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THE PAST DECADE HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL ONE IN THE AREA OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR NDEA INSTITUTES AND THE CONCEPT OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR ORAL COMMUNICATION AS WELL AS FOR READING AND WRITING HAVE SERVED TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF FL TEACHING. THE CONTENT OF FL PROGRAMS IS BEING CRITICALLY REVIEWED BY THOSE WORKING WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (FLES). ALTHOUGH A CONSENSUS OF OPINION ON CONTENT HAS NOT EVOLVED, SOME EFFORTS ARE BEING CHANNELED IN THIS DIRECTION, SUCH AS EXPERIMENTATION WITH INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES INVOLVING FL. ALTHOUGH CROSS-DISCIPLINE TEACHING IS NOT TOO PREVALENT, TWO STRONG ARGUMENTS ARE (1) THE STUDENT CAN CHOOSE FROM SEVERAL SUBJECTS AND (2) HE CAN EARN A CREDIT IN FL AS WELL AS THE OTHER SUBJECTS FORMING THE CONTENT. ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT FACETS OF FL TEACHING IS IN THE REALM OF THE TEACHING OF CULTURAL CONCEPTS. IN THIS AREA, THE TEXTBOOK WRITERS NEED TO INCORPORATE THE FINDINGS OF SCHOLARS INTO MATERIALS AND/OR TO IDENTIFY THE CULTURAL PATTERNS INHERENT IN READINGS SO AS TO ELIMINATE THE GUESSWORK FOR FL TEACHERS. THIS REPORT WAS PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTHWEST COUNCIL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS, EL PASO, TEXAS, NOVEMBER 10-11, 1967. (ES)

Teaching Content in a Foreign Language

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No one can deny that the past decade has been an eventful one in the area of FL teaching. Financial support for NDEA Institutes and public backing for increased foreign language study have fostered a positive change of attitude toward the concept of learning a FL for oral communication as well as for reading and writing. Despite the gains that have been made, however, there has been a slow but certain skepticism concerning just *what* it is that students are being taught to enable them to communicate — just *what* is the content of their discourse, both oral and written?

In July of this year, Dr. William Merhab, Associate Professor of Foreign Languages at the University of Michigan, spoke to the participants of the NDEA FL Leadership Institute at Central Washington State College in Ellensburg, Washington. He cautioned, "It is very possible that in the FL revolution there has not been enough change. Many educators believe that we have not added nor transported enough nor brought in new materials. We still talk to each other only. A FL teacher may teach history, but more often than not, it is a French teacher's version of history or a Russian teacher's version, as the case may be."

Is it true that FL teachers are still too narrow in their scope, too clannish — and that they keep too much to themselves?

The area of greatest hope has been FLES with its promise of an eventual long sequence of FL study, so necessary for a master of the added dimension of oral communication. What is happening there? In their article, "FLES: In Search of Discipline and Content" (DFL Bulletin, March 1967), Filomena Peloro del Olmo and Guillermo del Olmo, strike a somewhat somber note:

> "There are members of the profession who through ignorance or innate complacency believe that everything is just fine in FLES. It is not impossible to attend professional meetings where the entire time is devoted to patting ourselves on the back for the fine job that we have done. It is high time for some of us to take off our rose-colored glasses, and it is our duty to the profession to fight against self-satisfaction, particularly when it is not based on realities. The profession, if it cares at all about FLES, must explore and establish means of training some of the future elementary school teachers so that they may assume real FLES teaching responsibilities."

The responsibilities or objectives, which are stated in the article, concentrate on the techniques to be used for acquiring certain basic skills. The one objective dealing with content reads: "Reproduce accurately a body of meaningful, memorized material." The content of

the material is not defined; however, the authors do state that "one of the urgent tasks facing the profession with regard to FLES is to clear up the vagueness regarding what should be taught, how it should be taught and by whom it should be taught." Criteria must be devised. they believe, to differentiate between genuine FLES programs and the over-abundant "non-FLES" programs.

On another front, another word of caution is heard. In a fascinating analysis, "We Need a Communications Grammar" (to appear in GLOSSA, Volume II) Dr. William E. Bull of UCLA, says that a "deficit of knowledge" has been built right into present-day FL programs. These courses, he continues, lack techniques for instruction and fail to give students needed cues for making choices in guided-discovery learning situations. Dr. Bull also adds that the attrition rate in the advanced levels of FL study are almost as high as they were in the "traditional" grammar-translation classes. He places much of the drop-out rate on the "deficit of knowledge" which keeps building up and finally leads to inevitable frustration on the part of the student. To combat this "deficit of knowledge" he insists that texts will have to contain well-structured programmed material. To quote:

> "There can, consequently, be no significant reduction in deficit of knowledge which the students must overcome in the current programs until the profession designs a grammar which provides all the information needed to make all the decisions necessary to generate an original sentence from scratch."

A different kind of an attack on the problem of content is being made in various sections of the country — experimentation with inter-disciplinary studies involving foreign language. The idea is not a new one although actual cross-discipline teaching is still none too prevalent Two strong arguments for teaching another discipline in a FL are: 1) the student can choose from a wealth of subjects — geography, history, political science, and many others — as well as literature; 2) he can earn a credit in the foreign language and in the discipline at the same time — a double credit. In an overloaded curriculum the latter could prove to be a boon to many a good but harried student as well as to the administrators.

Recently, an eight-week unit on "Latin American Studies" was planned and implemented in Delaware by Mr. Charles W. Grassel (in English) and an identical unit (in Spanish) by Mr. Hernan Navarro. Mr. Navarro reports that "in an effectively controlled experiment in Brandywine High School, Wilmington, Delaware, forty-five students of Spanish at the fourth year level, mostly sophomores, in intact classes, learned as much social studies in Spanish as did nineteen students, mostly seniors, in a regular class conducted in English by Charles E. Grassel, a highly qualified social studies teacher of the School District."

Lectures and discussion were the techniques used since all necessary materials were not available in Spanish. The students were asked "to concentrate their attention in the content area, social studies, rather

than in the language, Spanish." The experiment, according to Mr. Navarro, was not designed to test progress in learning Spanish because "the acquisition of significant knowledge of an FL involves a much longer process." He does say, however, that the next logical step would be to test the progress of the students in Spanish by means of a course in social studies "in order to establish a certain level at which to introduce bilingual education."

If non-native students can profit from interdisciplinary studies involving a FL, there is no doubt that bilinguals, who already have control of the basic structure of their native language and who command a sizeable vocabulary, would or could profit immeasurably more in a variety of courses taught in the vernacular; however, for them, too, there may be some question as to the desirability of using a lecture-discussion technique, which all too often can lead to a passive, uninteresting learning atmosphere.

From Miami, Florida, a new text in English as a Second Language, to be used in the junior high school, has been developed for the teaching of content and language simultaneously. It may give some insight to anyone who may be interested in structuring an integrated course for social studies and language study in the vernacular. The text, *Man Is an Island,* prepared by the Curriculum Development Laboratory (ESEA Learning Laboratories, Board of Public Instruction, Miami, Florida) combines social studies with the study of the English language. In the margin of the teacher's manual the objectives for each lesson or drill are spelled out, and to the right of the objectives on each page there are there are corresponding activities drawn from the social studies content. The activities may be pattern drills for teaching structure of the language; suggestions for role playing; or guidelines for reading, writing, interpreting passages; learning new vocabulary and the like. A few of the marginal notes gleaned at random from the teacher's manual (Chapter II, "My Family Needs Me") may give a slight idea of some of the diversity and scope of the material:

1. "Identifying how family patterns are acquired."
2. Using *is* and *are* with *-ing*."
3. "Discussing how family patterns can effect behavior in broader social contexts."
4. "Using *don't* and *doesn't* in negative statements."
5. "Practicing reading skills."
6. "Identifying meanings."
7. "Discovering concepts."
8. "Identifying how family patterns are acquired."
9. "Identifying character traits and cause-effect relationships."
10. "Identifying markers of verbs and nouns."
11. "Writing a report."

Another possible source of help for content in FL classes is to be found in an article which appeared in the special TESOL edition of *The Florida FL Reporter,* Spring 1967. It is "Literature and Cross-culture Communication in the Course in English for International Students," by William F. Marquardt. "Knowledge of deep structure of the target language," Marquardt says, "and perception of underlying values, assumptions, beliefs, and intergroup attitudes of the target culture are now considered as imporant as control of structural patterns in cross-culture communication. Literature has again been found ready to suggest ways of meeting these new needs. This does not mean, however, that one literary work is as good as another as material for training in cross-culture communication."

In his study Marquardt has suggested, in order of ascending difficulty, titles of narrative prose, essays, short plays, poems which meet the language criteria for selecting and sequencing works. He has further listed, in order of ascending difficulty also, some categories of works which meet the culture criteria. Finally he lists a number of techniques 1- for teaching literature to a foreigner for enabling him to communicate with Americans more effectively, and 2- for helping the student increase his cultural understanding "obtained from the literary work."

Marquardt, like a number of other educators, points to a need for contrastive analysis not only of linguistic divergence but of cultural divergence too. He suggests a list of writings which may give a new perspective on the "uses of literature."

One of the more controversial issues in the teaching of FL content today concerns literature. There are those who would ban it completely and those who would include it to the exclusion of all other content. It may be quite safe to say that literature has become the whipping boy for all the ills that have beset language arts programs. It has even been named the culprit responsible for the overwhelming attrition in advanced FL classes — the almost complete drop-out of boys in particular.

Could it be possible that not literature *per se* but rather what has been done to it in the classroom is what is to blame for the many lacklustre classes at the advanced levels? Is a policy of forging ahead in reading with "too much, too soon" perpetuating the system of disastrous decoding which is still all too common in many classes?

The vocabulary controlled, slightly programmed readers, similar to the *Reading for Meaning* series, written in accordance with the criteria of the committee headed by the late George Scherer, may eventually help to bridge a wide gap between language and literature. They will not be very helpful, however, unless they contain both authentic cultural and linguistic patterns.

One of the most difficult facets of FL teaching is in the realm of the teaching of cultural concepts. Just what culture is, how it can be pinned down and identified in a body of material for teaching as content, seems to be, as yet, one of the "gray areas" of FL teaching. The subject has been tossed around for a long time, but all too often the teacher ends up — unwittingly — making false assumptions and

superficial value judgments, drawing lifeless stereotypes, or simply ignoring the cultural features embedded in unauthentic language simply because he does not know what to look for. The question is not so much concerned with whether the cultural pattern is to be found in a literary masterpiece, in a news bulletin, or in a sports or society section of a foreign newspaper but rather, it is concerned with *what* it is that one must look for: the exact bit of kinesics or paralanguage or personality traits or verified assumption or perspectives of the value system of a culture or "what-have-you" that differentiates or unites the target culture with the student's culture.

In this regard, Edward T. Hall's new book, *The Hidden Dimension* (Doubleday, 1966) may well have many implications for the teaching of exact cultural patterns. In his book Hall promulgates a new theory -- proxemics — the "interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture." He cuts across ethnic lines both in the United States and in the world at large to show that "people cannot act or inter-act at all in any meaningful way except through the medium of culture." Chapter XI gives a detailed account of proxemic patterns, which point similarities and differences in how Americans and Germans, Englishmen, and Frenchmen perceive "social and personal space." Chapter XII is a similar analysis which involves Americans and the Japanese and the Arab Worlds.

Two short quotations concerning Hall's observations on art and literature may not be amiss here. Speaking of art, he says: "The artist himself, his work, and the study of art in a cross-cultural context all provide valuable information not just of content but even more important of the *structure* of man's different perceptual worlds." Of literature he says: "If one examines literature rather than content, it will shed light on historical trends and shifts in sense modalities. These differences may not, however, be equally clear to those who read for content alone."

Another person who has shed some very specific light on culture as content is Dr. Howard Lee Nostrand. In his study, "Describing and Teaching Language and Literature," which appears in *Trends in Language Teaching,* edited by Albert Valdman (McGraw-Hill, 1966), he explains in detail how to go about selecting, defining, organizing, and teaching the essentials from "that vast panorama of a people's way of life with its varied geographical regions, social classes, and all the types and interests of individual persons." For good measure, too, he includes *Criteria for Judging the Sociocultural Aspect of Instructional Materials and Course Plans.*

It is up to the textbook writers to incorporate the findings of scholars into materials and/or to identify the cultural patterns inherent in readings for use by those who need to be guided to discover them. There should be no need for guesswork on the part of the teacher; culture has a definite content which needs to be taught exactly and accurately. It cannot be left to a mere mention gained from some hidden intuition or cursory observation.

The revolution in the teaching of foreign languages may yet be pushed beyond its narrow confines into interdisciplinary areas. Perhaps the latent depths of sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, and

the arts — to name a few — inherent in the discipline of FL itself may be uncovered as teachers gain control of new dimensions of knowledge. And it may well be that the FL teacher of the future will have to specialize in content areas in order to give purpose, meaning, and relevance to his use of the foreign language vehicle.

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