Components of language instruction today are identified and discussed. The basic steps of the audiolingual approach are first presented and are followed by brief discussions of curriculum guides, instructional materials, and language facilities. Instructional procedures, student and teacher roles, and the means of evaluating a language program are also briefly considered. (AR)
Evaluating the Foreign Language Program

FOREIGN language instruction from elementary school to university is far different today than it was in the first half of the twentieth century. During that era the so-called reading and eclectic methods were paramount. A practical command of the language usable in a communications situation was not thought of. Living in the "global village" of today necessitated a reorientation, and the inclusion of foreign languages in the NDEA of 1958 put the stamp of approval on the need for more and better teaching of foreign languages in the schools. Besides the usual French, German, Spanish and Latin, languages such as Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Portuguese, and others came to be considered as fundamental to national interest.

Within the past fifteen years some profound changes have been wrought in the foreign language curriculum. There has been a realignment of objectives, involvement of new disciplines, new methodology, application of the new technology, development of new materials for the audiolingual approach, longer sequences of study, and new evaluation techniques.

The audiolingual approach, as the new methodology is referred to, is derived from the linguist-informant method devised by descriptive linguists and used in the Foreign Service Institute, the Defense Forces Language Schools, and institutions like the Hartford Seminary Foundation where missionaries are trained for overseas service.

The method stresses the teaching of language through the ear and the tongue. First and foremost, language is oral communication and must be taught as such. If understanding rather than decoding is the expected outcome, this approach places the learner in a favorable position for acquiring the reading and writing skills more effectively.

The Audiolingual Approach

Once the concept of the listening-speaking-reading-writing progression is accepted by the foreign language teacher the following practices in the teaching-learning situation are evident:

1. At the least, 90 percent of class-time must be devoted to the active use of the language. The classroom is a learning laboratory where the focus is on training to understand the spontaneous utterances of the native speakers of the foreign language and to speak the language itself.

2. The first activities are devoted primarily to listening and speaking using the basic structure and a limited vocabulary with oral accuracy and correct intonation. Reading and writing at this stage are taught only to reinforce the student's ability to listen and speak more accurately.

3. At the intermediate and advanced levels, structure and vocabulary in context are expanded until the student is brought to the point of reading and discussing masterpieces as well as advanced materials in other subject matter areas in the foreign language itself.

4. Language, a complex of skills, must be acquired as other skill subjects are acquired through steady daily practice, active and aloud. The language laboratory permits practice in private until the student has obtained control of the language. Tapes are made by native speakers to assure increasing comprehension and authentic linguistic models to imitate. Tapes are carefully correlated with the work of the regular class period.

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5. Since language is a complex of skills the two-year foreign language program is abandoned in favor of a four-year (Grades 9 through 12) and a six-year (Grades 7 through 12) sequence. The more progressive schools are initiating programs in the elementary school (FLES), nine- or ten-year programs (Grades 2, 3 through 12), in order to make best use of a child's physiological, neurological, psychological, and intellectual growth. These long sequences, if properly articulated and taught with the use of culturally authentic films and filmstrips facilitate an automatic control of the basic sounds, structures, and vocabulary at an early age and allow children to grow up "in the culture of another country" as well as that of their own. The longer sequence gives the slower learner a better chance to assimilate a language. Culturally authentic materials (filmed materials in particular) open new vistas, especially for the culturally deprived youngsters who should be allowed to participate in the foreign language program. Longer language sequences also give students who are especially adept in linguistic skills a chance to pick up another language during their school careers.

6. Since automatic control of language is the goal, analogy—rather than analysis—is the process used in the structuring of drills. These exercises are so constructed that the student is constantly on the alert and knows what he is doing and why he is doing it that way. There can be no rote learning since the ultimate in language learning is the free and spontaneous manipulation of language.

7. The language program uses a variety of materials on tape and in print to provide for the individual differences that occur in any class.

8. Efficient use of staff combines specialist and native informant, large group sessions for language analysis, small group sessions for practice and performance, and individual work on a programmed learning basis in the laboratory for taking care of individual differences.

9. Materials used are designed by the descriptive linguist, the learning psychologist, and the classroom teacher using culturally authentic language and situations.

10. Students with several years of foreign language study in elementary school who wish to continue with that particular language in the junior high school are grouped in the same unit, and a separate unit is organized for beginners at this level. This requires a multitrack system in the junior and senior high schools. Differences between these groups should be evident or else the program is inadequately structured and badly articulated.

11. A school system, or a large school, makes provision for a coordinator for the development and maintenance of a well-articulated program. Time is provided for the teachers to work on materials and activities as well as coordination of the program horizontally and vertically. Teachers visit each other's classes and are given an opportunity to visit good teachers in other schools.

12. Much use is made of the community and its foreign language, cultural, and human resources. Wherever possible native speakers of the target language are asked to participate in class and other activities. The students work actively with schools in the foreign country by exchanging tapes, books, texts, letters, and even visits when possible. Foreign language camp programs in the summer have in many cases become part of an enrichment program in the school or state.

The Curriculum Guide

Textbooks are not curriculum determiners. Any good language program is in need of a curriculum guide. Such a guide is based on a state guide1 but adapts it-

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1 Recommended guides are:

**California State Department of Education**

*Spanish: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, Grades 7 through 12, 1961, 69 pp.*

The State Department has other excellent bulletins on foreign language teaching.


**Minnesota State Department of Education**


**Modern Language Association**

*German, French, Spanish Guides for Grades 3 to 6, 1959.*


Obtainable from: MLA, 4 Washington Place, New York City.

**New York City**


Obtainable from: N. Y. City Board of Education, Bureau of Curriculum Research, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, New York.

**New York State Department of Education**

*French for Secondary Schools, 1960* 

*German for Secondary Schools, 1960.*

*Spanish for Secondary Schools, 1960.*


**York City School District**

*Course of Study for the Teaching of French in the*
self to the local needs of the school district or the individual school. Objectives must be clearly specified in relation to the language program itself and to the general education objectives of the school. A guide helps in pacing and selection of materials and in the placement of students. (20 percent of all students change schools each year.) A guide should also state:

1. at what level language study is best begun in the school,
2. the differences in approach used according to the age level of the student,
3. which languages are offered and why,
4. to whom foreign languages will be offered: to all students, or to those who elect it, or to a selected group,
5. the continuity of the program and how the schedule allows students to stay with the program from beginning to graduation,
6. what credit is given for each level of language including the elementary school program,
7. the needed qualifications for the FLES teachers and the high school teachers,
8. the use of film courses and TV courses and their effectiveness,
9. the number of contact hours, the length of the class and laboratory sessions, the size of the classes at the elementary school, junior high, and senior high school levels. Advanced senior high courses can meet less often whereas class periods can be shorter but held daily at the beginning levels of language learning.

Materials

Basic materials used in a language program include a teacher’s guide, tapes, visual aids, textbook, workbook, tests, individual take home records, supplementary listening and reading materials. The teachers should be familiar with the Selective List of Materials and its Supplements (MLA-FL program, 4 Washington Place, New York City) to be able to select intelligently and with the proper criteria foreign language curriculum materials such as readers, periodicals, newspapers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps, travel literature, realia, records, slides, filmstrips, films, and other materials which can be obtained with the help of NDEA funds.

Facilities

A language classroom is a cultural island, a kind of embassy for the foreign country. It has a movie screen and means of darkening the room for films, a tape recorder, a filmstrip-slide projector, and an overhead projector (an indispensable piece of equipment for using enrichment materials in a foreign language class), and its own film projector if the new audiovisual courses are used in the language program. It also is a miniature library with shelves for books, magazines, and other materials. Bulletin boards and exhibit cases are incorporated as part of the instructional program of the foreign language program.

The profession has given much thought today to the language laboratory versus the electronic classroom. Many classrooms are equipped with audio-active head-phones and a small console which can, after use, be put away leaving the classroom free for other activities. This enables the teacher to use the laboratory facilities at the time needed so the class does not waste time in going from one room to another.

An ideal language facility is a language suite with a fully equipped language laboratory and a recording room centered in such a way that the language classrooms surround the laboratory. Intercommunication should be possible between laboratory and the classrooms. The classrooms are also equipped with simple laboratory facilities. This provides for the individualization of instruction so badly needed in the field.

A good language facility also provides filing equipment, adequate storage space for tapes, and wherever used films and filmstrips. Records are put on tape immediately to save wear. Tapes are carefully labeled and catalogued. If possible, different colored boxes and reels as well as lead tape are used to indicate the different languages. A most important feature in both language laboratory and electronic classroom is soundproofing with good acoustical tiling. The laboratory facilities
of a school are effective only when the teachers are trained to use them and have had a part in designing them to suit their particular needs.

**Instructional Procedures**

Fundamental to the audiolingual approach is the memorization of short dialogs or basic sentences and pattern practice. These techniques should not only use expressions in common use but should also help make language automatic at the manipulative level. When pattern drills are carefully conducted, the student should know immediately if his utterances are appropriate and correct. When the language taught is usable in real life and when the expressions and structures are repeated in many different contexts and types of pattern drills, the students are being prepared in the active use of language—one of the ultimate goals of language learning.

However, mimicry-memorization and pattern drills can become tedious in the hands of an unskilled teacher. In the audiolingual approach students must understand the rationale of so much drill, practice, and careful attention during the performance of these tasks. This creates the set to learn—an important factor, since this kind of learning rarely takes place in the other academic classes. Unremitting drill, seen in so many classes and laboratory sessions, does not always result in learning. It can often become distasteful and the student will do the drill mechanically with his thoughts elsewhere.

Going from one drill to another as is often seen in the classroom cannot be considered a change on the nature of the task facing the student. Laboratory practice tapes as well as classroom activities need thoughtful planning. In the classroom the teacher must sense class reaction and prepare to change an activity at the first sign of boredom. Activities should move from active drill to listening and reading experiences, to question-answer, true-false statements, directed dialogs, free rejoinders, writing practice, structured songs and games, and the many other ways in which language can be acquired. In fact, constant repetitive activity may be decremental. Overlearning can produce stereotyped behavior and a loss of flexibility. As a result, the student will have difficulty in varying his responses and communicating freely at the advanced levels of language learning.

The drilling of structures should be accompanied by the generalization which describes for the student what he is doing. When pattern drills go on in the class or laboratory, the student must understand the crucial element he is drilling. Better yet, the teacher by the use of careful questioning can guide the students in making their own generalizations. Understanding the whole language pattern and the functions of the various parts in relation to each other and to the whole is necessary if the student expects to transfer his learnings to the many situations he will encounter and desires flexibility in the use of what he has learned.

When such procedures are followed the student will not only use the correct response but will also understand in what way his response is right. Always putting the right response in the mouth of the student without understanding on the student’s part can give an impression of glibness but the student is at a loss if asked to express himself in a real communications situation. As a result he becomes disillusioned and wants “out” of his language class.

The language laboratory is an important and powerful technique, but it is not an indispensable part of the audiolingual approach. It is indisputably a way of making this approach more practical by relieving the teacher of the tedium of repetitious drill with the same material in successive classes. In other words, the laboratory work is auxiliary to face-to-face communication situations set up in the class.

Taped materials must also contain a variety of activities and exercises which have not already been drilled intensively in class. In this way the student’s atten-
tion is caught and held and a laboratory session will have real meaning for him. A 20 to 30 minute tape is about the right length for a laboratory session depending upon the kind of material on the tape. If possible a daily 20 minute lab session would be ideal. Students should have no less than two laboratory sessions of at least 45 minutes each per week.

In most laboratories identical material is presented to all members of the class at the same time. Each person is expected to learn at the same rate. This frustrates both the intelligent student and the slow learner. Some members of the language teaching profession prefer a pause button on the tape machine so the student can regulate the length of the pause according to his own needs. If this cannot be done then the materials should be adapted to the needs of three or four group levels in the class. Of course, this means much extra time and work for the teacher at present until such needs can be taken care of by commercial materials. A laboratory system where each student can take out the material he needs and then proceed at his own rate is the most feasible solution to the problem.

To assure good intonation and pronunciation, the teacher must carefully monitor the students' work in their booths. This avoids reinforcement of incorrect responses and prevents frustration for the weaker student who is at a loss to see how his language facility can be improved.

In the elementary stage of language learning, the mimicry-memorization and structure drills automatize the necessary associations in language: subject-verb, adjective-noun agreements; word order in statements, questions, commands; tense sequences and other differences in a particular language's structure. These drills should relate to the students' particular interest at whatever age the elementary level of language learning starts. Wherever possible a humorous element should be included to relax tension and regain the attention of the wavering student.

The more advanced levels of language training should focus on fluency in expressing one's ideas and values. A great amount of practice is needed here. Students must be taught how to select structures and vocabulary needed to enter into free discussion with their peers and with the native speakers of the language.

If the elementary stage has been carried out as mentioned above, the student will be entrepreneur enough to use language structures independently of the specific context in which he first learned them. Practice at the second and more advanced levels required a certain amount of trial and error. Approbation when the correct response is given will strengthen the free and correct use of the language. It must be remembered that hesitation in the communication of our own thoughts in our own native language is very frequent. We pause many times to find the best way of conveying our thoughts. It cannot be otherwise in another language.

At the advanced levels, the teacher structures the situations in the class to resemble real life communication. After the customary every day chit chat the students will discuss current events as read in newspapers, magazines, and books; as seen over TV, at the theater, or cinema; and as heard over the radio. To make this possible the classroom atmosphere must be relaxed with no tension between teacher and student and among the students. From time to time talk should divert to areas of interest to the students provided the talking is always in the target language. Thus one of the goals of language learning is effectively achieved: getting attention, sharing interests, getting information, even participating in light verbal banter. All this is facilitated by a teacher and audience not unduly critical, the teacher taking notes in order to prepare drills on the common mistakes made. Each student has a chance to participate with a feeling of success, a factor which greatly influences motivation.

One of the most controversial issues in the field is when to introduce the written
symbol in the audiolingual approach. Recommendations have been to defer the introduction for a number of months, for several weeks, to introduce the printed word as soon as a unit has been learned thoroughly audiolingually, or even simultaneously. There is not enough exacting research on this to commit the profession to any one of the above. The interference of the written symbol in the learning of our Western European languages which use printed symbols similar to ours, will occur in any case no matter when introduced.

The teacher must remain constantly on the alert to condition the student to associate the new sounds with the familiar written or printed symbols which he has associated with his own native set of sounds all during his life. Keeping the written symbol from the high school student for a period of several weeks or months can frustrate him. He will surreptitiously make notes—frequently erroneous—or develop images the teacher cannot get at, thereby perpetuating errors hard to eradicate later.

To sum it up, we do not know enough about how students learn audially, visually, tactically, kinesthetically, or in combinations of these—to force the learner to only one way of learning. But to reduce the interference the teacher should never allow a student to read what he has not already worked through audiolingually or what he is not hearing simultaneously as he reads silently. This is a potent reason for the use of the laboratory at the intermediate and advanced levels in language learning. Such safeguards and vigilance lessens the student's dependence on the teacher and makes him the independent language learner he needs to become for further progress. It also gives him confidence in his own oral work.

As soon as students have become familiar with the basic structures and a modest vocabulary, they are encouraged to do extensive listening to and reading of authentic materials. Even at the very beginning of a language experience students should be encouraged to read many materials in English about the foreign culture. After the first few units of an elementary level, easy listening and reading materials, conversations, and skits—all carefully graded and based on the structures learned with only slight increases in vocabulary—will build concepts, increase vocabulary, and further familiarity with the idiomatic expressions of the foreign language. Since there are not enough scientifically graded materials on the market, teachers in large schools or school systems should have the opportunity to get together to develop materials. Such materials should not present the odd and unusual unless it is made clear to the students that these are not representative of the contemporary society of the culture. These materials can be read later for their intrinsic interest.

At the advanced levels, a great amount of time is spent on listening to and reading materials, much of which should be done outside the classroom. Time is also devoted to memorizing and manipulating in a variety of ways the more difficult structures encountered in the advanced materials. Oral communication, however, is still the major part of what goes on in the classroom if we want to enlarge the student's active language repertoire and achieve our present objectives.

The Student

How are students selected for the language courses? Attempts have been made to use various means of prognosticating success in learning languages. Some criteria were the requirement of a "B" or better average, an IQ of 100 or above in an intelligence test, or high scores on aptitude tests. These criteria have proved to be of questionable value in predicting success in language learning, especially in the audiolingual phases of language. Interest, motivation, and personality characteristics are also powerful factors in a person's success in learning languages. As yet, no truly
valid prognostic instruments have been devised. The best predictor in the prognosis of achievement in modern language study is still a sample of actual work in a language class over a period of time. This is especially true in the longer sequences of study such as the nine- and six-year courses.

A point worthy of consideration is that language study has something to offer nearly every child. Fluency and acculturation will vary with native intelligence, interest, and ability to hear and imitate sounds. Children with low sound perception may not be able to speak well, but they can learn the language. This adds something of value to their broad educational experience by giving them some knowledge of another people, their country and their way of life, their culture and literature.

The Teacher

The teacher who guides a foreign language program must have a dynamic personality energizing positive reactions and attitudes in his students. The behavior pattern wanted in a person who is learning a language is intimately dependent upon teacher-learner, learner-learner relationships in the classroom. The interaction of personalities makes the teacher's role especially critical in language learning. He is model, guide, coach, and motivator in getting his students to attain competency in a modern language. He must be a practitioner in his specialty; thoroughly at home in the understanding, speaking, reading, and writing of it. He must have the ability to contrast the structures and cultural units of the target language with those of his own to enable him to concentrate his teaching in the areas of difficulty for the language learner. To do this well he must know the structures of English and be able to analyze these in terms of the target language. The nature of language, the inter-relationships of methods, materials, and measurements in language learning are part of his stock in trade.

Although a specialist, he must digress into such fields as geography, the social studies, folk lore, the theater, the arts and crafts, the dance and music, at least so far as these concern the culture of the target language. In a well-integrated school there should be a close collaboration and often correlation of work with colleagues in other disciplines, especially at the advanced levels of language learning where much reading and many activities could enrich the students' experiences. A well-trained teacher should be encouraged to teach units of work of the other disciplines in the modern language.

Any modern language teacher should frequently, at least once every five years, renew contact with the culture of the country whose language he is teaching. A teacher cannot allow himself to present quaint stereotypes which no longer hold true of the dynamic societies of the 20th century. Thus he must also know the latest materials which give insight into the civilization of the country. By using the magazines, periodicals, and newspapers he will be able to help his students prepare a basic foundation for the advanced stages of language when the classics of the foreign cultures can then be read with enjoyment and understanding.

It is the duty of the school administration to see to it that the foreign language teacher gets released time and proper renumeration to participate in programs of study and travel abroad. The foreign language consultant in the State Department of Education should advise with foreign language teachers on exchange programs and summer institutes held under NDEA and encourage their participation.

The first-year teacher should have taken the Foreign Language Proficiency Tests for Teachers and Advanced Students, a battery of seven tests developed and ad-
ministered by the Modern Language Association and Educational Testing Services, to find the strengths and especially the weaknesses which need further concentration for him to become the effective modern language teacher.

In the Soviet Union, a language teacher is expected to have a good working knowledge of a second foreign language. It would be wise for a language teacher in this country to learn a second foreign language or even a third to enable him to keep his perspective with regard to the complexities in the learning process his students have with their first foreign language and to assist him in gaining new insights in the teaching act.

A modern language teacher should know how to use the technological media such as tape recorder, language laboratory, film, filmstrip, slide, and overhead projector, and many other audio-visual machines and aids to enrich and help his students experience the language and the culture as deeply as they can.

The teacher or the library in his school should subscribe to the professional magazines in the linguistics, language learning, and teaching fields. The latest books in these areas are part of his professional library. He should be able to assist the librarian with selecting appropriate reading materials—carefully graded books and magazines—at the elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels; the audio-visual man with ordering tapes, filmstrips, and films for the enrichment of the language program.

Any good language teacher belongs to professional groups such as the American Association of French, Spanish, German, Russian Teachers, the Modern Language Association, or the Department of Foreign Languages in the NEA. He works actively with his local language organizations to facilitate an interprofessional exchange of ideas. He promotes student foreign language organizations and activities. Being acquainted with resources of the community which can enhance his language program, he invites foreign persons to the language classes and activities. American Field Service Students and foreign exchange teachers become a part of the total foreign language program. In the curriculum development program in his own school he is an active participant recognizing the fact that as a developer of young people he needs to look at the total educational program.

If a foreign born teacher is teaching his own language, he needs to know and understand the American school curriculum and the American student. He will not be able to communicate well if he does not have courses in descriptive linguistics in English as well as in his own language. All the professional activities in which the American teacher, trained to teach the foreign language, participates should also be part of the foreign teacher's activities.

Of most importance, the teacher himself must be a humanist who understands the minds and hearts of his students. He must realize that his greatest task is to keep their thirst for knowledge alive; that he must help them develop positive behaviors in their interaction with their fellow neighbors; that without this his instruction has been of no worth in the "global village" in which we live today.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation is an integral part of the instructional process. It involves the student's progress in all areas of learning, both objective and subjective. Language learning should be evaluated at all levels, including elementary school, in the same manner as all subjects in the curriculum thus stressing the position of the modern language program as an integral part of general education. It is useful to the student for evaluating his own progress; to the teacher in determining his strengths and weaknesses in his teaching, in determining the correctness of the language learning processes used, in comparing the achievements of his students on tests with national, standardized norms, in articulating the language sequences, and in determining the placement of students who
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change schools during language study.

Progress in the skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing is observed not only through an analysis of achievement test results but also through information gathered informally. Progress in cultural understanding and attitudes is very difficult to evaluate except through long range follow-up of individual student activities and observations of their behavior.

A continuous evaluation program using techniques which simulate real life situations will indicate the amount of progress that might be realized by the individual student when optimum teaching effectiveness is operating in the classroom.

Although the profession has now developed a battery of tests to evaluate the competency of the students in the four skills which should become a powerful factor in evaluating a well-articulated language program, lengthy formal tests are not always required in an ongoing, cumulative learning process as demanded in the acquisition of language. Systematic daily observation of students' oral and written work provides highly valuable information in indicating the direction future instruction should take. A teacher may select several items of pronunciation and grammar for evaluation each day and grade as many students as he is able by monitoring individuals during individual and group recitation, in the language laboratory where from the console a sizeable number of students can be evaluated quickly. Such daily evaluation in classroom and laboratory provides the teacher with a constant record indicating whether all students have been receiving equal attention in classroom activities.

Daily short tests of different types simulating real life situations provide motivation and serve to sharpen the student's alertness as well as stimulate his interest. Psychologically, they make the student use at once what he has learned, reinforcing correct usage by immediate correction. Such small daily tests also gives the slow learner a chance to accomplish a task which may be too much for him on a longer test. Such tests, never longer than 5 to 10 minutes, should be considered as diagnostic or learning tests, as well as a basis for grading.

The Advanced Placement Program which has increased considerably in the last decade is a means of helping the student benefit from his college education by granting him recognition for his effort and success in his secondary school career. However, a word of caution needs to be said with regard to this program. It needs a well-qualified, near-native language teacher; otherwise the program can vitiate the progress of the student trained in the audiolingual approach by having the course turn out to be a watered-down college course, a series of lectures in English on the literary history of the foreign country accompanied by the students' laborious decoding selections from the great masterpieces. This program should not be entered upon unless the students have had a good four years of intensive audiolingual training in the language as it is spoken and written today.

In conclusion, one must say that foreign language teachers today are determined to provide a quality program. Other disciplines are also in a state of turmoil and evolution. New concern for structure in the curriculum, new paths in the teaching-learning process, the new materials, and technology are aimed at producing better citizens to handle tomorrow's national and international problems.

*MLA—Cooperative Foreign Language Tests (in French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish) Cooperative Test Division, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey.

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