particular pedagogic function. They might occasionally be said to illuminate a text. The audio-visual movement brought about significant upgrading of the value and function (though not necessarily the quality) of visual elements, as these were intended to provide the meaningful context for language which had been lacking in audio-lingual approaches. The attempt to cater for a clientèle of much wider ability led to more extensive use of illustration, often of a 'strip cartoon' variety. The present position no doubt owes a good deal to improved technology in printing as the modern coursebook is almost universally characterized by:

-       quantities of photographs (black and white) of people,

        places and things associated with the target language

        and culture;

-       authentic or quasi-authentic reprints or reproductions

        of newspaper or magazine items, advertisements, timetables,

        brochures, etc.;

-       strip cartoons and other line-drawn illustrations;

-       more visually striking presentations of linguistic elements

        through the use of boxes, shading and page layout.

This investigation will be principally concerned with coursebooks of

this latter variety.

3.3   Some 'pros and cons' of coursebooks

"A course is only excellent in the eyes of the writer and
even for him its excellence diminishes as time passes.
The perfect course book has still to be written."
(Hornsey, 1976)   (10)

If publishers' literature were to be believed, every new volume that

appears <u>is</u> that perfect coursebook.   (Just as every 'new' method that

has arrived on the scene has been hailed by its protagonists as the

answer to all our problems).   Without pre-empting subsequent

discussion of possible ways forward for coursebooks, it is appropriate

in this Chapter to examine some of the justifications for their

central position in the teaching-learning process.

Perhaps as a symptom of their abandonment of the vain search for the

ultimate method, a significant number of teachers have adopted a more

eclectic, pragmatic approach to teaching, using a variety of

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coursebooks in any one year to provide a rich and varied exposure to the target language. It is clearly felt that the needs of a particular group of learners are best interpreted on the spot by the teacher and that materials are best organized and presented with those perceived needs in mind. Clearer definition of teaching and learning objectives has had the effect of freeing teachers from over-dependence on a coursebook and has led to greater inventiveness and resourcefulness in the selection and adaptation of authentic materials, the compilation of graded 'worksheets' and the use of other media such as radio, film, video, slides and other visuals, tapes and even artefacts. Some teachers' (or, more often, some departments') compilations of 'original' materials have been developed to the extent of supplanting a commercially-produced course. 'Grass-roots' - initiated graded objectives schemes in many LEAs have also contributed significantly to a liberalization of attitudes to course materials.

These and other factors are discussed by O'Neill (1982). Having posed the question "Why use textbooks?", he identifies the "vogue" for "home-produced" materials as an important aspect of the growing focus on the learner and the learner's needs. The shortcomings of "ready-made" materials (i.e. mainly coursebooks) are that they predict the learners' learning process and that they promote over-involvement of the teacher and consequent under-involvement of the learner. In O'Neill's view, teaching materials should be designed <u>after</u> contact with a teaching group and analysis of its needs. However, he promptly concedes that:

"Situations in which this is possible are uncommon."

He then proceeds to a justification of the use of textbooks. There is an inherent "suitability" in commercially-produced materials. Although they may not be designed with specific learners in mind, they respond to a "common core of need" by providing a

"grammatical and functional framework in which we could work."

There is, furthermore, an immense variety of textbooks to draw upon. Another advantage of textbooks is that their "portable" nature makes it possible for learners who miss lessons to catch up and allows learners to use their own resources by preparing in advance, revising and consolidating. A significant factor is appearance and quality of presentation. "Home-made" materials soon acquire a careworn look and (as many who have committed themselves to this approach would testify) pose considerable storage problems. Even with the vastly improved technology of recent years, reprographics are expensive. In short, books are good value for money, portable and easier to use than any other medium.

O'Neill does not let the argument rest there, however. As they stand, textbooks have the power to shackle teachers as well as learners. There is a need for choice and variety of teaching style, learning opportunity and in the style and approach of materials available. This implies greater flexibility in textbook design to make possible improvisation and adaptation by teacher and learner. Textbooks must promote "creative interaction". In summary:

"Textbooks can at best provide only a base or a core of materials. They are the jumping-off point for teacher and class." (11)

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Notwithstanding the weight of O'Neill's opinions as to the advantages of coursebooks, many teachers have committed themselves to the more original materials production, often to the exclusion of commercial products. Their stance is, in general, based on discontent or even disillusionment with:

- the implicit or explicit view of the language-learning process presented by the coursebook writer: many 'new' books that appear under the guise of being 'communicative' are in fact based on a prescriptively linear 'structural' view of the language which may be best characterized by its excessive delay in introducing past and future tenses, restricting learners for far too long to the world of the 'here and now';

- a failure to meet learners' emotional and cognitive needs by not producing material which they can relate to for its intrinsic interest and not imparting a sense of achievement: a hazard of some 'modern' courses is that they focus excessively on what is (was) 'fashionable' in their year of publication: to the young there is nothing more unacceptable than that which has just gone out of fashion: publishers' time-scales also tend to promote delay, so that 'realia' such as price lists can be two years out-of-date from their incorporation into the design of the course to its publication; concerning achievement, the fashion for teaching on a unit/topic basis seems to me to work against a coherent sense of growing competence in the learner's mind: there is if

anything more of a notion of an endless series of discrete
hoops to be jumped through;

- the excessively rigid programming of some coursebooks,
  which forces teachers to use (for example) dense,
  synthetic texts, which presupposes rote learning of
  vocabulary, rules and paradigms and in which 'practice'
  exercises and drills assume the character of tests;

- the dense and confusing layout which (ironically)
  characterizes some supposedly more 'progressive' course-
  books: one wonders if the daunting impression on learners
  created by tightly-packed pages, often in small type, has
  been seriously considered.

On the other hand, I am certain that a substantial majority of
teachers do still depend on the coursebook, their principal reasons
being:

- that the grading and selection of language and tasks
  essential to effective learning of a foreign language
  has been done concisely and economically;

- that the time-consuming business of collection,
  selection and processing of texts and authentic materials
  has been carried out, usually to a higher standard than is
  possible with home-produced equivalents;

- that the coursebook represents a solid base of knowledge
  and information which may be effectively and competently
  used by the inexperienced or those whose own linguistic
  skills may lack depth;

-     that a professionally-produced course geared to a notional

      learning population can be reasonably guaranteed to

      prepare learners for public examinations and other key

      outcomes of learning.

Teachers' views of coursebooks will be returned to in more depth in a
later Chapter.

To summarize, it seems that the "central, indispensable" position of
the coursebook identified previously is undergoing some reappraisal
and even a degree of healthy erosion. Perhaps the real question mark
in the debate as to the coursebook's value hangs over its format.

Faced with a greater diversity of demand from teachers and learners,
publishers seem still to react as they always have done - by producing
homogeneous, bound volumes, each a product of its time, with a
tendency to date as soon as it hits the shelves. Schools are forced
to invest vast capital sums (in 1987, it would cost an average-sized
secondary school over £2,000 to re-equip with a new course) and are
consequently tied to their choice for a number of years. The time
seems ripe for a reassessment of the value of traditional practice,
spurred perhaps by what is happening at 'grass-roots' level. The
flexibility O'Neill advocates is being generated by many practitioners
through their adaptation and exploitation of authentic resources.
Publishers need to look harder at these initiatives and to explore the
possibilities of translating them into a commercial context by
abandoning the 'once and for all' concept of investment in a
coursebook in favour of a rolling programme of good-quality, low-cost
input that would stand a good chance of keeping the teaching and

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learning of languages dynamic and buoyant.

3.4 Coursebook evaluation: motivation and learning

One of my major concerns in this investigation has been to move
towards the establishment of a base for evaluating coursebooks. This
could, of course, be done from a number of standpoints. Hornsey
(1976) observes that

> "A coursebook writer has to serve three masters: the
> learner, the teacher, the language." (12)

There is no doubt that more widespread study of the linguistic content
and merits of coursebooks (such as that undertaken on a selection of
German courses by Campbell in 1976) would contribute significantly to
the quality and authenticity of the language and culture represented
in them. It would be equally interesting to investigate the
assumptions coursebook writers make about teacher style, competence
and motivation. Such investigations would assume greater significance
at a time when, through GCSE, there is a national consensus of aims,
objectives and content in the secondary education sector. The focus
of this investigation is, however, on the learner - specifically on
learner motivation, in which vital area a clear role must be ascribed
to the coursebook, and on the learning process itself. The coursebook
represents a programme of instruction designed to promote learning by
offering, in accordance with the generally accepted definition of
learning, experience or input designed to modify behaviour or
cognition. The evaluation instrument I shall now draw up will attempt
to identify key areas in the fields of motivation and learning and
will be presented as a series of questions which might be asked in a

process of assessment or evaluation of a coursebook.

3.4.1 Motivational aspects

Analogous with the discussion of the teacher's motivational functions (2.5.1), four aspects may be identified which will be of particular significance in evaluating the motivational qualities of a coursebook: these are arousal, expectancy, incentive and organization. The four aspects cannot be rigidly separated - previous discussion highlighted ways in which they are interdependent - but questions will be grouped in the above order to give some developmental line to the evaluation system.

The following will be clearly linked to arousal:

1. Is the coursebook attractively presented with, for instance, an illustrated colour cover, colour photographs of interesting or pleasing images and a variety of colour used to highlight tasks or aspects of language presentation such as gender, number tense and other syntactical features?

2. Has the book effectively identified areas of potential interest to the target learner group - i.e. does it deal with themes, topics and situations on learners' intellectual and emotional levels which they can relate to their own 'real life' interests?

3. Is there sufficient variety in the layout to avoid a sense of routine setting in too early?

4. Does the layout invite independent browsing and

stimulate questions or conversation?

5. Bearing in mind the detrimental effect of excessive arousal, do the layout and content permit easy access to a broad span of learners or are pages excessively 'busy', with realia, activities, cartoons or other illustrations and language presentations jostling for the learner's attention? (Particularly questionable here are concentrations of quantities of small black and white photographs).

Questions linked to expectancy:

6. Following 2. above, is coursebook content linked to the real needs of learners - do they, for instance, learn to produce or understand language linked to things that matter to them?

7. Can learners discern a progression in, or accumulation of, their skills and competences - i.e. is there a tangible 'pay-off' to working with the coursebook? Are the objectives and outcomes of learning identified?

8. Are the implied objectives or stated outcomes sufficiently appropriate to be perceived as valuable by learners?

9. Is expectancy fostered by continuity - such as an ongoing 'serial' storyline or theme to capture and sustain interest over a necessarily long learning period?

10. As a corollary to the above, is the course excessively concerned with exploiting discrete topics and situations which may be seen to militate against a positive overall

sense of achievement for the learner?

The fundamental area of incentive raises such questions as:

11. Does the material invite the personal involvement of the
     learner - is his own experience drawn in and perceived to
     be a valuable contribution to the learning taking place?
     This would include the provision of pair and group tasks
     or other "social" learning activities.

12. Is successful learning made feasible by, for instance,
     exercises which focus on what the learner can do, rather
     than test what she perhaps cannot do?

13. Are differentiated objectives built into the course so
     that a wide spectrum of learners may experience success
     based on positive achievement at a variety of levels?

14. Does the course encourage autonomous use and learning by,
     for example, providing tasks or features that can be
     tackled outside the teacher's jurisdiction, that offer
     possibilities for generative use or imaginative extension
     of input or that draw attention to language-learning
     possibilities outside its covers?

15. Does the course feature tasks which promote problem-
     solving or 'information-gap' activities or which
     stimulate low-key competitiveness?

16. Is input from the course sufficiently meaningful as to
     provide a perceptible expansion of learners' experience?

17. Can the content be perceived as relevant to the requirements
     of, for example, graded tests and public examinations?

18. In broad terms, does the material foster and capitalize

    on a desire to learn or does it tend merely to entertain?

Learning is linked to a basic urge to make sense of the environment, hence the following organizational questions arise:

19. Is the book organized into manageable-length units which

    learners may perceive as feasible targets?

20. Is its presentation systematic - for instance, are themes

    or situations introduced with some explanation or

    justification of their place in the scheme of the book?

21. Is the course's input sympathetic to stated outcomes -

    does it, for instance, provide the linguistic tools for

    expression, or are there conceptual gaps to be bridged?

22. Does the course deal even-handedly with the four basic

    language skills and, more significantly, does it provide

    mixed-skill activities?

23. Does the course provide revision and consolidation units,

    synopses and a basis for "self-help" or self-assessment?

3.4.2 Aspects related to learning

Moving more specifically into the realm of learning theory, the following seem to be salient issues:

1. At a quite basic 'gestalt' level, are the format and

    visual layout of the book balanced and orderly?

    (cf 1. and 5. above).

2.   As an extension of the above question, is care taken
     with the presentation of positive images with a broad
     cultural base, avoiding damaging or trivialising stereo-
     types?

3.   Is effective learning promoted by the provision of
     meaningful contexts, explicit objectives, clear
     explanations, continuity and activities with a recognisable
     point?

4.   Do illustrations have a clearly-defined function with which
     the learner may perceive them to be consistent - teaching,
     comprehension, punctuation, light relief?

5.   Are positive reinforcement and feedback provided in the
     coursebook itself or are they left to the discretion of
     the teacher?

6.   Is the material set in social and cultural contexts the
     learners can relate to?

7.   Does the writer appear to acknowledge some known aspects
     of how learners learn? - is there, for example, a clear
     hierarchy of strategies which acknowledges progression
     by increasing the need for drawing inferences, hypothesis-
     making and abstraction?

8.   Does the presentation of material exploit existing
     cognitive structure and knowledge by stimulating
     categorization, assimilation, accommodation and
     subsumption?

9.   Are social dimensions to learning exploited?
     (cf 11. above).

10. Are cognitive strategies supported by cues and 'advance organizers' such as appropriate and meaningful illustrations and authentic materials, non-verbal symbols to cue (for example) the use of supporting resources such as tapes and, an area of some debate in recent times, an acceptable balance of mother tongue and target language?

11. To avoid damaging or even terminal situations like "learned helplessness" and "leaving the field", does the coursebook avoid the following pitfalls?

    - unclear explanations involving jargon or metalanguage ('gerundive', 'modal auxiliary', 'indefinite pronoun', etc.)

    - obscure or confusing rubrics or tasks whose outcomes cannot be realized without further information that is not given

    - excessively demanding schedules of learning (especially vocabulary items) or practice (tasks that cannot be completed in the equivalent of one phase of a typical lesson - say fifteen minutes)

    - as mentioned previously, confusion of teaching/ practice drills with tests, which should themselves be designed to enable learners to show what they can do

    - excessively long units, which become effectively inaccessible goals to many learners.

3.4.3 Conclusion

A final broad question which must be addressed: Is the course book apparently conceived as an aid, resource or support to the teacher-learner partnership, or does it assume the role of an all-embracing taskmaster?   Books which appear to exclude effective mediation by the teacher or which fail to stimulate the learner to look at the cultural and linguistic worlds beyond their covers must surely be viewed with the same scepticism as must now be reserved for the concept of the 'all things to all learners' method.   Just as methods must now be judged pragmatically in relation to the needs of a particular group of learners, coursebooks must be evaluated and selected with the needs and capabilities of a particular group in mind.   Hornsey suggests that a coursebook should present teachers with:

> "a book which is a sensible guide to the ground to be covered,
> which contains a large proportion of usable material, but
> which is not so rigidly programmed that they cannot choose
> to take or leave as they please." (13)

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CHAPTER FOUR : COURSEBOOKS: SOME LEARNERS' VIEWS

4.1 Introduction

Some years ago, Hana Raz wrote a paper on learner motivation entitled simply and poignantly "Ask your pupils!" In an investigation such as this, some substantial attempt to canvass the views of learners in secondary schools on the coursebooks which provide the staple diet of their foreign language learning is indispensable.

A survey of school pupils can be approached in a wide variety of ways, from the large-scale national operations carried out in depth and over a long period of time exemplified by research into the Primary French Project of the 1960s and early 70s to a 'straw poll' in a small group of classes or even with an individual group of learners. For the purpose of this investigation, twenty-two groups were identified in twenty schools. Because of the relatively unusual nature of secondary education provision in my local authority area (the county of Kent), it was possible to identify a variety of different types of school – grammar (selective), comprehensive, secondary (non-selective) and one independent school. The common factor that I sought in the groups surveyed was that they should recently have begun work on one of the 'new style' modern language coursebooks referred to in Chapter 3. In all, 503 replies to the survey were received from pupils. A separate survey of teachers' views will be reported in Chapter 5.

4.2 Background to the survey

The survey took the form of a three-page questionnaire designed to be

readily comprehensible to a wide ability range of learners of about third or fourth-year secondary school age. The questionnaire was also designed to be completed in a relatively short time - fifteen minutes was suggested to the teachers of participating groups. Most of the questions involved simple choices of opinion or judgement presented on the familiar 'semantic differential' scale, and expressed by ticking boxes, but the last two questions invited original comment (and also the possibility of issues being raised which were not covered in the main body of the questionnaire). Because of the age group and general maturational level of the learners surveyed, questions were designed to elicit opinions based on concrete experience or impression rather than abstract speculation. The questionnaire aimed to survey learners' views on their particular coursebook from the standpoints of:

(i)   its capacity to arouse their interest;

(ii)   the perceived value in day-to-day use of various
        component features of the course and supporting
        resources;

(iii)   views of its perceived contribution to their personal
        and linguistic development and general motivation for
        foreign language study.

4.3 Discussion of the questionnaire

Before proceeding to an analysis of the results of the survey, it is appropriate to discuss the questionnaire itself to give an account of the rationale behind the questions asked.

Section 1: "First/early impressions"

All that is known from psychology and learning theory points to the key role of arousal of consciousness, curiosity and interest prior to effective learning taking place. The first question in the survey accordingly dealt with the fundamental issue of whether the coursebook looked interesting or not:

> 1. Did you find the course looked interesting [ ]
>
> not interesting [ ]

Motivation is equally linked to expectancy and incentive (Chapter 2), hence questions two and three which dealt with learners' expectations of an enjoyable or boring experience and with the possible generation of feelings of anticipation and associated enthusiasm for language lessons:

> 2. Did you feel that your learning with this course might be enjoyable [ ]   boring [ ]
>
> 3. Did you look forward to lessons   more [ ]   less [ ]

Respondents were offered a straight choice of answer partly because the issues as presented were quite clear cut and partly to avoid mystifying them or putting them off the questionnaire with a more complex choice.

Section 2: "Using the course"

The complex and comprehensive nature of the "modern" foreign language coursebook has already been discussed (Chapter 3). This section of the questionnaire was quite long (ten questions), but it was felt that

all component elements of the coursebook (and some key supporting resources) should come under scrutiny. Question 1 attempted to gauge views of the value of illustrations as a contribution to the learning process:

1. Did you find the photos and drawings

[ ] very helpful   [ ] sometimes helpful [ ] off-putting

while question 2 concerned itself with "texts":

2. Did you find the texts in the foreign language

[ ] very interesting [ ] sometimes interesting [ ] boring

("texts" are interpreted as any organized input for teaching/learning purposes).

Mindful of the value learning theory places on assimilation and subsumption (Chapter 2), sensible, pragmatic use of the mother tongue must be acknowledged to have a place in the foreign language learning process. Questions 3 and 4 addressed the at times controversial question of mother tongue (English) explanations:

3. Did you find the English explanations

[ ] Too much [ ] About right [ ] Not enough

4. Did you understand them

[ ] Mostly [ ] Sometimes [ ] Hardly ever

In similar vein, the role of summaries of grammar had to be considered:

5. Were summaries of grammar helpful

[ ] Mostly [ ] Sometimes [ ] Hardly ever

as did the vital area of organized drill and practice of new language:

6. Exercises and practice work, were they

[ ] Very interesting [ ] Sometimes interesting [ ] Boring

and the equally vital area of revision and consolidation:

7. Did the course go back over previous units

[ ] Often [ ] Sometimes [ ] Hardly ever

Although detailed consideration of the role of supporting resources (tapes, film strips, slides and flashcards) is beyond the scope of this investigation, the integral part they play in the overall makeup of the modern language course justified questions:

8. Tapes: did you find them

[ ] Very useful [ ] Fairly useful [ ] Boring

9. Filmstrips/Slides: did you find them

[ ] Very useful [ ] Fairly useful [ ] Boring

10. Flashcards: did you find them

[ ] Very useful [ ] Fairly useful [ ] Boring

Responses in this section were based on a three-phase scale designed to identify clear positive and negative views with a neutral middle response.

Section 3: "Final impressions"

This section aimed to focus directly on the learner and his personal views of some of the outcomes of using the coursebook. The first

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group of three questions focused on the input provided by the course in three areas: first, language with a perceived value for practical communication in situations the learner could identify with:

1. Did the course teach you language you can use in real situations

   [ ] A lot [ ] A fair amount [ ] Not much

second,the important socio-cultural area (mindful especially of Gardner and Lambert's "integrative motivation" as a touchstone for more effective learning):

2. Did the course teach you about French/German people and how they live

   [ ] A lot [ ] A fair amount [ ] Not much

third, the more specifically linguistic area (the assumption is that real knowledge of a foreign language is based on effective learning of its key structures - the 'building blocks' of communication):

3. Did the course teach you about the language (including how it works)

   [ ] A lot [ ] A fair amount [ ] Not much

A second group of three questions focused on the learner's view of her own progress - a vital issue in sustaining motivation. Two questions touched on the cognitive issues:

1. How much did using the course improve your understanding of the language

   [ ] A lot [ ] A fair amount [ ] Not much

2. How much did using the course improve your knowledge of

the language

[ ] A lot [ ] A fair amount [ ] Not much

while the third focused on the important affective domain:

3. How much did using the course improve your liking of the

language

[ ] A lot [ ] A fair amount [ ] Not much

The final part of this section invited the most subjective responses. It was intended that the learner's broadest perceptions should be brought to bear on the coursebook with the question:

Was this course typical of what you think a school

textbook should be? [ ] Yes   [ ] No

If you answered "No", please state briefly why not, and a final open-ended opportunity for comment was provided by the questions:

What did you like most about the course?

What did you like least about the course?

The questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix A.

4.4 Findings of the survey

503 secondary school pupils responded to the questionnaire. All were learning French or German using the three most popular complete ab initio to first examination (GCSE) courses currently in use. These are Tricolore, Action!, and Deutsch Heute. Full bibliographical details may be found in Note 1.

As described in 4.3, the first part of the survey called for objective responses to a series of questions through a simple semantic differential 'box-ticking' exercise. The outcomes of this part may be expressed in straightforward percentage figures. To give a global picture of the views of a good cross-section of learners on a variety of currently popular coursebooks, a first set of statistics will present an overall, averaged response. Equally interesting, however, is the variation in response to aspects of each separate coursebook. A second set of statistics will accordingly present the three separate sets of responses. The second part of the survey invited more subjective responses. These will be reported in detail.

4.4.1 Overall responses

These are reported expressed as percentages of the total response in Table 1:

First/early impressions:				
1. The course looked	interesting	81.8	not interesting	18.2
2. Learning would be	enjoyable	72.9	boring	27.1
3. Lessons looked forward to	more	61.7	less	38.3

Using the course:

1. Photos and drawings	very helpful	19.1	sometimes helpful	77.0	off-putting	1.9
2. Foreign language texts	very interesting	10.9	sometimes interesting	75.6	boring	13.3
3. English explanations	too much	2.0	about right	64.6	not enough	33.4
4. Understanding explanations	mostly	51.9	sometimes	41.6	hardly ever	6.5
5. Summaries of grammar	mostly helpful	45.1	sometimes helpful	45.5	hardly ever helpful	7.4
6. Exercises and practical work	very interesting	17.4	sometimes interesting	69.8	boring	12.8
7. Revision of previous units	often	23.8	sometimes	59.3	hardly ever	13.2
8. Tapes	very useful	27.3	fairly useful	55.2	boring	16.3
9. Filmstrips/ slides	very useful	22.2	fairly useful	29.7	boring	12.1 *
10.Flashcards	very useful	21.6	fairly useful	30.7	boring	12.3 *

* a limited response was made to these questions either because schools did not have (or use) the resources in question or because, as in the case of Action!, there are no accompanying filmstrips/slides. In view of learners' generally positive views of these resources, their lack in many departments should be noted.

Final impressions:

How much the course taught

1. Language for real situations	a lot	45.5	a fair amount	44.9	not much	8.5
2. About French/ German people	a lot	32.2	a fair amount	47.8	not much	18.3
3. About the language	a lot	21.1	a fair amount	21.1	not much	16.3

How much using the course improved

1. Understanding of the language	a lot	39.6	a fair amount	48.9	not much	11.4
2. Knowledge of the language	a lot	28.7	a fair amount	56.2	not much	14.7
3. Liking of the language	a lot	29.0	a fair amount	41.2	not much	29.1

Whether the course met expectations of a school textbook:
            Yes: 86.7   No: 12.9

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4.4.2 <u>Discussion</u>

In terms of the impact of the courses and the first or early impressions they create, there is no doubt that they have the capacity to arouse learners' interest: 81.8% of respondents felt that their coursebook looked interesting. A substantial majority (72.9%) anticipated that their learning might be enjoyable with the new coursebook. The response touching on sustained good attitudes to lessons was, however, less positive: slightly less than two-thirds of respondents (61.7%) looked forward to lessons more. This figure suggests that whereas the initial impact of the coursebook is such as to generate motivation, it may flag somewhat in the crucial area of sustaining it. It would obviously be unwise to read too much into this response as learners' replies may well have been influenced by factors outside the coursebook, such as their personal relations with the teacher. Nevertheless, it may equally be interpreted as a cooling of initial enthusiasm. It is certainly the case that, where problems arise with a particular coursebook, they do so after a period of regular use and usually despite an initially favourable reception from learners and teachers.

The section "Using the course" found a majority of respondents opting for the middle, often neutral response. This, as may be seen from the wording of the questionnaire, still tends to represent a positive rather than a negative stance. Overall evaluation of the responses thus rests with the weight of the opinion expressed at the clearly positive and negative poles of the scale. Photographs and drawings, for example, were perceived as "sometimes helpful" by 77%, "very

helpful" by 19.1% and "off-putting" by only 1.9%. This is clearly a positive rather than negative judgement - a point which will be underlined in subsequent discussion and prioritization of learners' subjective responses. The reaction to foreign language texts also saw a substantial number (75.6%) opting for the middle point of view "sometimes interesting", but only 10.9% found them "very interesting" while 13.3% found them "boring". The wording of question 3 produced a different response pattern. Only 2% of respondents found the English explanations "too much", 64.6% found them "about right" and 33.4% found them "not enough". Subsequent discussion of individual personal responses will indicate that many learners feel the lack of good, clear explanations in the mother tongue. Those provided were substantially understood (question 4) ("mostly" by 51.9%, "sometimes" by 41.6% and "hardly ever" by only 6.5%). The helpfulness of grammar summaries (question 5) was highlighted by a response of 45.1% to the proposition "mostly" and 45.5% to "sometimes". Only 7.4% found summaries of grammar "hardly ever" helpful. Exercises and practice work (question 6) were pronounced "very interesting" by 17.4% and "sometimes interesting" by 69.8%. Nevertheless, 12.8% found them "boring".

The importance of revision and recycling of previously-taught material was addressed in question 7: 23.8% of respondents were satisfied that this was done "often", while 59.3% felt it was done "sometimes" and 13.2% "hardly ever". Respondents' subsequent comments support the view that this is not an overwhelming vote of confidence in the provision of adequate revision material.

Supporting resources (questions 8, 9, 10) saw a fairly similar distribution of views: a sizeable proportion of learners (27.3%) found tapes "very useful" and 55.2% found them "fairly useful" while 16.3% found them "boring". 22.2% of these able to respond on filmstrips and slides (see notes in 4.4.1) pronounced them "very useful", 29.7% "fairly useful" and 12.1% "boring". Similarly, 21.6% found flashcards "very useful", 30.7% found them "fairly useful" and 12.3% found them "boring".

The options open to respondents in the "final impressions" sections were worded to invite a clear positive response, a positive response with, perhaps, minor reservations and a clear negative response. On this basis, respondents' final impressions were overwhelmingly favourable in the areas of (1) language that can be used in real situations (only 8.5% adopting a negative stance), (2) acquisition of knowledge of the target language community and its lifestyle (18.3% recording a negative response) and (3) acquisition of knowledge of the language itself (16.3% responding "not much"). In respect of the last question, it should be noted that only 21.1% felt that they had learned "a lot" compared with 45.5% in the first question of the section who felt they had learned "a lot" of usable, authentic language. These figures are further pointers towards the notion that learners would welcome more explanatory material in their mother tongue to support "communicative" activities in the target foreign language. The three final questions in this section focused most sharply on the ultimate value learners placed on their experience using the course: understanding and knowledge of the language (1) (2) were clearly felt to have benefited considerably (only 11.4% and 14.7%

failed to perceive any significant benefit). The rather more sensitive (and perhaps ultimately crucial) area of liking the language (3) produced a more equivocal response: 29.0% felt that their liking of the language had improved "a lot" and 41.2% "a fair amount", but 29.1% felt that their liking of the target language had not improved much.

The final summative evaluation attempted to canvass learners' general views on school textbooks. As with first impressions, there was a very clear statement that coursebooks met with learners' approval: 86.7% responded that the books lived up to their expectations and only 12.9% felt they did not. Interestingly, even this latter modest percentage did not represent a totally negative vote: a number of respondents exposed a dual interpretation of the question by answering "no" and explaining that the book was better than their existing expectations.

4.4.3 Responses to individual courses

For purposes of comparison, and as a possible basis for evaluation of these three widely-used courses, learners' responses to the main body of the questionnaire are reproduced below in tabular form. Courses are designated T (Tricolore), A (Action!) and DH (Deutsch Heute).

Results of the survey are expressed as percentages of the total response on each course. They are reproduced as Table 2:

Section 1: "First/early impressions"

1. The course looked		interesting	not interesting
	T	86.9	13.1
	A	75.4	24.6
	DH	83.1	16.9

2. Learning might be		enjoyable	boring
	T	82.0	16.6
	A	60.5	39.5
	DH	76.3	23.7

3. Lessons looked forward to		more	less
	T	69.1	29.9
	A	53.3	46.5
	DH	69.5	30.5

Section 2: "Using the course"

1. Photos and drawings		very helpful	sometimes helpful	off-putting
	T	23.5	73.5	2.3
	A	20.2	72.8	1.8
	DH	13.6	84.7	1.7

2. Foreign language texts		very helpful	sometimes helpful	boring
	T	13.0	75.5	11.1
	A	6.1	71.9	21.9
	DH	13.6	79.6	6.8

3. English explanations		too much	about right	not enough
	T	3.6	71.2	26.5
	A	2.6	65.8	31.6
	DH	0.0	57.6	42.4

4. Explanations understood		mostly	sometimes	hardly ever
	T	60.5	37.3	2.3
	A	36.0	57.0	7.0
	DH	59.3	30.5	10.2

5. Summaries of grammar helpful		mostly	sometimes	hardly ever
	T	54.9	39.9	4.9
	A	28.0	54.4	14.0
	DH	52.5	42.4	3.4

6. Exercises and practice work		very interesting	sometimes interesting	boring
	T	14.4	73.9	11.8
	A	19.3	69.3	11.4
	DH	18.6	66.1	15.3

7. Revision		often	sometimes	hardly ever
	T	26.0	60.1	11.8
	A	21.9	53.5	15.8
	DH	23.7	64.4	11.9

8. Tapes		very useful	fairly useful	boring
	T	27.1	52.9	18.3
	A	15.8	55.3	27.2
	DH	38.9	57.6	3.4

9. Filmstrips/slides		very useful	fairly useful	boring
	T	22.2	29.7	12.1
	A	not applicable		
	DH	not applicable		

10. Flashcards		very useful	fairly useful	boring
	T	23.9	28.1	9.2
	A	20.2	14.0	7.0
	DH	20.8	50.0	20.8

Section 3: "Final impressions"

Did the course teach

1. Language for real situations		a lot	a fair amount	not much
	T	43.1	50.0	5.5
	A	32.5	2.6	14.9
	DH	61.0	32.2	5.1

2 About French/ German people		a lot	a fair amount	not much
	T	38.2	47.7	12.7
	A	26.3	53.5	18.4
	DH	32.2	42.4	23.7

3. About the language		a lot	a fair amount	not much
	T	38.2	51.6	10.1
	A	13.2	63.2	23.7
	DH	11.9	72.9	15.2

How much did using the course improve

1. Understanding of the language		a lot	a fair amount	not much
	T	47.7	45.8	6.5
	A	28.9	51.8	19.3
	DH	42.3	49.2	8.5

2. Knowledge of the language		a lot	a fair amount	not much
	T	31.7	57.2	11.4
	A	18.4	57.9	22.8
	DH	36.2	53.7	10.1

3. Liking of the language		a lot	a fair amount	not much
	T	33.7	40.2	26.0
	A	24.6	41.2	34.2
	DH	28.2	42.4	27.1

Whether the course was typical of what learners thought a school textbook should be

		Yes	No
	T	87.3	11.1
	A	86.0	14.0
	DH	86.5	13.5

Note: In all the statistical material presented in this Chapter, it will occasionally be seen that the figures for a particular response do not add up to 100%. This was caused by respondents' omission of some questions.

4.4.4 Learners' subjective responses

Although the questionnaire was of a generally structured nature, it was clearly important that respondents be given an opportunity to express some genuinely subjective reactions to their coursebook. Those who felt it did not correspond to their expectations were invited to explain briefly why not and two final open-response questions asked learners to identify those features of the course they liked most and least. It was not necessarily anticipated that all would wish to make a response in this section. In the event, however, only 10 of the 503 respondents failed to complete this section. The anonymity of respondents might have opened a way to excess of humour or expressions of disaffection. In fact, there were one or two mildly humorous contributions, but overall responses were pertinent, often

incisive and clearly reflected serious and considered evaluation of perceived strengths and weaknesses of coursebooks. There follows a digest of these responses presented in respect of the three courses featured in the survey.

4.4.4.1

The first response was invited from those who felt that their coursebook did not correspond to their expectation of a school textbook. It should be noted from the discussion in 4.4.2 that a negative response here was not necessarily critical.

Respondents who used <u>Tricolore</u> praised the course for

- being interesting and enjoyable (courses used previously were described as "boring")

- presenting aspects of French life and real situations in an authentic way (not simply "lots of facts")

- being well illustrated (giving a more interesting appearance)

- providing quizzes and humour.

The course fell short of their expectations for

- failing to provide or incorporate:

  - enough grammatical explanation in English

  - explanation of the French pronunciation system

  - clearly-enough explained presentation of verbs

  - enough exercises

- enough information on "things children like": music

 and school life were singled out.

Other criticisms levelled were

- too much use of English

- one subject or topic carried on for too long

- insufficient thoroughness in providing "key words" for

 conversations with French speakers

- the role of the teacher diminished

- photographs need to be updated.

Some Action! users found the course more interesting, more helpful and

more fun than those used previously. One found it "too easy", while

another pronounced it "too good" for a typical schoolbook.

Reservations were expressed about

- difficulty in understanding: sections entirely in French

 seemed to make assumptions about learners' ability to

 understand "just like that"

- lack of English explanation, specifically explanation of

 exercises

- a failure to teach pronunciation

- lack of thoroughness: units were short and difficult

 aspects were glossed over

- lack of "background" information on France

- an over-emphasis on food.

A smaller group commented on Deutsch Heute. Some users were clearly

impressed by the absence of long vocabulary lists, verb tables, "words and facts". They also approved of the more "everyday" nature of the course's content, and specifically of the use of flashcards and cartoons. On the other hand, some expressed a need for more detailed explanation in English and for summaries at the end of Chapters (Tricolore was cited as a yardstick for this comment).

4.4.4.2

All respondents were finally asked to identify those features of their coursebook that they liked most and those that they liked least. The following report incorporates all responses, recorded in descending order of frequency.

Tricolore users liked most

- helpful English explanations and summaries of grammar

- widespread use of pictures

- use of cartoons

- provision of filmstrips

- presentation of real-life, everyday situations

- quizzes (crosswords, games, etc.)

- use of tapes and interesting dialogues (authentic background noise evoked positive comment)

- a presentation of the language closely linked to the people and their way of life

- material to stimulate conversation

- material for role-play

- the course's "modern" layout

- provision of a vocabulary

- the variety of activities and topics

- information on France

- learning about French people and their peers in
  particular

- sections on letter and postcard writing

- exercises (especially those presented as games), revision
  units and unit tests

- scope for individual work and self-evaluation

- "question and answer" work

- use of flashcards

- interviews

- random responses praising the "more enjoyable" and
  "up-to-date" nature of the course, its "progression" and,
  in general, a feeling of enjoyment using it.

One respondent recorded appreciation of a "nice teacher
who explains things well".

Tricolore users liked least

- the tapes: these were criticized for accent, speed of
  delivery, general difficulty, lack of interest and poor
  quality music punctuating items

- "grammar" sections

- presentation of verbs

- repetitive, pointless, over-long chapters, exercises,
  texts and interviews

- the lack, or in some cases, poor quality of English
  explanations

- "dated" pictures and photographs

- revision exercises and tests

- "conversation" sections

- the length of specific units: that on the Metro in
  Book 3 came in for particular criticism

- lack of colour in the illustrations: this was felt to
  cause problems of concentration

- the course being "dated" and "out of touch" with the
  age group

- inadequate explanation or poor presentation of verb
  forms (the passé composé, future tenses and negatives
  were mentioned specifically)

- the filmstrips: not perceived as very useful

There was less consensus on the undesirable features of the course:
only small numbers of learners offered the following responses:

- too many letters

- excessively jumbled layout

- no index at the front of the book

- too much "information" about the country: not enough
  language (sections in English, though long, were
  generally considered helpful)

- too much vocabulary

- work on timetables and lists (e.g. hotels)

- inadequate time spent on some more difficult features

- dislike of sections which tell learners what they "can
  now do" (or, as the respondent put it, "are supposed to
  be able to do")

Some comments clearly related more to teaching style than the course itself, but are certainly worthy of note in the broader context of this enquiry: a number of learners clearly dislike

- learning grammar

- copying up work

- reading aloud (in French and English)

- translating

- spelling tests

- drawing.

Action! users liked most

- extensive illustration and use of cartoons and humour

- the accompanying tapes

- quizzes

- learning about French life and French people in real situations

- extensive use of dialogue

- a well set-out, easy-to-follow vocabulary of perceived usefulness

- role-play work ("practical communication")

- particular topics or themes: pets and hobbies, sport, food, restaurants, hotels

- the support from English explanations, promoting better understanding.

Of particular interest, given the nature of Action! (the settings, topics and situations of the course project the learner into the role of a visitor to France) was the response of several learners "going to

France to use the language we learned". Once again, teaching style, rather than the course itself, was reflected in such responses as

-    drawing pictures

-    translating.

Action! users liked least

-    the tapes: lack of clarity and excessive speed: there was a need to "build up" speed linked to growth in confidence and understanding

-    exercises

-    lack of English translation and/or explanation

-    written work

-    dialogue and role-play work

-    the need to memorise and be able to spell

-    specific units: the telephone and post office, transport and time-telling.

A rather small overall number of respondents to Action! produced less of a consensus view: other individual responses which nonetheless seem significant criticized

-    too much listening and reading

-    crosswords and jokes

-    the lack of a French-English vocabulary (only in parts 1 and 2: parts 3-5 remedied this with a final section "le petit dictionnaire").

Again, some objections clearly related to teaching strategies:

- translation

- learning verbs and grammar

- tests.

Deutsch Heute users liked most

- photographs and drawings

- the tapes and their dialogues ("more than just exercises")

- role-play and conversation work

- the presentation of "real-life" situations, useful
  everyday phrases, authentic dialogue

- learning about Germany and German people, especially
  family life

- interesting topics, useful input

- the accompanying worksheets and flashcards

- the exercises

- cartoons and use of humour

- general layout and presentation

- an "incline of difficulty" that did not make excessive
  demands: "the course knew our capabilities".

There was a widespread dislike of

- lack of English explanation, especially of aspects
  of grammar

- lack of an end-of-chapter summary "showing what you
  know"

- inadequate provision of vocabulary (though there is a
  classified list)

- hard or "long-winded" exercises

- lack of clarity

- lack of colour in illustrations

- the cognitive demands of the course: "a lot to learn in a short time" (a comparison was made with <u>Tricolore</u>)

- insufficient tape and oral work

- certain specific features or topics: the "Landeskunde" sections, the cartoon pig Fränzi, the large number of "shop" situations and the "unusual" nature of some situations - texts with a fantasy or historical background.

It will, of course, be noted that in almost all instances there are some directly contradictory responses. These do no more than reflect and underline the many and varied differences in perception of what might be said to be a broadly homogeneous group of learners.

4.5 Summary of findings

It was acknowledged in the introduction to this Chapter that this survey was limited in overall scope. It did, however, offer the characteristic of representing a good cross-section of the views of the full ability range of secondary school learners. The survey was intended to gain direct access to some learners' views of those features of the modern coursebook which they find motivating and those which they do not. I have already indicated that I was impressed by the thoughtfulness and seriousness of learners' responses. By way of a summary conclusion to this Chapter and the survey, I now list for the information and guidance of all who are involved in the production and use of coursebooks those subjective responses which might be said to represent a consensus of learners' views of the most desirable and

undesirable features of a coursebook. Only those views emanating from

a minimum of 10% of respondents are included in this summary list -

the others may be found in the body of the text of the Chapter.

Learners clearly favour:

1. an abundance of illustration: photographs, drawings and

    cartoons: these should preferably be in colour and will attract

    criticism if they are too readily perceived as "dated" (this

    point would appear to relate to hairstyle, clothing and

    other obvious "fashion" features); illustrations play a clear

    role in arousing and sustaining learners' interest;

2. English explanations, especially relating to the structure

    and functioning of the language: a perceived lack of these

    was a source of criticism: they need to be clear and

    frequent to support effective learning by engaging

    existing cognitive capacity and structure and, in

    consequence, motivation;

3. quizzes (crosswords, games, etc.): apart from promoting a

    sense of enjoyment in learning, they have the added value

    of focusing learners' attention on effective, purposeful use

    of the target language rather than on the self-

    conscious structural manipulation involved in many

    "exercises", in Krashen's terms, comprehensible input

    is approached with the "affective filter" low, thus generating

    a situation in which acquisition of language seems more likely

    to take place;

4. tapes: these are clearly popular as a source of

authentic language, a means of access to pronunciation

and communicative functions, possible "role-models"

for performance and development of the listening skill;

they must, however, be clear and some thought must be given

to teaching learners to come to terms with speed and variety

of accent: a better-developed methodology for the listening

skill seems called for;

5. plenty of dialogue, conversation and role-play work: it

    would seem that learners are more than convinced that

    "practical communication" (GCSE National Criteria, 1985) is

    indeed one of the most significant aims of a foreign

    language course in school;

6. presentation of real-life, everyday situations:

    another illustration of the premise that meaningful

    learning takes place when new ideas and experiences can

    be readily subsumed into existing cognitive structure;

7. presentation of the target language community and its way

    of life: this reveals an important humanistic motivation

    which is clearly endemic in our learners: if

    successfully tapped, it paves the way for the realization

    of Gardner and Lambert's "integrative motivation" with all

    that accrues therefrom;

8. provision of a vocabulary: the typical learner's world

    is organized and categorized through the mother tongue:

    those lucky enough to spend substantial amounts of time in

    the target language country or with members of its community

    may eventually cross the threshold of learning into the realm

of unself-conscious language acquisition; the vast
majority, however, will still seek reference points in the
mother tongue, both for comprehension and production and
will benefit in general educational and linguistic terms
from developing an ability to use resources in a process
of broadening understanding and stimulating generative and
autonomous use of language - meaningful verbal learning.

Learners are seemingly not motivated by

1. "Exercises": these are especially criticized when they
    are repetitive and excessively long: included in the
    criticism of drills and practice is the "question and
    answer" technique, which, though well-established as a
    teaching strategy, appears to need reappraisal in the
    current socio-communicative context of language learning;

2. "grammar" sections (including presentation of verb tenses and
    paradigms): learners welcome explanations, seemingly
    accepting that language is governed by rules and conventions:
    they do not, however, like these presented in separate,
    formal "sections" of a coursebook unit (an approach
    particularly favoured by _Tricolore_) where they are perceived
    as an uncomfortable appendage to, or an element divorced from,
    the main communicative objectives ostensibly represented
    by the coursebook;

3. "tests": although not an integral part of any of the courses
    discussed, convention or individual school requirements seem
    to call for periodic testing of learners' achievements:

testing and assessment have been thrust into the forefront

of educational debate by graded objectives, GCSE and

proposals linked to the National Curriculum (1988): learners

seem to react well to those tests which are of perceived

value as part of the learning process, but do not like formal,

often summative tests which have a normative function.

These, then, are the most significant findings to emerge from the survey. They do not present any unduly startling or avant-garde ideas, but they do underline firmly a number of points about foreign language learning which have been articulated as aims of the GCSE examination: learners want an experience which is enjoyable, comprehensible, meaningful and practical and which appeals to their instincts both to learn and to engage in social behaviour.

Note 1:

Bibliographical details of the three courses covered by the survey:

Honnor, S., Holt, R. and Mascie-Taylor, H.: Tricolore. Published by Arnold Wheaton in five parts between 1980-85.

Buckby, M.: Action! Published by Nelson in five parts between 1979-85.

Sidwell, D. and Capoore, P.: Deutsch Heute. Published by Nelson in three parts between 1983-86.

CHAPTER FIVE : COURSEBOOKS: SOME TEACHERS' VIEWS

5.1 Introduction

A key point which emerges from Stern's (1983) wide-ranging discussion of language teaching is that deep-rooted past preoccupations with the search for a "method" of universal applicability have had a debilitating effect on the development of language pedagogy. It is only in recent times that new directions of thought have begun to emerge

> "to overcome the narrowness, rigidities and imbalances which
> have resulted from conceptualising language teaching purely
> or mainly through the concept of method." (1)

Preoccupation with method has had the inevitable effect of keeping the focus of attention on teaching and the teacher. The main thrust of initial and in-service teacher training and the development of a pedagogic literature has been "how to teach . . ." From Jespersen (1904) through Lado (1964) and Rivers (1968) to Partington and Luker (1986), a substantial number of books have been produced offering teachers guidance on techniques and strategies aimed at generating effective learning. There has seemed to be an underlying assumption that, if only we get the method right, a broad spectrum of learners will experience a successful outcome to their language studies. Teaching materials and resources, and in particular coursebooks and their contents, have played, and continue to play, a central role in the delivery of instruction. Producers of teaching materials seem to have felt it increasingly incumbent on them to provide guidance and instruction for teachers. In broad terms, the value of this is not

disputed, though questions must be raised about, for example, the compulsion of users of the TAVOR audio-visual materials of the 1960s to attend induction courses. Equally, the very substantial and prescriptive nature of the teachers' books which accompany those major contemporary courses discussed in Chapter 4 serves only to underline what must be viewed as a truism of language teaching - that, in buying a particular language coursebook, one buys someone else's view of what constitutes learning a language.

Teachers do not by any means always have a free choice in the materials they use. They are constrained by economic factors - the high cost of re-equipping with modern coursebooks and their indispensable ancillary resources has to be balanced against the possible existence in schools of enough older but still 'serviceable' books. The fact that older courses such as _Longmans Audio-Visual French_ still feature prominently in publishers' catalogues is indicative of continuing demand not, I suspect, as a serious departmental investment but rather as a process of keeping existing stocks topped up. Another common form of constraint is imposed by the expectation of some schools, parents and learners themselves that every learner should have her 'own' textbook. In consequence, departments invest in a course almost as a line of least resistance.

If it seems fair to suggest that teachers do not always have an uninhibited choice of coursebook, it also seems fair to suggest that their opinions as to the content and orientation of teaching materials are not regarded as an issue of very high priority. A telephone survey of major publishers of course materials in 1987 indicated that,

whilst some have a policy of field-testing material, this is often done in the writer's own school and that, in a number of instances, publication deadlines or absence of a clear policy preclude any such testing. Such factors, combined with the general dearth of informative literature discussed in Chapter 3, point to the conclusion that, broadly speaking, teachers' views have received little more recognition than those of their learners. This state of affairs adds weight to the importance of the next phase of this investigation - a survey of the views of serving foreign language teachers on the course materials which clearly exercise a strong influence on their professional practice.

5.2 Teachers and Learners: the notion of partnership

In the late 1980s, there appears to be a broad consensus view that the pursuit of a universal method is about as fruitful and relevant as the search for the Philosopher's Stone. Stern's image of a "break with the method concept" has come about through a confluence of factors, one of the most important of which, from the point of view of this investigation, has been a significant shift of focus from "teaching" to "learning", from "the teacher" to "the learner". Oller and Richard's book Focus on the Learner: Pragmatic Perspectives for the Language Teacher (1973) is a seminal work by virtue of its title alone, as the title encapsulates the shift of emphasis. Placing the learner centre-stage has brought into prominence such issues as the learner's needs, expectancies, aspirations and, of course, motivation. The new dimension to the teacher-learner relationship has led to revision of practice embracing such notions as negotiation of goals

and even curriculum, the creation of more independent and autonomous modes of learning within the classroom and the emergence of a view of the teacher as a 'facilitator' of learning rather than as a purveyor of instruction. This has in turn led to a need for a greater mutual understanding between teacher and learner which finds expression in an increasingly formalized dialogue between the two. Emerging models of practice in Profiling and the compilation of Records of Pupil Achievement are the clearest evidence of the notion of a working partnership between teacher and learner rather than the situation of benevolent despotism which may be said to have prevailed in the past.

This enquiry began with a view of effective language learning being the outcome of a partnership between teacher, learner and material designer. The nature of the partnership in the context of foreign language learning must, however, be clarified and qualified. The new dimensions to teacher-learner relationships alluded to above have often arisen from a shift in teaching strategies from a 'didactic' approach fostering Ausubel's "reception learning" to an approach enabling Bruner's "discovery" learning to take place. Whereas such an approach can be shown to be effective in the exploration of historical, geographical or 'humanities' themes and in the development of scientific and mathematical concepts, in addition to the more obvious areas of creative and artistic development, the particular problems inherent in trying to learn a foreign language urge caution. The fact is that, unlike any other subject in the curriculum, study of a foreign language does not simply involve acquiring knowledge, skills or competences (a "message") through an established communication "medium" (the mother tongue). In foreign language learning, as is

frequently pointed out,

"the medium _is_ the message".

Nevertheless, within the framework of the 'communicative approach' to language learning, considerable progress has been made. The progress has its roots in a widespread acknowledgement (underpinned by, among others, Her Majesty's Inspectorate in their 1987 document _Modern Foreign Languages to 16_) that language learning has social and inter-personal as well as literary and academic objectives. The foreign language classroom has thus been permeated with pair and group-based communicative activities and, given the need for some coherent graded and selected input, learners are currently enabled to engage in more independent learning than might at one time have been deemed possible. This process has been further accelerated by the advent of GCSE with its central aim of the promotion of language learning for the purpose of practical communication.

The implication for these changes is that, if the teacher-learner partnership is to continue to grow and develop, there must be a clear _rapport_ between teachers' and learners' perceptions of what approaches, activities and resources are most likely to promote effective learning. The following survey of teachers' views of coursebooks is intended to explore the current state of teacher-learner partnership as it may be viewed in the light of both partners' perspectives on the 'staple diet' of language learning - the coursebook.

5.3 Background to the survey

A target group of 100 secondary school teachers was identified. They were known to be users of contemporary coursebooks and, as regular and enthusiastic participants in in-service events in Kent, seemed likely to be willing to co-operate in a survey. A postal questionnaire was sent to the group and a total of 88 replies was received. This is a very good response to a postal questionnaire.

In selecting the group, I was concerned with representing the different types of secondary school which still exist in Kent. Following a process of selection at 11 or 13, some 25% of Kent pupils attend 'grammar' schools while the remainder go to 11-16 'high' (wide-ability secondary) schools or to the small number of schools which designate themselves 'all ability' or comprehensive. Of the 88 replies to the questionnaire, 51 came from high school teachers, 24 from grammar school teachers and 13 from comprehensive school teachers. The survey can thus be said fairly to represent the views of the full spectrum of secondary teachers.

5.3.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed for rapid completion by members of a professional group who, especially in recent years, have become increasingly beset by the demands of educational change and have seen their status and perceived value frequently challenged.   I was not expecting a 100% response and was very gratified by the high percentage response I did receive.   General introductory questions were of the 'tick in box' type; the three major survey areas offered a

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choice of three responses to each component items with an open section

for free comment while the final question offered teachers the

opportunity for the expression of individual, original viewpoints.

Questions 1-3 were by way of a preface.   Question 1 asked teachers to

name the main coursebook they use and to record an overall impression

by ticking boxes labelled

[ ] very satisfied [ ] fairly satisfied [ ] not very satisfied.

Questions 2 and 3 switched the focus onto the main theme of the

survey.   Question   2 invited teachers to assess the   course's

suitability for groups of learners of differing motivation by ticking

one or more of the following three categories:

[ ] highly motivated   [ ] of average motivation

     [ ] of low motivation.

Question 3 called for a specific statement of teachers' views on the

motivational function of the coursebook by asking them to indicate

whether it had

[ ] increased motivation [ ] produced no measurable difference

     [ ] decreased motivation.

The main body of the survey was contained in questions 4-7.   These

questions were constructed partly in relation to aspects of coursebook

evaluation discussed in Chapter 3, but more substantially in the light

of major issues arising out of learners' perceptions and responses as

identified in Chapter 4.   Question 4 invited teachers' views on a

series of features of modern coursebooks which learners had identified

as desirable or motivating.   With the aim of exploring the extent of

the match between teachers' and learners' perceptions, the teachers were asked to grade each feature

[1] very significant to your learners' motivation

[2] of average significance

[3] not very significant.

The features identified in the questionnaire were

- Presentation of "everyday" situations

- Language learning linked to understanding the life of the target language community

- Copious illustration

- Cartoons

- Quizzes

- Tape recordings

- Role-play and conversation work

- Variety of things to do

- Slides/filmstrips

- Explanations in English

- Provision of a vocabulary

Teachers were then offered the opportunity for open comment with an invitation to identify

"Any other features of the modern coursebook which you and your learners have found beneficial."

Question 5 was something of a mirror image of Question 4. A number of learners' negative views on unhelpful or demotivating features were presented: teachers were asked to express their reaction by grading

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each feature

[1] seriously detrimental to your learners' motivation

[2] moderately detrimental

[3] producing no noticeably adverse effects.

The features listed were

- Problems with "natural" voice speed, accent and clarity on tapes

- Repetitive exercises with no perceived point

- Too many questions asked

- Unclear "grammar" sections

- Long units, texts and dialogues

- Boring or unclear presentation of verbs

- Course already "dated" or out of touch with age group

- Lack of English explanation or translation.

Open comment was again invited:

"Any other features you have found to work against learner motivation or any of the above you may wish to elaborate on."

Question 6 drew more on the evaluative framework for coursebooks proposed in Chapter 3. A small group of features of coursebooks was identified which might be perceived as undesirable in the light of our knowledge of aspects of learning and motivation. These were

- Overcrowded pages

- Excessively demanding schedules of learning (is "a book a year" a feasible target?)

- Variety at the expense of practice and consolidation

-    Too many discrete topic units lacking overall continuity

-    Excessive emphasis on "transactional" language at the

     expense of entertaining or imaginative input.

The features were presented as critical propositions with which
teachers were invited to express

[1] agreement

[2] no strong feeling

[3] disagreement.

Question 7 was intended as a "catch-all".

     "Please record any further opinions you may have of the function

     of the coursebook in motivating the learner - any aspects not

     covered by the questionnaire and any ideas you may have for the

     development of the format and scope of the coursebook."

The questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix B.

5.4 Findings of the survey

As reported above, 88 teachers responded to the questionnaire.
Several teachers use more than one coursebook, sometimes teaching two
languages, sometimes obviously having some variety and/or choice at
their disposal. These respondents accordingly submitted duplicate
questionnaires, bring the total number of separate responses to 99.
The results of the survey will thus be reported and tabulated on the
basis of this latter figure. As with the survey of learners in the
previous Chapter, outcomes will be presented, where appropriate, as a

global picture followed by a breakdown of responses according to the different coursebooks used by respondents.

5.4.1 Coursebooks covered by the survey

Of the 99 respondents, 56 use the French course Tricolore, 23 use the French course Action!, 7 use Deutsch Heute. These courses were the ones evaluated by learners in Chapter 4. In addition, 13 respondents use a variety of other courses: D'Accord (3), Communications (3), Escalier, Studio 16, French for You, Vorwärts, Kapiert and ¡Vaya! (one each). (Details of these courses are included as notes in a separate section of the Bibliography). The latter group will be included both in the overall picture and as a separate section in the individual breakdown as they represent an interesting cross-section of course materials produced over the last 15 years or so (or, in the case of the Spanish course ¡Vaya!, still in the process of development as, at the time of writing, only Parts One and Two of four have appeared). As such, they may be seen to represent a "control" group against which responses to the three most popular may be measured. Concerning the proportion of response to the three main courses, the clear dominance of Tricolore tallies exactly with the publishers' own estimate (see 3.1) that the course is in use in over 50% of UK schools.

5.4.2 Presentation of findings: the overall picture

Table 1 presents the results of the survey expressed in each instance as a percentage of the total response:

Question 1:   Overall impressions of coursebooks used

    Very satisfied   29.3%
    Fairly satisfied   62.6%
    Not very satisfied   8.1%

Question 2:   assessment of suitability for different levels of
              learner motivation

    High motivation   35.5%
    Average motivation   54.6%
    Low motivation   9.9%

Question 3:   Effect of using the course on learners' motivation

    Increased motivation   60.6%
    No measurable difference 37.4%
    Decreased motivation   2.0%

Question 4:   Features of modern coursebooks identified by learners
              as desirable or motivating: totals out of 99 responses

	Very significant to motivation	Of average significance	Not very significant
Presentation of "everyday" situations	78	18	3
Language learning linked to understanding life of target language community	44	47	8
Copious illustration	33	59	7
Cartoons	23	52	24
Quizzes	39	37	23
Tape recordings	72	24	3
Role-play and conversation work	80	18	1
Variety of things to do	81	16	2
Slides/filmstrips	17	36	46
Explanations in English	25	54	20
Provision of a vocabulary	48	42	9

Question 5: Features identified by learners as unhelpful or
demotivating: totals out of 99 responses

	Seriously detrimental	Moderately detrimental	No noticeably adverse effects
Problems with tapes	30	49	20
Repetitive exercises	53	27	19
Too many questions	15	40	44
Unclear "grammar" sections	51	34	14
Long units, texts, dialogues	43	35	21
Boring or unclear presentation of verbs	55	26	18
Course "dated"/out of touch	38	30	31
Lack of English explanation/translation	7	46	46

Question 6: Features undesirable from point of view of learner
motivation: totals out of 99 responses

	Agreement	No strong feeling	Disagreement
Overcrowded pages	68	23	8
Excessively demanding schedules	57	30	12
Variety at expense of practice	39	44	16
Too many discrete topic units	36	41	22
Excessive emphasis on "transactional" language	50	40	9

5.4.3 Presentation of findings: individual courses

Of obvious significance as a basis for some comparative evaluation of
widely-used courses is a presentation of the same findings of the
survey expressed in terms of teachers ' reactions to Action! (A),
Deutsch Heute (DH), Tricolore (T) and others (O) (see 5.4.1). In each
case, the findings will be expressed as percentages of the number of
responses per course - 23 for Action!, 56 for Tricolore, 7 for Deutsch
Heute, and 13 for the others: the findings are presented as Table 2.

Question 1:   Overall impressions

	A	T	DH	O
Very satisfied	8.7	39.3	28.6	23.1
Fairly satisfied	78.3	53.6	71.4	69.2
Not very satisfied	13.0	7.1	0.0	7.7

Question 2:   Suitability for different motivational levels

	A	T	DH	O
High motivation	34.3	38.2	36.4	23.5
Average motivation	51.4	55.1	54.5	58.8
Low motivation	14.3	6.7	9.1	17.7

Question 3:   Effect of course on learners' motivation

	A	T	DH	O
Increased	56.5	73.2	28.6	38.5
No measurable diff.	43.5	23.2	71.4	61.5
Decreased	0.0	3.6	0.0	0.0

The results of questions 4, 5 and 6 are given in tabulated form on the following pages.

Question 4: Desirable or motivating features

1 indicates "very significant"
2 indicates "of average significance"
3 indicates "not very significant"

	A			T			DH			O		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Everyday situations	82.6	17.4	0	78.6	17.8	3.6	71.4	28.6	0	76.9	15.4	7.7
Long-learning linked to target community life	43.5	47.8	8.7	44.6	48.2	7.2	42.8	42.8	14.4	46.1	46.2	7.7
Illustrations	30.4	69.6	0	39.3	50.0	10.7	42.8	42.8	14.4	7.7	92.3	0
Cartoons	17.4	65.2	17.4	28.6	44.6	26.8	28.6	42.8	28.6	7.7	69.2	23.1
Quizzes	39.2	30.4	30.4	44.7	37.5	17.8	14.4	42.8	42.8	30.7	46.2	23.1
Tape recordings	73.9	17.4	8.7	67.8	30.4	1.8	85.7	14.3	0	84.6	15.4	0
Role-play/conversation	86.9	13.1	0	78.6	19.6	1.8	85.7	14.3	0	76.9	23.1	0
Variety	91.3	8.7	0	78.6	17.8	3.6	57.2	42.8	0	92.3	7.7	0
Slides/filmstrips	13.0	39.2	47.8	17.8	41.1	41.1	14.3	14.3	71.4	23.1	23.1	53.8
English explanations	30.4	60.9	8.7	23.2	57.2	19.6	28.6	28.6	42.8	23.1	46.2	30.7
Vocabulary	56.5	30.4	13.1	42.8	50.0	7.2	57.2	42.8	0	53.8	30.7	15.5

Question 5: Unhelpful or demotivating features

1 indicates "seriously detrimental"
2 indicates "moderately detrimental"
3 indicates "no noticeably adverse effects"

	A			T			DH			O		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Tape recording problems	39.2	34.8	26.0	28.6	55.3	16.1	28.6	57.2	14.2	23.1	46.2	30.7
Repetitive exercises	60.9	21.7	17.4	50.0	32.2	17.8	28.6	28.6	42.8	69.2	15.4	15.4
Too many questions	13.1	52.1	34.8	14.3	41.1	44.6	14.3	0	85.7	23.1	38.5	38.4
Unclear "grammar" sections	39.2	47.8	13.0	50.0	33.9	16.1	42.8	42.8	14.4	85.7	7.7	7.6
Long units/texts/dialogues	43.4	39.2	17.4	51.8	26.8	21.4	14.3	85.7	0	23.1	38.5	38.4
Boring/unclear verb presentation	56.6	21.7	21.7	58.9	26.8	14.3	14.4	42.8	42.8	61.5	23.1	15.4
Course "dated"	34.8	30.4	34.8	41.1	32.2	26.7	14.3	14.3	71.4	46.2	30.7	23.1
Lack of English explanation	8.8	43.4	47.8	5.4	50.0	44.6	28.6	14.2	57.2	0	53.8	46.2

Question 6: Undesirable features

1 indicates "agreement"
2 indicates "no strong feeling"
3 indicates "disagreement"

	A			T			DH			O		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Overcrowded pages	52.1	39.2	8.7	75.0	21.4	3.6	71.4	14.3	14.3	69.2	7.7	23.1
Excessively demanding schedules	34.8	43.5	21.7	66.1	25.0	8.9	71.4	14.3	14.3	53.8	38.5	7.7
Variety at expense of practice	34.8	47.8	17.4	41.1	41.1	17.8	28.6	42.8	28.6	46.2	53.8	0
Too many discrete topics	43.4	39.2	17.4	32.2	42.8	25.0	28.6	57.2	14.2	46.2	30.7	23.1
Excessive emphasis on "transactional"	56.5	34.8	8.7	46.5	44.6	8.9	71.4	14.3	14.3	46.2	46.2	7.6

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5.5 Analysis and discussion

This analysis and discussion is initially concerned with those findings of the survey which have been reported in statistical, tabular form. Questions 4-6 included a supplementary invitation to open comment and, as reported in 5.3.1, Question 7 consisted solely of an invitation to open comment. The findings of these latter parts of the survey will be reported and discussed separately.

5.5.1 The overall picture

It emerges from the general, prefatory questions 1-3 that

- a substantial majority of teachers (62.6%) are fairly satisfied with the "new generation" of coursebooks; nearly one in three (29.3%) are, however, very satisfied and only 8.1% are not very satisfied;

- the coursebooks are clearly perceived as being suitable for children of at least average (54.6%) to high motivation (35.5%) and that, with a response of only 9.9% deeming them suitable for learners of low motivation, the courses are not making as significant an inroad as they might into meeting the needs of the full spectrum of learner ability which has been catered for at least in years 1-3 for over a decade now and which, under the provisions of the National Curriculum proposals (1988), will have to be catered for in years 1-5 in the 1990s;

- the coursebooks are felt, again by a substantial majority of teachers (60.6%) to enhance learner motivation; 37.4% reported

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no measurable difference (which could reflect satisfactory existing levels of motivation); this conclusion is perhaps underlined by a reported decrease in motivation in only 2.0% of responses.

Question 4 was designed to test teachers' reactions to learners' declared perceptions on coursebooks.   It also stands in its own right as a survey of teachers' perceptions of aspects of language teaching and learning identified as priorities in, _inter alia_, the GCSE National Criteria (1985). Significant amongst these are such aims for foreign language study as the use of the target language for practical communication; the provision of an enjoyable learning experience and a contribution to learners' language development and awareness of the nature of language in the broadest sense.

It is immediately apparent that teachers respond in a very varied way to the propositions or views implicit in the items surveyed. Whereas there is majority agreement as to the considerable significance of the presentation of "everyday" situations (78 respondents out of 99), the use of tape recordings (72), role-play and conversation work (80) and variety of things to do (81), rather less than half the responses perceive the same degree of significance in the provision of a vocabulary (48), the linking of language learning to understanding the life of the target community (44) and the use of quizzes (39). Only one teacher in three (33) placed the same value on copious illustration while one in four or less valued equally explanations in English (25), cartoons (23), and the provision of slides or filmstrips (17).

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Substantial "neutral" responses were recorded for the value of illustrations (59), explanations in English (54), cartoons (52), the linking of learning to the life of the target community (47) and provision of a vocabulary (42).

Among those features rated not very significant to learners' motivation, slides and filmstrips scored highest (46) (a response related to the relatively low use of these resources in schools - characteristically more for financial than educational reasons), but responses of some significance were recorded for cartoons (24), quizzes (23) and explanations in English (20).

An important section of this Chapter will deal separately with a comparison of teachers' and learners' views which could have serious bearing on the conclusions of this enquiry. Suffice it to say at this stage that certain mismatches of teachers' and learners' valuation of key features of coursebooks are emerging.

Question 5 pursued the relationship between teachers' and learners' views by presenting a series of coursebook features identified by learners as unhelpful or demotivating. As with Question 4, the features also have a broader significance - they all contain elements (lack of clarity, excessive length or repetitiveness, failure to stimulate or appeal to affective characteristics and failure to capitalize on or exploit learners' cognitive capacity) which learning theory would identify as detrimental. Teachers' responses to this question were, on the whole, more conservative. Barely more than half found just three features seriously detrimental to their learners'

motivation. The aspects concerned were boring or unclear presentation of verbs (55), repetitive exercises (53) and unclear "grammar" sections (51). Other features rated seriously detrimental by a reasonable number of respondents were long units, texts and dialogues (43), "dated" or "out of touch with the target group of learners" features (38) and problems with speed, accent and voice quality on tapes (30). Only 15 respondents felt that excessive numbers of questions were asked and only 7 found the lack of English explanation or translation seriously detrimental.

A reasonable number of respondents acknowledged the moderately detrimental effects of tape problems (49), lack of English explanation (46), excessive use of questions (40), long units, texts and dialogues (35) and unclear grammar sections (34), while at least one in four felt that "dated" features (30), repetitive exercises (27) and poor presentation of verbs (26) did not act in their learners' best interests.

It was the third possible response "no noticeably adverse effects" which produced a result giving rise to the greatest concern about possible mismatches in teacher and learner perception. Nearly half the respondents seemed not to share learners' concern about lack of English explanation or translation (46 recording no noticeably adverse effects on learner motivation) and excessive use of questions (44 negative responses). One in three (31) did not perceive problems with "dated" or "out of touch" materials, while one in five did not perceive problems with long units (21), tapes (20), repetitive exercises (15) and poor verb presentation (18). It was in the area of

unclear grammar sections that the lowest number of respondents (14) could be seen to be at variance with learners' views.

Question 6 canvassed teachers' views on five features of current coursebooks which are evident from even a cursory inspection and which, in the context of this enquiry, are deserving of more critical scrutiny.

Overcrowded pages may lead at least to excessive arousal, clearly identified as detrimental to motivation (Yerkes-Dodson Law) and at worst to confusion and a desire to "leave the field" (Lewin).

Excessively demanding schedules of learning may likewise easily provoke a sense of "negative valence" (Lewin) as well as placing excessive demands on memory, recall and general cognitive capacity.

Variety at the expense of the chance to practice and thereby consolidate can lead to loss of a sense of expectancy as to a worthwhile outcome (De Cecco and Crawford) while the teaching of too many discrete topic units can fail to mobilize the learner's capacity for categorization (Bruner) and undermine the principle of a diet of comprehensible input (Krashen). Excessive emphasis on "transactional" language is a classic instance of "instrumental" motivation taking precedence over "integrative" motivation (Gardner and Lambert).

Relating the above list of undesirable characteristics to aspects of learning and motivation theory previously discussed was not merely an exercise in sophistry. A contention underpinning this enquiry is that theory exists to illuminate and serve practice and enables more

rigorous and ultimately more worthwhile evaluation and development to take place.

Question 6 could thus be said to test one of the major hypotheses behind this enquiry - that much established practice in the design and presentation of teaching materials is not consistent with what is now widely believed about the generation of motivation and the promotion of effective learning. Teachers' responses to the propositions in Question 6 revealed a concurrence with the hypothesis which ranged from overwhelming to significant. 68 respondents agreed their overcrowded pages created problems for learners, 57 felt the same about excessively demanding schedules of work and 50 supported the notion that current orthodoxy places excessive emphasis on transactional, as opposed to discursive or imaginative, language. Although attracting less than a straight majority agreement, the suggestions that variety at the expense of practice and consolidation and that the division of learning programmes into too many discrete "topic" units worked against learner motivation nonetheless drew support from 39 and 36 respondents respectively.

The latter two propositions drew the largest neutral response (44 and 41). 40 respondents expressed no strong feeling about excessive transactional language, but only 30 took a non-committal stance on the excessive length and demands of learning schedules in some books and only 23 were not wholeheartedly opposed to overcrowded pages.

There was some measure of disagreement, but in no case did this amount even to one respondent in four. The highest level of disagreement was

recorded on the use of discrete topic units (22), while 16 teachers disagreed on the detrimental effect of variety for its own sake. It must be acknowledged that, through teacher training programmes, GCSE syllabuses and the thrust of much contemporary in-service training, teachers have been strongly urged to provide learners with a kaleidoscopic diet of activity. This approach seems to be linked to a rather circumscribed view of motivation strategy (on the teacher's part). Similarly, the breaking down of traditional, linear, amorphous learning schedules into definable, feasible-looking discrete tasks and situations has been a central feature of the "graded objectives" and GCSE approach. To challenge an apparently still buoyant orthodoxy may be seen by some teachers as near iconoclasm. The common issue in the challenge is the risk of reducing the coherence of a learning experience by the introduction of variety and discontinuity for their own sakes. The remaining propositions in the question (learning schedules, transactional language and page format) drew only 12, 9 and 8 dissenting responses respectively.

5.5.2 Subjective responses

As with the survey of pupils' views, it was felt that valuable evidence would be gained by inviting unstructured comment on Questions 4 and 5. As indicated in the discussion of the questionnaire (5.3.1), Question 7 was set up expressly to give teachers the opportunity to comment freely both on matters arising from other items in the questionnaire and on aspects relevant to the enquiry which it has not, in their view, touched on. I have already indicated that the level of response to a postal questionnaire was impressively high. It should

also be noted that the questionnaire was administered at a time (early 1988) when teachers were feeling distinctly beleaguered by revised conditions of service ("directed time" linked to an imposed restructuring and settlement of their salaries) and great change (notably the - as many saw it - hasty introduction of GCSE, the proliferation of TVEI, the Education Reform Bill, and the need to develop profiling and records of achievement). It is a tribute to their co-operativeness that only 12 of the 99 respondents felt unable to contribute personal responses. It might equally be argued that many teachers appreciated having their views sought on a subject which, while crucial to their daily professional lives, has already been demonstrated to be somewhat under-explored.

The majority of teachers' subjective responses centred on the particular coursebook they use. Their responses will be reported in respect of that book - though some will be of more general import. This report will both illuminate and elaborate on the statistical presentation of responses on individual coursebooks reported in 5.4.3. Teachers' responses will be reported in relation to each question in turn, in all their interesting diversity.

In addition to those features of the coursebooks identified as desirable or motivating by learners, teachers using <u>Action!</u> elaborated on

- the course's provision to its users of the opportunity to succeed quickly in the use of spoken French in public situations

- the use of authentic materials and situations relevant
  to day-to-day living

- the (for many users) relevant and feasible linking of
  much of Book 1 to a day trip to Boulogne

- use of humour and a light-hearted approach to topics:
  this, backed with the use of puzzles and games created
  a climate for learning that pupils related to

- provision for 'differentiation' by the inclusion of a
  separate, more advanced 'grammar' section with exercises
  for more able learners balanced with the simplicity and
  clarity of most grammar presentation

- the striking of a balance between the need for
  authenticity and the presentation of materials accessible
  to a learner group of average ability

- the extensive use of pictures as reinforcing agents
  (including the provision of flashcards)

- the variety of strategies used to present a particular
  piece of information

- page format: some respondents commended the course for
  not overcrowding its pages

- the helpfulness of the teacher's book which accompanies
  the course: it contains useful ideas on exploiting the
  course material and suggestions for pair and role-play
  work.

<u>Tricolore</u> users, a more numerous group, found a good range of items to
elaborate on.

As a course book, <u>Tricolore</u> was praised for

-   the large amount of authentic material it contained

-   being up-to-date and presenting a recognizable image of
    a modern French way of life

-   greater realism; a rich variety of character and voice

-   learners' ability to relate to the topics and images
    presented, notably those such as music, fashion and
    outings which are of real concern or interest to young
    people

-   language tasks and structural manipulation linked to real
    situations and contextualized

-   a topic-based structure which gives a 'concrete' feel to
    language study

-   offering learners the opportunity to learn language with
    quick and ready useability in public situations.

A number of specific features were commended:

-   the variety of ways of presenting similar information

-   the flexible exploitation made possible by the extra
    "Au choix" sections, attractive worksheets which allow
    extended work and related unit tests which encourage the
    setting of short-term goals and reinforce learning

-   related to the above, the provision of adequate and
    suitable reinforcement work for faster workers

-   the provision of reprographic masters for worksheets and
    tests: these are a significant breakthrough in the
    provision of more flexible, learner-friendly teaching

materials

- constant revision and recycling, with material being re-presented in different forms and contexts

- listening material: a wide range which promoted flexible exploitation by different ability groups, including potential for autonomous use as, for example, homework

- a comprehensive and helpful teacher's handbook accompanying each volume

- the provision of flashcards

- recommendations for the integration of games into the learning process

- reading material: the clarity of 'documentary data' (maps, plans, etc.), the interesting nature of the factual (background) texts

- the introduction of full-colour sections in Stage 3.

- the introduction into Stages 4a and 4b of 'information gap' activities, topic-based vocabulary lists and exercises to develop examination technique

- the practice of presenting exercises by titles, not numbers or letters

- the use of 'advance organizer' headings to units and end-of-unit summaries

- tapes with backing music.

One or two respondents entered caveats as follows:

- adoption of a comprehensive course such as this facilitated movement of learners between teaching sets,

but there should be more scope for teachers to choose
their coursebooks

- notwithstanding its variety, the course is still too
  dense and difficult for slower learners

- the end-of-chapter summaries should be expressed as
  language 'functions' (the new Spanish course ¡Vaya!
  was cited as an example of good practice)

- "the course is a vast improvement on Longmans, but there
  is still a long way to go".

Deutsch Heute users commented only on the treatment of topics as
teaching units which enabled teachers to use the book more flexibly
rather than work through it cover-to-cover. The provision of related
assessment tests was also seen as a positive development.

A few interesting points were raised by users of other courses, most
of which are mirrored in comments on the three main courses
investigated:

Studio 16: designed for use by older learners, this course showed a
logical progression in introducing and practising a new structure: it
was particularly good for its introduction of the passe compose.

Communications: presented a particular body of information in a
variety of ways; liked for its sense of humour and clear grammatical
sections with appropriate exercises to consolidate learning and
provide learners with a gauge of their progress.

D'Accord: has regular sets of check points as a means of

consolidating and reinforcing learning.

<u>Fertig</u> is another course organized along topic-based lines.

Turning to unhelpful or demotivating features of the books, teachers
were equally forthcoming in their responses.

<u>Action!</u> users felt that

- listening exercises and activities were too long for
  less able pupils: there was in any case a need for more
  graded listening material to overcome pupils' sense of
  being intimidated by natural speed authentic language

- some sections (travel in Book 2 was cited as a prime
  example) are too long: the teacher has to be very
  selective to maintain learners' interest

- overall, there is too much material for the teaching
  time characteristically available: the teacher's book
  in particular makes exaggerated assumptions: the need
  to cut and select makes lesson preparation very time-
  consuming

- from the learners' point of view, teaching units,
  especially from Book 2 on, were far too long, leading
  to boredom; they featured a surfeit of (background)
  'information' which was felt to be too difficult for
  learners and was, in any case, not geared to a
  communicative approach; pages were too crowded; a
  factor which induced boredom was an excessive amount of
  time spent on a single page

- there were not enough exercises to practise and
  reinforce

- exercises based on 'completing' conversation were not
  satisfactory as learners found it difficult to provide
  the 'necessary' response: motivation for the activity
  was particularly difficult to generate

- exercise rubrics could be clearer: learners had some
  difficulty establishing what they were trying to achieve:
  exercises were quite easy once 'deciphered'

- learners <u>would welcome</u> (my underlining) more formal
  exercises as a means of self-assessment

- more up-to-date pictures and cartoons were necessary:
  it was argued that learners relate best to the learning
  experience through visual stimuli

- topics (especially those related to travel) tended to be
  repetitive

- there was too much of a jump of level of attainment
  between different books in the course

- ever-present translation into English of vocabulary did
  not encourage learners to seek meaning within the target
  language.

A significant summary comment from one teacher suggested that pupils
of lower motivation or ability would find all the aspects raised in
Question 5 unhelpful or demotivating: those of high ability and
motivation "would hardly notice". It seems appropriate to note at
this point that only 'high' (non-selective) schools responded as users
of <u>Action!</u>. Knowledge of the characteristics of abler learners (as

discussed by John Nott in Richardson's (1983) _Teaching Modern Languages_) suggests that teachers of abler groups might not experience the problems to the same extent.

Notwithstanding the concluding note above, a picture emerged from _Tricolore_ users which was not dissimilar. Learners were said to be discouraged by

- excessive length of teaching units, especially in parts 3 and 4: the surfeit of material was not clearly accessible to learners without a lot of teacher input: the teacher often had to "sift" material and use GCSE syllabuses to point the way to effective and feasible exploitation

- lack of variety in presentation, again especially in parts 3 and 4: the course was too complicated for average (the majority of) pupils

- too many grammatical points in one unit (Unit 6 of part 1 was cited as presenting verbs and adjectives simultaneously)

- long listening passages (it was noted, however, that, whereas these tended to demotivate a whole class, motivation and effective use would improve considerably when the cassette (and control of its use) was given to learners in small groups

- 'cluttered' layout, overcrowded pages, confusing presentation, the need to spend too long on one page

- long vocabulary lists

-    too much 'information' (English background): this was

     felt to work against language learning for practical

     communication

-    excessive complexity of language and grammatical

     presentation, especially in later books: average- and low-

     ability learners were quickly demotivated.

The course was also criticized for

-    its "rather disjointed, bitty approach" which was felt to

     act against learners' seeing what they are aiming at

     achieving

-    allied to the above, a lack of context and clarity in

     some exercises: learners need to know "what they are

     doing and why"

-    failure adequately to follow up "new" grammar: there was

     not sufficient emphasis on minor grammatical points and

     insufficient emphasis on essentials

-    exercises which were "too easy" for abler learners and

     risked inducing a sense of pointlessness: there was

     more need for suitably graded exercises

-    grammar presentation sections which were often unclear by

     assuming non-existent knowledge of mother-tongue grammar

     terminology and structure: presentations needed to be

     looked at with more appreciation of the breadth of ability

     in learners: non-verbal modes of presentation, for

     instance, should be explored

-    lack of an English-French glossary: many simple errors

could be eradicated if pupils could check their own

output more easily

- lack of written exercises: there were seen as a valuable

  means of consolidating learning

- problems created by 'natural' voice speed on the tapes:

  these needed to be exploited with great care

- a larger than average number of errors and misprints

- excessive explanatory use of English

- the placing of too heavy a responsibility on the teacher

  for selection of a useable body of material

- excessive exploitation of personal and family

  information and correspondence (it appears that children

  dislike writing letters in any language).

Once again, comments emerged which serve to sum up this stage of the report:

"Pupils prefer shorter, more manageable units which show them they are progressing."

"The teacher is the main source of motivation: pupils become bored with the pattern of presentation in a coursebook, which is why the teacher must use it judiciously."

Deutsch Heute users complained of the use of "background noise" on the tapes (though this is insisted on for GCSE as representing greater authenticity of situation): it was perceived as a hindrance to understanding. Several users complained of the lack of an English-German vocabulary or a comprehensive topic vocabulary principally

because their absence made it frustrating for abler learners to work and assess their output independently.

Users of other courses commented as follows:

<u>Escalier</u>: too many different types of exercise on a single page.

<u>D'Accord</u>: introduction of unexplained new material; lack of revision of some key points.

<u>Communications</u>: insufficient practice and consolidation of structures; too much information given; lack of colour or diagrammatical presentation of grammar; need for a separate section (at the back) to summarize grammar.

<u>Vorwärts</u>: there is a lack of satisfying support material, especially to stimulate dialogue or role-play: the only "pairs"-type exercise offered is too difficult.

<u>Fertig</u>: the comment of the teacher using this course was broadened into a general observation:

> "Today's emphasis on everyday situations has brought with it almost complete loss of any kind of 'anecdotal' (story) content. This seriously demotivates and creates boredom. No pupil wants to spend <u>all</u> lessons (often in two modern languages) practising how to buy cheese or make phone calls!"

As indicated earlier, Question 7 offered teachers an opportunity freely to express their views. The thoughtful, diverse and often incisive responses the question drew seem amply to justify its inclusion.

Action! users wrote of the need for

- a series of tasks with a shallower "incline of difficulty" which, by promoting a gradual build-up of confidence, would enable more learners to tackle more demanding units

- breaking down large bodies of vocabulary into more digestible chunks

- coded, graded exercises for differentiated exploitation: these should include more reading and writing work for abler learners and more simple exercises which would provide encouragement and the promotion of understanding and success (see Note 1)

- shorter books which can feasibly be completed in a year: there was imbalance in the existing structure of the course in that Book 1 contained too little material but Book 2 contained too much

- more "exercises" to supplement the (useful) worksheets and provide the necessary volume of practice

- more variety and shorter units in Books 2, 3 and 4: the need for variety, which the books did not fulfil, led to the introduction of extraneous material, which in turn meant that the book was even less likely to be finished in a school year (see Note 2)

- a "spiral" approach to topic presentation and development: each book should contain largely the same topics but they would be graded in order of difficulty of vocabulary, functions and general sophistication; such an approach would be simple but not simplistic and would enable work

to be more closely tailored to learners' needs and

attitudes

- less crowded pages, more colour, a generally more

attractive appearance: significant lack of any of these

was perceived as especially demotivating for slower

learners.

Two comments clearly summarized strongly-held views:

- the coursebook should be a "second teacher", enabling

learning on an individual basis: if "overused", any

coursebook will rapidly become boring to learners: it

should be a basis for the assimilation and application

of new language through visual, written and oral-aural

stimuli: the teacher is the main "developer of

motivation": her role is complemented, never replaced,

by the coursebook

- the "slavish" use of any coursebook is in itself

demotivating: a wide variety of strategies and resources

is available: many do not require the use of a book.

The responses of <u>Tricolore</u> users were an interesting mixture of
specific, practical aspects of coursebook design and views on the
nature and scope of the coursebook which, in some cases, anticipate
some of the conclusions likely to emerge from this inquiry.

On a specific level, respondents indicated a need for: aspects of
presentation and organization:

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- greater use of colour: Stages 1 and 2 are uniformly black, white and grey

- greater clarity in presentation: everything has a "condensed" air: pages are too crowded, leading to confusion among learners

- greater and more stimulating visual appeal: pages should be designed like those of a good modern magazine

- clearer identity for exercises: they need numbers and/or rubrics (teachers find themselves referring to, for example, "the exercise in the bottom left hand corner")

- short exercises: many pupils find long exercises and texts demotivating

- greater use of cartoon and magazine-style presentation for reading (the "Tom et Jojo" strip cartoon used once in Stage 1 is cited as a good example which merits repetition)

- more suggestions for (and better presentation of) role-play activity: role-play work is often presented rather unobtrusively and compares poorly with, for example, the same publisher's Tu Parles!, which has attractive pictures and simple, straightforward tasks

- engaging learners more frequently in performance: they appreciate the opportunity to perform in a socio-communicative setting: the book tends to leave them "passive" for too long periods of time

- revision units built into the course every 3-4 units, especially for "average"-ability learners

- shorter units: the length of units, especially from Stage 2 on, and notably in Stage 3, leaves learners spending weeks at a time on one unit of a book: they regard their slow progress as a sign of <u>their</u> inadequacy

- less long vocabulary lists, especially in Stage 4: these are perceived as very detrimental to motivation as they can only be tackled on a rote learning basis

- more, longer reading texts designed to appeal to and stimulate learners' imagination

- better music punctuating items on the accompanying tapes and cassettes and use of more authentic voices, especially those of children who can frequently be heard poorly impersonated by adults;

linguistic and content features: areas of concern:

- new structures should be more clearly identified in the context in which they are exploited (exercises, etc.): broad "function" statements at the beginning of a unit are not sufficient

- the course should start with language that enables learners to meet their everyday needs and experience an immediate sense of the relevance of what they are learning

- the course should reflect more clearly and closely the topics contained in GCSE syllabuses

- listening and writing tasks should be brought more into line with those encountered in GCSE

- there is too big a "conceptual gap" between Stages 2

  and 3: Stage 3 needs re-thinking: it is too crowded,

  too intense and too grammatical: it is "difficult to

  get through"

- verbs, in particular, should be presented in a broader,

  more diverse and, by implication, more genuinely

  'communicative' way: new tenses are introduced in a

  monotonous linear way from Stage 2 on which is reminiscent

  of more traditional coursebooks

- there are grammatical shortcomings in Stage 4B: it is

  felt that the final book in a course should summarize its

  linguistic objectives

- there are a number of linguistic errors, particularly in

  Stages 4A/B

- whereas diversity and variety can be good things, in

  excess they can, as one respondent put it, "leave learners

  swimming in an ocean without limits and with very little

  to grasp": the same respondent referred to the detrimental

  effect of "too many stimuli"

- a significant proportion of the material is too difficult

  for "lower ability" pupils.

The following responses were of a more general nature:

- there is a need for shorter books which can comfortably

  be completed in a school year

- abler learners need more reading, writing and explicitly

  grammatical work

- "Important features of a coursebook are (a) simplicity and (b) clarity. If we produce textbooks which are complicated and overcrowded, we 'switch the learner off'."

- a good coursebook needs to appeal to a wide spectrum of learners: this will involve the use of graded (possibly colour-coded) exercises and areas to stimulate all (see Note 1)

- "I do not believe that the 'wide-ability' coursebook exists, if there is a need for such a thing (with school budgets in mind), there must be different 'tiers' within the book. There is a need for more space, especially in the presentation of sections for lower-ability learners."

- "If a coursebook is too demanding, parts can be omitted. It is there to be used as a tool, not followed slavishly."

- "I get bored with coursebooks myself, so I have to vary their use otherwise I don't enjoy teaching. Other members of my department like the security of a coursebook."

One or two respondents took a more progressive line:

- rather than a coursebook, material could be presented in individual topic- or theme-based booklets which would also exploit one or two grammatical points

- a "way forward": the teacher, in conjunction with GCSE syllabuses, should take responsibility for defining content and should use worksheet-type material for flexible exploitation

- "I am keen to see a move away from the coursebook to a

  learner 'handbook' which would serve as a course guide

  and a key to access to 'resource bank' materials for

  learning".

The implications of a number of these responses will be returned to (see Note 2).

Deutsch Heute users recorded the following views:

- the coursebook "brings" the target language country and

  its people to the learner: accurate illustrations in

  up-to-date settings are important: Deutsch Heute scores

  well in this respect

- worksheets and progress tests for each unit are significant

  aids to motivation

- there is a need for clear presentation of exercises: they

  should not be made unnecessarily complicated by efforts to

  make them more imaginative, which can be at the expense

  of learners failing to understand their aim and what is

  expected

- locating written exercises at the back of the book is not

  popular, these are better incorporated into teaching units

- there is a serious lack of role-play material, especially

  in Parts 1 and 2.

Finally, the following responses were recorded by users of a variety of other courses:

<u>Communications</u>:   there is a need for reprographic masters for worksheets and practice material, as are available with <u>Tricolore</u> and other leading courses; lack of clarity of the objective of some exercises; need for more revision material .

<u>D'Accord</u>:   sections introducing 'imaginative' input are more clearly presented in the teacher's book than in the pupil's.

<u>Escalier</u>:   commended for its presentation of dialogue which leads to the identification of key sentences with the aim of encouraging gist comprehension.

<u>French for You</u>:   too much repetitive question and answer work in French is demotivating for average and lower ability learners: it would be better offered as an extra section for the abler learner (if used at all . . .).

<u>Studio 16</u>:   answers to exercises at the back of the book can be helpful as support for more independent learning but are susceptible to abuse by less motivated or immature learners.

<u>Vorwärts</u>:   there is a need for two vocabularies: one for each unit and a classified version; there is also a need for a digest of basic grammar points for reference and for a more informative table of the contents of the course.

5.6 <u>A summary of salient points</u>

One of the concerns that lies behind this inquiry is that, in an assessment of any aspect of the value of a central feature of the language teaching and learning process, due prominence and status

should be given to the views of professional practitioners and, as it is becoming increasingly fashionable to say, their "clients". This survey of pupils' and teachers' views on some aspects of coursebooks is, to the writer's best knowledge, the first of its kind. The results were thus reported extensively. However, in the interests of a more refined and manageable summative evaluation and the comparison of the most significant views of teachers and learners which will be an important by-product, there follows a summary presentation of salient views expressed by the teachers. Items have been included where, in the main body of the survey, they draw a 'first past the post' majority view and, in the subjective response sections, where a number of respondents (a minimum of 10%) recorded similar points of view.

The aspects of modern coursebooks felt by teachers to be most desirable or motivating were

- variety

- role-play and conversation work

- games

- presentation of "everyday" situations

- accompanying tape recordings

- flashcards

- provision of a vocabulary.

Aspects felt to be most unhelpful or demotivating were

- boring or unclear presentation of verbs

- repetitive exercises with no perceived point

- unclear grammar sections

- long units, texts and dialogues.

Possible "undesirable features" which were most unequivocally condemned were

- overcrowded pages

- excessively demanding schedules of learning

- excessive emphasis on 'transactional' language.

In broader terms, teachers signalled the need for

- greater use of colour - a much more feasible proposition with modern printing technology

- the combination of audio and visual support material into the obvious, and increasingly used, modern medium of the videotape

- greater clarity in the presentation of material: the use of 'advance organizer' chapter headings and end-of-chapter summaries was strongly commended

- shorter units: learners link 'progress' to rapid completion of the structures elements (chapters/units/lessons, etc.) of their coursebook

- regular 'revision' units to consolidate learning

- built-in 'differentiation': teachers recognise that no single book can be all things to all learners: coded, graded sections with optional extended material are indispensable to the flexibility sought by teachers

- worksheets and integrated assessment materials: moves

towards more individualized and autonomous learning place

much more of a premium on learners' ability to assess

their own progress: the value of the sort of instant

feedback this generates is readily apparent

(c.f. Chapter 2.6)

- the role of the coursebook to be more clearly defined as

  that of "an aid not as means of learning": coursebooks

  tend to be marketed as:

  > "a complete programme of French teaching for
  >
  > Middle and Secondary schools"
  >
  > (Tricolore publicity broadsheet)

  and the publication of both Tricolore and Action! in five

  volumes both imparts a sense of ubiquitousness (a book a

  year) and imposes on teachers a pattern of use with which

  they feel they really must attempt to comply.

5.7 The views of teachers and learners: consensus or conflict?

The important notion of partnership in the planning, design,
management and acquisition of learning has been touched upon passim.
Implicit in the term 'partnership' are such concepts as shared
aspirations, common purpose and a good measure of consensus on aims,
objectives and outcomes. It seems not only desirable but also
necessary at this point to compare the most strongly and clearly
articulated views of learners and teachers on the major instrument of
their shared activity. Such a comparison will address a crucial
question: to what extent are teachers' and learners' views of
coursebooks compatible? Any serious mismatch or conflict of viewpoint

will need to be addressed as a further outcome of this inquiry.

Consistent with the overall learner-orientated thrust of this inquiry, learners' most strongly-held views will be compared to teachers' responses to the same issues. Teachers' views were, perhaps inevitably, more elaborate and wide-ranging than learners'. Their most consistently impressive feature was a clear desire that their professional work should be supported by a rich, varied and above all flexible resource that made learning more accessible and more rewarding.

5.7.1 Areas of consensus

Teachers and learners were in clear agreement on the value of

- presentation of the target language community and its culture in real-life everyday situations

- an abundance of dialogue, conversation and role-play work

- supporting tape recordings, bringing a variety of authentic native-speaker voices into the classroom for comprehension and as a source of models for production

- a vocabulary, not only for its obvious reference value but also as a means of promoting greater learner autonomy.

They also agreed on the detrimental nature of

- exercises which, through repetitiveness, poor quality of rubrics or lack of obvious relevance to the broader

topic in hand, failed to arouse interest or enthusiasm

- grammar sections which purport to present or explain the language in structural terms, but which contrive to confuse or bore learners.

5.7.2 Some areas of mismatched perception

In the event, "consensus or conflict" makes quite a good headline, but the outcome of this comparative exercise is less antithesis-laden. Learners' enthusiasm for quizzes is viewed rather equivocally by teachers - about one in three finding such activities very significant to learner motivation, but another one in three finding them not very significant. Only one in three teachers wholeheartedly acknowledges the importance of copious illustration which learners rate highly. Learners' dislike of 'tests' is presumably not shared by the seemingly large number of teachers who set them - though some teachers did speak out against norm-referenced testing and others emphasized the potential value of more learner self-assessment.

The area which saw the most serious mismatch between the views of teachers and their learners was the often controversial and potentially crucial issue of the nature and extent of explanations in English in a foreign language coursebook. Just over one in three learners found these to be lacking, whilst an insignificant number found them excessive. Barely one in four teachers agreed that they were very significant to motivation, whilst an almost equivalent number felt that they were not very significant. The history of foreign language teaching has been marked by a perpetual tension

between those advocating the provision of direct access to the language in a quasi-mother-tongue-acquisition mode and those who feel that effective learning must be linked to a certain intellectual rigour involving knowledge of grammatical technicality and terminology. There are currently two or three generations of teachers for whom the former (in its various guises) represents an ideal to be striven for. The practical reality of the typical teaching-learning situation is such that some sensible cognitive corner-cutting is both prudent and even desirable. Learners want above all to understand what is going on, they want a structured and orderly experience. One of the major issues to be addressed in looking for a way forward from this inquiry must be the balance of mother tongue and foreign language. As this comparative study stands, it is the most contentious issue between teachers and learners.

5.8 Conclusion

As has been frequently emphasized, effective learning will take place as an outcome of a healthy working partnership between teacher, learner and the producers of materials and resources which support the efforts of the former two. Although some publishers claim to have a well-developed field-testing and feedback programme, there is no evidence of any systematic attempt to gather, collate and compare teachers' and learners' views. Chapters 4 and 5 of this inquiry represent a modest step in what is surely a desirable direction. It is a matter of regret and even concern to many educators that, as education has become more and more of a political issue, the jargon of educational debate has become coloured with mercantile images of

"delivering the curriculum" with learners as a "clientèle". Such rhetoric need not, however, become the monopoly of a tendentious lobby: partnership involves the commitment of all concerned and one of the most powerful ways of generating this is to make all parties feel they have an involvement in the whole enterprise - that they are valued. The surveys of teachers' and learners' views have demonstrated that the "clientèle" possess a wealth of interest, concern and sound judgement.

Notes

1. The recently-introduced (1987) German course <u>Zickzack</u> (Goodman-Stephens, B., Rogers, P. and Briggs, L.) features both practice material and presentations of grammar on three differentiated levels to cater more effectively for differences in learner ability. Nelson's Italian course <u>Ciao!</u>, intended for publication from 1990, will incorporate a similar approach.

2. The ILEA/Mary Glasgow course for years 1-3 Éclair (1975) featured disposable workbooks which contained presentation and practice material. One of their minor distinctions was to metamorphose the "exercise" into a "game". See further reference in 3.2

Reference

1. Stern, H.H. (1983): <u>Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching.</u> Oxford University Press, p.477.

CHAPTER SIX : A CASE STUDY: TRICOLORE

6.1 Introduction

The 1960s saw an unprecedented level of investment in the hard- and
software resources perceived as indispensable to the implementation of
the new audio-lingual and audio-visual approaches already discussed
(Chapter 2.4.1). In the area of teaching resources, probably the most
important contribution came from the Nuffield Foundation.   The
Foundation set up a Foreign Language Materials Project in 1963 which,
over a period of several years, produced audio-visual courses in
French, German, Russian and Spanish. The French course En Avant was
intended initially to service the ill-fated primary school French
project, but, when the Schools Council took over the Nuffield
initiative in 1967, it was developed to the level of the 16+
examination.

The demise of the primary school project and changing perceptions of
materials and methods led   the course's publisher, Arnold-Wheaton of
Leeds, to commission a new French course for beginners in their first
year of secondary education. Work on the course was begun in 1977 and
Stage 1 of Tricolore was published in 1980. The course was originally
intended to be produced in three stages, leading into existing
Nuffield-Schools Council material to complete a five-year course to
first public examinations. It achieved a rapid and remarkable
commercial success and, as indicated in 3.1, the publishers can
substantiate the slogan, which adorns all their contemporary
publicity, that Tricolore is "Britain's Most Popular French Course".

In response to demand from users and also to developments in the theory of syllabus design influenced by the work of the Council of Europe, van Ek, Wilkins and others (see Note 1) and the impending introduction of the common public examination at 16+ (GCSE), two further stages - 4A and 4B - were produced in 1985. _Tricolore_ thus became

> "A complete programme of French teaching for Middle and
> Secondary schools beginning with Stage 1 for students
> 10-12 years and running through to Stage 4 which completes
> the course to 16+, GCSE and Standard Grade examinations."
> (Publisher's brochure)

It is thus a particularly suitable vehicle for a 'case study' - an application of the evaluation instrument described in Chapter 3.4 combined with a recapitulation of views expressed by learners and teachers in Chapters 4 and 5.

6.2 A general description of the course

The course is in five volumes, each with its own teacher's book, a set of accompanying tapes, filmstrips, and a book of A4-size reproduction masters for photocopying or duplication of worksheets, puzzles and games. Stages 1 and 2 have recently been augmented with sets of reading and games cards and Stage 4 has recently been augmented with a set of twelve overhead projector transparencies. In addition to all the above, a series of seven "assessment packs" offers a programme of assessment for each unit of the course, providing for continuous feedback on progress in the various skill areas with worksheets and tapes. Stages 1 and 2 feature supplementary appendices of practice material called "C'est Extra" and "Au choix", each volume has a

French-English glossary and a summary of grammar is provided at the back of the book from Stage 2 onwards. Presumably in response to feedback from users, the publisher recently (1985) introduced a division of Stages 1 and 2 into two volumes - A and B - each covering half the material in the original version. The publisher's informative catalogue explains:

> "Some schools have found that they are not completing
> Stages 1 and 2 in one academic year, and pupils are
> more highly motivated when they progress to a new book.
> The two-volume edition provides the teacher with greater
> flexibility of use and also avoids double-purchasing
> when textbooks are required beyond one academic year."

Leaving aside the shrewd commercial aspect of the above, it is interesting to note the publisher's views on the motivational aspect of change (cf. some teachers' views in Chapter 5), on flexibility and on the financial implications of resourcing a contemporary foreign language department in a secondary school. To amplify a point touched on in Chapter 3.3, the total cost of equipping a school of 750 pupils with the full range of Tricolore material at 1988 prices would be approximately £4,575. This figure must be seen in the context of a typical annual departmental budget of less than £1,000 to cover not only books but stationery - which nowadays includes a much heavier commitment to reprographics. Small wonder that equipping a department with a new course is a very long-term undertaking and that most schools have to content themselves with the minimum viable components - coursebook, teacher's book, repromasters and tapes (though most schools even have difficulty in affording the latter two). It is with such stark realities in mind that this inquiry addresses itself to the coursebook, which is the central, indispensable item.

By any standards, <u>Tricolore</u> offers a rich and varied programme of study - the only media it has (as yet) failed to incorporate are video and computer programmes.   It is set up to bombard teacher and learner with stimuli,   thereby   furthering its publisher's stated aims and claims that the course

" -   inspires and motivates pupils by giving them a sense of
         achievement and success;

  -      contains a wealth of attractive, lively and up-to-date
         material designed to stimulate and maintain the pupil's
         attention and interest;

  -      sets clearly defined tasks and attainable goals;

  -      teaches pupils to communicate in French and provides
         practice in asking questions, giving information, role
         playing and expressing opinions;

  -      is competitively priced, well-designed and easy to use,
         with a very comprehensive Teacher's Book for each Stage;

  -      caters for pupils of a wide range of ability providing
         material to challenge the more able as well as the less
         able;

  -      teaches structure and basic grammar, naturally, in context
         and with plenty of explanation and practice;

  -      covers the topics and themes included in the Graded Test
         schemes in use throughout the UK."

                    (Arnold-Wheaton Modern Languages Catalogue, 1988)

The   above   list   contains a number of claims which   are   particularly relevant   to   this   inquiry and which will be   examined   carefully   in subsequent evaluation of the course.

In concept, structure and content, the course owes much to a consensus view of the nature,   scope,   aims and objectives of language   teaching which   has developed steadily since the early 1970s.   Hawkins   (1987) summarizes   the   starting   point   for what   was   effectively   a   major

reappraisal of the language-teaching syllabus in a series of questions:

" Who is the prospective learner?

What are his/her needs?

Can we structure the syllabus according to the functions that he/she can be predicted to want to perform in the language?

In order to perform the predicted functions, what notions (general or specific) must the learner be able to communicate?"   (1)

To complete the picture, it is also necessary to define the social and psychological roles the learner will play, the topics that will be dealt with and the settings in which the language will be used.

Such a syllabus structure led to a much more practically-orientated, realistic and relevant pattern of teaching material design, was strongly instrumental in facilitating the development of Graded Tests (see Chapter 3.2) and exerted a powerful influence on the development of both the National Criteria for GCSE Modern Languages and the actual examination syllabuses produced by Examination Boards.

Tricolore is thus based on a series of predictions of role, topic, situation and setting and, from the outset, projects the learner as a visitor to France. Stage 1 is set in La Rochelle, as is much of Stage 2, though the context is broadened by items on Brittany, Normandy, the Loire Valley and French Canada. Stage 3 is divided into five units, each featuring a different region of France - Paris, Alsace, the Alps, the Loire Valley and Provence. A "special section" (two pages) deals with "Les Pays Francophones". Stage 4 revises and consolidates much

previously-presented material in a general way, though the topics and
situations continue to be authentic and realistically presented. The
pupils' books 4A and 4B are unique in containing a preface obviously
addressed to the learner which sets out a nine-point agenda of aims
and objectives under the rubric

"by the end of the course, you should be able to do the
following:"

The salient features of the agenda are

1. An ability to cope with everyday (transactional)

   situations on a visit to a French-speaking country.

2. Ability to exchange personal information with French

   people and express opinions on a variety of matters.

3. Ability to advise and assist French-speaking visitors

   to this country.

4. Knowledge of everyday life in France and French-speaking

   countries.

5. Ability to extract information from French 'documentary

   data'.

6. Ability to gist read French magazine or newspaper articles

   or short stories for enjoyment or interest.

7. Gist comprehension of direct speech in French.

8. Gist comprehension of other material heard such as

   conversation, travel information, weather and news items

   on the radio.

9. Familiarity with the most important grammar and structures

   of the French language.

In setting up such an apparently comprehensive and wide-ranging programme, important questions of balance and emphasis must be addressed. These too will be considered in subsequent evaluation.

The publisher's own summary of the complete course, which lists topics, structures and language tasks, is reproduced as Figure 1.

6.3 Analysis and evaluation of the course: focus on motivation and learning

A significant outcome of Chapters 1-3 of this enquiry was the drafting of an instrument for the evaluation of coursebooks. The instrument was based on an analysis and distillation of those aspects of motivation and learning theory which were of greatest apparent relevance to the secondary school foreign language learning situation. It was presented as a series of questions which might be asked in a process of assessment or evaluation of a coursebook.

This instrument will now be used as a basis for analysing and evaluating Tricolore within the overall parameters of this enquiry.

6.3.1 Motivational features

The following questions are to be addressed in relation to the motivational functions of the course:

1. Presentation: initial impressions and use of colour:

Early editions of Stages 1 and 2 featured a rather uninspiring, plain cover with blue, white and red 'tricolore' motif, but all stages now feature glossy colour photographs on the cover. There has been a

general movement in this direction from most publishers. The photographs themselves feature social scenes, views of La Rochelle, Paris and, in Stage 3, famous places in the five French regions featured. Arguably the most appealing images are those on the cover of the last volume - Stage 4B - which feature young people canoeing, cycling and visiting Paris. In the light of learners' expressed interest in the daily life of the target language community, it seems that the human dimension could have been exploited more and the postcard scenic, less.

Apart from the covers of each volume, the widespread lack of colour is a significantly detrimental feature of the course. Two "magazine" sections in Stage 2 are given a small amount of overlay and highlighting in red, and a seven-page full-colour section in Stage 3 presents a fair range of colour images, from reproductions of Cézanne and Van Gogh to a plan of the Paris Métro and a number of views of French-speaking countries around the world. Different regions of France are presented in scenic photographs measuring just 4 x 3 centimetres, a selection of French food is depicted, but not in a form that could profitably be used for teaching, and a number of images of "les Français et les Françaises" are presented which could no doubt be used with some ingenuity by teachers, but which seem to have no particular purpose. The views of "les Pays Francophones" seem almost designed to exclude the human multicultural and multiracial dimension of the French-speaking world with the exception of one Afro-Caribbean woman. It is difficult not to view this as a piece of two-way "tokenism" (race and gender) and, indeed, the overall impression of the "colour section" is that of a rather empty gesture. The remaining

1,044 pages of text in the full set of coursebooks are unremittingly black, white and grey. There does not seem to be a consistent pattern of use of black and grey blocking - grey is used sometimes for activities, sometimes for structural presentation (though the latter practice is abandoned in Stage 4) and sometimes for "substitution table" drills. Some consistency of approach would undoubtedly make the books easier to use. Concerning the lack of colour, the publishers will very likely raise the question of cost, though their new German course Zickzack makes quite extensive use of colour. This argument can, however, be countered with the desirability of limiting content - a point to be returned to.

2. Layout: variety, density, accessibility to the individual learner:

Every unit of each stage begins with a presentation, usually in English in the early stages but exclusively in French from Stage 3 onwards. This takes the form either of cultural or background input linked to the overall theme of the unit. Whether in English or French, it is difficult to imagine these introductions being used without extensive preparation and/or mediation by the teacher. Experience with the course taught me that they were best returned to when the language content of the unit had been mastered. The sections in English were useful as short end-of-lesson "filler" activities.

Overall, there is no disputing the variety of material on offer in Tricolore. A typical teaching unit (Unit 6 of Stage 2, which deals with health problems) contains thirty different learning 'events'. The extent to which these reflect a balance of progress in the four

language skills must be discussed later. The density of the layout of modern coursebooks provoked the strongest critical reaction from teachers (Chapter 5.5.1). On the basis even of a cursory inspection, Tricolore is a prime offender in this area, which is crucial from the point of view of both the arousal and sustaining of motivation and the promotion of a positive learning experience. On almost every 20 x 35 centimetre page in the course there are three or four different activities. This is particularly the case in the early stages. Significantly, the division of Stages 1 and 2 into "A" and "B" volumes included some restructuring of particularly dense pages. As with the use of shading, there is again little apparent consistency in layout – some activities straddle two or all three of the columns in a typical page, while others are fitted in with the meticulousness of a jigsaw puzzle. (For a typical sample page, see Figure 2.)

Concerning the course's accessibility to the learner, it is the view of the publisher's own Modern Languages Editor (1988 telephone discussion) that the course is not designed for pupils to use independently. Rubrics for activities tend to be quite terse and functional and it is only in the final stages that clearly identified pairwork exercises are introduced which are based on generative use of language.

Tricolore presents, especially to average learners, an aspect which is visually very dense and, on the level of independent browsing and discovery, verging on the impenetrable.

Figure 2

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Figure 2

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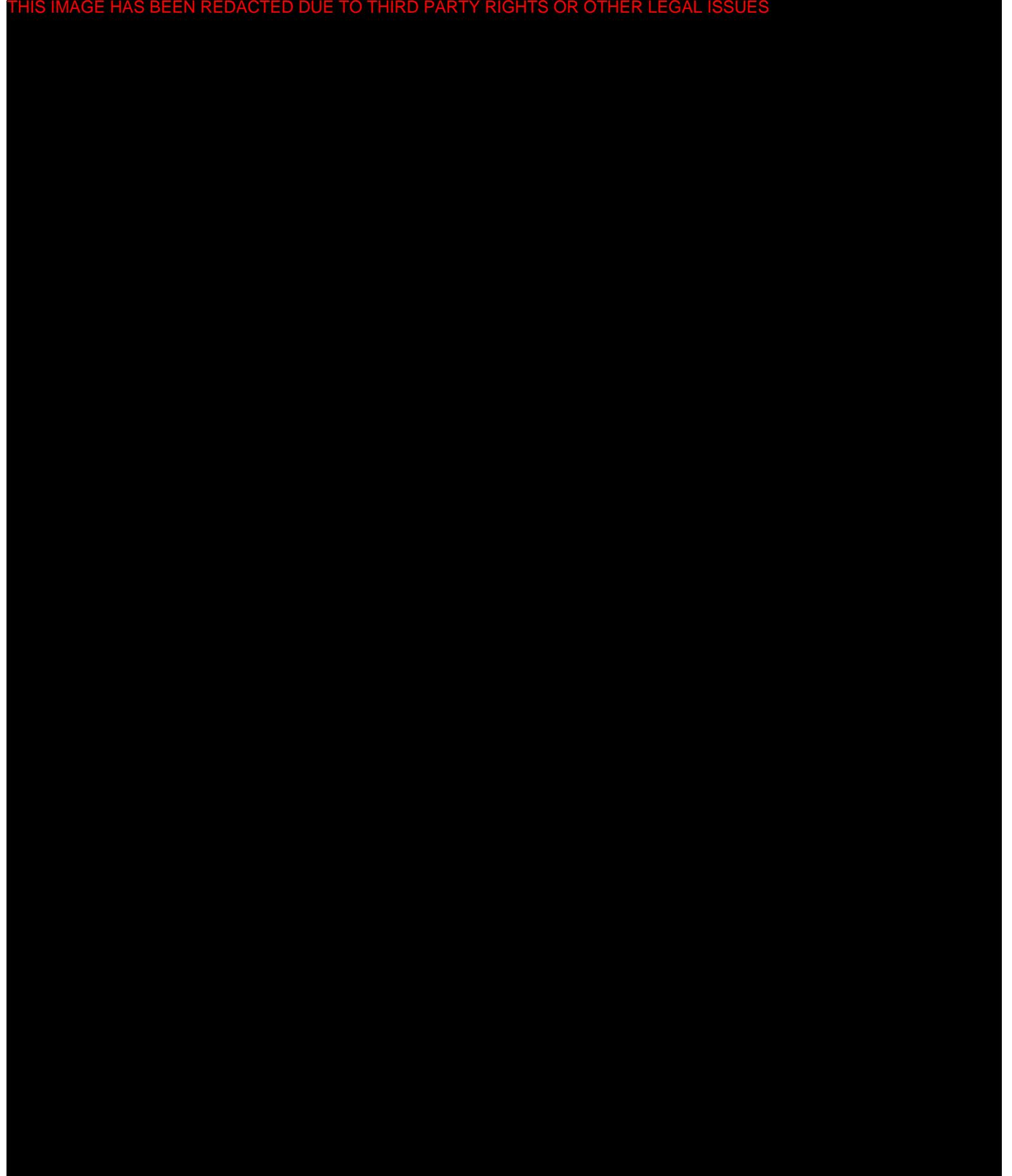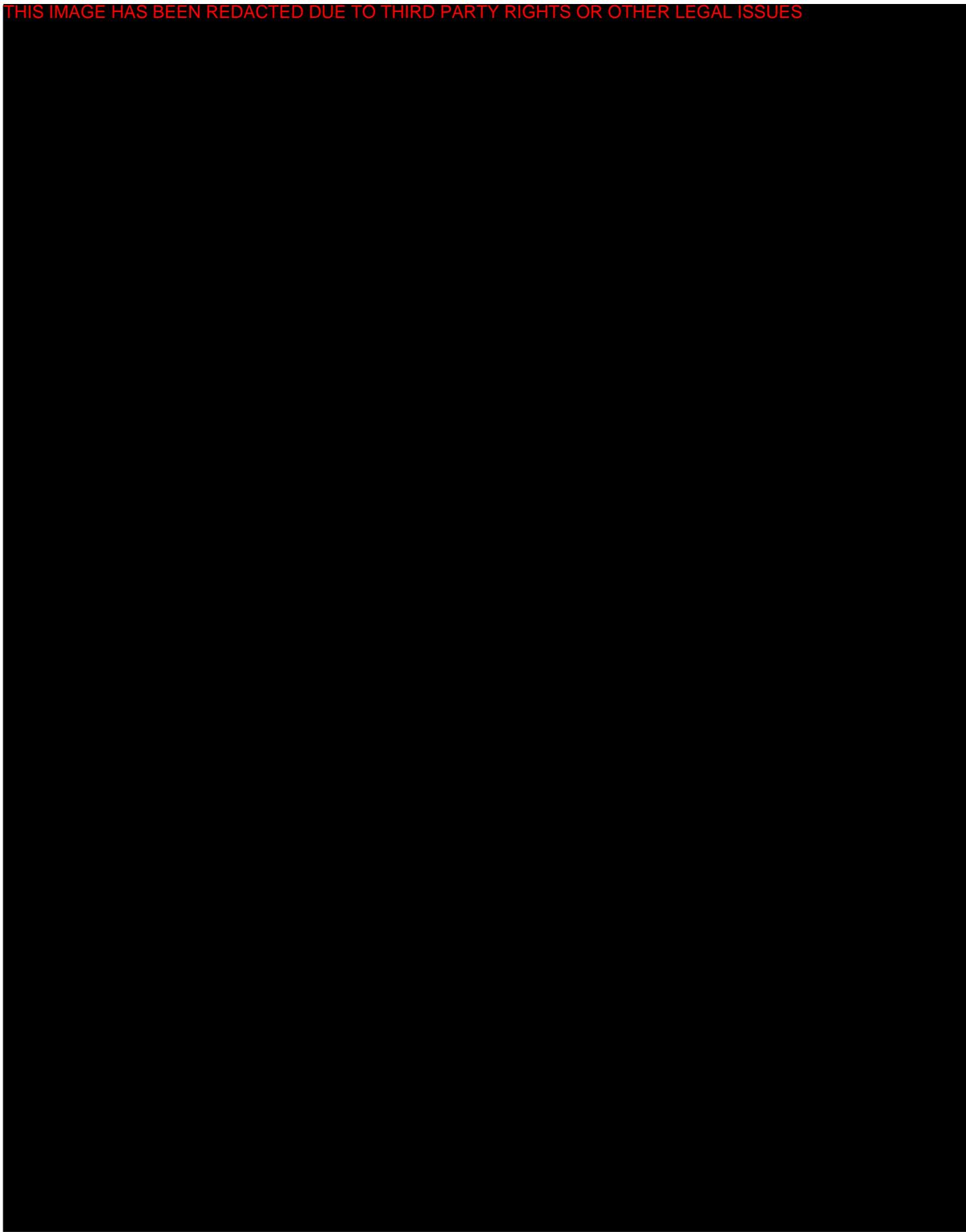
3. Expectancy: outcomes and a sense of progression:

In both their publicity material and their introduction to uses of Stage 4, the publishers place considerable emphasis on the definition of tasks and goals and the progressive acquisition of skills and knowledge. Throughout Stages 1-3, each teaching unit begins with a statement of projected outcomes, exemplified by the following:

> "In this Unit you'll learn how to make arrangements to go out or meet someone. You'll be learning how to find out the time of an event, different ways of travelling and how to discuss what to wear."
> (Stage 1, Unit 12)

> "In this unit you will learn how to buy a drink, a snack or a meal in France. You will also find out how to tell someone what has happened or what you have done, using the Perfect Tense."
> (Stage 2, Unit 7)

> "In this unit, you will learn about or revise the following topics:
>   the French Alps
>   planning a skiing holiday
>   staying in a ski resort
>   direct object pronouns (le, la, les)
>   the Present, Perfect and Future tenses
>   indirect object pronouns (lui, leur)
>   using the telephone
>   sending a telegram
>   talking about leisure activities."
> (Stage 3, Unit 3)

There is minor editorial inconsistency in the punctuation of the opening phrase in each case. More seriously, however, a sharply-inclined linguistic and conceptual progression can be observed. In Stage 1, objectives are expressed as communicative functions (in line with contemporary practice in GCSE and other modern language testing syllabuses). By Stage 2, grammatical terminology has been introduced (various references identify "the Perfect Tense" as an objective in

its own right) and by Stage 3 specific grammatical points are presented as objectives. A comparatively small proportion of users of Tricolore will handle such concepts with any facility. At Stage 4, such introductory statements of objectives disappear.

'Advance organizers' have already been identified (Chapter 3.4.2) as stimuli to motivation. They must, however, be linked to tangible goals and set in meaningful contexts. Actual titles to units tend to be short and sharp. Some of the most helpful information as to content and outcomes appears in the Contents pages of each volume. Pupils do not tend to refer to these, however. Overall, there is a sense of some lost opportunity: the statements of objectives could have been amplified into terms more descriptive of the expected outcomes in personal skill areas and the use of grammatical terms seems out of place in contemporary practice.

Units in all volumes conclude with some sort of statement or tabulation of outcomes. Until the final unit of Stage 1, such summaries consisted of rather dense vocabulary lists (for rote learning?) and a digest of grammatical points exemplified singly and with little or no explanation à la Whitmarsh. From Stage 1, Unit 14 onwards, summaries are rather more helpfully presented under the heading "Now you can:" but still consist of lists of words or phrases and bandy about the same grammatical terms whose use in the introduction to units was questioned. In Stage 4, presumably because of the greatly increased volume of content, "grammar" and "vocabulary" are presented as a series of back page references to the body of each unit. The "can do" approach to recording progress is gaining

adherents as issues related to learner profiling come to the fore. To make sense and provide genuine incentive, however, a tightly-structured series of activities with tangible outcomes must form an integral part of each teaching-learning unit and the completion of a personal profile of "can-do's" must be linked to perceived success. The fundamental flaw in the Tricolore approach is that bald recapitulatory statements of the contents of a unit do not represent outcomes for the learner.

In terms of general progress, learners with appropriate insights will perceive themselves to be taken through a good and broadly authentic range of experiences linked to visits to, or stays in France. There is, however, an overall lack of cohesion. Sporadic attempts are made in Stages 1 and 2 to present "real" French families, but the course lacks a baseline and progress cannot be measured in terms of increased competence in a familiar setting. Learners are rather presented with a seemingly interminable set of hoops through which they must jump. Other factors are involved in the creation of this impression which will be discussed elsewhere.

4. Incentive: valence and value: involvement of the learner

If arousal gambits are essential to the generation of motivation, incentives are vital to the arguably more important business of sustaining motivation. Hawkins' taxonomy of prescriptions for a teaching syllabus (6.2 above) highlights the importance of sound prediction of the needs and wants of the learning population. In this respect, Tricolore starts well, with a useful range of situations presented as exploited in Stages 1 and 2. It will fall to the teacher

to give an overall sense of continuity to the different learning events. In Stage 3, however, there is a sudden change of emphasis: five long units present a dense and often random experience which seriously lacks coherence, and, by virtue of its bulk and diversity, leaves learners gasping in its wake. Basing units on major regions involves quite considerable assumptions about learners; (and for that matter, teachers') familiarity with France. There would be little attraction in learning minutiae about the Paris public transport system if one were not intending to visit the city shortly. Teachers and others critical of <u>Tricolore</u> always point first to Stage 3. Stages 4A and B revert to a format which seems more learner-friendly and certainly revises and consolidates much early material: all topics of a typical GCSE syllabus are covered. Significantly, a number of users (in my own experience and as acknowledged by the publishers) omit Stage 3 altogether.

Stages 4A and B were produced after a three-year gap and in response to demand from users of Stages 1-3. During the intervening years, the GCSE criteria had been published and the move towards more practical foreign language study had gained both momentum and credibility (see 6.2). <u>Tricolore</u> 4A and B were quickly successful as the (as some will still argue) precipitate introduction of GCSE exposed a lack of suitable coursebooks. Stages 4A and B appeared to fill the gap and many schools bought these volumes first, introducing the earlier stages on a 'top down' pattern. What Stages 4A and B offered was a rich diet of material closely identifiable with GCSE, featuring more material designed to involve the learner in pair or groupwork through role-play, information-gap activity, opinion polls and quizzes. The

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writing, reading and listening skills were exploited largely through correspondence, authentic or quasi-authentic texts and documents and recordings which complement the general theme of each unit. Stages 4A and B include some unscripted dialogue by native speakers.

From the point of view of real involvement of the learner and the provision of incentive linked to a coherent view of progress, even Stages 4A and B seem to me to fall short of good practice. The linguistic diet is rich and varied, there are clear links with examination objectives, the socio-cultural tone and level of the books seem right for 15-16 year-olds, but the dense layout previously referred to is not alleviated by any thematic progression. This is precisely what the teacher respondent in 5.5.2 meant when she wrote of her (grammar school) learners "swimming in an ocean without limits". Leaving aside for the moment the issue of the considerable length of each teaching unit (five in each volume ranging between 33 and 45 pages in length), it is surprising that no thought seems to have been given to building some coherent developmental line into the course. The following illustrates what could be done:

	Existing format	Alternative format
Stage 4A		
Unit 1	Je me présente	Vive les vacances!
2	En ville et à la campagne	Bon voyage!
3	Bon voyage!	Je me présente
4	En famille et à l'école	En famille et à l'école
5	Bon appétit	Bon appétit
Stage 4B		
Unit 1	Les loisirs	Les loisirs
2	À votre santé!	En ville et à la campagne
3	À votre service!	À votre service!
4	Projets d'avenir	À votre santé!
5	Vive les vacances	Projets d'avenir

The alternative format proposed is based, as are many graded objectives schemes, on a progression of knowledge and competences linked to a visit to France or to receiving a French-speaking visitor.

Involvement of the learner comes back to more basic motivational constructs such as the meaningfulness and feasibility of the learning tasks presented, the establishment of links with the learner's existing experience and the promotion of some sense of autonomy and self-responsibility. The question of meaningfulness has been discussed elsewhere in this section. The more fundamental issue of feasibility warrants closer examination. The publishers claim that the course is designed for "pupils of a wide range of ability". This claim must be tested by examining the extent to which the course sets out to differentiate between different levels of learner ability. The most obvious areas in which to carry out such an evaluation are the presentation of language through texts, the language tasks set as part of the learning process and the way in which the language is presented as a formal system.

Concerning the language tasks, shortcomings in rubrics have been identified (in 2. above.) A good example of dense and essentially unhelpful instructions for any but the ablest learners must surely be the following from Unit 5 of Stage 1: A short dialogue between two children coming out of school is printed in white on a black square measuring just under 6 x 6 cm. Offset underneath, in black on a grey background, is the instruction:

> "Now make up a similar conversation, changing the words in
> italics".

A table is provided to help in the creation of the "conversation". It consists of a number of possible "activity" phrases such as:

"Je joue au tennis/tennis de table/football/golf/
baby foot/cricket."

It seems to me that, as an activity for most learners, this fails in that

- it relies on an ability to manipulate language in an
  abstract way simply not accessible to many learners

- there is no serious attempt to contextualize the
  dialogue: learners will not perceive any personal point
  or advantage in reproducing it

- the combination of abstraction and lack of proper context
  with the essentially non-generative nature of the
  substitution-based drill evokes now discredited aspects
  of behaviourist-based teaching strategy.

Such activities recur throughout the course: another example from Unit 7 of Stage 2, presented shortly after the introduction of the Perfect Tense, is reproduced as **Figure 3**. Other common activities are question-and-answer work based on texts or dialogues, matching questions and answers either in French (which, according to contemporary viewpoints, is no longer comprehension in the strict sense of the word) or English. What all these activities have in common is

- an emphasis on answers based on recall of facts,
  data or detail from the stimulus item

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1. Merci beaucoup, madame, | ai trouvé j' | ce pâté délicieux!

2. Est-ce que | tu aimé as | le fromage et le dessert Jean?

— Oui, madame, | ai préféré j' | le dessert. J'adore les gâteaux!

3. Où est-ce que | as mangé tu | aujourd'hui, Marie?

— À midi | ai acheté j' | un sandwich au café avec Claire et ce soir | mangé a on | au restaurant.

4. Alors, Pierre, qu'est-ce que | as tu commandé | ?

— Comme j'ai faim, | décidé ai j' | de manger deux sandwichs, mais pour toi | commandé j' ai | un sandwich au fromage, seulement. Ça va?

<u>Figure 3</u>

        —   an underlying motive based not so much on the value
of the item as a communicative building block for the
learner as on its capacity to illustrate a grammatical
point such as a verb tense, pronoun usage or rules
governing adjectives.

Serious attempts to provide differentiated learning experience in the
coursebook seem to come down to two strategies:

       (i)   a number of activities and texts are identified as
capable of "being omitted" by the less able

      (ii)   on a more positive note, Stages 1 and 2 feature separate
sections at the end of the book called "C'est Extra"
and "Au choix!" which provide

                 "additional practice material, mostly for more
                 able pupils to work on alone".

There is a programme of supplementary worksheets linked to each Stage
which, of its nature, can be used in a flexible way with groups of
varied ability. Like the course's own assessment programme, however,

it must be purchased as a relatively expensive separate item. For this reason, I am excluding it from this enquiry.

To summarize, despite its claims to cater for a wide ability span of learners, the course provides a diverse and demanding schedule of activities in which the majority will sink or swim. Its view of differentiation seems to lie in providing extra stimulus for the more able. This is valid up to a point - in my own experience using the course with mixed-ability groups I would identify and teach to all a 'core' from each unit and was grateful for the extra sections which extended the competence of the faster learners while necessary practice and consolidation at a more basic level could be undertaken with others. Interestingly, the publisher's own view of Stage 3 is that it is only suitable for the top 60% of the ability range.

Turning to the key area of the actual presentation of language through texts, it now seems appropriate to report what may well be seen as a seminal contribution to aspects of coursebook design from Dieter Wolff (1984).[2] Writing in the journal Neusprachliche Mitteilungen, he develops the hypothesis that "didactic" texts can actually block motivation to understand and learn by neglecting important principles identified by cognitive psychology. Earlier discussion of cognitive psychology (1.3.2.3-1.3.2.5 passim) has stressed the dynamic processes involved in learning. The notion of "active" and "passive" or "productive" and "receptive" skills as discrete competences belongs in the same reliquary as many other dubious dichotomies. Wolff quotes Frederiksen (1975), who postulated three factors in the linguistic comprehension process. These are

1. Understanding the "linguistic message"

2. Understanding the "contextual information"

3. Use of one's own "knowledge store".

The latter item is of particular importance in cognitive psychology as learning is based on the subsumption of new information or experience into existing cognitive structure, which is brought to bear on the new material with the eventual achievement of accommodation and assimilation. Frederiksen lists a series of important "sub-stores" in the knowledge store. These are linguistic knowledge (phonemic, syntactic and semantic), rhetorical knowledge (rules, conventions, styles and registers), causal combinations (the ability to construct a chain of events), spatial knowledge (the provision of spatial contexts through the construction of scenarios), knowledge of roles, persons and objects (mostly stereotypical) and knowledge of the events and processes of a real or imagined world, including routine tasks. In an act of linguistic communication, the comprehender (listener/reader) actively construes what is meant by the producer (speaker/writer).[3] Other cognitive strategies used are "schemas" (remembered frameworks selected from memory) which supply context and background, arouse expectations, direct attention and act as monitors to developing understanding (Graesser, 1981) and inferencing, another dynamic strategy described as a fundamental contribution to the economy of human communication.[4] The producer's contribution is to provide cues by implication and to observe Grice's (1975) principles of communication by structuring statements for quantity (informative, but not too much), quality (truth and accuracy), relation (relevance) and manner (clear, unambiguous, brief and orderly).[5] A communication

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thus becomes a co-operative act with an implicit contract between producer and comprehender assigning clear roles to each. Current orthodoxy, which demands an authentic situational base for foreign language learning linked to some view of the learner's needs and interests, has further highlighted the need for texts to function in accordance with the above principles of communication. If they do not, we are left with the stark, paradoxical picture drawn in Wolff's sub-heading:

"Didaktische Texte als das Verstehen hemmende Strukturen"

(Didactic texts as structures which hamper understanding).

If a text does not engage cognitive processes, it cannot be rated as communicative and has a demotivating effect. If dialogues contain information or statements which are not worth communicating, the comprehender's expectations are deceived and no interest can be forthcoming.

The following sample of texts (continuous prose and dialogue) from Tricolore with any attendant exploitation material will be evaluated using Wolff's criteria:

Text 1: from Stage 1, Unit 4: reproduced as Figure 4

The first proper reading text encountered, it is also tape recorded. The teacher's book rates it "suitable for most pupils but may be too demanding for the least able". No exploitation or explanatory rubrics appear in the pupil's book. It is suggested that pupils read the passage silently to see how much they can work out alone. The tape recording may then be played and listened to first without the book,

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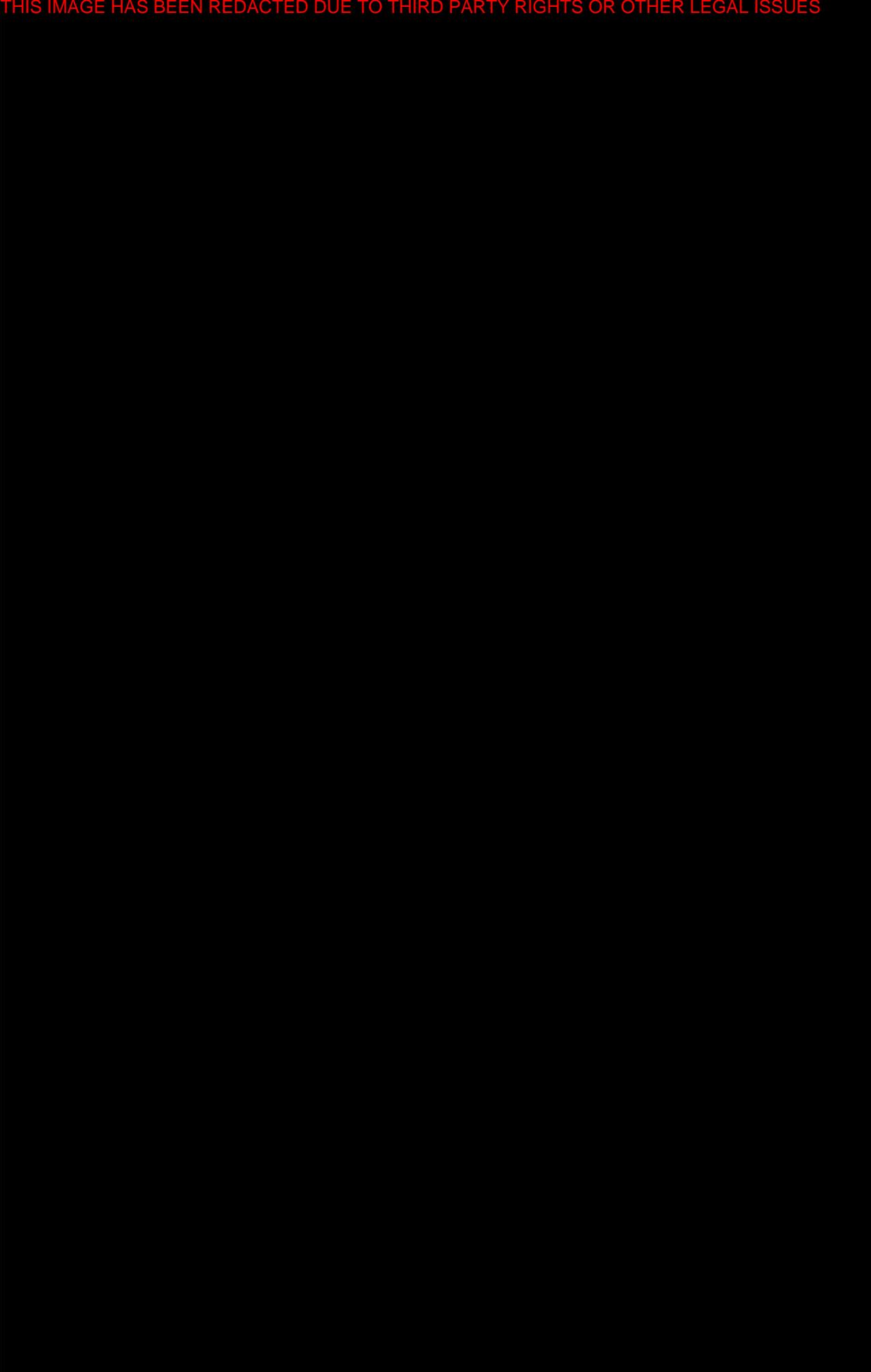
then following the text. "Most pupils" could then answer questions in French and "the more able" might copy the questions down and write answers. There is a clear attempt at differentiation of task (though the first proposed differentiation is to exclude the text from an unspecified but presumably significant group of learners). However, the differentiation is based on the rather stereotyped and questionable premise that the "less able" are not capable of written manipulation of language. In my experience, it is precisely this latter group, often characterized by less well-developed powers of retention coupled with a rather conservative view of written work as being of greater value than oral expression, who respond well to the opportunity of encapsulating their knowledge in a permanent record. From the broader educational viewpoint of the linguistic development of the slower learner, the ability to identify and retrieve from continuous text the answers even to simple closed questions (which are what is proposed - e.g. Jean-Paul, où est-ce qu'il habite? Comment s'appelle le chien de Marc?) is a basic skill that merits development. Success in such areas is an important stimulus to motivation. The abler, on the other hand, have higher expectations, which brings us back to Wolff's criteria.

Beginning with Grice's four elements linked to comprehender (learner) expectation, the following conclusions emerge:

- quantity: the text is long by any standard: 241 words; it is packed with information which, given its purportedly relaxed, interpersonal communicative style is both excessive and unrealistic: some 42 separate pieces of

information are included

- quality: the text is presented as quasi-authentic but is
  palpably far-fetched without being sufficiently imaginative
  to appeal to learners' sense of fantasy

- relevance: the text links up both tenuously and self-
  consciously with previously-taught material - description
  of pets and likes and dislikes: from the learner's point
  of view, it has no coherent role in the Unit, its
  essential absurdity and irrelevance are unlikely to
  impress today's 11-12 year-olds

- manner: the style of the text is pseudo-communicative:
  on tape it comes across as a rather dense "reportage"
  and in writing, straddling two pages and four columns,
  it looks fragmented and awkward to read; the use of
  what are primarily oral discourse features such as
  "Eh bien", "voilà, c'est très bien . . . mais non!"
  and "Alors" can only compound the mounting sense of
  mystification the text must arouse in most learners;
  illustrations are included, presumably to act as cues,
  but their rather grotesque form (a common occurrence
  throughout the course) and their random positioning do
  little to illuminate matters further: the text's failure
  in terms of brevity has already been mentioned.

Concerning the text's ability to engage comprehension strategies, its
out-of-context location and rather bizarre content would seem to
preclude effective use of schema. Its densely-packed structure leaves
no room for the drawing of inferences - a point underlined by the

suggested schedule of questions, which, as is all too often the case in foreign language coursebooks, aims only to promote reproduction of structure and restatement of understood content.

It is quite difficult to see how the text could be used in a dynamic way: it is not intrinsically interesting enough to memorize, it does not represent a valid model for adaptation and its generally uninspiring content would make comprehension or gap-filling activities no more than a chore. All in all, it seems to align well with Wolff's notion of the didactic text as a structure which blocks motivation.

Text 2: from Stage 2, Unit 2, reproduced as <u>Figure 5</u>.

This is the first piece of linguistic input in a unit whose central aim is to teach learners "all you need to know in order to travel by train in France". The text is in dialogue form and is also featured as a tape recording. Application of criteria used for Text 1 leads to the following conclusions:

- quantity: the text consists of two simple language transactions, each prefaced by a brief introduction: at 115 words it is not unduly long and conveys the language of its two functions (finding the railway stations and buying a train ticket) with economy and without unnecessary repetition: division into two situational halves makes the text quite easy to work with
- quality: dialogue form immediately gives a sense of authenticity, but this is offset by the central figure of "Mr. James": Who is he? For that matter, why is he?

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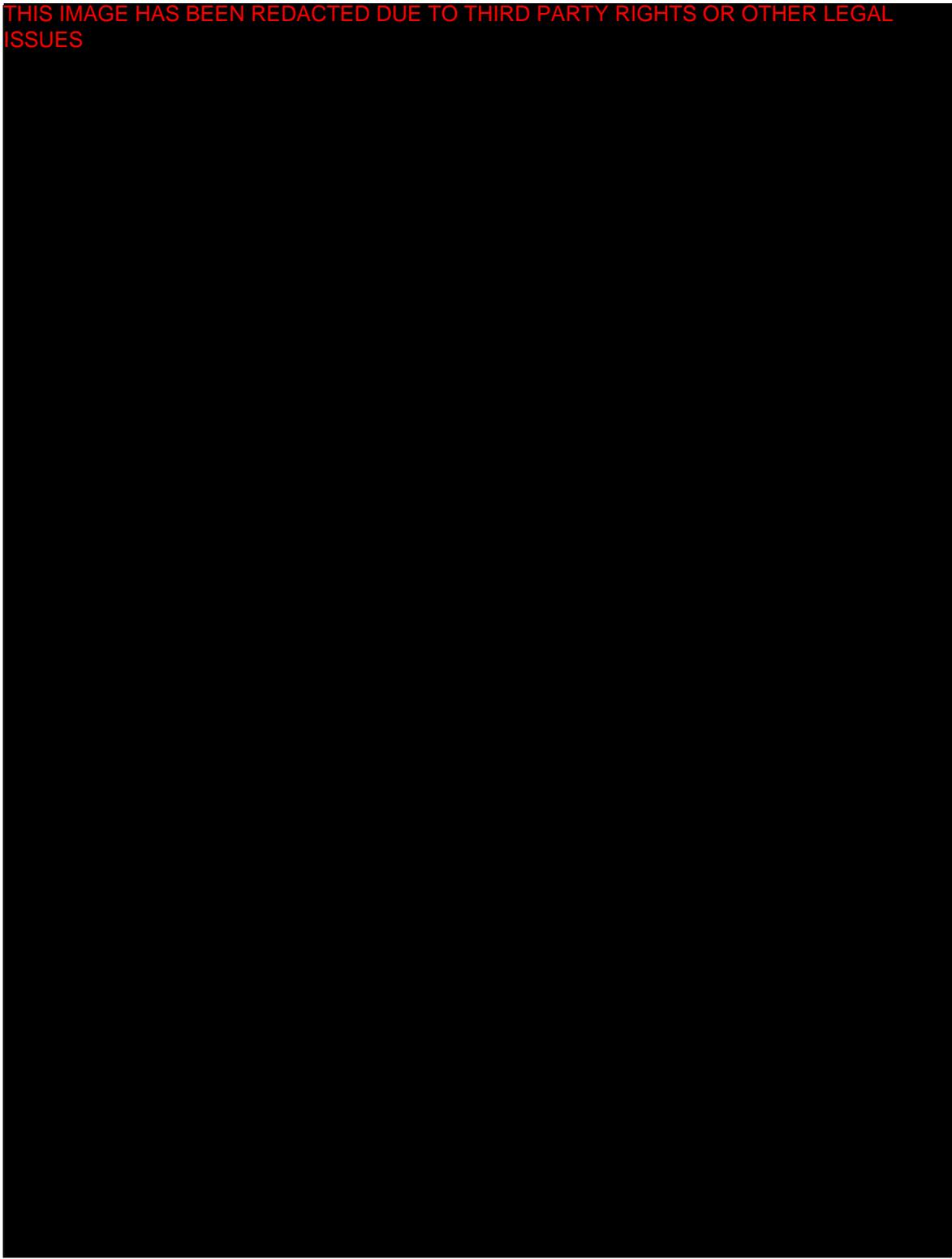
Figure 5

He does not feature anywhere else in the book. He is

depicted as a stereotypical Englishman (hence, presumably,

his name) but speaks on tape as a native speaker: no

introduction to, or justification of the text is given to

learners: one suspects they will be left with a number of

unanswered questions

- relevance: the text provides a revision model of direction-

finding and a simple, comprehensible and basically usable

model of buying a rail ticket: it could be used for role-

play and lends itself to adaptation by variation of both

location of the station and destination, cost and train

time; on the other hand, it tends to portray a rather

'phrase-book' view of language, suggesting that there is

one way to ask directions and buy a ticket; over-emphasis

on rote learning of the model (a relatively undemanding

task) leads both to a foreshortening of horizons and to

eventual extinction of motivation - the situation identified

by Salter (1989) in a recent critical look at the

contemporary modern language scene which poses the leading

question:

> "What, I wonder, would a psychologist make of so
> many language-learning activities which build up
> expectations that are never fulfilled, which seem
> designed to create frustration?" (6)

The survey of pupils' views (4.4.4.2) revealed some discontent with

low-level transactional language tasks

- manner: the text is brief and is clearly presented;

the single illustration relates to the first half (the

revision element), however and even the "map" is not
clear enough to be usable (if you "tournez à droite"
at the first road you fail to reach the station and at
the second you end up beyond it); the illustrations of
people are trivially stereotypical for 12-13 year-olds
- people just do not spend their holidays in bowler hats
and pinstripe suits.

Engagement of comprehension strategies:

The teacher's book suggests that only the tape should be used at
first.   It makes no suggestion as to how the text should be presented
in a meaningful way - this is presumably left to the teacher's
discretion or imagination.   The nature of the text does lead to
learners' ability to use schemata, but once again the accompanying
questions are so closed as to preclude any inferencing.   The section
"Find the French" would seem superfluous if a good job of presentation
of the text had been done.   All in all, this text measures up slightly
better than Text 1, but is still flawed in a number of key areas and
does not seem likely to engage or stimulate learners - unless for the
very brief spell of time during which it represents novelty.   It would
certainly have helped if "Mr. James" had been presented as more of a
flesh-and-blood character who featured throughout the unit and gave
learners a human model with whom to identify.   Regrettably they have
to wait until Unit 5 of Stage 3 before the English "Famille
Nottingley" provides a serious role model.

Text 3:   From Stage 2, Unit 7: reproduced as Figure 6
This is substantial text which combines narrative and dialogue and

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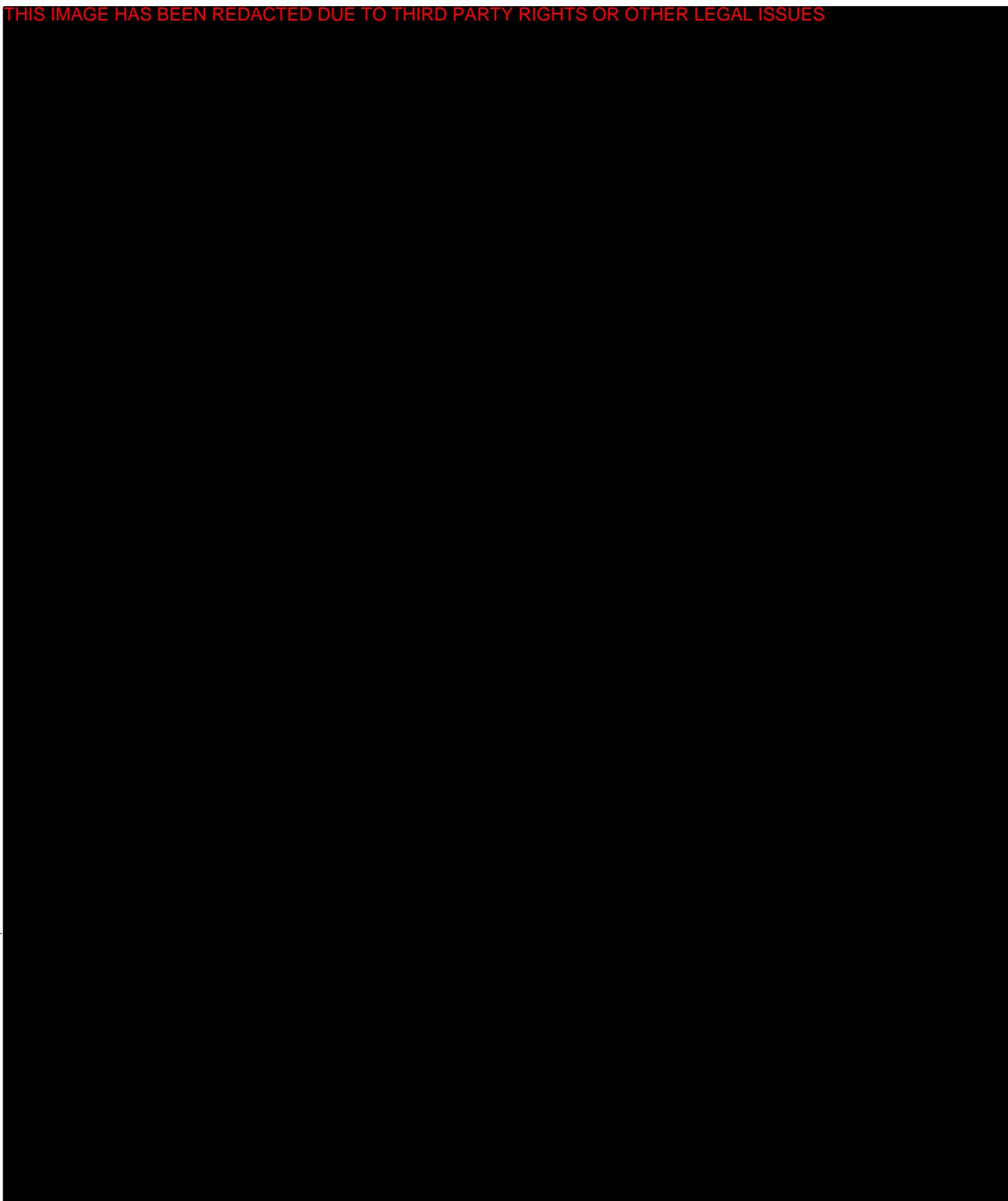
<u>Figure 6</u>

includes a large number of Perfect Tense verbs (introduction of the Perfect Tense is the main linguistic objective of the unit). Once again, the text is reproduced on tape and, once again, the teacher's book suggests that it be approached as a listening item with questions to establish gist comprehension. Turning to the text itself, learners will find something substantially longer (422 words) and denser than anything yet encountered in the course. It is also the first piece of narrative largely for its own sake - and therein, as will be demonstrated, lies much of its appeal. Using the same evaluative framework as before, we find:

- quantity: the text is certainly long, but it moves along at
  a good pace and appears to avoid over self-conscious
  presentation of specially selected structure: notwith-
  standing the length, interest is sustained by a good
  story line

- quality: there is realistic richness and diversity in
  the language, the text has quite a sophisticated feel
  and generally conveys an air of plausibility; the
  "plot" of the story is not too complex to be sustained in
  a foreign language yet manages to incorporate a very
  important stimulus to interest - an unpredictable or
  unexpected twist

- relevance: the text is, in fact, a major presentation item
  linked to a key linguistic structure: this is brought home
  to learners in the explanatory presentation of the Perfect
  Tense which follows; its real relevance to learners must,
  however, be that it stands in its own right as a rich

piece of comprehensible input

- manner: as reported above, the story moves along with

clarity and at a good pace; three cartoon illustrations

provide some framework for understanding without revealing

too much; concerning the tape - a recording of the text -

it seems best employed in a supporting role as a dramatised

reading: it is surely too long for the sort of gist

comprehension work proposed which, if followed through,

would have the effect of providing the "dénouement",

thereby extinguishing much of the interest generated; there

seems to be some uncertainty as to the relationship between

sound recording and reading material in Tricolore: almost

all recordings are recordings of written material rather

than authentic speech - an aspect strongly criticised by

the Secondary Examinations Council in its assessment of

some GCSE syllabus proposals; the uncertain relationship

of tape and text illustrated yet again in this text seems

to spring from an imperfectly thought-out methodology for

the exploitation of tapes: written texts are by nature

concise, dense, low in linguistic redundancy and devoid

of the pauses, ellipsis and non-sequiturs which often

characterize spoken language; they are also less flexible

and do not admit the negotiability of oral discourse; a

text such as this has to be seen as a destination towards

which the learner must be led by advance organizers,

scene-setting, provision of context, cues and, perhaps,

one or two clues to alert the reader that a surprise is

in store: the main reading of the text should see the
learner empowered to discover it at one go: printing
"True or false?" questions immediately under the text
seems rather poor organization as the statements give
away the ending; two exploitation tasks in the "Au choix"
supplementary practice section (once again, we are told,
"for able pupils") check understanding by a series of ten
multiple-choice questions in French) an activity now
considered not only non-authentic but also too difficult
for GCSE candidates) and offer learners a chance to
re-tell the story by answering a series of quite thought-
fully posed questions.

Engagement of comprehension strategies: the previous paragraph
indicates shortcomings which seem linked to the writers' view of the
function of this text: its real value as a piece of imaginative and
entertaining comprehensible input has been identified and any
exploitation which downgrades this effectively squanders that value:
to use it merely as a vehicle for "spotting examples of the Perfect
Tense" or promoting translation to answer "true or false" questions is
to sell it short. Personal experience using the text with a wide-
ability group of comprehensive school pupils showed me that, if
handled with some regard for its intrinsic merit, it can provide an
entertaining and rewarding experience. The writers should develop and
articulate more stimulating strategies for exploitation based on some
of the principles detailed above. The other great pity is that,
having had to wait until over two-thirds of the way through Stage 2
for a good story, learners have to wait until Unit 2 of Stage 3 for

another.

Text 4: from Stage 3, Unit 5: reproduced as <u>Figure 7</u>:

This is a dialogue text, presented as a televised interview concerning
the beneficial effects of a diet on two young women. Like the other
examples, it is tape recorded. Evaluation reveals:

- quantity: for learners in their third or fourth year, the
  text is of reasonable length (296 words); in tone, it
  captures some of the briskness of the commercial
  advertisement, but as its declared (to the teacher)
  intention is to provide "examples of the Imperfect Tense
  (including manger)", a certain amount of structural
  repetitiveness is noted which detracts from its quasi-
  authenticity

- quality: there is an all too obvious artificiality
  about the text and its seems to promote the rather
  distasteful notions that fat women do not have friends
  and are unhappy; it further suggests that a 30 kilogram
  weight loss is desirable; modern learners, for whom
  health and equal opportunities are an increasing part of
  the curriculum, will treat the text with deserved
  scepticism: the theme could have been exploited in a
  more positive and realistic way

- relevance: like so many other items, the item is devoid
  of context or rubrics: there is no obvious link with
  anything that has gone before; for the teacher, the
  text is a vehicle for presenting and practising an aspect

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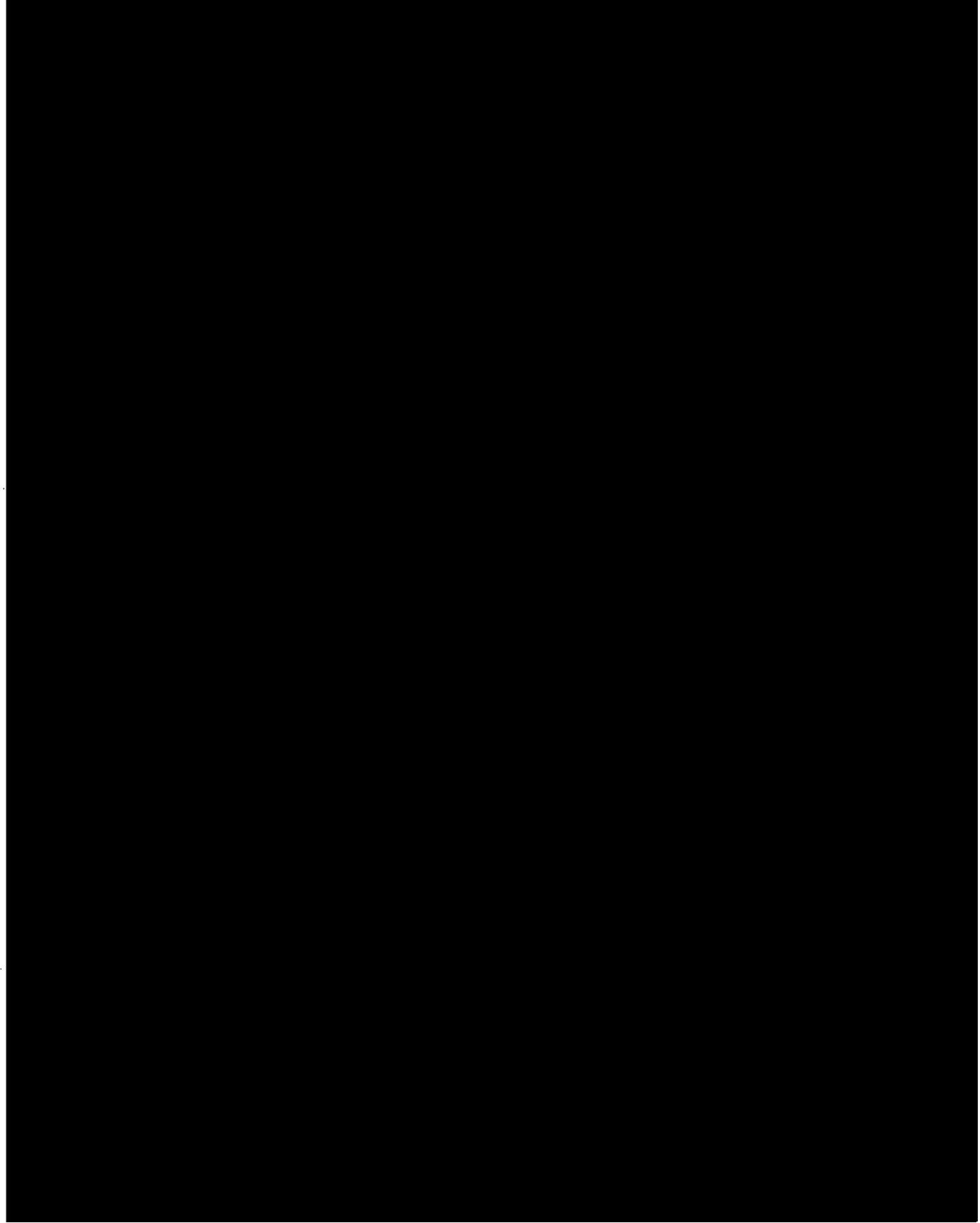
Figure 7

of the Imperfect Tense - a point underlined by the now

familiar litany of "comprehension" questions which follow

it; the text illustrates well a critical view of textbooks

taken by Kramsch (1987):

> "Learners are introduced to a dialogue of which
> they don't know the larger socio-cultural context;
> they are made to repeat uncritically statements
> of facts and opinions that have no other explicit
> agenda than their linguistic accuracy."   (7)

– manner: unless a text really is authentic (i.e. if it

has a linguistic ulterior motive) it will tend to over-

verbalize and convey superfluous information: the

learner's only involvement is to digest and regurgitate

something not particularly palatable: the text has a

basic coldness that arises from its failure to engage

the learner's own perceptions, viewpoints or experience:

to that extent it is another lost opportunity.

Engagement of comprehension strategies: having no real context other

than a grammatical one, the text does not admit much use of schemata -

though the issue of healthy eating is quite a 'live' one in

contemporary Britain and France;   the text contrives to leave no room

for the drawing of inferences mainly because of its desire to exploit

every possibility of verb tense use, with a consequent surfeit of

information.   Presented more realistically, it could have stimulated

interest and creative response - a better way of acquiring the

capability to use the Imperfect Tense than by written answers to yet

another series of closed questions.

The above series of texts was chosen as a reasonable cross-section of what the course offers - or, in the case of Text 3, an example of a form of language presentation that might have been more widely used. All failed to some extent genuinely to involve learners, their expectations and their powerful range of comprehension strategies. Effectively mobilised, the latter are major sustainers of interest and motivation to learn - or even, as Krashen would have it, acquire - language from comprehensible, meaningful input.

Having argued the case for more motivating presentation and exploitation of pieces of language for a wide ability range of learners, I turn now to the way in which the language is presented as a formal system. Early articulations of the communication approach tended to sideline grammar, certainly as an aspect of language to be taught either for its own sake or as a necessary prelude to any communicative language use. A more balanced view has emerged in line with the model of language depicted in Chapter 2.4. Knowledge of, or familiarity with, the formal system of a language is essential for generative, autonomous language use. Learners are aware from their experience of their mother tongue that language is a system limited by rules and conventions of usage. Many of these rules are of a "deep structure" variety and corners can usefully be cut in the foreign language learning process by capitalizing on learners' existing knowledge and experience as well as by mobilising their abilities to analyse and categorize (see Chapter 2.3.2). The way in which this is done is, however, crucial. Just as language needs to be presented in a way which engages cognitive strategies, knowledge of structure must emerge from meaningful experience of language and its important

transferable and generative nature must be brought to the fore through
clear explanation. Learners' strong need for explanation was
articulated in their response to the survey of their views on
coursebooks (see Chapter 4.4.4.2). Apart from necessary links with
comprehensible input, it seems to me that presentation of linguistic
structure should

-   be comprehensible at varying levels of abstraction
    (see Note 2 on the publisher's latest course - the
    German Zickzack)
-   avoid mystifying the learner and creating negative
    valence by use of grammatical metalanguage or jargon
-   illustrate a linguistic phenomenon by means of a good
    range of clearly-contextualized examples rather than mere
    theoretical explanation
-   be followed by copious practice conducted with pace and
    variety and providing the learner with incentives actively
    to use the structures in question: this would involve
    engaging the learner's own interests and experience
-   stand out as a feature of the book which learners will come
    to recognize and accept as valuable.

With such thoughts in mind, the following examples of structural
presentation from Tricolore will be critically evaluated:

1: Gender: articles and pronouns: Stage 1, Unit 3:
Tucked rather unobtrusively between two activities, this, the first
systematic presentation of an aspect of language structure is
cryptically entitled "Masculine and Feminine". A skeletal series of

examples   attempts   to   link   un/le/il   and   une/la/elle   with   the
explanatory note:

> "In French, things as well as people are all either
> masculine or feminine."

This, in particular, seems to revert to a rather naive and unhelpful
interpretation of the notion of gender - it would have been easier
simply to emphasize the point made later that learning a new word
(noun) in French includes learning un/une.   Including the definite
article at this stage is not justified by the very limited exposure it
has been given.   Equally unjustifiable is the introduction of the
associated subject pronoun which has received very limited exposure in
its purely personal form.   Even if this particular structural
'package' could be justified in terms of previous input, it is very
poorly   exemplified.   Learners   are   directed   to   a   short,
decontextualised 'substitution drill'-type exercise which achieves
nothing meaningful or coherent.

This presentation seems simply to revive the traditional grammar-based
approach in which a series of fundamental features of the language are
wrapped into a neat package of such abstraction that it is likely that
a majority of learners will fail to grasp it, thereby falling at the
first hurdle on the way to acquiring real communicative competence.

2: Partitive article forms: Stage 1, Unit 8:

This presentation occupies a more prominent position at the top right-
hand side of a page, but carries the cryptic title "'Some' Grammar"
and begins with the equally cryptic explanation:

"The French for 'some' or 'any' is du, de la, or de l'"

Use of <u>du</u> is linked to one and use of <u>des</u> to two. An advantage of this particular presentation is that there are at least some clear links back to a series of teaching items on the topic of food. It must also be assumed that the terms "masculine" and "feminine" now mean something to learners. Nevertheless, and despite some crude cartoon illustration, what remains is essentially an abstract statement of a grammatical rule which is systematically exploited only by another substitution drill -

"Make 5 correct sentences from each table."

3: Perfect Tense: Stage 2, Units 7-9:

Certain stereotypical treatments of this crucial structure have predominated in coursebooks, they include:

-      failure to introduce it until well into the second year
       of a typical course

-      introducing regular verbs conjugated with <u>avoir</u> first,
       followed by irregulars, followed by the important minority
       conjugated with <u>être</u> and finally reflexives

-      expressing rules and explanation in jargon-loaded terms
       such as Perfect Tense itself, auxiliary verb, past
       participle, regular, irregular, participle agreement,
       preceding direct object, transitive and intransitive.

The perfect tense is identified as a crucial structure as it is the first serious means by which learners escape from the one-dimensional

world of the 'here and now' and can not only comprehend but draw on and articulate past experience. This is a principal objection to the practice of introducing the tense comparatively late - itself a product of an arbitrary 'linear' view of how a language should be presented which begins with the article and ends up to six years later with the subjunctive. If we are serious about teaching language for practical communication, we will need to enable our learners very early on to say <u>je suis né(e)</u>, <u>j'ai perdu</u>, <u>j'ai pris</u>, to identify but a few obvious basic notions.

Regrettably, <u>Tricolore</u> falls into most of the above pitfalls. Many users will not encounter the Perfect Tense until their third year of study. What they meet is a rather terminologically-loaded series of introductions and explanations which follow hard on the heels of their first practical encounters with the structures in question. The first presentation of the Perfect Tense is in technical tabular form and is based on regular (-er) verbs. Learners are alerted that not all past participles end in <u>é</u> in a Footnote, but there is an essential neatness and conciseness about the presentation which must tend to beguile learners into thinking that they have learned about the Perfect Tense. In fact, the tense is addressed in five further presentations, while the perfect of reflexive verbs is included in the "Au choix" section as an "optional" area - presumably only for the more able. Subsequent references to the Perfect follow the well-trodden path of regulars - irregulars - verbs with <u>être</u>. This is yet another example of arbitrary linearity which, from a practical communicative standpoint, entirely ignores the frequency of use of 'irregulars' and intransitive verbs in everyday language - itself the main reason for their

survival. From the point of view of effective and successful learning, the "regulars first" approach sets up expectations in learners' minds which then have systematically to be dismantled. A course with real communicative competence as its central objective would so organize its linguistic input as to allow learners to experience language in its richness and diversity and promote language use linked to things that mattered to learners. The constraints of "linearity" are both artificial and debilitating. Such treatment of use of the past tense of verbs is a graphic example of this phenomenon. It should be acknowledged that Tricolore does provide a phased introduction of the Perfect, but still prefers explanation to exemplification and, by way of exploitation, offers exercises which are self-consciously grammatical. Summary presentations will only have any value if they follow practical experience at a distance sufficient for assimilation to have taken place.

4: Future Tense: Stage 3, Unit 2:

Although the 'immediate' future was usefully introduced at the end of Stage 1, the writers' grammatical agenda has delayed the future simple for probably eighteen months. Once again, the grammatical description of the tense jostles for learners' attention when they have hardly experienced it. A battery of practice activities follows based on quasi-authentic situations but each unrelated to the other and most clearly contrived for mechanical practice of the future. One of the more abstract merits reproduction as Figure 8. The Future Tense in French is, in fact, relatively straightforward, though a number of important and commonly-used irregular forms have to be addressed.

À vous de poser les questions

1 a) ... ... à l'étranger, cet été? (partir)
   b) Non, cette année nous resterons en France.
2 a) Où ... ... vos vacances? (passer)
   b) Nous retournerons en Alsace.
3 a) ... ... à l'hôtel? (loger)
   b) Oui, nous logerons à l'hôtel Dolmetsch à
      Strasbourg.
4 a) ... ... le train? (prendre)
   b) Non, nous prendrons la voiture. C'est plus
      pratique pour visiter la région.
5 a) ... ... Strasbourg? (visiter)
   b) Oui. Nous avons l'intention de visiter
      Strasbourg pendant notre séjour.
6 a) Quand ... ... à Paris? (rentrer)
   b) Nous rentrerons le 28 août.

Figure 8

<u>Tricolore</u>'s approach is to present learners with the following, totally decontextualised piece which is effectively no more than a syntactic puzzle:

"See if you can spot some examples of irregular verbs in the Future Tense.

Je ferai ça demain:

Aujourd'hui, il pleut et je dois acheter des provisions.

Tant pis! J'irai en ville, demain, et j'achèterai des provisions. Et il y a le ménage à faire. Inutile de faire ça quand il pleut, alors je ferai ça demain aussi.

Hmm, j'aurai beaucoup de travail à faire, demain.

Je serai très occupé et mes parents viendront déjeuner à midi."

As with the selection of texts, the above represent a fair cross-section of the course's presentation of linguistic structure and reveal approaches which raise serious questions, notably the adherence to the notion of language learning being linked to a linear mastery of grammatical structure and the subordination of much pseudo-realistic language activity to the mechanical practising (and presumed absorption) of language structure.

This section on "Incentive" has ranged widely, but has done so of necessity as it has addressed what is arguably the central issue in a consideration of coursebooks and their influence on learner motivation - does the course contrive to engage and involve the learner by setting an agenda that is valid, feasible and meaningful and which mobilizes and capitalizes on fundamental motivation and learning strategies?

5. Motivated learning: meaningful, manageable, systematic:

The much-used term "meaningful" here refers to the learner feeling some direct, personal sense of involvement in the learning experience offered. Beginning with the general lack of rubrics addressed to the learner and continuing through the vast majority of activities which, as has been demonstrated, often have structuralist motives and consequently qualify well for the epithet "hoops through which the learner must jump", Tricolore does not do enough to address its readership and never seems to elicit personal, individual response. Only intermittent role-play activities (and these mostly of a low-level transactional variety) alleviate the overall sense the learner must have of being a spectator invited to act as commentator or acolyte.

Both teachers' and learners' views of the length of many units have already called these into question. It is the publishers' view that they should provide an abundance of materials which teachers can use selectively and flexibly. Teachers, however, do not necessarily have the time to sift, grade and select - they would argue that these are

primary functions of the coursebook producer. Learners will take what is presented to them as an instrument for learning at face value and will be concerned either at large-scale omission or at making slow and laborious progress through, for example, a unit of Stage 3 such as number 4 which spans 34 pages and contains some 58 separate learning events (presentations, texts or exercises and activities). Even allowing for some being covered as homework, it is not unrealistic to suggest that such a unit could represent a whole term's work. Page layout makes a significant contribution to both learners' and teachers' sense of having to cope with excessively demanding schedules.

Humans' tendency towards orderliness and coherence, a central feature of "Gestalt" psychology, needs to be met in such an important instrument for learning as a coursebook. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that excessively routine and predictable layout in a five-volume course could promote a certain staleness and fail to sustain learners' interest. Throughout Stages 1-3, learners can readily identify from page headings which unit they are working on, though Stages 4A and 4B only have intermittent sub-headings. What the course lacks is a systematic approach to important areas such as the presentation of language, statements or summaries of objectives and clearer identification of skills needed in the various activities. For example, when a text is actually a transcript of a recording, a small symbol could indicate that it can also be listened to, dialogues for active use and writing tasks could be similarly identified. There really is need for greater consistency and predictability in the presentation of key features of the course: learners need to be able

to spot what is of particular importance.

Some courses have attracted criticism because of their excessive emphasis on entertaining learners rather than fostering a desire to learn. Tricolore achieves an image of lively presentation combined with a quite business-like and challenging approach. Its basic fault is that it seems to make assumptions about its users' capabilities and commitment and does not even meet them halfway. Any teacher of a first-year foreign language group will report eagerness, enthusiasm and a strong desire to learn. Coursebook producers need to assess their role in the all-too-characteristic dissipation of that desire.

6. Development of language skills:

Evolving views on language-teaching methods have led to a much greater balance being struck between the four language skills, a point underlined in GCSE, in which listening, speaking, reading and writing all carry equal weight. GCSE objectives are widely known to learners and part of their expectation of a language learning experience will be a balanced development of language skills, with listening, speaking and reading to the fore. Tricolore professes great interest in such balanced development. To test the balance of experience on offer, two stages of the course were surveyed. The various learning events or items (not including formal grammatical explanation or end-of-unit summaries) were analysed and listed under the four skill areas. The task was not straightforward. Some activities or presentations were clearly linked to one skill, others legitimately combined, for example, listening and reading or reading and speaking. Many,

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however, were of uncertain application: learners might be asked to complete sentences with correct verb forms, thus involving reading and speaking or writing - or both the latter. The writers might claim that it is the teacher's responsibility to decide the mode of exploitation and that such activities were indicative of the flexible nature of the course. I suspect that the concern of many teachers for learning and practice of structure will lead them to opt for more writing than is immediately apparent. The survey of activities was limited to Stage 1, which is learners' first contact with the course and, in all probability, with French and Stage 4B, which represents the terminal objective at the end of a five-year course of study. The survey's revelations are reproduced in Table 1:

Skill area	Listening	Speaking		Reading	Writing
		reproductive	generative		
Stage 1	91	44	15	121	42
Stage 4B	60	84	27	135	54

A rather uneven picture emerges. In terms of 'real-life' language use, it is reasonable that writing should be less frequently required, that in the early stage it should be used either for consolidation of known material or, more creatively, for short letter-type communication and that at later stages written tasks should be both realistic and consistent with those required for public examinations. The range of tasks, especially in Stage 4B is, however, narrow: letters, picture stories and 'exercises' with no real opportunity for imaginative or genuinely personal writing and little or no exploitation of more basic GCSE written tasks such as message-taking

and postcard-writing. In both volumes surveyed, reading activities clearly dominate (though it should be noted that almost all listening tasks appear transcribed in the book). Much reading material is of a 'background' nature, presumably intended to impart some feel of French life and culture. The problem here is that almost all reading material is followed by questions to be answered, arguably giving learners the impression that no information is offered gratuitously. The balance of listening activity in Stage 1 appears consistent with an introduction based on the notion that listening is the primary skill for learning or acquisition of language. Stage 4B provides less material in larger chunks. A better balance could have been struck by providing more shorter items and, after five years' study, a few longer ones which might be of the same intrinsic interest to the learning population as the good story whose general dearth has already been regretted. The survey of the speaking skill revealed two different types of activity which it was felt significant to separate. The equivalent in speaking of either reading or listening to textual input and answering questions on it is what has been called 'reproductive' speech - i.e. a reconstitution, sometimes with detail change of a 'model' dialogue or transaction, usually of a fairly low-key instrumental variety. Contrasted with this sort of speech activity is the 'generative' item, where learners are invited or enabled to produce language which is more personal and at least quasi-autonomous. It can be seen that the former outnumber the latter by 3:1. A majority of the 'reproductive' tasks are of the role-play variety common at the Basic level of GCSE, containing little of the negotiation and unpredictable intervention which are key

distinguishing features of GCSE Extended level and, broadly speaking, representing the sort of activity criticized by Salter (section 4 above). On the face of it, there is no serious failure to provide a balance of skills in <u>Tricolore</u>, but, as has been revealed in other areas of consideration, the course could do more to stimulate learner interest by providing more activities which promote more personal involvement.

7. <u>Revision, consolidation, self-help</u>:

The course as such provides no specifically-designated revision units. However, teachers surveyed praised its practice of recycling previously-presented material and Teachers' Books 1-3 list revision elements in the plan of each unit. Stages 4A and B were planned to incorporate revision of all topics previously covered - wherein lies much of their success as GCSE coursebooks. Having acknowledged that, we are still left with other deficiencies identified above which tend to detract somewhat from the sense of support a learner might derive from the course: these include the lack of adequate introduction and definition of many tasks and activities which do not encourage self-help or autonomy, summaries of learning outcomes which are not presented as identifiable communicative linguistic achievements and a mode of presentation and summary of structure which tends to mystify rather than illuminate.

Self-help implies a measure of self-assessment, an approach which is gaining ground rapidly in schools following recent education initiatives such as the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

(see Note 3). It must be viewed as a serious shortcoming of Tricolore that learners are given no access to answers to exercises, tasks, or even quizzes and games, let along encouraged actively to embark on any project or development activity located outside the covers of the coursebook. The provision of even detachable answer pages could easily solve the first issue. The second is somehow a more endemic problem whose roots lie in the course's self-containedness akin to insularity. The publisher's argument that teachers can adapt (that phrase again) the course for pupil self-access is frankly glib, given the amount of unscrambling, editing and rewriting that would be necessary for this to be a feasible proposition.

6.3.2 Features related to learning

The above seven sections have covered most of the motivation-related issues addressed in the coursebook evaluation instrument. Such are the interdependence of motivation and learning that a number of issues related to the coursebook as a vehicle for effective learning have also been addressed. Nevertheless, several 'learning' questions remain to be considered.

1. The role of illustration:

> "The teacher cannot assume that school children will readily
> understand what she teaches them simply because she shows
> them pictures." (Vernon, 1962) (8)

Richardson (1975) includes the above quotation in his contribution to a debate about the role of illustrations in language teaching and learning which had assumed particular importance during the heyday of

'audio-visual' courses in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His conclusion, backed by evidence from research, is that illustrations are of severely limited applicability. They are of undeniable value in teaching object vocabulary but cannot explain structure. They can provide cues or visual representation of a situational context. Richardson identifies a number of criteria for "good teaching pictures": they must be bright, clear, unambiguous and present images of the target culture which are up-to-date and accurate.[9]

Copious illustration has been identified as a central feature of modern coursebooks. Tricolore is very much of its generation in this respect. There is scarcely a page in the whole five volume course that does not feature a photograph or line drawing. Most new situations are illustrated with black and white photographs, though these are often rather small to be really effective (see example in Figure 9). The use of small photographs for such linguistically dense items as railway station departure boards and collections of tourist brochures and other "realia" is questionable: learners will feel a need to find out more detail, but the sheer complexity of a collage like Figure 10 (from Stage 1) must surely be off-putting for many or require an inordinate amount of time for full explanation. The possible inference that such items are for atmospheric effect undercuts their value. Presentation of less material in a larger, clearer format would bring them closer to the sort of criteria for usefulness identified by Richardson. In fact, later volumes resort to a clearer reconstitution of authentic material (rather like the now fashionable transcription and re-recording of unscripted speech). This has had the effect of making it more usable. (See example in

Figure 11 from Stage 4A). Much of the illustration in Tricolore is of
the line-drawn variety, often with a cartoon or caricature flavour.
Illustrations reflect something of an image   France in that
bicycles, berets, baguettes and appropriate signs, labels and names
abound.   An unfortunate tendency to grotesqueness has already been
identified, but the inclusion of cartoons is popular with learners.

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Figure 10

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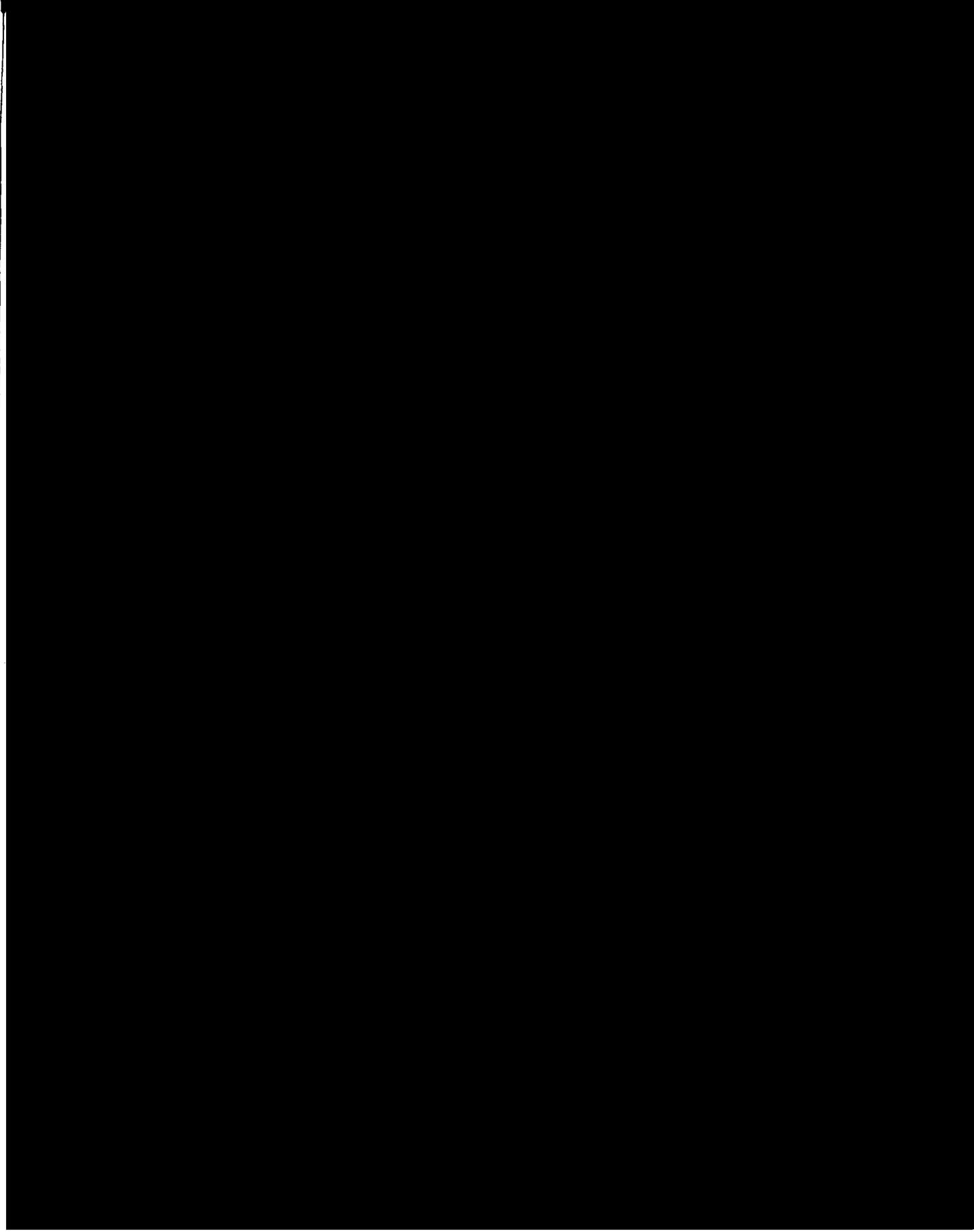
Rencontres-Mariage

Institutrice, 34 ans, célibataire, féminine, jolie, sensible, espère rencontrer Monsieur sérieux et responsable. (G203)

Fonctionnaire, 36 ans, divorcé, bon caractère, svelte, sens de l'humour, souhaite rencontrer jeune femme active et agréable. (D317)

Jolie jeune femme de 36 ans, veuve, deux enfants à .charge, honnête, sportive, ayant sens humour cherche homme courageux et de bon caractère. (A119)

Il occupe un poste de responsabilité dans un laboratoire, il a 27 ans, il est célibataire et il est las d'être seul. 1,75m, 70 kg. Sérieux, honnête, sentimental, il désire donner un sens à sa vie et rencontrer une jeune fille sincère et agréable (B481)

Cadre, 55 ans, veuf, responsable, ambitieux, agréable physiquement, courtois, désire rencontrer une dame active et jeune de caractère pour vie harmonieuse. (C532)

Infirmière, 31 ans, divorcée, indépendante, élégante, dynamique, aimant la littérature, le cinéma et le sport cherche Monsieur, ayant 30/40 ans, grand, physique agréable et ayant éducation. (E643)

Figure 11

Avez-vous bien compris?

1 What information are you given about the primary school teacher?

2 Describe the man who is a widower.

3 What *two* qualities is he looking for in a future partner?

4 What sort of man is the nurse looking for?

5 Which of the women would, according to the advert, make the most suitable partner for the man who is divorced?

6 What do you know about the man who works in a lab?

Overall, illustration is used to support textual material in informing learners, to provide cues for practice and exploitation, to teach object vocabulary (food, parts of the body, ski and camping equipment and parts of cars, for example) and to provide light relief. Tricolore seems to avoid the major pitfalls such as using pictures to teach structure or exposing learners to open-ended interpretation. The problems seem to me to be that some illustrations send unclear messages as to their value and that, to revert to an earlier critical view of the course, their sheer profusion becomes a significant aspect of the excessively 'busy' nature of so many pages.

Concerning the socio-cultural image projected by the illustrations, line drawings on the whole avoid gender stereotyping (though there are

some notable exceptions such as that discussed in 4. above) and make

occasional concessions to the ethnic diversity of the population of

modern France. There is certainly more social diversity than the

bland 'bourgeois' image which prevailed in many earlier courses.

2. Social dimensions to learning:

Central to the prevailing orthodoxy of language teaching and learning

is the view that one of the primary functions of language is

interpersonal communication. Genuine communication is based on the

need to inform or be informed, to express needs and emotions and to

exert some personal influence on one's environment. It is the failure

to generate this need - or a credible representation of it - that

creates the risk of the communicative approach becoming yet another

skeleton in the pedagogic elephant's graveyard to which modern

languages has made a not insubstantial contribution over the years.

From Macnamara (1973) through Hawkins (1987) to Salter (1989), the

plea has been for a pedagogy which promotes personal use of language -

a powerful and crucial phrase.

The inextricable links between language, thought, society and learning

have been discussed (1.3.2.2). Much learning is based on

collaboration and communication and all effective learning is linked

to meaningful experience. Such basic principles and realisations have

steadily been embraced by foreign language teachers. Their classrooms

are nowadays much more alive with the sounds of collaborative learning

in groups and pairs. Much of what is going on, however, falls into

the category of low-level transactional language criticized by Salter

(q.v.). The sort of transactional language referred to tends to impose rigid situational and task frameworks on the learner, leading to mechanical, ritual, almost Pavlovian use of linguistic items which can be acquired with consummate ease when the stimulus of a real situation and real need are present.

Tricolore contains much paired practice work of the type referred to above. A survey of socially-based activities in the entire course revealed the following: Table 2:

	Role-play	Information gap	Opinion poll	Collaborative task
Stage 1	20			
Stage 2	14			
Stage 3	15			
Stage 4A	48 *	4	1	
Stage 4B	38 *	2		

* These figures are somewhat misleading in that such activities were mostly grouped in clusters of 3-5, exploiting the same theme or situation.

The above table tells its own story. Teachers' books for Stages 1 and 2 make brief prefatory reference to group work as a learning strategy but leave implementation to the teacher. The course fails to build in explicit provision for more varied and meaningful social learning activity, offering a restricted range sprinkled among pages and pages of activities which are in effect individual tests and exercises which all too often cast the learner in the role of bystander. Enough has been known about the benefits of group work (see, for example, Rowlands, 1972) for it to be featured as a central strategy in a modern coursebook. In this area, as in others so far discussed, Tricolore takes a more conservative stance.

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3. Exercises: practice or test?:

It is widely acknowledged that effective learning of a foreign language is linked to the pursuit of feasible goals, the provision of positive feedback, and a sense of personal security on the learner's part (the level of Krashen's "affective filter") all underpinned by copious and meaningful practice. Good practice drills, exercises or exploitation activities will embrace all the above principles and, following Joy and McNair (1975), should be interesting, explicit, within the capability of learners and easily checkable. They should not concentrate on linguistic form at the expense of meaning.[10] Much of the above has been enshrined in GCSE and Graded Objectives principles which have as a central aim the learner's ability to show what she can do. The focus, in a phrase, is a positive achievement. By contrast, traditional assessment procedures have set out to discriminate between learners by setting tasks that only a certain percentage will succeed in - the "norm-referencing" approach. Related to exercises, this approach produces activities which test learners rather than provide them with vital opportunities for practice, consolidation, assimilation and a sense of achievement.

Tricolore tends to respond well to many of the criteria listed above. There is an abundance of activity, usually quite closely linked to the theme of a unit or section of a unit. In Stage 1 especially, learners are given a good deal of support in the provision of clusters of answer phrases or words. Exercises are not consistently exemplified, however, there is overall a serious lack of truly helpful rubrics and there are shortcomings in the provision of feedback, notably the

absence of any system for peer or self-assessment. As the course progresses, many exercises, particularly those linked to practice of structure, become more abstract and can only be described as tests, often of a quite esoteric variety (see example in <u>Figure 12</u>).

Faites des phrases correctes!

1 Demain matin, Luc (**est allé / ira / va**) en classe, comme tous les jours.

2 Hier soir, (**j'irai / je suis allé / je vais**) au cinéma. Après le film, (**je vais / je suis allé / j'irai**) prendre un verre dans un café.

3 L'année prochaine, (**j'aurai / j'ai / j'ai eu**) peut-être un vélomoteur.

4 En ce moment, (**j'ai travaillé / je travaillerai / je travaille**) chez Renault.

5 Samedi dernier, ils (**jouent / ont / joué / joueront**) au football. Le soir, ils (**sont / seront / ont été**) très fatigués.

6 Aujourd'hui, (**j'ai / j'aurai / j'ai eu**) quinze ans. Mais demain (**j'ai / aurai / j'ai eu**) seize ans. En effet, demain, c'est mon anniversaire!

7 Je prends l'avion pour l'Angleterre dans quelques minutes. Dans une heure, (**je serai / j'ai été / je suis**) à Londres.

8 L'année dernière, Chantal (**passe / passera / a passé**) un mois en Angleterre.

9 Nous ne sommes pas libres cette semaine, mais nous (**sommes / serons / avons été**) libres la semaine prochaine.

10 Demain, (**je suis / j'ai été / je serai**) à Londres et après-demain (**je suis / j'ai été / je serai**) à Edimbourg.

<u>Figure 12</u>

6.4 <u>Tricolore in the balance</u>

The perfect coursebook, as we have often been reminded, has yet to be written. To judge by its huge commercial success, <u>Tricolore</u> should stand up to closer scrutiny than most. Though wide-ranging, this evaluation has of necessity been quite cursory. Many of the issues addressed merit more in-depth investigation. Furthermore, this Chapter has focused on <u>Tricolore</u> only in respect of the course's value

in fostering motivation and generating learning. Its value in important areas such as its approach to the teaching of structure, presentation of the target language culture and its use of supporting audio and visual aids have been touched on only to the extent that these are aspects of the central theme of this evaluation. It nevertheless seems appropriate to draw up a summary balance sheet of findings and, within the parameters of this inquiry, to match those findings with the publisher's claims for the course.

6.4.1 Tricolore, motivation and learning: positive features

The principal features of the course likely to sustain motivation and promote learning are

- its richness and variety

- its lively mode of presentation

- its clear attempt to predict learners' language needs

- the range of authentic experiences and tasks it offers

- its generally appropriate socio-cultural tone

- the pluralist view of French society it depicts

- its broadly sound use of visual material

- an abundance of relevant practice material

- in-built review and recycling processes

- coverage of public examination syllabus topics

- its attempt to teach the formal system of the language, not just phrases

- its business-like and challenging approach.

6.4.2 Negative features

The following features of the course, by contrast, are likely to

impede or even militate against motivation and learning:

- the density of the course's layout

- the length of many teaching units

- density and lack of clarity in many visuals

- the course's impenetrability to the individual learner
  seeking independent learning experience

- a general failure to engage and involve the learner on a
  genuinely personal level

- an overall lack of 'social learning' activities

- lack of provision for self-assessment

- lack of thematic progression

- lack of cohesion - specifically the absence of any story
  line in any one Stage

- some questionable presentation of objectives and outcomes:
  these must be tangible and closely linked to learners'
  perceptions

- the unremitting diet of discrete activities being
  perceived merely as hoops through which the learner must
  jump

- failure to engage experience and comprehension strategies
  in most textual material

- an excessive reliance on closed questions

- a lack of good extensive reading material

- too much low-level transactional language

- the esoteric nature of many exercises

- excessively technical explanation of some structure

which also follows too soon after initial presentation

in communicative settings

- an implicitly linear approach to any degree of linguistic

    competence driven by traditional and arbitrary hierarchies

    of structure

- lack of a systematic, 'user-friendly' mode of organization

    and presentation

- some unevenness in the balance of language skills developed

- lack of provision for the lower end of a wide ability range

    of learners

- lack of specific and genuine differentiation of

    presentation and task

- lack of colour

- the placing on the teacher of too heavy a burden of

    sifting, selecting and prioritising of material.

6.4.3 The publisher's claims re-appraised

In its publicity material, the publishing house states a number of
aims and makes a number of claims for the course which were reported
in 6.2. The ones which may be said to be fairly substantiated by this
survey are:

- that the course contains a wealth of attractive, lively

    and up-to-date material

- that test and examination topics and themes are covered.

A more equivocal view must be taken of the assertions that

- structure and basic grammar are taught naturally,

in context

- the course teaches pupils to communicate in French.

Question marks hang over the claims that <u>Tricolore</u>

- gives its users a sense of achievement and success

- is well-designed and easy to use

- caters for pupils of a wide range of ability

- sets clearly defined tasks and attainable goals.

Turning to the series of aims and objectives addressed to the learner, it is quite fair to say that the course fulfils all nine stated aims. Considered globally, however, that particular cluster of aims adds up to a rather restricted model of communicative competence, placing heavy emphasis on the instrumental functions of language and thereby, pursued to its logical conclusion, reducing the whole learning experience to a long rehearsal for events that may never take place.

6.5 <u>Conclusion</u>

The evaluation instrument devised earlier in this inquiry has provided a useful and viable basis for a case study of a major course. It has revealed a number of commendable features but also a rather larger number of features which fail to capitalize on known aspects of the generation and maintenance of motivation and the promulgation of effective learning. The publisher has no plans for a revised edition of the course, taking the view that it is comprehensive and sufficiently flexible to be selectively exploited by teachers. Such is the denseness of the course, however, that teachers baulk at the

extra time and effort this would entail. Some of the shortcomings identified are met in supplements to the course (involving further expense) or, by the publisher's reckoning, in resources which may be bought in. I feel that, given the course's age and its clear shortcomings, revision could beneficially be undertaken which would subsume the best of the supplementary material, cut out the less motivating material identified above, provide a more systematic and coherent thematic progression, break with the linear approach to structure and, above all, provide a course which, from the point of view of layout and general appeal, is more accessible to the individual learner. As it stands, it will no doubt continue to be adopted by many, but evidence is mounting from long-term users of the sort of disenchantment leading to disaffection which seems almost endemic in the life of a coursebook. The final Chapter of this inquiry aims to consider whether there is a way out of this apparent impasse.

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9. Ibid. p.198.

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Notes

1. The European Economic Community is the tangible manifestation
    of a widely-supported desire for greater unity in the continent.
    The Council of Europe has attempted to address the problem of
    language and communication in a series of policy resolutions
    linked to research and development programmes. Some of the most
    significant work was produced in the 1970s in the area of
    syllabus design. Van Ek (1975) set up a model for defining
    language-learning objectives initially for adults wishing or
    needing to acquire the sort of basic competence which would
    enable them to move more freely around the 'new' Europe. His
    model for the "Threshold Level" specified syllabus components
    such as situations in which languages would be used, topic to
    be dealt with, functions, notions and forms of language.

    David Wilkins carried the model forward in the well-known
    Notional Syllabuses (1976). The notional syllabus exemplifies
    an "analytic" approach to designing a programme of instruction
    by organizing it in terms of the purposes for which language
    is learned and the kinds of language performance necessary to
    meet those purposes. The syllabus itself is a taxonomy of
    functions and notions.

2. _Zickzack_ presents grammar on three levels: Level 1 - "Tip
    des Tages" - presents new structures for productive use
    without formal grammatical analysis; Level 2 - "Grammatik
    auf einen Blick" - has summaries of new structures: these
    take the form of functional presentation with occasional
    grammatical explanation; Level 3 - "Grammatik-Überblick",
    located at the end of the book, is both summary and
    explanation of a functional and formal nature. Level 1 is
    for "all learners", Level 2 for "the majority" and Level 3
    for "the most able" (course description).

3. TVEI is reported in some detail in 7.2.2. Notable among
    the curriculum principles which it sets out to promote are
    -   learning based on experience

- a negotiated curriculum with modular course design
- integration of curricular areas
- 'problem-solving' approaches to learning
- profiling and graded assessment (including self-assessment
- more independent and 'project' work.

CHAPTER SEVEN : THE WAY AHEAD

7.1 Introduction

This enquiry was initiated in an attempt to address a significant
aspect of foreign language learning in British secondary schools -
learner motivation. The extent of learners' motivation is widely
recognized as crucial to a positive outcome to any educational
process. Motivation has assumed a particular importance in the often
turbulent history of foreign language study in schools. The so-called
crisis in modern languages of the mid to late 1970s was essentially a
crisis of motivation which two thirds of secondary learners resolved
by abandoning language study as soon as the then prevalent subject
option systems allowed them to do so. The fundamental weaknesses in
the mode of provision, organisation and management of foreign
languages in the curriculum have been discussed at some length
elsewhere in this enquiry. They raise many complex issues which tend
to manifest themselves as imperfect pedagogic practice based on
unsound theory. The classic example of this must be the audio-lingual
and audio-visual movement of the 1960s which derived their credentials
from psychological theories of learning, linguistic theory and a
quasi-scientific rationale linked to new educational technology. The
prevailing focus on teaching and methods allied to the above led
language study up what could have been a terminally blind alley. Many
practitioners felt their latent suspicions of 'theory' confirmed by
events and, from the late 1970s through the 1980s, set about assuming
greater responsibility for the development and destiny of their
subject discipline. Perhaps predictably, their initiatives mirrored

developments in theories of learning and motivation which shifted the focus of the educational process from teaching to learning. Programmes of study have become increasingly driven by learners' actual or projected needs and important motivational functions such as arousal, expectancy and incentive. The management of instruction and the learning environment has become more flexible and more enterprising to accommodate new views on the promotion of effective learning. Assessment objectives have focused less on discrimination and more on what learners understand, know and can do. We have been, and continue to be, in a period of significant change.

As far as practical teaching and learning are concerned, the coursebook has traditionally played a central role, often constituting the entire scheme of work for a cohort of learners. As a tangible and permanent resource, it has characteristically represented a meeting point for theories of how a language should be learned and the actual provision of a learning experience. In an investigation of so broad and complex a field as motivation for language learning, it was necessary to narrow the focus considerably. The coursebook and its role in learner motivation thus became the focal point of the enquiry. A review of theories of learning and motivation led to the establishment of an evaluative instrument for coursebooks. Surveys of the views of learners and teachers on a variety of current coursebooks were conducted and the evaluation instrument was used as a basis for a case study of the coursebook which is currently the most popular in the United Kingdom. Findings of both the surveys and the case study revealed features of coursebooks which did not correlate with the expectations of learners and teachers and could at times be seen to be

at variance with well-founded views of how motivation and effective learning may be generated and sustained.

In the light of the above, this final Chapter aims to explore aspects of the format, content and presentation of coursebooks which could or should be modified to enhance their motivational value. As a preface to such a summative activity, however, it must be acknowledged that the many changes alluded to in the opening paragraph are not merely administrative: they are bringing about profound changes in the whole landscape of education. Conditions for the planning, management and assessment of learning are coming under widespread scrutiny and learners in the 1990s will operate different models of learning which will aim to generate different motivations. In such a climate, key resources for learning should reflect, not work against, the prevailing orthodoxy. I now propose briefly to review these changes and developments.

7.2 A changing educational landscape

Although the public education sector has been organized and regulated through various government Education Acts (that of 1944 being probably the best known and most significant in recent history), much change and development had taken place in the three decades following that act with education remaining the preserve of academics rather than politicians. The large-scale (though not universal) reorganisation of secondary schools along comprehensive lines of the 1960s-70s had clear political overtones, but it is only in the last ten or so years that education has become a major political issue. This has generated a level of government interest and involvement— not to say intervention

- which will culminate in a radically transformed educational landscape for the learners of the 1990s. The process of 'politicisation' can be viewed historically in terms of certain key events which, although apparently discrete at their inception, may now be seen to be converging and cohering into a national framework for the school curriculum. The definition of the curriculum currently enjoying the widest currency is that of HMI (1985):

> "A school's curriculum consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organisational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils." (1)

It will be shown in the following review of key developments that the phrase "all those activities" is both powerful and far-reaching.

7.2.1 A period of reappraisal and reform

The event generally regarded as beginning the politicisation process was a speech delivered at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1976 by Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan. He called for a "great debate" on education which was followed in ensuing years by a number of documents from the DES and HMI. Among these may be cited HMI's A View of the Curriculum (1980), Curriculum 11-16. Towards a Statement of Entitlement (1983) and The Curriculum from 5-16 (1985) and the DES's Curriculum 11-16 (1977), A Framework for the School Curriculum (1980), Better Schools (1985) and, of course, the consultative document The National Curriculum 5-16 (1987). It was the latter, the brainchild of Conservative Ministers of Education in a government first elected in 1979, which probably represented the culmination of political involvement in education, coming as it did as part of a broadly and

radically reforming Education Act of 1988. In the meantime, however, other significant developments were taking place.

7.2.2 The Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI)

This has already been alluded to briefly (Chapter 6.3.1). As its title suggests, TVEI was an initiative which may best be defined as an attempt to reorientate the school curriculum. It was launched by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1982 initially as a very well-funded "pilot" for 14-16 year old secondary pupils. The first TVEI cohorts (in fourteen LEAs) began their fourth year secondary courses under the scheme in September, 1983. Apart from the inherent novelty of such an initiative, another important feature was that it would be managed not by the DES but by the Manpower Services Commission, a government-backed agency set up to deal with employment and training. This factor in itself led to an initially hostile reaction to the scheme from some quarters. The broad aim of the pilot project was:

> "to explore ways of managing programmes of general,
> technical and vocational education for 14-18 year olds
> within the education system." (2)

This aim became expressed most significantly through:

> "the progressive adoption of student-centred approaches
> across the whole of a student's learning experience,
> thereby bridging subject areas. Thus many people involved
> in the projects have seen the introduction of new courses
> as an opportunity to effect a change in emphasis towards
> more active learning and towards helping students to learn
> to learn." (3)

In fact, the words "technical" and "vocational", whose apparent specificity and narrowness were alighted on by many critics, proved to

be less than central. The initiative was extended progressively (though with proportionally diminishing funding) and has become a much broader exercise in curriculum development than (one suspects) its founders envisaged. Even at the outset, one of its major aims had about it a certain liberal and humanistic aura:

"Aims of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative:

In conjunction with LEAs to explore and test ways of organising and managing the education of 14-18 year old young people across the ability range so that:

. . . (v) more emphasis is placed on developing initiative, motivation and enterprise as well as problem-solving skills and other aspects of personal development." (4)

The complete statement of the aims of TVEI, together with the latest (Spring 1989) "Mission Statement" from the Training Agency (formerly MSC) are reproduced as Appendix C.

From the point of view of this enquiry, the major impact of TVEI has been its promotion of broader views of the curriculum and, in particular, its emphasis on a different approach to learning in which group-work, self-managed learning and greater learner autonomy are encouraged. The 'extension' phase which followed the first initiative means that all 14-18 year olds will probably be involved in TVEI during their school career.

7.2.3 Profiling and Records of Achievement

Shortly after the introduction of TVEI, and at a time when much debate and reappraisal were taking place in the vital area of assessment of learning, the Government issued a policy statement Records of Achievement. A Statement of Policy (1984). This sets out the

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objective of establishing by 1990 arrangements under which all
secondary school learners would have a record of achievement prepared
within a framework of national policy.   As with TVEI, a number of
pilot schemes were set up to investigate and test the proposal.   The
policy statement (here quoted from the 1989 report of the National
Steering Committee) defined four main purposes of records of
achievement:

-    Recognition of Achievement

     Records and recording systems should recognise,
     acknowledge and give credit for what pupils have
     achieved and experienced, not just in terms of public
     examinations but in other ways as well;

-    Motivation and Personal Development

     They should contribute to pupils' personal development
     and progress by improving their motivation, providing
     encouragement and increasing their awareness of
     strengths, weaknesses and opportunities;

-    Curriculum and Organisation

     The recording process should help schools to identify
     the all-round potential of their pupils and to consider
     how well their curriculum, teaching and organisation
     enable pupils to develop the general, practical and
     social skills which are to be recorded;

-    A Document of Record

     Young people leaving school or college should take
     with them a short, summary document of record which
     . . . should provide a more rounded picture of
     candidates for jobs or courses than can be provided
     by a list of examination results . . .   (5)

In an important section on the impact of Records of Achievement on
pupils, the 1989 report asserts that

     "Records of Achievement should help pupils to identify
     educational and personal goals which are both challenging
     and attainable, and to recognise their success and
     achievement in relation to their own progress in this

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> context . . .
>
> Records of Achievement should enhance pupils' motivation
> and commitment to their education by helping them to
> understand the purposes behind their work and assessment,
> and to plan action to develop both strengths and positive
> approaches to weaknesses. They should help pupils to
> develop initiative and the skills necessary for self-
> assessment and self-management so that they can take
> increasing responsibility for their own learning . . ." (6)

An important instrument in the construction of the Record of Achievement is the pupil 'profile'. The profile came to prominence as a central feature of a one-year post-16 course called the Certificate of Pre-vocational Education (CPVE). This was introduced in 1984 to provide an educational challenge to students of a wide ability range who might subsequently proceed into vocational training or opt to stay in the traditional Sixth-form curriculum areas with a view to higher education. Central features of the course, constructed within individual schools but nationally validated were:

- 'core competences' such as communication and social skills, numeracy, information technology, practical skills and problem solving

- vocational studies: business, technical, production, distribution or services

- work experience

- formative assessment by negotiated 'profile statements' involving the individual student and teachers.

A profile statement is thus the outcome of a review of learning experience conducted as a dialogue between student and teacher having both the formative function of setting targets and identifying needs

to be put into the learning agenda and the summative function of a joint assessment of performance or outcomes of learning based on known and agreed criteria and, crucially, aimed at recording positive achievement in a systematic way. For the student, profiling can enhance motivation by recognising achievement, providing incentive and expectancy and extending awareness of the learning process and how assessment takes place.

Schools are still a long way from a definitive approach to profiling. The pilot scheme encountered problems with its many ramifications. As a Sixth Form tutor in a CPVE pilot school in London in 1984-5, I had personal experience of both the advantages (in terms of a clear enhancement of learner attitude and motivation) and the disadvantages (notably in terms of the commitment of time necessary for useful dialogue even with a relatively small group of students and in terms of the review of teaching, learning and assessment procedures that is a necessary accompaniment to the introduction of profiling).

Nonetheless, like the many other recent innovations in education, profiling and Records of Achievement seem here to stay and examples of good practice are emerging. One must certainly acknowledge the principle articulated by Stierer (1987)

> "All of the approaches, however, share a determination to go beyond traditional dimensions of learning to examine the skills, concepts, attitudes and abilities which pupils demonstrate in the classroom, to more explicit and clearly attainable 'targets', to a greater involvement by students in their own learning and assessment, and to a fuller, more rounded picture of the student as learner." (7)

7.2.4 A common examination at 16+: GCSE

The idea of a common public examination to record the outcomes of statutory education contrived (though arguably for different motives) to unite educationalists and politicians. For many years, the only such record of achievement available had been the General Certificate of Education Ordinary level, an examination controlled by university-run examining boards with a jealously-guarded academic bias and generally deemed suitable for only the top 20% of the secondary ability range. The effective disenfranchisement of such a large proportion of learners, together with an increasing concern that achievement in school should be recorded and certificated, led to the introduction of the Certificate of Secondary Education in 1965. This examination extended the possibility of accreditation of learning to 60% of the school population at 16+, was administered by non-university boards with teacher representation, encouraged experimentation and development in syllabuses and generally contrived to set goals based on a broader constellation of skills and competences. In particular, greater weight was attached to active and practical skills with correspondingly less deployment of factual knowledge in the form of written answers.

It was once again under the Thatcher administration that matters moved swiftly forward. A wide-ranging consultation exercise was initiated in 1981 with the publication of draft criteria for the new common examination. In 1985, the DES published General Certificate of Secondary Education: the National Criteria: General Criteria, which

set out general principles, requirements and criteria for all subjects. Some important features of this document were:

- the amalgamation into four examining groups of the
  dozen or more GCE and CSE boards

- the assignment of comprehensive powers of monitoring
  syllabuses, assessment and grading procedures to the
  Secondary Examinations Council (latterly the Secondary
  Examinations and Assessment Council)

- access to the examination for "all candidates, whatever
  their ability range relative to other candidates, who
  are able to reach the standards required for the award
  of particular grades"

- differentiated assessment "so that candidates across
  the ability range are given opportunities to demonstrate
  their knowledge, abilities and achievements: that is,
  to show what they know, understand and can do"

- syllabuses designed "to help candidates to understand
  the subject's relationship to other areas of study and
  its relevance to the candidate's own life"

- close definition of the subject content which will be
  examined, aims and assessment objectives

- provision of a "significant school-based component
  assessed by teachers, subject to external moderation"
  (generally referred to as "coursework"). (8)

Clear areas of alignment with aspects of other initiatives discussed emerge from the above. What also emerges is a picture of an

examination designed to accredit and validate the learning of a much enlarged group, carrying upwards into national assessment mechanisms principles of good teaching and learning practice and generally exhibiting a greater sense of accountability to its candidates.

GCSE was projected to start in 1988 and was heralded with an unprecedentedly comprehensive and lavish training programme organised regionally by the examining groups. The timetable for production of syllabuses and the many guidelines needed for new patterns of assessment was short, however, and the situation was further exacerbated by a long-running dispute between teachers and the government which led to some boycotting of training courses. In addition, despite the General Criteria document's stricture that unreasonable demands must not be made on human and financial resources, schools approached the new examination short of information, books and equipment. In the event, GCSE began in 1988 and the general impression was one of success, to the converging satisfaction of educationalists and politicians referred to in the opening paragraph of this section. The educationalists felt that they had a common examination which, though not perfect, nevertheless underpinned better teaching and learning practice and did reward achievement. The politicians felt that they had a more tightly-framed structure for evaluating the outcomes of learning - monitoring standards, assuring quality. In politicians' terms, GCSE, a national system of assessment, was something of a prelude to the last act in the current saga of reform which will now be reported.

7.2.5 A National Curriculum

The idea of a core or common curriculum for all is not a politician's gambit. Leading writers such as Holt (1978) and Skilbeck (1982) have articulated the feeling of many educationalists that greater uniformity, consistency and equity must be seen to prevail in the educational provision available to all school learners. The diversity of provision not simply from one LEA to another but even from one school to another could justifiably be described as at best idiosyncratic and at worst discriminatory.

A key feature of the 1988 Education Reform Act is that it sets out legal requirements for a National Curriculum for pupils of compulsory school age. The underlying principle is that

> ". . . it entitles every pupil in maintained schools . . .
> to a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and
> which, as the Act says,
> '(a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and
>   physical development of pupils at the school and of
>   society; and
> (b) prepares such pupils for the opportunities,
>   responsibilities and experiences of adult life.'" (9)

The National Curriculum proposal is comprehensive and wide-ranging, comprising

- specified subjects: three "core" subjects - English,
  mathematics and science - and, for secondary age pupils,
  seven other "foundation" subjects - technology
  (including design), history, geography, music, art,
  physical education and a modern foreign language

- attainment targets, to be specified at up to 10 levels
  of attainment . . . setting objectives for learning

-     programmes of study specifying essential teaching
      within each subject area

-     assessment arrangements related to the 10 levels of
      attainment. (10)

The elevation to "foundation subject" stage of some subject areas (notably modern languages) will have considerable repercussions.

The devising of programmes of study and setting of attainment targets will initially be the task of working groups composed of "experts from a wide variety of educational backgrounds" (DES 1989: 9.5).

National reported assessment, to which formative, summative and evaluative functions are ascribed, is a central feature of the proposal - indeed it is described (6.1) as "an integral part of the National Curriculum". For secondary age learners, reported assessment will take place at 14 and 16 and will be based on Standard Assessment Tasks, drawn up under the direction of the SEAC. The <u>Policy to Practice</u> document cites the benevolent effect of TVEI on curriculum organisation and "delivery" refers to lessons drawn from work on Records of Achievement as valuable contributions to assessment and reporting and acknowledges a continuing (though possibly modified) role for GCSE. In many ways, the National Curriculum proposals provide a point of confluence for all the initiatives and changes described above. In the context of this inquiry, the word 'entitlement' applied to the individual learner is of great importance: learners are to be offered an educational experience qualitatively and quantitatively different from what has gone before.

Implementation of the National Curriculum will pose challenges in the planning and management of learning which even its most ardent proponents do not attempt to minimise.

7.2.6 Summary

The above chronicle of change and reform was briefly reported as a necessary prologue to the concluding Chapter of this inquiry. It is beyond the scope of this inquiry to initiate critical analysis and discussion of major areas of educational change and reform. This is being done at length and in depth elsewhere. The concern of the above section was to map out the landscape on which the next decade's teaching and learning will be done and to summarize the nature of the climate in which that teaching and learning will take place with reference to the ethos and expectations that will be generated. Such brief and essentially factual reporting should not be interpreted as uncritical acceptance.

7.3 The impact of change on foreign language teaching and learning

> "Languages in the core curriculum to age 16 would have been
> derided as a concept even a decade ago." (11)

For the second time in barely a quarter of a century, foreign language teaching faces an enormous expansion of its role in the secondary school curriculum, this time encompassing the whole 11-16 age and ability range. Although the Chair of the National Association of Language Advisors (quoted above) acknowledges some "doubt and uncertainty", he nevertheless contrives to strike "a note of cautious optimism".[12] Such optimism may be founded on the fact that, this

time, change is not being foisted on language teachers with the suddenness and arbitrariness of combined radical change in methodology **and** considerable expansion of the learning population. Change, as reported in 7.2 above, has come in instalments and, having done much to remedy the problems generated by the "revolution" of the 1960s and 70s (see Chapter 2), language teachers have been much more ready to meet the challenge of change head-on and be prepared to adopt a mainstream role in coming to terms with it.

Thus, partly because of generous levels of funding at pilot and preliminary stages, TVEI has enabled some radical experimentation with active learning, elaborate simulation exercises, exchanges of tapes and materials with cross-curricular links and the exploitation of foreign language study in business studies and work experience contexts. In addition, the central role of information technology in the TVEI framework has enabled many schools to acquire computers for productive as well as more conventional (software games) use, electronic mail systems and access to satellite television broadcasts from Europe. Some of the above is reported by Holroyd (1988), who further suggests that

> "At the very least, TVEI has reinforced trends in foreign
> language teaching which, though desirable in themselves,
> have made very little impact in many conventional classrooms.
> At best, the Initiative has allowed much valuable experimentation
> in course structure and methodology to take place." (13)

The influence of the Graded Objectives movement (see earlier reference in Chapter 2.4.1) has proved wide-ranging. Its progress has been well documented in Page and Hewett (1987), who are able to state with conviction that:

"The influence of the graded objectives 'philosophy' is
then to be seen everywhere - in public examinations, in
published materials and in the general preoccupations of
language teachers, particularly in the schools. It is
undoubtedly true that the graded objectives movement
has been a major influence in shifting the focus of
language teaching over the last ten years." (14)

Page and Hewett refer to syllabus design, assessment procedures,

materials design and methodology and go on to indicate (as does

Stierer, q.v.) the potential of a graded objectives approach in

profiling schemes.   Perhaps one of their most significant assertions

is that

"The graded objectives movement had a profound effect on
the new national examination - GCSE." (15)

Even a cursory examination of a GCSE modern languages syllabus will

reveal definition of tasks, content (by topic, setting, functions,

notions and structures) and lexis that owes a great deal to the

structure of a typical graded objectives syllabus.

Graded objective tests were equally precursors of GCSE in that they

were accessible to virtually all, based on the completion of defined

tasks, criterion-referenced, in practical communicative situations,

such objectives known to learners before they take the tests.   In

short,

"Both teachers and learners know exactly what is expected
of them." (16)

GCSE itself produced a new, more closely defined and far-reaching set

of aims for foreign language study. They are here reproduced in full:

"The aims of a course in modern languages leading up to a GCSE examination should be

(i)   to develop the ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication;

(ii)   to form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure;

(iii) to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of French-speaking countries;

(iv)   to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;

(v)   to provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation;

(vi)   to encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations;

(vii) to promote learning skills of a more general application (e.g. analysis, memorising, drawing of inferences)." (17)

Apart from the enormously enhanced detail and prescriptiveness which examining groups built into their syllabuses following the publication of the above aims, the Criteria's specifications for the actual examination called for major realignment of the balance between the four language skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In fact, "common-core" assessment objectives, leading to the award of a certificate at the three lowest grade levels, are tested only in listening, speaking and reading. The first, and arguably central aim - the ability to use the target language effectively for purposes of practical communication - has caused an upward permeation of graded objectives approaches. These in turn owed much to work in applied linguistics (see notes to Chapter 6). Traditional objectives, linked to understanding structure and coping with essentially literary registers of language, have been replaced by a balanced four-skill set calling for

- an ability to listen to and understand the voices of
  native speakers in authentic monologue, dialogue
  and interview
- an ability to read for gist a variety of authentic
  items and texts
- an ability to ask for and impart information and
  conduct sustained free conversation
- an ability to carry out writing tasks in response to
  realistic stimuli.

The impact of all the above in the classroom has varied from relatively easy transition for those teachers (and their pupils) who had already identified what they felt was a viable way forward for the broad mass of the learning population to reappraisal fraught with doubt, uncertainty and not a little scepticism for others.

In the most recent book on modern language teaching (Summer, 1989) Colin Wringe takes GCSE aims as a starting point for a useful discussion of approaches and techniques for today's language teacher. Whilst still ascribing a central role to the teacher, the author does not fall into the trap of advocating a new "definitive method". He treads a fine line between some of the more exaggerated pronouncements of the "communicative" lobby and the concerns and limitations of the ordinary practitioner. He also, significantly, makes the point that

> "It is also regarded as important these days that pupils
> should fully understand the point of the learning
> activities they are engaged in and take responsibility
> for the aims and purposes of their own learning." (18)

One of the features of GCSE that has in itself added much weight to the above remark is the prescription of differentiated objectives for the wide ability range of candidates. This had led (beneficially, most would argue) to teachers setting tasks which may be differentiated or graded in themselves or which may lead to differentiated outcomes in terms of the amount or sophistication of language. Teaching towards communicative objectives has in itself helped the differentiation process as it has

> ". . . the great advantage of releasing both teachers and
> pupils from a regime in which everything written or said
> by any pupil had to be controlled and checked by the teacher
> . . . There are many communicative activities which,
> provided they are sensibly set up in the first place, do
> not need continual and detailed monitoring." (19)

It is becoming increasingly clear that the phrase "focus on the learner", which has had something of an idealistic or slogan-like ring to it, is rapidly becoming a reality in classrooms. More than ever, teachers need to view their classes as groups of individuals. In addition to obvious implications for teaching approaches and strategies, the new agenda for foreign languages, which will simply be further underlined by the implementation of the National Curriculum, has clear and serious implications for resources for learning. It is at this point that I return to the theme of this inquiry.

7.4   The role of the coursebook: recapitulation

7.4.1   General considerations

The surveys of the views of learners (Chapter 4) and teachers (Chapter 5) and the review of theories of motivation and learning applied to

coursebooks (Chapter 3) revealed a breadth and diversity of needs and perceptions which was discussed and reported in detail. At this stage of the investigation, it seems appropriate to distil from those findings a number of key issues relating to what the coursebook should offer.

7.4.2 What learners want

The most significant expressions of need to emerge from the survey of learners' views were

- a need for bright, attractive presentation: an abundance of illustration, especially in colour

- clear explanations in English: an evident need to know what is going on, why, and what is expected of learners

- provision of games, quizzes and activities with intrinsic interest and enjoyment value

- activities promoting practical, realistic communication

- presentation of real-life situations involving the way of life of the target language community and linked to themes that are interesting or that matter to learners

- access to authentic spoken language through well-produced tapes.

A further need firmly articulated on learners' behalf by their teachers was for shorter books divided into shorter, more manageable units: an ability to work rapidly through pages and units generates a sense of progress.

In summary, to reiterate a point made in the concluding paragraph of

Chapter 4, coursebooks should be major contributors to a learning experience which is enjoyable, comprehensible, meaningful and practical.

7.4.3 What teachers want

The survey of teachers' views on coursebooks, albeit limited to one LEA, revealed an extent of interest and, in some cases, a depth of feeling that in themselves suggest an under-valued source of ideas for development. Extracting a small number of key responses was not an easy task, but the following may be particularly identified:

- variety in both presentation and content

- an abundance of role-play and conversation work linked to everyday situations

- the important role of games, quizzes and activities to promote enjoyment

- provision of supporting resources and facilities such as tapes, flashcards, video and vocabulary lists

- clarity of presentation: less crowded pages

- use of colour

- shorter, more manageable units

- provision of differentiated objectives and activities

- scope for independent work and self-assessment.

Teachers clearly share their learners' most important perceptions of those features of materials for learning which are most likely to promote successful outcomes to study. Teachers apparently remain more fully to be convinced about learners' need to understand the purposes

of learning activity and have its objectives explicitly stated, but their concern for the same broad issues as their pupils' is manifest.

7.4.4 What theory suggests

The coursebook evaluation instrument produced in Chapter 3 was based on clearly identifiable motivational functions linked to the education process and on important principles governing effective learning. In summary, it can be reduced to the following:

- learners must have their attention and motivation aroused by attractive presentation and an appeal to their personal interests

- there must be an expectancy of a successful outcome to learning activity by perceived increase in knowledge, skill or competence

- learners need incentives: these will be provided by the generation of a sense of personal involvement and by differentiation of content and tasks which allow all to experience a sense of achievement

- learners must feel that their experience is organized: systematic presentation in clear and concise form should be linked to a capacity for self-management and self-assessment

- effective learning is promoted by the provision of meaningful contexts, an appeal to existing knowledge or experience which leads in turn to elaboration of both and a general air of accessibility and ease of use.

7.5 Coursebooks: looking ahead

7.5.1 An agenda for change

I began this investigation from a position of broad concern which it
became appropriate to channel into the specific area of coursebook
design. My enquiry set about identifying the strengths, weaknesses
and shortcomings of widely-used contemporary coursebooks with the aim,
supported by both the views of theorists and the expressed needs of
learners and teachers, of providing a basis for change and
development. The initial thesis, that coursebooks do not fully
exploit their undoubted potential to generate motivation and effective
learning, has been sustained by both the application of a "template"
based on theory and the findings of my surveys. Until fairly
recently, propositions arising from the thesis would have been
expressed in terms of what should happen as an evolutionary process.
The climate of change and reform of the late 1980s reported above
makes it more appropriate to postulate change that must take place. It
must be acknowledged that change and reform in themselves generate
development: GCSE in particular brought onto the market an abundance
of new teaching material, much of it designed to plug gaps in existing
provision, particularly in the realm of authentic materials. The
broad new agenda for education in the 1990s is provoking some reaction
and innovation in materials which I shall examine briefly.

7.5.2 Innovation in course and resource design (1989)

Simultaneous with the publication (in June 1988) of an article of mine

based on the coursebook evaluation instrument set up in Chapter 3, Green reappraised the role of the modern languages textbook. He perceives it not merely as a linguistic package but as a contributor to learners' personal development, referring to its potential to

"open up the subject and embrace the outside world" (20)

Motivational functions are discussed with reference to format, presentation, content, language, methodology and the promotion of achievement. Salient features of a good coursebook are the provision of frameworks for self-direction, self-assessment and self-awareness, the socialisation of language and flexibility - in particular, the presentation of alternative ways of learning leading to greater self-directedness and the inculcation of confidence to proceed beyond the textbook. Teacher and coursebook producer should co-operate

"to ensure that the fare on offer to pupils is relevant, accessible, stimulating and above all life-centred." (21)

A review of recent material (August, 1989) reveals a number of positive trends in the market. Notably innovative offerings include:

- Studio 16: aimed squarely at a teenage market, the three-volume course from intermediate to GCSE level features cassettes susceptible to individual use, a wide (four-grade) range of activities and student progress charts;

- Action! Nouvelle Edition: a revised version of Buckby's 1979 original which aims to place an "emphasis on active learning", provides in-built self-monitoring assessment and more material designed for homework or independent

study "to encourage greater independence";

- Arc-en-Ciel, to appear in five stages by 1992, is a major new course: its aims emphasize the learner's personal and linguistic development, it is realistic and authentic by virtue of being based on learners' own lives and experience, emphasizes social learning activity, features much individualised worksheet material graded on three levels from Stage 2 on, includes pupil and teacher assessment sheets for profiling purposes and maintains the MGP multi-media approach with an accompanying videotape;

- Hexagone Plus is another revision of a successful course for wide-ability groups in years 1-3: it now has four-page units "to make students feel they're making progress" and, in common with an increasing number of courses, has for the teacher a Resource File containing photocopiable sheets covering pairwork for role-play (including "information-gap" activities) and differentiated work ranging from reinforcement for slower learners to extension work for faster learners;

- Deutsch Jetzt, another major new course, also features a loose-leaf resource pack for teachers with differentiated language work and a photocopiable pupils' workbook; objectives are stated to learners, authentic contexts are paramount, progress tests are built in for instant feedback and checking and emphasis is placed on clear page layout;

- <u>Dans la Poche</u>, designed for GCSE students, places emphasis
  on learners' "taking responsibility for their own learning"
  and presents eight modules of GCSE material in a manner
  designed for learner self-access.

As mentioned above (7.5.1) the supporting resource area has often been
something of a proving or development ground for innovation. Material
for speaking has advanced considerably through information-gap-based
books such as <u>Tu Parles</u>, <u>Abgemacht!</u> and <u>Cara a Cara</u>, the neglected
area of reading has been enhanced by <u>Lies Mal Deutsch</u> and <u>Pigé</u> and the
pending <u>Le Tour du Calendrier</u> adopts an integrated-skill approach with
a diary format inviting learners to record their own experience.

Courses and materials referred to above are detailed as
references.[22]

It is clear that some response to the challenge of change is underway,
bringing with it a new publisher's rhetoric focusing on such notions
as differentiation, individualisation, independence, personal
development and the social dimension to learning.

7.5.3 <u>Coursebooks: some proposals for change</u>

The report and discussion of change and reform in 7.2 and 7.3 above
have indicated that foreign language teaching is facing an
unparalleled challenge and (in all probability) an unrepeatable
opportunity. Central to the success of the subject's expansion into
the core curriculum of all 11-16 year-olds will be the arousal and
sustaining of learner motivation. The impact of change and reform has

already given today's learners new expectations which they clearly wish to have fulfilled in their learning experiences. Instruction must thus be planned, managed and resourced to fulfil learners' expectations. This in turn throws the role of the coursebook into sharp relief. It is in this light, and in the light of shortcomings and areas offering scope for change and development already identified in this study that I draw up a series of proposals for coursebook design for possible incorporation into a new generation of coursebooks.

Such proposals must stem initially from a recapitulation of the deficiencies of the coursebook as it stands (and, with publishers' latest offerings as indicators, will continue to stand for the foreseeable future). Notable amongst these are

- dense and confusing layout
- demanding schedules of learning with too much input and too many activities in one chapter or unit
- failure to promote interaction with the learner
- lack of susceptibility to independent use: too many learning events require the overriding control of the teacher
- a self-containedness which in itself inhibits curiosity and, ultimately, learner autonomy
- an emphasis on transactional language to the detriment of imaginative material
- the perpetuation of a model of language based on structural linearity which is a serious inhibitor of effective communication.

The upshot of all the above is that, despite its superficial visual appeal, the contemporary coursebook fails the most fundamental test - that of 'user-friendliness'. Engaging the learner's interest and personal motivation is the indispensable ingredient for successful learning. It could well be argued that some of the characteristics listed above not only fail to support the learner but, worse, create difficulties by setting up adverse emotional reaction which in turn undermines motivation.

The necessarily central role played by the foreign language teacher has not been called into question in this study. Some coursebooks, on the other hand, have purported, both in their content and in the prescriptive nature of accompanying teachers' books, to assume the role of organizer of learning. This has led to teachers feeling that they are not fully in control of events in their classrooms. Looking to new modes of course design, I identify as a central feature a resource file for teachers containing a flexible body of material on a limited number of themes which might be presented as modules and whose content would be under the control of the teacher. It is essential that the teacher be an effective mediator between linguistic data or input and the learners. It is the teacher who has access to knowledge of learners' interests and characteristics and is consequently in the best position to fulfil the following prescriptions:

> "Learning activities should be based on, and extend the pupil's
> own experience. This motivates pupils and encourages a more
> independent attitude towards learning . . . This means
> organizing activities of intrinsic interest to pupils and
> exploiting these to facilitate language learning . . .
> Whereas in the past, schools might have expected their foreign
> language teachers to base their teaching almost solely upon a

few core textbooks, the wide variety of pupils' needs
throughout the extended core period of language study will
necessitate a more eclectic approach to selecting
materials." (23)

The themes I would identify as particularly relevant in the above
context are

- personal information, including family, home and daily
  routine
- leisure time activities and other interests
- holidays and travel
- school life.

The settings in which such themes would be developed would involve
learners both as visitors to the target-language country and as hosts
to a speaker of that language. The themes lend themselves to a
continuous process of recycling with increasing sophistication for
linguistic progression, are equally susceptible to differentiated
structuring of outcomes and, of their nature, invite the dynamic
participation of the learner. The establishment of a limited number
of themes as a basis for learning should help play down the role of
content which, as currently extensively defined in GCSE and even
Graded Objectives syllabuses, is assuming an increasingly dominant
role.

Themes should be exploited in a way which actively involves the
learner: this will involve not only some devolution of responsibility
to the learner in selection of materials and tasks from a resources
bank, but will also necessitate the provision of clear and explicit

written or taped rubrics which will genuinely facilitate autonomous and independent work. This principle has been embodied in an innovative French programme devised in Hertfordshire for lower-ability pupils.[24]

"Pupils learn better when they are actively involved." [25]

Specific features of new-style course materials designed to overcome previously-identified shortcomings will include:

- attention to layout and format: the dense and, in the views of some, uneconomical structure of a bound volume coursebook should be replaced with a folio constructed progressively by pupils. This will take the form of an A4 ringbinder file to which both input and worksheets can easily be added and which also serves as a repository for the learner's own work, progress tests and assessments. Linguistic input will come from the central resource file and will reflect differentiation of task, vocabulary and syntax. Any one sheet should focus on one piece of input or task only, thereby presenting the learner with a coherent and manageable activity

- interactive learning: learning events should promote the social dimension to learning not only by exploiting group and pairwork but, in the light of the greatly increased potential of information technology, should enable learners to gain access to data about real people with whom real interaction may be built up: the potential of 'electronic mail' for direct links between

groups of learners is enormous and some of the latest

modern languages software promised is designed to

provide learners with a database for interactive

exploitation[26]

- independent use: this will be enabled partly by attention

to presentation and rubrics as discussed above and partly

by the effective grading and differentiation of

presentation, activities and outcomes. More use will need

to be made of audio multiple-copying and the classroom

will have to be organized to contain a variety of

activities. Pupil self-assessment is being actively and,

by accounts, successfully incorporated into graded

objective schemes and the Southern GCSE Examining Group's

modular French examination (piloted in 1988) devolved a

good measure of responsibility to learners for the

development of speaking as well as listening, reading

and writing skills: they were expected to compile a

dossier sonore of their own speaking activities

- beyond the textbook: the notion of the self-contained

coursebook with nothing else to buy has been challenged:

HMI (1987) emphasize the potential richness of a foreign

language learning experience by capitalizing on interest,

arousing curiosity and dealing with many aspects of

life.[27] The coursebook must point away from itself,

encouraging learners to seek out further information and

enlarge their experience. A tangible way of achieving

this would revive a practice in older coursebooks of

providing well-chosen fragments of literary text
(such as a few gripping paragraphs from <u>Mateo Falcone</u>
or Maupassant) which would excite learners to discover
the world of imagination and education in literature

- beyond the transactional: arguments relating to the
excessively transactional nature of some communication-
oriented courses and programmes of study have already
been rehearsed: there are clear signs of disenchantment
- as there inevitably will be when an unbalanced diet
is on offer.   Language is not simply about transaction:
it is about discourse, expression, imagination and the
world of the human spirit.   The road from café menu to
Proust is a long one, but suitably motivated learners may
be induced to take it

- Grammar in a communicative context: it is widely
acknowledged and supported by research that the mother
tongue is not acquired by the linear process which remains
enshrined even in the latest coursebooks: this locks the
learner in an almost Piagetian pre-operational world of the
here and now for up to two years.   One of the features of
foreign language learning which may be perceived as either
advantageous or disadvantageous is that, even at eleven or
twelve years, the learner has formed a sophisticated
network of concepts: much learner 'error' is produced by
a desire to express those concepts in the foreign language.
A linear approach to grammar poses severe constraints on
autonomous language use and real communication.   In a topic

such as personal information, "I was born in . . ." is quite a basic utterance, simple discussion of leisure and interests quickly moves into past and future, and so on. Éclair (1975) showed us that there is nothing intrinsically difficult for beginners in the phrase "Je voudrais", though traditional views would place the conditional tense in year four or five. The complexity and importance of acquiring syntax are not to be minimised, but much useful contact with the patterns of a language can be built up by learning it as idiom in suitably clear contexts. Providing learners with a rigidly-controlled, linear programme of structure is tantamount to providing them with a starvation diet. The mould of controlled content has been broken: the same must be done with syntax.

7.6 Summary

This Chapter sketched in the background to what will undoubtedly be a testing time for foreign language teachers: the political will which has thrust their subject into a national core curriculum is no guarantee of success. Learner motivation will remain a crucial factor. This study has shown that motivation can at least be influenced, if not controlled by the teacher and that this influence is linked, among other things, to the provision of learning experiences and resources that arouse and sustain motivation. The findings of this study have pointed to areas for reappraisal and development in coursebook design and my investigation has in turn led me to make some tentative proposals. It was not within the scope of

the study that new course materials should be produced: this must be a subsequent task.   The study's more modest but, I hope, significant contributions have been to develop further the existing evaluative base for coursebooks relative to the crucial areas of motivation and learning and to point the way to developments which have been shown to be desirable and even necessary.

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This study was undertaken as a further investigation of an area of broad concern in the field of foreign language teaching. Events of the last few years have provided added impetus to consideration of foreign language learner motivation. Changes in the scope, organization and practice of language teaching are afoot which will make new demands. Within the discipline itself, some long-established attitudes and practices have been called into question. Notable amongst these is the role of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge by a prescribed method of instruction. Despite a continuous process of updating, the coursebook has retained certain endemic features which are bound up with a transmission model of teaching and learning. Developments in theories of motivation and learning and the pragmatic response to change of practitioners have signalled the need for reappraisal. My thesis has sought to contribute to this process.

Coursebooks have a long and, in the main, honourable record as the central resource for learning, but, like so many other features of education, are not immune from change. The 1990s will see a restructuring of educational experience based on the greater independence and autonomy of the individual learner. The coursebook is essentially an instrument which operates on a series of predictions of language, learning strategy and, latterly, learner need. This study has found it deficient in a number of respects. Coursebooks have proved susceptible to change - the various influences of audio-visual methods, the introduction of mixed-ability grouping and GCSE have each generated a flurry of 'revised editions' as well as new

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material. The apparently immutable feature which this study has concluded by challenging is the dense, bound volume itself. Findings of the survey indicate that the coursebook runs a risk of standing in the way of necessary curriculum development. They also indicate that the coursebook can create (or at best fail to address) attitudinal difficulties.

Implementation of the National Curriculum presents foreign languages with an opportunity they cannot afford to miss. In addition to the recognized educational benefits of 'a foreign language for all', the social, economic and political repercussions of the Single European Act of 1992 will place national competence in foreign languages in the spotlight. A measure of European concern is provided by the view of a French official of the Transmanche (Channel Tunnel) Consortium interviewed in March, 1989 by members of the South-East Regional TVEI Modern Languages Consortium:

> "Sur l'apprentissage des langues vivantes, je ne peux que
> leur recommander d'apprendre au moins une langue sinon deux
> . . . Et ça, ce n'est même pas un conseil - je crois que
> c'est une obligation pour les écoliers d'aujourd' hui qui
> deviendront les travailleurs de demain."

Signs identified in discussion of GCSE and Graded Objectives indicate that the basic approach to foreign language teaching and learning is meeting with a positive response from a broad spectrum of learners. There is clear scope for development of teaching resources, though sound new ideas are emerging. An obstacle to progress that might have been foreseen is teacher shortage.[1] From the announcement of the list of foundation subjects for the National Curriculum, concerns were

expressed about the shortfall in numbers of foreign language teachers needed for its implementation. If a teacher shortage emerges, the right sort of resources will be essential to enable learners independently to sustain their study. Should this come about, the coursebook will revert, by one of those cyclical processes which seem characteristic of education, to its much earlier role of support for self-directed study.

A study such as this must be limited in its scope and cannot hope to be all-embracing: discussion of motivation and learning has been deliberately kept on a broad base. Among areas related to the study which clearly merit further investigation are

- gender and social class factors in motivation
- work on the links between mother tongue acquisition
  and foreign language learning, in particular on the
  acquisition of syntax and its implications for teaching
  grammar in a communicative context
- the potential of information technology in establishing
  efficient and accessible contact between language learning
  communities and, more important, individual learners:
  a syllabus created from real contact should stimulate
  learning in a way that even reasonably well-informed
  hypothesis and prediction cannot do
- closer investigation of the perceptions of the writers
  of coursebooks and others with a perceptible interest
  or concern in their development (2)
- implications of the findings of this study (and other

changing circumstances) for the initial and in-service

training of teachers: in particular, the notion that

the role of the teacher as 'expert' must be not so much

set aside as augmented with the appropriate skills and

perceptions necessary for the role of facilitator or

enabler of more pupil-centred learning.

As far as the outcomes of the study itself are concerned, I have indicated that my next task must be to attempt to transform hypothesis into reality by development work on course materials.

If foreign language teaching is to respond effectively to new challenges, it needs to embrace a principle central to the whole process of human motivation and learning - the often-quoted statement attributed to von Humboldt:

> "We cannot teach a language; we can only create the conditions under which it will be learned."

Coursebooks have a key role to play in the realisation of that principle.

Notes

1. Hawkins (1987 pp.12-15) reports a process of decline in teacher recruitment traceable back to the early 1970s.

2. Low (1987) details a "network" of participants in a language teaching situation - ten in number - who are involved in the evaluation of teaching materials: investigation of their perspectives will provide a rich source for future research. See Low, G.: "The need for a multi-perspective approach to the evaluation of foreign language teaching materials" in Evaluation and Research in Education. 1,1.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEXT BOOK SURVEY

Name/title of Course: ....

First/early impressions: (please tick one box for each question)

1. Did you find the course looked

   Interesting ☐   Not interesting ☐

2. Did you feel that your learning with this course might be

   Enjoyable ☐   Boring ☐

3. Did you look forward to lessons

   More ☐   Less ☐

Using the course

1. Did you find the photos and drawings

   Very helpful ☐   Sometimes helpful ☐   Off-putting ☐

2. Did you find the texts in the foreign language

   Very interesting ☐   Sometimes interesting ☐   Boring ☐

3. Did you find the English explanations

   Too much ☐   About right ☐   Not enough ☐

4. Did you understand them — Mostly ☐ — Sometimes ☐ — Hardly ever ☐

5. Were the summaries of grammar helpful — Mostly ☐ — Sometimes ☐ — Hardly ever ☐

6. Exercises and practice work: were they — Very interesting ☐ — Sometimes interesting ☐ — Boring ☐

7. Did the course go back over previous units — Often ☐ — Sometimes ☐ — Hardly ever ☐

8. Tapes: did you find them — Very useful ☐ — Fairly useful ☐ — Boring ☐

9. Filmstrips/slides did you find them — Very useful ☐ — Fairly useful ☐ — Boring ☐

10. Flashcards: did you find them — Very useful ☐ — Fairly useful ☐ — Boring ☐

Final impressions:

Did the course teach you

1. language you can use in real situations — A lot ☐ — A fair amount ☐ — Not much ☐

2. about French/German/Spanish people and how they live — A lot ☐ — A fair amount ☐ — Not much ☐

3. about the language (including how it works)   A lot ☐   A fair amount ☐   Not much ☐

How much did your using the course improve your

1. understanding of the language   A lot ☐   A fair amount ☐   Not much ☐

2. knowledge of the language   A lot ☐   A fair amount ☐   Not much ☐

3. liking of the language   A lot ☐   A fair amount ☐   Not much ☐

Was this course typical of what you think a school textbook should be?   Yes ☐   No ☐

If you answered "No", please state briefly why not: _____

What did you like most about the course? _____
_____

What did you like least about the course? _____
_____

Thank you for your help.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSEBOOKS AND LEARNER MOTIVATION: TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please name the main coursebook you use in your teaching ....

   Having regard to the key role of the coursebook and its consequent influence on your pupils' motivation, please record your overall view of the course you use by ticking one box below:

   very satisfied ☐   fairly satisfied ☐   not very satisfied ☐

2. Given that most teachers have to work with learners of high, average and low motivation, indicate by ticking one or more boxes below which of these groups you find the book particularly suitable for:

   highly motivated ☐   of average motivation ☐   of low motivation ☐

3. In your view, has use of this coursebook (tick as appropriate)

   increased motivation ☐   produced no measurable difference ☐

   decreased learner motivation ☐

4. The following features of modern coursebooks have been identified by learners as desirable or motivating. From your own experience, please grade each feature

   1 **very** significant to your learners' motivation
   2 **of average significance**
   3 **not very significant**

Presentation of "everyday" situations	☐
Language learning linked to understanding the life of the target language community	☐
Copious illustrations	☐
Cartoons	☐
Quizzes	☐
Tape recordings	☐
Role-play and conversation work	☐
Variety of things to do	☐
Slides / filmstrips	☐
Explanation in English	☐
Provision of a vocabulary	☐

Any other features of the modern coursebook which you and your learners have found beneficial:...
....
....

5. Learners have identified the following features as unhelpful or demotivating
   Please express your own reaction by grading each feature

    1   seriously detrimental to your learners' motivation

    2   moderately detrimental

    3   producing no noticeably adverse effects

Problems with "natural" voice speed,
accent and clarity on tapes   ☐

Repetitive exercises with no
perceived point   ☐

Unclear "grammar" sections   ☐

Long units, texts and dialogues   ☐

Boring or unclear presentation of verbs   ☐

Course already "dated" or out of touch
with age group   ☐

Lack of English explanation or
translation   ☐

Any other features you have found to work against learner motivation or any of
the above you may wish to elaborate on:

....
....
....

6. From the point of view of learner motivation, the following may be identified as undesirable features of a coursebook: from your experience please record your reaction by grading each feature

1 agreement

2 no strong feelings

3 disagreement

Overcrowded pages   ☐

Excessively demanding schedules of
learning (is "a book a year a feasible target?)   ☐

Variety at the expense of pratice
and consolidation   ☐

Too many discrete topic units
lacking overall continuity   ☐

Excessive emphasis on "transactional"
language at the expense of entertaining
of imaginative input   ☐

7. Please record any further opinions you may have of the function of the coursebook in motivating the learner - any aspects not covered by the questionnaire and any ideas you may have for the development of the format and scope of the coursebook..
   ....
   ....
   ....

Thank you for your help.

ANNEX A : AIMS OF THE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE

A   In conjunction with LEAs/EAs to give young people aged 14-18 in all maintained schools and colleges access to a wid· ∶ and richer curriculum based on the lessons emerging from the pilot TVEI projects, so that:

    (i)   more of them are attracted to seek the qualifications/skills which will be of direct value to them at work and more of them achieve these qualifications and skills;

    (ii)   they are better equipped to enter the world of employment which will await them;

    (iii)   they acquire a more direct appreciation of the practical application of the qualifications for which they are working;

    (iv)   they become accustomed to using their skills and knowledge to solve the real-world problems they will meet at work, and in adult life;

    (v)   more emphasis is placed on developing initiative, motivation and enterprise as well as problem-solving skills and other aspects of personal development;

    (vi)   the construction of the bridge from education to work is begun earlier by giving young people the opportunity to have direct contact and planned work experience with local employers in the relevant specialisms;

    (vii)   there is close collaboration between local education authorities and industry/commerce/public services etc., so that the curriculum has industry's confidence.

B   To undertake (A) in such a way that:

    (i)   the detailed aims can be achieved cost-effectively;

    (ii)   the educational lessons learnt from the pilots can be applied to all students aged 14-18;

    (iii)   the educational structures/schemes established to further the aims of the Initiative are consistent with progressive developments in skill and vocational education and training outside the school environment, existing vocational education for under 16-year-old young people, and higher education;

    (iv)   emphasis is placed on appropriate arrangements for monitoring and evaluation;

    (v)   the extension plans are prepared and managed by the education authority concerned;

    (vi)   the overall conduct, progress and development of the Initiative can be assessed and monitored by the Commission, advised by the National Steering Group and the TVEI Unit.

WHAT IS TVEI TRYING TO DO?

TVEI aims to ensure that the education of 14-18 year olds provides young people with learning opportunities which will equip them for the demands of working life in a rapidly changing society.

TVEI seeks to influence the Education of 14-18 year olds in 5 explicit ways:

(1)   By making sure **the curriculum** uses every opportunity to relate education to the world of work, by using concrete/real examples if possible.

(2)   By making sure that young people get the **knowledge, competencies** and **qualifications** they need in a highly technological society which is itself part of **Europe** and the **world** economy.

(3)   By making sure that young people themselves get **direct opportunities** to learn about the nature of the economy and the world of work - through work experience, work shadowing, projects in the community and so on.

(4)   By making sure that young people learn **how** to be effective people, solve problems, work in teams, be enterprising and creative through the **way** they are taught.

(5)   By making sure that young people have access to initial **guidance and counselling**, and then continuing education and training, and opportunities for **progression** throughout their lives.

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