

ED 011 940

24

AA 000 057

TOWARD A PRACTICE-CENTERED PROGRAM FOR THE TRAINING AND
EVALUATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS.

BY- POLITZER, ROBERT L.

REPORT NUMBER BR-5-0252-6

PUB DATE MAY 66

CONTRACT OEC-6-10-078

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.09 HC-\$0.28 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *LANGUAGE TEACHERS, SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS,
LINGUISTICS, LANGUAGE SKILLS, PERFORMANCE FACTORS, TEACHER
IMPROVEMENT, RETRAINING, *TEACHER EDUCATION, *COLLEGE
LANGUAGE PROGRAMS, *LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, TEACHING
TECHNIQUES, *MICROTEACHING,

THE CREATION OF A TEST MEASURING THE CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE OF A LANGUAGE TEACHER AND THE VALIDATION OF THE TEST IN TERMS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT WAS RECOMMENDED. DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEST WAS VIEWED AS A HELP IN THE CREATION OF A "PRACTICE-CENTERED" TRAINING CURRICULUM, AND THE TEST ITSELF WAS DESCRIBED AS A MEASURE THAT WOULD PROVIDE A MEANS TO APPRAISE THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF TEACHER PREPARATION AND MAKE POSSIBLE A DETERMINATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH PREPARATION INFLUENCES PERFORMANCE. THE TEST WAS RECOMMENDED AS AN EXTENSION OF PRESENT TEACHER EVALUATION TESTS, BASED ON MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION STANDARDS OF TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS, THAT ARE NOW USED TO MEASURE THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS BUT NOT THEIR PERFORMANCE. CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEST WOULD BE BASED ON PERFORMANCE CRITERIA FOR THE TEACHER-TRAINEE APPRAISAL THAT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY'S INTERNSHIP PROGRAM. THE NEW "COOPERATIVE TESTS" OF PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT (SPEAKING, READING, WRITING, AND LISTENING) WERE SUGGESTED AS A MEANS OF VALIDATING THE TEACHER PERFORMANCE TESTS TO BE DEVELOPED. THE AUTHOR SUGGESTS THAT CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE SHOULD BE TAUGHT AS PARALLEL TRAINING GIVEN ALONG WITH THE COURSES IN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE SKILLS BY USING THE "MICROTEACHING" TECHNIQUE THAT IS A PART OF THE STANFORD TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM. "MICROTEACHING" PROVIDES FOR "DIRECT" TESTING AND TEACHING OF SPECIFIC TEACHING SKILLS. THE MICROLESSONS WOULD BE GIVEN IN PARALLEL WITH A SEQUENCE OF COURSES ON CULTURE, LINGUISTICS, CONVERSATION, AND METHODS. THE AUTHOR HAS DEVELOPED A SYLLABUS FOR A PRACTICE-CENTERED, TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM IN FRENCH THAT IS DESCRIBED IN AA 000 051. THIS ARTICLE IS A REPRINT FROM THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL, VOLUME 50, NUMBER 5, MAY 1966, AND WAS PRESENTED AS A PAPER TO THE SEMINAR OF THE STANFORD CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHING. (AL)

Toward a Practice-Centered Program for the Training and Evaluation of Foreign Language Teachers*

ROBERT L. POLITZER, *Stanford University*

AN INTEGRAL part of the "revolution" in foreign language instruction which has taken place during the past 10 years has been a new approach toward the evaluation and training of foreign language teachers. At the heart of this new approach have been a new testing program and the retraining of teachers in various types of Institutes sponsored under the National Defense Education Act.

The testing program took as its starting point the definitions of proficiency and qualifications for Modern Language Teachers which were prepared by the Steering Committee of the Modern Language Association¹ approximately ten years ago. This document, by now "historic" in the development in foreign language education, attempted to define "superior", "good", and "minimal" qualifications of the foreign language teacher in seven areas: 1. Aural Understanding; 2. Speaking; 3. Reading; 4. Writing; 5. Language Analysis (Linguistics, Applied Linguistics); 6. Culture; 7. Professional Preparation (e.g., knowledge of methodology of language teaching). The Modern Language Association in cooperation with the Educational Testing Service then developed a series of tests in each one of the seven areas of preparation of the foreign language teacher. These tests—known as the "MLA Foreign Language Proficiency Tests for Teachers and Advanced Students" and now administered exclusively by Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey—have become, and are becoming, widely accepted as the "national norms" according to which the preparation of the foreign language teacher is to be judged. Typically they are used as pre-tests and post-tests in Institutes training foreign language teachers, and in some states they have become part of the accreditation program in foreign language teaching. Thus, the State of California, for instance, is at present conferring a Special Subject Matter Credential (in Foreign Lan-

guages) essentially based on the candidate's score on the MLA Proficiency Tests and on his having acquired a college degree and having passed a methods course in foreign language instruction.

The suggestions and proposals for research submitted in this paper are not meant to depreciate in any way the important work accomplished by the creation of MLA Proficiency Tests. My suggestions, as a matter of fact, mean to take advantage of the existence of these tests and of the Institute programs which are "measured" by them—and, intend to carry them one step further into actual contact with the subject for which they were designed in the first place, namely actual language instruction in the classroom.

Thus it seems to me that there is a very real need to supplement the existing "battery" of tests by tests which measure, not the teacher's *preparation* for teaching languages, but his actual *performance* in the classroom. That adequate preparation will guarantee adequate performance is, of course, a reasonable hypothesis, but the relation between preparation and performance is itself an area to be investigated.² To create an acceptable and generally accepted instrument for evaluating the teacher's performance in the classroom is no easy task. At the same time, however, this task may very well be

* Paper presented to the Seminar of the Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching. Presentation of the paper in the Seminar does not necessarily imply that all of the research proposed in this paper will be undertaken and/or supported by the Center.

¹ "Qualifications for Secondary School Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages," *PMLA*, Vol. LXX, No. 4, Part 2 (September, 1955), pp. 46-49.

² That adequate preparation will *automatically* guarantee adequate performance is, for instance, the obvious assumption made in the granting of the above-mentioned special provisional California certificate which is based on preparation *alone* without practical apprenticeship or performance criteria.

easier for the language teacher than for most other subject matter specialists. The primary task of the language teacher, though certainly not the only one, is to create language skills in the pupil. Even if there are other tasks and goals within the language curriculum (e.g., creation of cultural understanding), these other tasks are at least intimately connected with learning the language skills. Thus it seems possible that in foreign language teaching the efficiency of the language teacher—or at least his efficiency as imparter of foreign language skills—can be measured objectively in terms of the achievement of his pupils. And the very fact that the most important goal of the language teacher is the creation of a new “verbal behavior” on the part of the student justifies the hope that the efficiency of his teaching may also be analyzed and evaluated in terms of observable, behavioral categories.

In the construction of an instrument for the rating of the teaching performance, one need not start “from scratch”. The concept of rating according to a “rating scale” is already being utilized in the tests measuring the speaking knowledge of the teacher. Ground work on observing the performance of good language teachers has been done already.³ Recent textbooks on foreign language teaching methodology give by implication a great deal of information concerning these points of classroom performance judged essential by experienced observers.⁴ Stanford University’s Internship Program in the training of teachers has for years utilized and has kept on refining an appraisal guide for teachers and has evolved a series of performance criteria on which trainees may be judged. These performance criteria, which evolved quite independently from the specific problem of evaluating language teachers, contain categories like “Establishing a frame of reference”, “Controlling participation”, “Presenting feedback”, “Rewarding and Punishing”, “Setting a model”, etc. Obviously they contain a list of behaviors which experts in language instruction have always judged as essential in the classroom performance of a teacher and which need only be refined and applied specifically to the language teacher.

As far as the validation of instruments for

appraisal of classroom performance is concerned, the present situation in foreign language instruction opens up several possibilities: The new Cooperative Tests of pupil achievement (speaking, reading, writing, listening) have just been put into use. They have the disadvantage of measuring rather late in the curriculum, probably not before the end of the second year of high school; in other words at a time when it may be quite difficult to associate achievement with a specific teacher. However, it may still be possible to use these tests for the evaluation of teaching effectiveness if they are used as pre-tests as well as post-tests in third-year courses or above. Another possibility consists in the construction of specific tests designed to measure early, even at the end of the first semester, in specific audio-lingual curricula and approaches which are widely used throughout the United States of America.

The creation and validation in terms of student achievement of a test measuring the classroom performance of the language teacher would not only help in the creation of a “practice-centered” training curriculum, but would have implications for research and teacher training which go beyond the training of language teachers as such. The existence of a valid instrument of classroom performance would in turn allow us to appraise the exact contribution made to this performance by various elements which make up the teacher including preparation as well as inherent characteristics. The existence of the Skills Tests (speaking, reading, writing, comprehension) and of the tests in Applied Linguistics, Culture, and Knowledge of Methods, would allow us to determine the extent to which *preparation* in this field influences performance. More important, the existence of these tests in conjunction with a valid instrument of classroom performance, may allow us to ask the question as to what factors *besides prep-*

³ See Leonard Brisley, Carl Dellaccio, *et al*, *Good Teaching Practices: A Survey of High School Foreign-Language Classes*, Modern Language Association, 1961, R. L. Politzer, “The Effective Use of the Structure Drill,” *French Review*, Vol. XXIII, No. 5 (April, 1965), pp. 674-680.

⁴ See, for instance, the checklist on “How to Keep up to Par” in Nelson Brooks, *Language and Language Learning, Theory and Practice*, Second Edition, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964, pp. 257-259.

aration in the subject influence the classroom performance of the teacher. We can only agree with David C. Bailey, who in a recent article has made a plea for the specific application of such research approaches as those taken by Ned A. Flanders, Donald M. Medley, Harold E. Mitzel, *et al.*, to the foreign language teaching situation.⁵ Perhaps the ultimate importance of the MLA-ETS tests in teacher education may very well lie in the simple fact that they will allow us to keep constant in a very specific area and with respect to specific effects on the pupil, to be sure, the teacher's knowledge of the subject and to isolate those other characteristics which determine his success or failure.⁶

As far as the preparation and training, or retraining, of the foreign language teacher is concerned, our suggestions are based on two propositions, both of which will be almost self-evident to language teachers: 1. that the efficiency of the training be judged not exclusively on achievement in skills which are merely preparatory to classroom performance but also on classroom performance as such; 2. that the desired classroom performance be taught as well-defined units of behavior. Both of these propositions, can, as a matter of fact, be stated as one: The time has come to apply the very same methods which we have used to teach language, and to form the "verbal behavior" of the pupil, to the training of classroom teachers and to the formation of their classroom behavior. If we want a pupil to speak a foreign language and if we want to measure his proficiency in speaking a foreign language, we test his knowledge of speaking and we no longer rely on testing some other skill which presumably correlates with that knowledge. And in the process of language teaching we divide language behavior into small units and teach each unit by explaining, modeling, repeating in the laboratory, and the like.

"Direct" testing and teaching of specific teaching skills has of course been a prominent feature of the Stanford Teacher Education Program in which Professors Robert N. Bush and Dwight Allen, the directors of the program, devised the idea of "micro-teaching".⁷ In the micro-teaching procedure, the trainee is given instruction in a specific "teaching skill" (e.g., "establishing a frame of reference", "using

questions"). He is then given an opportunity to teach a short lesson of five to ten minutes duration in order to apply this specific skill. The lesson is taught to a small class of about five pupils who are paid subjects. They can be chosen for their specific desired characteristics, and they receive some training in giving the trainee immediate specific "feedback" about his teaching. The teaching performance is also watched and immediately critiqued by a supervisor. Especially if the performance is unsatisfactory, the lesson may be immediately "re-taught" to a different small group of pupils. Just as it is possible to model the responses to be taught to the language student on tape and have the language student study and under proper guidance evaluate his own tape-recorded responses, so it is possible in the micro-teaching procedure to model specific teaching procedures on videotape and to have the trainee study his own videotaped performance. The latter procedure—immediate correction and feedback supplied through video-tape has proved particularly effective in the Stanford program.

The application of the concept of "micro-teaching" to the retraining of foreign language teachers would not necessitate a revolution, but merely a slight reorientation or reorganization of the procedures which are now employed. Of course, Modern Foreign Language Institutes vary considerably; yet by and large it seems that the above-mentioned proficiency tests dominate their make-up and structure. Thus, the "typical institute" contains courses in Ap-

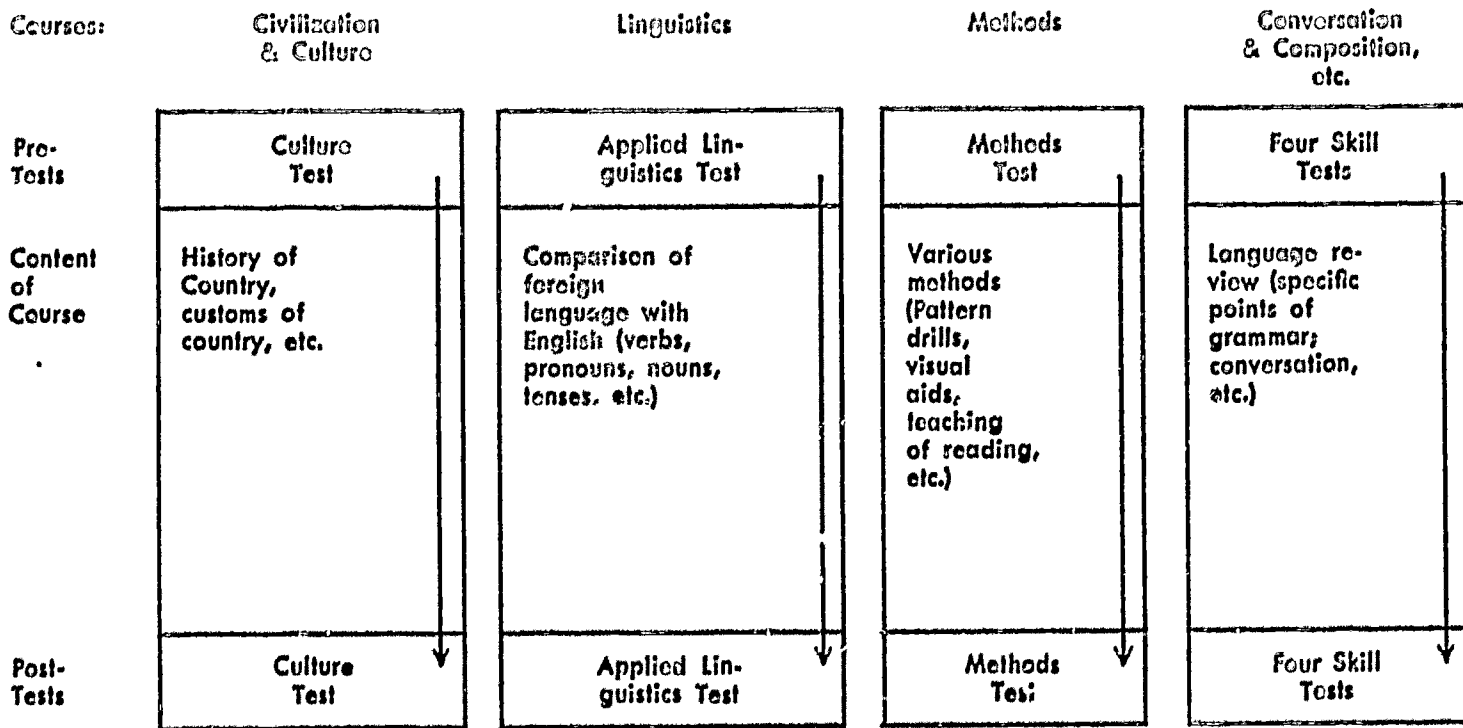
⁵ David C. Bailey, "Foreign Language Teaching: The Human Gap," *French Review*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1 (October, 1965) pp. 114-119.

⁶ Aside from the personality factor, these other characteristics could of course include various features of the teacher's professional preparation—or the presence or absence of such preparation; e.g., the above-mentioned Special California Credential in Modern Language allows teachers to teach the subject on the basis of the knowledge of subject matter but without professional preparation or apprenticeship. An obvious question to be asked is whether these teachers will be as effective as teachers of equal subject matter competence who also have varying types of professional preparation and apprenticeship.

⁷ For a very brief description of micro-teaching as a training procedure and some of the positive results achieved by it, see, for instance, *Journal of Secondary Education*, Vol. XL, No. 4 (April, 1965), pp. 188-189.

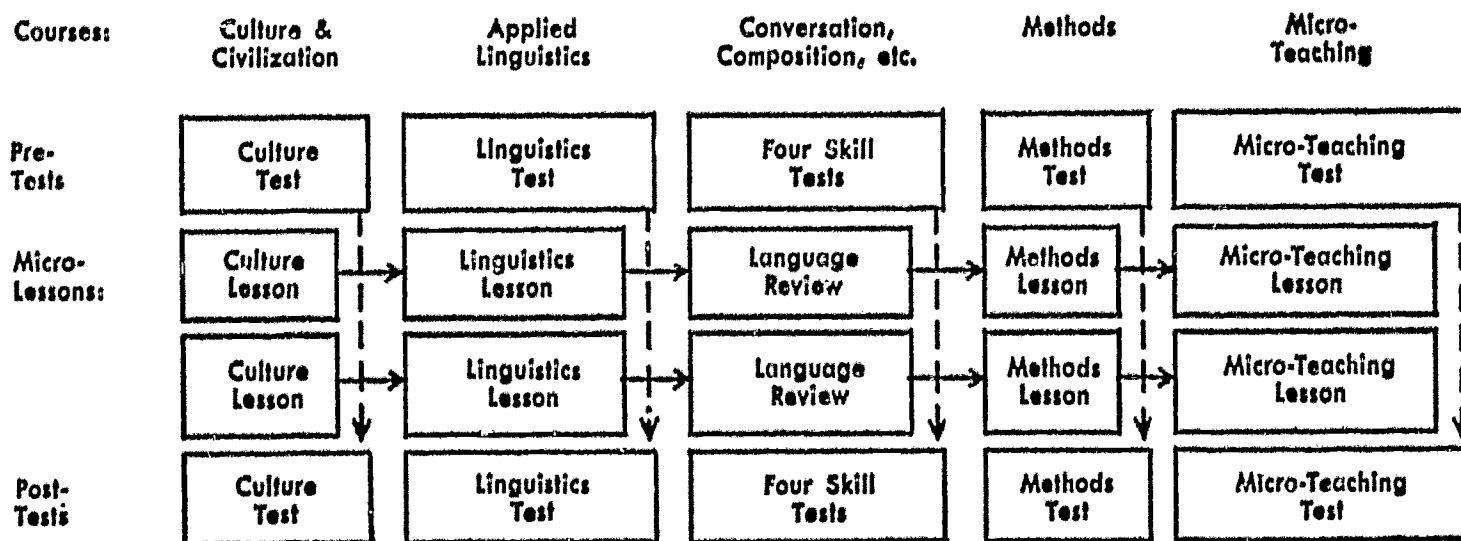
plied Linguistics, Culture, Methods, and—depending on the level of competence of the participants—retraining in language skills. The seven proficiency tests are used as pre-tests and post-tests for the training. The following schema may thus be used to describe the structure of the “typical” Institute:

The “horizontal integration” pointing to the micro-teaching lesson is accomplished by a carefully worked out syllabus coordinating Linguistics, Language Practice, and Methods, and if possible Culture and Civilization, and applying them to a micro-teaching unit. In other words, to give precise examples: The Applied



The creation of a “practice-centered” retraining procedure would necessitate a rearrangement of the above-described “vertical” pattern of parallel but more or less separate courses into a “horizontally” integrated pattern of material in which specific units of “teaching behavior,” the “micro-lesson,” would be the goal of the material presented. The schema of such a retraining course would look as follows:

Linguistics lesson deals with the comparison of pronouns in the foreign language and the pronoun structure of English isolating the special problems posed by the foreign language. The Conversation and Composition course gives the teachers themselves additional practice in the way in which the foreign language uses pronouns. The Methods course then develops a specific methodological tool (e.g., use of visual



aids, gradual withdrawal of cues, etc.) and shows how this tool is employed in the classroom. The micro-teaching lesson is the culminating experience in which the teacher has the chance to apply the knowledge to the teaching of a specific short lesson on the use of the pronouns. In the teaching of the micro-lesson various procedures are possible, although they constitute in themselves training variables and are also subject to investigation. The teachers can be asked to make up their own micro-lesson, or they can be asked to watch and imitate a short video-taped model lesson applying a specific teaching procedure to a specific problem, or they can be asked to watch various video-taped lessons applying different teaching procedures to the same problem. Video-taping of the trainees themselves and critiques with or without such video-taping constitute other training variables, some of which have been and are still under investigation in the Stanford training program.

The author of this article, working in the newly created Stanford University Center for Research and Development in Teaching, is now developing a syllabus for retraining (or training) French teachers in which the various "strands" of the training program are integrated by pointing to a series of 25 five- to ten-minute micro-lessons. It is hoped that the syllabus and the micro-lessons will be available by Summer, 1966. Some of the procedures and lessons have been and will be tested with interns in the Stanford Teacher Education Program. However, the small Stanford program affords only limited possibility for testing such a training procedure. Also, the Stanford program accepts only highly qualified students with at least a recent B.A. in the foreign language. Thus, systematic training or retraining in language skills is neither provided for nor, typically at least, needed within the Stanford training

program. The author of this article thus invites other teacher-training institutions—especially those concerned with the retraining of teachers in Summer Institutes—to join him in experimenting with a program of "practice-centered" teacher training aimed at the creation of specific teaching skills.

There are many indications, too many to be enumerated here, that the trend of teacher training in the United States is more and more to the practice-centered program. The importance accorded to practice in teaching, the emphasis on the "clinical experience" of the trainee, and the rise of numerous "internship programs", all testify that practice is becoming the very core of the entire training program. There seems to be a realization that one important goal of teacher training is to make the trainee aware of practice, to make him realize that all of his preparation "counts" in terms of his ultimate role as a teacher. One important goal of teacher training is to convert the student into a teacher. Under those circumstances it is particularly noteworthy and somewhat paradoxical that so much of the current retraining of teachers seems to attempt to convert the teacher into a student. The practice-centered retraining program described here would impart to the teacher in training or retraining the requisite skills yet would focus his attention clearly on his role as a teacher and not on his role as a student.

Whether the practice-centered training procedures described above are better than other alternative avenues is ultimately by itself a subject for research and detailed investigation. The answer as to what ways of teacher training are best must come from the type of validated, practice-centered appraisal instrument which we envisaged earlier in this article. Thus the two concepts dealt with in this article, practice-centered training and practice-centered testing, ultimately connect and merge into one.

Reprinted from
THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL
Vol. L, No. 5, May, 1966