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TWO YEARS WITH THE SAINT-CLOUD MATERIALS.

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THE EXPERIENCE OF FLES TEACHERS WITH "BONJOUR LINE" (FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE) AND "VOIX ET IMAGES DE FRANCE" (SIXTH GRADE) IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FRENCH CURRICULUM OVER A 2-YEAR PERIOD IN SHAKER HEIGHTS, OHIO, HAS RESULTED IN A NUMBER OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WAYS IN WHICH AMERICAN AND FRENCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE TAUGHT NECESSITATE ADJUSTMENTS IN THE PACE AND VARIETY OF PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES FOR AMERICAN STUDENTS. SINCE THE MATERIAL CANNOT BE TAUGHT AS RAPIDLY AS THE SAINT-CLOUD PEOPLE SUGGEST, CARE MUST BE TAKEN THAT STUDENTS NOT BE BORED BY STORIES BELOW THEIR LEVEL. MINIMUM TEACHER TRAINING TO USE THE METHOD IS ONE WEEK, AND CHILDREN ALSO MUST BE ORIENTED TO THE PURPOSE OF THE METHOD. AFTER THE FIRST YEAR, A CURRICULUM GUIDE WAS PREPARED WHICH INCLUDED SUGGESTIONS FROM SAINT-CLOUD, FROM THE ORIGINAL TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM, AND FROM STAFF EXPERIENCE. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL," VOLUME 50, NUMBER 3, MARCH 1966, PAGES 137-139. (AF)

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*Two Years with the Saint-Cloud Materials**

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ALTHOUGH cursory evaluations of several of the newer curricula have been published in the past year or two, there have been few detailed analyses of a particular set of materials. It is the intent of this article to describe these materials and the use that has been made of them in the past two years in the elementary schools of the City School District of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

As is well known the Saint-Cloud materials—*Voix et Images de France*—are the result of the research program of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of France, a program designed to formulate the best method of teaching French as a foreign language. The researchers, by means of tape-recorded interviews with a cross section of the French population, were able to establish the minimum number of structure and vocabulary items which would enable maximum everyday communication.

Both the content (*Le Français Fondamental*)

and the methodology were developed by a staff of teachers, linguists and psychologists at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud. After the original *Voix et Images* curriculum was developed, a curriculum for elementary schools, *Bonjour Line*, was produced to meet the demands (mostly American) for such materials.

In the nine elementary schools of Shaker Heights, *Bonjour Line* is used as the beginning French course for all students in the 4th grade. The teachers are fully trained and certified FLES teachers, many of whom hold the Master's degree in French. *Bonjour Line* is the continuing curriculum in the 5th grade, and *Voix et*

* EDITOR'S NOTE: Although Mr. Kunkle is evaluating one set of materials in this paper his observations are generally applicable as guides in effective FLES teaching and demonstrate the fundamental validity of continuous cooperative supervision and coordination in any successful foreign language program.

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Images is the curriculum in the 6th grade. At the end of the 6th grade, approximately the bottom twenty-five percent of the students are screened out, and the remainder continue with *Voix et Images* through the 7th and 8th grades.

Two years ago, the *Bonjour Line* materials were introduced in this school system. The seven other FLES teachers were given a week of training in the methodology at the Chilton Books Company in Philadelphia, while I spent five weeks in training there during the summer. As we began to teach with these materials, our first impulse was to feel hamstrung. Following the stringent rules of Saint-Cloud posed a great difficulty to teachers who had used a number of eclectic methods. However, after several months of regular meetings during which the materials were discussed in detail, and slight variations in their use were evaluated, the staff came to the following conclusions:

1. Although these materials were developed for the elementary age child, the American elementary school student is not accustomed to the rather strict discipline, attention and response demanded by French educators. He has had more attention given to his motivations and interests. He is used to a variety of techniques during his instruction.
2. Although a "straight-through" development may be appropriate for a European, adult, intensive course, it is certainly not suited to American children. There should be mastery of a few lines each day, and then application of them immediately, rather than mastery of the whole story and then application.
3. The stories are very appealing to the 4th and 5th grade students, and, used well, are an effective means of instruction.
4. The 35 to 40 minute lessons suggested by Saint-Cloud are not usually found in the American elementary schools, and planning must be revised accordingly.
5. None of the teachers, though many were experienced FLES teachers, was able to teach the material at the rate Saint-Cloud suggested, which meant that sixth graders were still in the first part of *Bonjour Line* with the very juvenile characters. Children are now quite sophisticated for their

years, particularly in the suburban community. They do not appreciate stories which are even slightly below their level. For this reason *Voix et Images* was adopted a year later in the 6th grade.

Having discovered these things the first year, the staff was more secure about the elements which could be varied profitably and those which were essential to the method. In the intervening summer, a curriculum guide was prepared which was a compilation of the suggestions from Saint-Cloud, from Chilton Books, and from the experience of the staff. Having all the teaching suggestions and methodological explanations under one cover has made the job of the teacher much easier.

The second year with the material was a much more rewarding experience. With teachers and students more familiar with the methodology, fewer difficulties were experienced. The new members of the staff were given a one-week orientation to the methodology conducted by the FLES coordinator, consisting of lecture, films, and demonstrations with a volunteer pupil class.

Our conclusions after two years are:

1. This is a basically sound curriculum, based on realistic priorities in vocabulary and structure.
2. No teacher or group of teachers should attempt to teach with these materials without thorough minimum training of one week in the method. This is essential.
3. FLES teachers, classroom teachers, and administrators should have a sympathetic understanding of the method before it is instituted. Children should also have a thorough orientation to the method before instruction begins and frequently during the year, so that they can see the how and why of what they are accomplishing. The items which need explaining are:
 - a. Why we are not learning in the manner in which their parents learned.
 - b. Why there is no translation into English.
 - c. Why there is no reading or writing for over two years.
 - d. Why the filmstrip and recorded tape are used for instruction.

- e. Why just memorizing the dialogues is not enough.
- f. Why we spend time after we have "finished" a story in asking questions and putting the words together differently, instead of going right on to the next story. As we like to point out to students, for example:

"There are three main steps in learning a language today.

- 1) "First, we must learn the conversation which is recorded on the tape, memorize it so well that when we see a picture, we can immediately say the French sentence that goes with it. Using the gestures which the people in the pictures use will help the memorization.
- 2) "Secondly, we learn to ask questions, answer them, and take the sentences apart and put them together in different ways—manipulation.
- 3) "Finally, we come to the part which is the most enjoyable and the most valuable: using the parts of the sentences we have learned to make up stories and conversations of our own. This is really why we study a language: to learn to understand and express ourselves in it, but to do that, we must go through all three steps in their correct order."

4. Various changes should be made in the progression for better teachability. The following are examples:

- a. With the exception of the first lesson, proceeding a frame at a time with the four phases is superior to proceeding a segment at a time.¹ It preserves the element of surprise which many of the stories contain.
- b. In general, there should be more manipulation of the structures even in the earliest lessons than the teaching notes suggest. To do this effectively, several questions must be added; e.g., *Où est . . . , comment est. . .*
- c. Pronoun replacement of subject nouns should be stressed more than the guide indicates.
- d. Telling time, if only with hours, can be taught near the end of the first unit.
- e. Teach the question, *Que dit Michel?*, and its answer in order to elicit direct discourse and simplify the narrative technique.
- f. Omit most of the *exercices en images*, but drill the elements they teach within the familiar situations and vocabulary from the stories and the *jeux*.

¹ The four phases are: presentation, explanation, repetition, and transposition (exploitation and application).