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FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

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A 1953 MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION-SPONSORED CONFERENCE OF SPECIALISTS ON TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS DREW UP A SERIES OF ANSWERS TO THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FLES. IN 1954, SPECIALISTS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION MET TO CRITICIZE THESE ANSWERS AND TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS IN FLES. THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS BOTH THE QUESTIONS AND DETAILED ANSWERS AND THE "CONSIDERATIONS FOR INITIATING A PROGRAM OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL." INCLUDED ALSO ARE LISTS OF THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS AND A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SYLLABUSES, BOOKS, AND ARTICLES FOR THE TEACHER'S REFERENCE. (AF)

### THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

FOREIGN- LANGUAGE PROGRAM

**4 WASHINGTON PLACE** 

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# FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

At a work conference sponsored by the Modern Language Assor' tion and held at its headquarters 11-13 December 1953, a group of authorities on the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary schools met to provide informed answers to the questions most frequently asked about this rapidly growing movement. At a second conference, 11-12 June 1954, specialists in elementary education met to criticize these answers and to discuss the problems involved in the introduction of foreign-language instruction in grades I-VI.

Participants in the first conference were:

THEODORE ANDERSSON, Associate Director, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Yale University

AGNES BRADY, Professor of Spanish, University of Kansas

DOROTHY CHAMBERLAIN, teacher of Spanish, Somerville, N.J., schools

RUTH R. GINSBURG, Supervisor of Foreign Languages, Los Angeles Board of Education HELEN K. MACKINTOSH, Associate Chief, Elementary Schools Section, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C.

CARLOS RIVERA, Supervisor of Spanish, Elementary Schools, El Paso, Texas EMILE B. de SAUZÉ, former Director, Foreign Language Dept., Cleveland public schools

ARTHUR SELVI, Professor of Education and Modern Languages, Teachers College of Connecticut, New Britain

CLARENCE WACHNER, Director of Language Education, Detroit public schools EMILIE MARGARET WHITE, Supervising Director of Foreign Languages, Washington, D.C., public schools.

Special Consultants:

THEODORE HUEBENER, Director of Foreign Languages, New York City public schools HENRY LEE SMITH, Chief of Language Training Branch, Foreign Service Institute, Department of State

Participants in the second conference were:

THEODORE ANDERSSON

JAMES T. COLEMAN, President, National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, Dept. of Education, Jackson, Miss.
ROBERT W. EAVES, Executive Secretary, Dept. of Elementary School Principals,

NEA, Washington, D.C.

FRANCES HAMILTON, Executive Secretary, Association for Childhood Education

International, Washington, D.C. ELIZABETH HENSON, President, National Council of State Consultants in Elemen-

tary Education, State Dept. of Education, Richmond, Va.
ROBERT R. LEEPER, Associate Secretary, Association for Supervision and Cur-

riculum Development, NEA, Washington, D.C. VICTORIA LYLES, Director of Elementary and Kindergarten Education, York, Pa.

HELEN K. MACKINTOSH MARGIT MacRAE, Supervisor of Spanish, Elementary Schools, San Diego, Calif. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE SFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED ASSOCIATION ORIGINATING

CARLOS RIVERA

Q.A.W. ROHRBACH, President, State Teachers College, Kutztown, Pa. (representing the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education).

WILLIAM E. YOUNG, Director of Elementary Education, New York State Education Dept., Albany (representing the National Council of Chief State School Officers).

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At the second conference, the participants agreed on the following

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR INITIATING A PROGRAM OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1. What are the proposed program's real values, immediate and long-range?

2. How will the program contribute to the specific and total needs of (a) the children and (b) the community?

3. Should all or only part of the children be involved in the program?

How should community groups and individuals be involved in planning the program: children, parents, school board, administration, supervisory staff, teachers, specialists in the field?

5. Can the present school program be modified to include the new program?

6. Should this program have priority over other new programs under consideration?

7. Will the new program be recognized as an integral part of the school program, and how will it be integrated?

8. Is leadership available in the school or the community to help establish the new program? Is personnel available to maintain it?

9. Where can administrators find information on similar programs in other schools?

10. What advice and guidance can be obtained from agencies, institutions, national organizations, and individuals outside the local school system?

11. Will the new program involve additional school funds? If so, will they be available?

12. Can provisions be made for a continuous evaluation of the new program?

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The majority of the participants in the second conference felt that the document formulated by the first conference, "Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools: Some Questions and Answers," was subjective, too sweeping in its claims, and lacking in documentation. The child-centered, integrated curriculum, in their view, makes it difficult to speak of allotment of specific amounts of time to foreign language study, and the current trend away from departmentalization is opposed to the use of foreign language specialists. Two of the participants felt that the principle of curriculum development should determine the answers to almost all the questions. A basic principle of curriculum development, in their view, is "that children must be dealt with as individuals. Study appropriate for one child may not be appropriate or suitable or needed for another. The learning experiences, activities, and opportunities in any grade should be developed on the basis of the needs of the children and of the community situation."

The Modern Language Association, a learned society, in reprinting the original Questions and Answers, is glad to include these friendly reservations about a movement which thus far has elicited almost no unfavorable comment in print. These criticisms may serve, not only as an antidote to the uncritical enthusiasm of some parents and some language instructors, but also as a suggestion of objective research needed in a field where conclusions have rested largely on the accumulated experience of foreign language teachers themselves.



In a partial attempt to answer these criticisms, the Modern Language Association held at its offices on 16-17 October 1954 a Conference of authorities in the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and mental measurements. Plans were laid for determining, through objective, impartial long-range testing, to what extent the proponents of the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary schools are justified in their claims. Participants in this third conference were:

NELSON BROOKS, Research Associate, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Yale University

JOHN B. CARROLL, Associate Professor of Education, Harvard University
JOHN E. DOBBIN, Cooperative Test Division, Educational Testing Service, Princeton,

HENRY S. DYER, Vice-President, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N. J. ROBERT LADO, Associate Director, English Language Institute, University of Michigan

HELEN K. MACKINTOSH

KENNETH MILDENBERGER, Research Associate, MLA, Co-Chairman
H. H. REMMERS, Director, Division of Educational Reference, Purdue University
HARRY N. RIVLIN, Professor of Education, Queens College
ELSA E. ROBINSON, Associate Professor of Psychology, New York University
DAVID SEGEL, Specialist for Tests and Measurements, U. S. Office of Education
ARTHUR M. SELVI, Professor of Education and Modern Languages, Connecticut
Teachers College, New Britain, Conn., Co-Chairman

HILDA TABA, Professor of Education, San Francisco State College MARY P. THOMPSON, Supervisor of Languages, Roger Ludlowe High School, Fairfield, Conn.

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The rapid spread of this movement has captured the attention of the American public, but the teaching of foreign languages in the grades is not wholly a recent growth. They have been taught at this level in European schools for generations. French has been taught to selected pupils throughout the grades in Cleveland since 1922; French and Spanish, in Public School 208 in Brooklyn since 1931. Seven programs began in the 1920's, and twenty in the 1940's.

Among other outstanding and well-established programs are those in Los Angeles and San Diego, Cal., Fairfield, Conn., Washington, D.C., Emporia and Lawrence, Kans., St. Louis, Mo., Somerville, N.J., Carlsbad, N.M., Jamestown, N.Y., York, Pa., Corpus Christi and El Paso, Texas, and Seattle, Wash.

By the fall of 1953 one or more foreign languages were being learned by at least 145,000 children in elementary schools of 145 cities and towns in 33 states and the District of Columbia. By the end of 1954 nearly every state was represented in the movement. (A detailed report of the fall 1954 MLA survey of foreign language study in American elementary schools will be available early in 1955.)

Among institutions that, during the summer of 1954, offered special workshops or courses in elementary-school foreign language teaching are: Kansas State Teachers College at Emporia, Univ. of Kansas, Louisiana State Univ., Macalester College, Univ. of Maine, Univ. of Michigan, Middlebury College, Univ. of Minnesota, New Jersey State Teachers College at Montclair, New Mexico Western College, Occidental College, Rosary College, Southern Illinois Univ., Syracuse



Univ., Western Reserve Univ., and Univ. of Wisconsin. In the summer of 1955 many of these workshops will be repeated, and a number of other institutions plan to initiate similar training programs.

#### THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### What values does foreign language study have for elementary-school pupils?

We take for granted what is really a miraculous acquisition, by a kind of absorption from his environment, of the child's skill in understanding and speaking his mother tongue. We are impressed when we observe how easily young children learn a foreign language in an environment where it is spoken. We know moreover that the introduction of a second language at the beginning of the elementary-school program exercises the language-learning capacity of children when the capacity to understand and speak a foreign language is at its highest. Learning a language at this age is therefore not a chore but a joy, increasing the children's appetite for learning more. By releasing greater powers of self-expression than have formerly been tapped, the learning of a second language contributes to the general learning process of the child, whose pride and pleasure are fortified by his new sense of accomplishment. In fact, it has been noted with surprising frequency that even children who learn very slowly are stimulated by contact with a second language. The confidence gained through success in a foreign language often produces better performance in other areas as well.

By starting early and continuing his study as long as the experience is rewarding for him, the pupil can learn to understand, speak, and eventually read and write a second language much better than if he begins at a later age. His ear becomes more perceptive and his tongue more articulate. Later on, when the mind begins to make comparisons, the materials available for comparing his own language with a second language will make him more keenly aware of the resources of his mother tongue.

A language is not only a means of communication; it is the vehicle of culture. Young children are by nature eager to know how other people live, to learn their songs, their dances, their legends and stories, and their art. Moreover, the child who learns by heart jingles, songs, and verse in a foreign language is cultivating a taste for and a love for literature.

The values of foreign language study in the fields of art, music, the dance, drama, and the language arts are apparent. The opportunity to learn numbers and to review in the foreign language the simplest operations learned in arithmetic is just as obvious. The second language can be an element of enrichment and support for many parts of the curriculum.

Foreign language study serves to cultivate the child not only as an individual, but also as a member of society. It is possible to instill in the young child an early interest in and acceptance of children of other national backgrounds, both abroad and in his own community. It has been noted, particularly in bilingual areas, that the introduction into the school of the second language of the area tends not only to develop, in the child in whose family this language is spoken, a respect for the culture of his parents, but also to raise the social status of both child and parents in the community.



Teachers and students of foreign languages, social studies, and international affairs are more and more realizing the importance of international understanding in the shrinking world of the twentieth century, but many of them have not yet fully understood to what extent foreign languages are the key to understanding foreign peoples. The total education of the child will be strengthened when foreign languages and social studies combine forces to emphasize world understanding.

### At what age in a child's development is it most desirable to begin foreign language instruction?

The evidence of numerous experimental programs (Brooklyn, Carlsbad, Cleveland, El Paso) shows that a child, having mastered at the age of five the basic aural and oral skills of his native language, \* is ideally equipped to begin learning these same skills in a second language. The younger the child the easier his acquisition of a new language: his ear is attuned to intomations, accents, and pronunciations, and his tongue imitates foreign language sounds with effortless flexibility and with none of the self-consciousness that is such a handicap at a later age. Foreign language instruction for the child at this period should present the language, insofar as possible, in the same natural manner as that in which he has learned his native tongue. At this early stage in the child's mental development. he does not think of analyzing the foreign language or comparing it with his own. He accepts it without question, learning sounds and accents through imitation, and ideas through his senses. Words and phrases acquire meaning through sensory aids and pantomime. Both common sense and the observations of neurologists, \*\* psychiatrists, and language researchers indicate that the years from five to ten are the best years for children to learn to understand and to speak a foreign language.

### Should all children of a given grade be allowed to study foreign languages? If not, should such study be restricted, and on what basis?

All children of a given grade should have the opportunity to learn a foreign language. The elementary-school curriculum is properly considered as a sum of learnings acquired by individual children as they progress through the years at their own speed, in keeping with their individual talents. Language learning,

<sup>\*\*&</sup>quot;'To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven.' Educators, before all others, must realize that this is particularly true of the 'organ of the mind.' Physiological evolution causes it to specialize in the learning of language before the ages of 10 to 14. After that gradually, inevitably, it seems to become rigid, slow, less receptive. In regard to this function, it is soon senescent. But it is ready for life's fulfillment in other directions, ready for reasoning, self-discipline, understanding, even wisdom."--Wilder Penfield, "A Consideration of the Neurophysiological Mechanisms of Speech and Some Educational Consequences," Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, LXXXII (1953), 201-214.



<sup>\*</sup>Children in grade 1 have an "understanding" vocabulary of 24,000 words and a "writing" vocabulary of over 5,000 words, according to studies by Mary Katherine Smith and Henry D. Rinsland cited in Ruth G. Strickland's The Language Arts in the Elementary School (Boston: D.C.Heath & Co., 1951), pp. 190-191.

then, should not be restricted to children of superior intelligence; but it should not be imposed indiscriminately on slow-learning children. However, any children who show a desire and ability to learn a foreign language should be allowed to participate in the program if their consequent feeling of success gives them greater confidence in their ability to learn.

In <u>border areas</u> and wherever there are frequent contacts with non-English speaking groups (and where the percentage of bilingual teachers is relatively high) there are obvious advantages in extending foreign language instruction to <u>all</u> children in a grade.

In other communities foreign language instruction may at first have to be limited simply because in these areas there may not be enough teachers qualified to give such instruction to all elementary-school pupils. It may be necessary, at the outset, to use these teachers with selected groups of pupils in order to insure the needed continuity of instruction.

### What should be the content of the foreign language class?

The content will be determined by a number of basic considerations: the abilities and interests of the children involved; the scope and sequence of related areas of the curriculum as outlined for each age group; the time available for foreign language instruction. Basically, the content planned must have meaning for the children concerned, and it must be of sufficient interest to stimulate active participation by all the pupils.

If the sequence established for language arts, social studies, and other related areas is to be used as a guide for determining children's interests at each age level, the choice of content for foreign language instruction becomes quite obvious. In the primary grades, phrases and units of vocabulary will center around exchange of greetings, expressions of courtesy, the family, pets, the home, the school, and the immediate community. Parallels in foreign communities may be indicated. The extent of the vocabulary included in each unit will, of course, depend upon the abilities and interests of the children in the group. Much can be done with a limited number of words and phrases if these are used in meaningful situations, in simple dialogues and dramatizations. Songs, games, and folk dancing will enrich the modest beginnings at these levels.

As the children progress through the grades, the units of vocabulary begun in the earlier years will be expanded. Children will still want to talk about their school, their friends, their activities at home and in the community. Much of the foreign language conto will continue to be motivated both by the activities and interests developed in the other areas of the school curriculum and by the expanding experiences of growing children. Songs, games, dramatizations will continue to be highlighted. Folk stories and stories about children in the foreign country can be told and acted out.

All new words and phrases will be introduced orally with the use of pictures, objects, action, and dramatizations. Much oral practice in chorus and by individual children will be essential.

Since foreign language instruction may begin at any level from grade one through grade six, it is difficult to decide when reading and writing of the second



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language should begin.\* There are two principal factors to be considered: Reading and writing of the second language, even of the informal sort, should not be introduced until: 1) the aural and oral skills of the second language are well established, and 2) the child's progress in reading and writing his own language has been developed to the point where he is secure in his ability to use these skills.

#### What teaching materials and techniques should be used?

The integration of the foreign language with the other areas of study in the particular grade is very important. Foreign languages should not be taught in isolation. In the first grade, the child's family, home, pets, and toys are the persons and objects around which his life centers, and around which all language instruction should center. Since learning a language should be above all an experience, the child in the first grade must live the language; and because his experiences are limited, foreign language instruction must be brought to his level of understanding.

All materials discussed in the foreign language class period should be presented visually and orally at the same time, so that sound and concept are identified. One effective way of presenting visual aids in any grade, but specifically in the lower grades, is by mounting pictures on chart paper and presenting them as new words are introduced. The picture of a man is shown to the children as they hear the word "papá." They recognize the picture and hear the word associated with it. As the teacher points to the picture, he says: "Este es el papá." Note that the word is immediately used in a sentence, not learned in isolation. The children repeat with the teacher: "Este es el papá." When there is no doubt in the teacher's mind that the children have a clear concept of the word "papá," he asks: "Niños, ¿quién es este señor?" (Children, who is this gentleman?) He encourages an answer by saying with the children: "Este señor es el papá." Nothing is left to chance. Each new word is presented in this manner, in a sentence, to assure comprehension. Retention is maintained by repetition, and "thinking in the foreign language" is sustained by the direct use of the language, without translation.

Once the child has a clear concept of the meaning of a word, he must, if possible, actually "feel" the object. In units on furniture, foods, fruits, and vegetables, miniature or wax models may be passed around so that the child sees and feels the object designated by the word he has just heard.

In the first and second grades, correlated practice materials can be very effective. Their purpose is to teach the child to follow directions in the foreign language, to learn the names of the colors he is to use, the parts of the object that he is coloring, and finally the name of the whole object. Such work is fun, and the child is learning the foreign language without effort. For example, in the unit on the outside of the house, mounted pictures of houses are presented and each part of the house and the surroundings is identified in the foreign language: the roof, chimney, bricks, windows, door, stairs, sidewalk, trees, street. The

<sup>\*</sup>In El Paso, where Spanish is introduced in grade one, reading and writing of an informal sort are begun in the third grade. French in Cleveland is begun in grade one, but reading and writing are not formally introduced until the seventh grade.



child makes freehand sketches of houses, following instructions given in the foreign language. In order to test retention, a stenciled house with all the outside characteristics learned in the foreign language is handed to each child. Instructions are given in the foreign language. "Paint the roof black." "Now paint the chimney red," and so on, until the whole house is colored.

In the third grade, interest is created by presenting in the foreign language songs and folk tales appropriate for this age level, keeping the foreign language within the children's vocabulary and comprehension. Story-book characters are mounted on flannel board as the story progresses in very simple terms.

Other materials that have been found effective are doll houses with removable walls and roof, colored paper and crayons (for teaching the names of the colors), plastic table settings, dolls (or the actual clothes of the children), and photographs of children and adults in the foreign setting, especially those of middle-class groups (avoiding those of "quaint" but barefoot or sabot-shod children). When the children are old enough to tell time, a clock with movable hands is invaluable, and flags, maps, and globes will add variety to a geography lesson. At all levels of instruction, a browsing table stimulates interest and conversation. On it can be placed pictures and picture books printed in the foreign country, primers, arithmetic books, and song books.

Dramatizations and dramatic play are another effective device. In the unit on the living room, a natural situation can be created, since the members of the family meet guests in the living room. At first, a picture of a lady in a living room is presented: "Ninos, ésta es mi mamá." (Children, this is my mcther). The children have learned to identify the members of the family in an earlier unit. Now all they have to learn is: "Tengo mucho gusto en conocerla." (I am very pleased to know you). The mother, father, or other members of the family being introduced answer: "El gusto es mío." (The pleasure is mine). Groups of children introduce each other, taking the part of the various members of the family, or introduce the foreign language instructor as a visitor in their home. In learning the words for dishes and silverware, children participate by dramatizing a mother setting the table: as she places each object, the class says: "La mama pone la mesa. Pone el mantel. Pone cuatro platos." (The mother sets the table. She puts the cloth on. She puts four dishes on.) and so on until the table is set. The appeal in foreign language instruction to the first- and second-graders is the emphasis on natural situations in which they can participate.

### How can records, tape recordings, radio, and television be used?

Records can furnish a model for songs and, if the diction is clear and the vocabulary limited, for speech as well. Participation records, with pauses for choral repetition by the class, are a still more effective teaching device.

Tape recordings can be similarly used, and they are adaptable to the needs and foreign-language ability of the class. In the upper grades, the voice of the teacher or another person fluent in the language can be recorded in supplementary stories within the vocabulary range of the pupils. If a reader is used, passages can be recorded and the children can read aloud with the narrator. Questions on the reading can be recorded, with pauses for the children to repeat the question and give (or repeat) the answer, to get practice in correct intonation. At any grade level, children can record their voices as an aid to correct pronunciation and intonation. The tape recorder can also be used to direct group work for part of a class while the teacher works with the rest of the children in another part of the classroom.



In some communities classes receive regular radio or television lessons, especially helpful in larger school systems that may lack sufficient teachers fluent in the foreign language. In Miami, daily 10-minute broadcasts of Spanish lessons to fifth-grade pupils in 35 schools are followed by related classroom activities in Spanish. In El Paso, a Spanish program is broadcast three times a week to the fourth-to eighth-grade classes of 17 schools. These programs maintain interest and aural practice in these pupils, who have had classroom instruction in Spanish in grades 1-3. In Cleveland, weekly 20-minute lessons in French and Spanish are broadcast to classes under the guidance of voluntary teachers. In these cities, the radio material is recorded on tape beforehand.

In Washington, D.C., foreign language classes receive weekly 15-minute TV lessons in French or Spanish. After-school classes receive TV Spanish lessons in Buffalo, N.Y., and French lessons in Schenectady.

## What should be the length and frequency of the foreign language teaching period in each grade?

Experience has shown that the minimum desirable, in the kindergarten and 1st and 2nd grades, is 15 minutes from three to five times a week. In grades 3 to 6, 20 to 30 minutes have proved desirable, although an able class can continue for a longer time without tiring if the teacher is skillful in varying the activities.

Foreign language learning need not be confined to the period formally allotted to it. The teacher can create opportunities for children to use and hear the foreign language in everyday classroom situations, in simple arithmetic problems, in directions, in counting out for games or other activities, encouraging children to greet her and to say "please," "thank you," "pardon me," "good bye." The effectiveness of language learning will be in direct ratio to the amount of time given to its use in school and out.

### What factors should determine which foreign languages are to be offered?

The chief factor determining the choice of the foreign language to be offered in school should be the known or inferred preference of the majority of the parents. Parents should, however, be urged to select (1) a language of international importance and (2) one for which continuity can be provided in high school. Whether one or more languages are offered in the same school or school system depends upon local conditions. In Public School 208 in Brooklyn, N.Y., for example, French and Spanish are offered from grades one through eight and there are enough children studying each language to keep one teacher busy all the time. If an approximately equal number of parents express a desire for two different languages, both should be offered. Some communities or schools might, however, not be able to provide this choice, for financial reasons or because of a lack of teachers.

# What is the place of "general" or "exploratory" language in the elementary or junior high school?

In schools where a foreign language has been introduced in the grades there is little place for either general or exploratory language courses. Children making satisfactory progress in their foreign language will want to and should be encouraged to continue. For those who lack either the interest or the aptitude to continue profitably, a general-language course can broaden a language consciousness, emphasizing the place of language in our society and stimulating an interest in other peoples.



In schools where a foreign language has not been introduced before Grade 7, children of at least average aptitude could (except for comparative historical-cultural purposes) with greater profit begin a foreign language at this point than either a general or an exploratory type of course.

## Can foreign language instruction be integrated into the curriculum without displacing other essential areas of instruction?

It can. It happens, as administrators and foreign language teachers have agreed, whenever and wherever those responsible for the total curriculum accept the demonstrable fact that foreign language instruction is an enriching activity which contributes to the learnings in other areas.

In schools where all children are given the privilege of participating in foreign language study, two distinct patterns have emerged. In one, where the foreign language specialist comes into the classroom from the outside, careful joint planning by the language teacher, the classroom teacher, and the supervisor concerned is necessary to make sure that the vocabulary and content of the language units are directly related to the regular curriculum offering for the grade concerned. In the other pattern, where the foreign language instruction is given by the classroom teacher, it is planned primarily as an enrichment activity to be correlated with the other areas in the over-all curriculum. Activities in such fields as social studies, language arts, music, art, physical education, and arithmetic will give motivation and meaning to the experience in foreign language learning (simple dialogues, dramatizations, dramatic play, vocabulary games, songs, folk dancing, and pageantry), through many of which the child acquires understanding and appreciation of a foreign culture and people.

Wherever foreign language instruction is planned as enrichment for children of superior intelligence, there is no problem of displacing other essential areas of instruction, since such children can master essentials in less time than average children and need additional challenges. Foreign language instruction provides such a challenge. With continuity in such instruction provided through the school such a challenge. With continuity in such instruction provided through the school years, the outcomes in cultural appreciation and in fluency in the foreign language bring rich rewards to these young people and to American society.

# How can continuity and progression be achieved in foreign language instruction up through the grades?

A course of study designed for continuous progression in a given language from grade 1 through 12 might have the following phases:

Crades 1-3: Development of aural-oral skills through conversation, songs, and activities related to home, community, and school experiences. The fostering of an understanding of and interest in children who speak the foreign language.

Grades 4-6: Further development of aural-oral skills and attitudes established as goals in grades 1-3. Content of the course related to other study areas and creative activities, with parallels in foreign communities indicated. Reading and writing may be introduced, but only after the firm establishment of the pupil's command of these skills in English and of oral-aural skills in the foreign language.

Grades 7-9: Continued emphasis on oral expression and the cultivation of attitudes. Reading begun or continued, with stories and other materials that give insight into the customs and culture of the foreign country. Language structure learned inductively. Planned sequence of functional drill projects on verbs, vocabulary building, and speech patterns.



Grades 10-12: Further stress on conversation and oral discussion; practice in writing original compositions. Extensive and intensive reading of works in the foreign language, with consideration of their place and value in the foreign literature. Systematic study of the essentials of grammar.

There is considerable variation in the organizational patterns of our public schools. The main types are: (a) the 8-year elementary and 4-year secondary plan; (b) the 6-year elementary and 6-year secondary plan; (c) the 6-year elementary, 3-year junior H.S., 3-year senior H.S. plan; (d) the 6-year elementary, 2-year junior H.S., 4-year senior H.S. plan.

In the majority of public schools, up to the present, foreign language study has begun in the 9th or 10th grade. Some elementary schools which have introduced foreign languages leave an unfortunate gap in grades 7 and 8, particularly in systems which do not operate on the 8-4 or 6-6 plan.

The following suggestions are offered as possible solutions of the articulation problem:

- A. Articulation under the 8-4 or 6-6 plans. If one or more of the foreign languages currently in the high-school curriculum are also offered in the elementary grades of that system, and if present high-school foreign language offerings can be extended to cover all 4 or 6 high-school years, articulation can be attained in one of these ways:
  - 1. The high school might offer two types of foreign language courses, one for pupils with previous training in the grades and another for pupils beginning a new language in high school. We might call the first type "continuing courses" (Continuing French I, II, III, IV), and the second type "beginning courses" (Beginning French I, II, III, IV). The two programs could be carried on concurrently. Yearly or semestral placement tests would show differences in individual progress.
  - 2. The high school might gear its language offerings to the needs of pupils who had previous foreign language experience in the grades and offer intensive "conversation courses" for 1 to 4 semesters for pupils without such previous preparation.
  - 3. Pupils who have had a language in the grades might be admitted to the second, third, or fourth semester of a high-school foreign language course either on the basis of a placement test or of a blanket transfer of credit at the rate of 1 high-school semester to 3 years in the primary grades or to 1 year in the upper elementary grades. Secondary-school foreign language teachers will have to adjust and to make adjustments for pupils with varying backgrounds of foreign language study.
- B. Articulation under the 6-3-3 and 6-2-4 plans. The junior high school, as the link between elementary and secondary education, can also be the place for passing from the predominantly aural-oral training of the elementary-school to the more systematic study of the foreign language and culture in the senior high school. "Continuing" courses and "beginning" courses (or alternate plans as presented under "A") may be designed for both junior and senior high-school programs.



#### Who should teach foreign languages at this level?

In some schools the foreign language is taught by classroom teachers with varying degrees of foreign language preparation or by fully qualified classroom teachers; in other schools the classes are taught by foreign language specialists. The question of who should teach the foreign language depends upon the personnel and financial resources within the school or school system, and also upon the individual teacher's enthusiasm, preparation, and willingness to qualify. Any plan requires adequate supervision. There must be available an adviser or coordinator to raise and maintain the quality of instruction, to provide in-service training where needed, and to provide liaison among departments of the elementary school, and between the school and the community.

- A. The regular classroom teacher. The teacher should have an acceptable pronunciation and be able to use the language in correct speech patterns, or at the very least, be developing this ability through in-service training. Prominent among the objectives of such a teacher will be the enrichment of the total elementary school curriculum through the foreign language experience, an understanding of other peoples, and the creation of an interest in and a readiness for serious language study.
- B. The fully qualified classroom teacher. Qualified elementary classroom teachers who have majored in or are fluent in a foreign language teach foreign languages at different grade levels in a school. Such a teacher serves either as a "resource person" to assist others who are carrying on the foreign language instruction or provides continuity for the established program by teaching foreign languages on a class-exchange basis.
- C. The staff member with a part-time job. A regular member of the elementary-school staff competent in a foreign language may combine teaching this language with part-time work in another field (e.g., the library).
- D. The foreign language specialist. If he is thoroughly prepared in the foreign language, in elementary school methods, and in child growth and development, the specialist, who enters a classroom only to teach the foreign language, has an excellent opportunity for effective teaching. His planning and preparation are confined to a single subject, and since all his contacts with the children are in the foreign language, he can create for the children an atmosphere in which hearing and speaking the language seems natural and exciting. The specialist may be a second-ary-school teacher qualified for elementary-school teaching or a qualified elementary-school teacher who is fluent in the foreign language.

# How can elementary-school teachers without foreign language facility be trained to teach foreign languages?

An in-service workshop sponsored by the local school system is probably the best solution. Through such workshops or through courses at a nearby college, available throughout the year and offering functional training in foreign languages and in methods of teaching them, teachers can get the needed training. Their own study should be of the aural-oral type that they will use in their training. They may also be able to get advice and help from directors of foreign languages, supervisors, or consultants in the local school system, or from foreign language teachers in nearby colleges.



The community itself may furnish help. Parents, other townspeople, and high-school or college teachers who know the foreign language may be invited into the classroom to work with the teacher on the unit being studied.

Elementary-school teachers seeking training in foreign languages can clearly profit from summer workshops, summer-school foreign language courses, and foreign travel.

### How can future elementary-school teachers receive foreign-language training?

The training can be obtained in teachers colleges or in schools of education working in conjunction with university foreign language departments. Addition of foreign language courses to the course of study for elementary-school teachers presents to administrators in teacher-training institutions a problem that they must consider in relation to other areas of study, since some courses have by legislative act become an established part of the program and are required for teacher certification. Members of the foreign language staff of an institution and those in charge of the preparation of elementary-school teachers should work together on this problem. One obvious place for the introduction of foreign language training is the materials-and-methods laboratory in the language arts.

In some universities a major in foreign languages is available as an elective course to prospective elementary-school teachers. Such majors will be more widely offered and elected when there is assurance of the local need for an elementary-school foreign language program, an assurance that can best come from local school systems.

Such foreign language programs may be stimulated by workshops in teacher-training institutions or in nearby colleges. Future elementary-school teachers can be interested in foreign languages, and in preparing themselves to teach them, through a variety of approaches, such as displays of children's books written in other languages, through demonstrations of music and dancing, and through foreign films, recordings, and transcriptions.

### How can such a program get started?

Initiative by the school administration or by the elementary-school teacher is the most obvious and natural way of starting such a program. A college or secondary-school teacher may have difficulty in initiating a program of foreign language teaching in the elementary school if there is any "pressure" involved. Parents or interested laymen, too, will need to proceed in an objective way and without the use of "pressure tactics."

A. A school superintendent is in a position to bring together teachers, principals, and parents interested in foreign language teaching. He can set up a committee to study the problem, and a favorable report by the committee can lead to an experimental program. The programs in Atlantic City, El Paso, and Los Angeles were established in this way.\*



<sup>\*</sup>The establishment of the Atlantic City program is described in the NEA Journal, XLII (Nov. 1953), 479-480.

- B. An elementary-school teacher with foreign language ability can create an opportunity if he has initiative. To succeed, he will need the permission of his principal and superintendent and the cooperation of his supervisor in the experiment, and he should secure the interest and cooperation of the parents of the children with regard to the proposed class or classes. Such a procedure by a fifth-grade teacher in one school in Lawrence, Kansas, led to the introduction of Spanish into all the Lawrence elementary schools.
- C. A college or secondary-school foreign language teacher may make known to the school superintendent, through appropriate channels, that he is available as a consultant to any elementary-school teacher who would like his help. Before making official contact with the administration in an elementary school, he should make sure that there are elementary-school teachers with an interest in foreign languages and that there is a community interest in having a foreign language taught at this level. A cooperative effort will bring the best results.
- D. Parents or interested laymen, as individuals or organized groups (the PTA, Home and School Associations), should make a survey of the attitude of all parents in the school community and discuss the results of this survey with the principal, then with the principal and staff, and if the situation seems favorable, with the Superintendent of Schools. Such a procedure, advisable in initiating any new school project, will have a much better chance to succeed than if a campaign is started in a newspaper article or in a board of education meeting.

Once an experiment is started, every effort should be made, through talks and press notices, to bring it to the attention of the public and all the school officials in the area. But individuals or groups that hope to get cordial consideration of this or any other new idea should collect the facts, interpret them judiciously, and then proceed through the administrative channels appropriate to the situation.

# How can a program at this level win the cooperation of classroom teachers, administrators, and the community?

To win and maintain their support, one must: (1) show that the program is practicable and desirable, (2) consult with everyone concerned with the program, and (3) evaluate continually what is being achieved to make sure that results are commensurate with effort.

In one large city school system, for example, official authorization to experiment with the teaching of French in a second-grade and a fifth-grade class was given in 1944 as the result of many consultations with the Associate Superintendent in Charge of Elementary Schools, the Director of Elementary Education, the principal of the school concerned, the parents of all the children in the two groups to be taught, the teachers of these classes, the senior-high-school teacher who was to conduct the experiment, her principal, and the latter's superior officer, the First Assistant Superintendent of Schools. The experiment was watched with interest not only by those immediately concerned but also by others in the community. Results permitted continuance of the experiment in two elementary schools until the Spring of 1951, when all agreed that it was no longer feasible to continue the program if it was necessary to depend upon secondary-school foreign language teachers loaned for the purpose when they could find free time.

After preparing instructional materials and securing the authorization of the Board of Education for a city-wide program insofar as teacher resources were available, the community was approached for its verdict. A questionnaire sent to all parents



of elementary-school children in the city's public schools brought 22,860 replies in favor of the foreign language teaching, and only 110 opposed. A questionnaire sent to all elementary-school teachers through their principals brought approximately 200 volunteers to teach French, 150 for Spanish, and 75 each for German and Latin.

Such a program succeeds only if it is undertaken voluntarily, even enthusiastically, by teachers who recognize its possibilities in enriching the regular learnings of children and in broadening their own cultural equipment. It is doomed to failure if imposed from above upon the elementary-school teachers. As a result of the meticulous planning in setting it up, this program now enjoys the warm support of administrators (including principals), teachers, parents, and children.

Weekly TV lessons in French and Spanish serve as a unifying element in the city-wide program and give both pupils and teachers models of pronunciation and method. They also arouse the interest and enlist the support of people not directly concerned with the schools. Teacher morale is raised by eight workshops in area schools, where secondary-school foreign language teachers help elementary teachers with pronunciation and methods of teaching languages.

### How can foreign language teaching at this level be financed?

In many places where foreign language teaching has been started in the grades, it is carried on without additional cost to the school system, the language being taught mainly by the regular elementary-classroom teachers, by foreign language teachers from the secondary schools, or by volunteers from other sources. Where language teachers from secondary schools do the teaching, it is done either as a voluntary service during free periods or before or after school, or on assignment by the school administration, sometimes as a traveling position, sometimes to fill out an incomplete language schedule in their schools, instead of giving the teacher assignments in a different subject-matter field.

In other communities (Lawrence, Kansas, El Paso, Fairfield, Conn., Somerville, N. J., and notably Cleveland) one or more foreign language specialists have been added to the elementary-school staff.

Sponsorship of the foreign language program by agencies outside the school system:

- 1. A nearby college, which lends the services of teacher or assigns a foreign language major to teach in the school as part of his practice teaching or in connection with a research project (e.g. University of Kansas, New Mexico Western College, Central Michigan College of Education).
- 2. A community agency (the PTA, Home and School Association, a foreign language group), which pays a qualified person to do the teaching (e.g. Staten Island, N. Y.).
- 3. Parents of the children receiving the lessons, who pay, through a yearly fee, the salary of the foreign language teacher (e.g. P.S. 208, Brooklyn, N. Y., where the optional yearly fee is \$10.00).

Foreign language teaching should properly, however, be financed through regular . budget appropriations. This will not occur on a general basis until the trained personnel are available to make possible a continuity of articulated courses from grade to grade and into the junior and senior high schools.

Meanwhile present enthusiasm and resources must be fully used to keep programs going, so that they may prove their worth and justify their inclusion in the ERIC regular budget.

### A few quotations on foreign language study for children

- "It is a psychological fact that young children learn new languages easily and idiomatically. In learning to speak without accent they excel their parents because their speech habits are not rigidly formed. If, therefore, easy and natural communication is one of the principal aims of language instruction, there is good reason to begin the study of a new tongue at an early age. And there is no convincing evidence to show that under proper conditions the learning of another language interferes with the further refinement of one's own or causes other psychological disturbances. Moreover, the early beginning of a new language has the obvious advantage of affording a longer period of later schooling during which the child can perfect his speaking and reading habits. At present many youth begin the study of foreign language so late that with all their other academic obligations there is not time to gain an actual working facility in the new tongue. And there is the further advantage in an early start that those students who have real ability and interest in language study can undertake a second foreign language before the end of their formal schooling if they wish to do so. "-Earl J. McGrath, U. S. Commissioner of Education, 3 May 1952.
- 2. "There is an age when the child has a remarkable capacity to utilize these areas [of the cerebral cortex] for the learning of language, a time when several languages can be learned simultaneously as easily as one language. Later, with the appearance of capacity for reason and for abstract thinking, this early ability is largely lost. One who is mindful of the changing physiology of the human brain might marvel at educational curricula. Why should foreign languages (dead or alive) make their first appearance long after a boy or girl has lost full capacity for language learning?"—Dr. Wilder Penfield, Director of the Montreal Neurological Institute, in an address before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, ll February 1953.

Comments on Dr. Penfield's statement:

- a. "I heartily agree with his point of view about exposing children to languages as early as possible, for there can be no doubt that children have the greatest capacity for learning languages between the ages of five and fifteen."—Dr. John F. Fulton, Sterling Professor of the History of Medicine, Yale School of Medicine, 26 March 1953.
- b. "I agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Penfield's thesis that children can learn languages much more easily between two and ten than later. I also agree that language learning should be by ear and motivated by important personal relationships. I, too, have marvelled at the stupidity of preparatory school curricula that teach grammar, syntax and translation and thus inhibit the acquiring of an ability to understand and speak a language."—Dr. Stanley Cobb, Bullard Professor of Neuropathology in the Harvard Medical School and Psychiatrist-in-chief of the Massachusetts General Hospital, 24 March 1953.
- c. "It may be questionable whether there is 'a time when several languages can be learned simultaneously as easily as one language'; but there can be no doubt that the most favorable time to begin to learn a second language is in the pre-adolescent period. A child who has learned a second language 'naturally' at this age is pre-pared to acquire additional languages in later life with much greater facility...."
  -Dr. C. Judson Herrick, Professor Emeritus of Neurology, University of Chicago, 28 March 1953.



- 3. "The earlier children learn a foreign language the easier it is. In the earlier years children learn almost everything by memory and by ear, and not by reasoning. . . . Languages, if learned while children are young, are learned largely by ear, and not by grammar, and children get an accent better and find the language easier than if they wait until they are older. It is most important for our young people to learn languages now, since they are likely to work and be in countries all over the world. Making friends in foreign countries is easier if you know the language of the people you are with."—Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, in McCalls, January 1954, p. 21.
- 4. "Neither teachers nor pupils should be content any longer with mere token training to satisfy college-entrance requirements. Language training should be begun very early and continued assiduously. Heretofore, in our country at least, fluency in a foreign language has been a desirable luxury. From this day forward fluency in a foreign tongue is one of the essentials."—Herbert G. Espy, Commissioner of Education of the State of Maine and former president of the State Teachers College, Genesco, N. Y., 15 December 1953.
- 5. In Chicago on 7 March 1953 the 719 persons (representing 364 institutions) attending the eighth National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the Association for Higher Education (a department of the NEA), voted unanimously as follows: "Whereas a great need of our generation is for a wider and deeper understanding of other nations and other peoples, and whereas a knowledge of the language of a people contributes greatly to the understanding of a foreign culture, be it resolved: That this Conference recommend that increasing provisions be made for the study and effective teaching of foreign languages and cultures at all levels of American education—elementary, secondary, higher."
- 6. The following resolution, offered by the International Relations Committee, was approved by the Representative Assembly of the Wisconsin Educational Association in the autumn of 1952 (published in the Wisconsin Journal of Education, April 1953): "Believing that to understand and to appreciate the culture and customs of other countries it is essential to know their languages, and believing that it is easier to learn and to remember a foreign language at an early age, we recommend that the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary schools be encouraged to as great an extent as possible."
- 7. "One language opens more than the gate to a country's people, their history and their literature. It opens the mind to the world through the gate of that one language.... I should like to see languages taught in our schools much earlier than they are."—Pearl Buck, 25 October 1952.
- 8. The Board of Directors of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. adopted the following statement in March 1953: "As a member of the largest international organization for girls in the world, (we) would like to lend support and encouragement to the schools' efforts to provide the young people of this country further opportunities to learn foreign languages.... We are finding it possible to offer an ever increasing number of events which bring young people of different nationalities together .... We believe the ability to communicate freely with members of other countries through the spoken and written word is one of the best means of developing wider international understanding.... It is our earnest hope that schools will not only continue to provide students with opportunities to study the languages but will increase their efforts to provide this opportunity for children in this country at an earlier age."



- 9. "There should be a revival of interest in languages, and such languages should be taught as early in the school program as experiments indicate to be practicable in our culture. The variety of languages could also be broadened on all levels." Oliver J. Caldwell, Assistant Commissioner for International Education, U. S. Office of Education, in School Life, XXXVI (Dec. 1953), 36, 45.
- 10. "I think it is high time that foreign languages were included in the curriculum of the lower schools. Despite our efforts to enrich the curriculum, particularly of the brighter children, I am confident that there is plenty of time for the study of foreign language in our elementary school."--John J. Theobald, President of Queens College (Flushing, N. Y.), in a letter of 30 October 1953.
- ll. "I do believe that the study of Spanish in the elementary schools of El Paso has done a great deal toward improving relations and understanding between the bilingual population of our city. I am happy that we started this program. But I wish to emphasize the following point very strongly: I believe that foreign language study in the grades is even more essential in communities where only one language is spoken, for there the children run the danger of complete cultural isolation."--Mortimer Brown, Superintendent of Schools, El Paso, Texas, 3 September 1954.
- 12. "I am firmly convinced that we should do more in this country to promote the study of foreign language in our educational institutions. The place to start is in the elementary schools where the learning of new languages can be most easily absorbed by young pupils."--John S. Knight, Editor and Publisher, Chicago Daily News, 10 November 1953.
- 13. "Agreement among United Nations language experts meeting in Ceylon that United States public schools start teaching languages too late should attract the attention of most school officials, including our own. The need for Americans with genuine ability to speak, read and write foreign languages is increasing daily, and it is one that our schools should be seeking harder to meet. Introduction of grammar school courses in French, Spanish and other languages could go a long way to this end, and might well be considered seriously by all public school authorities."--Editorial in the Philadelphia Inquirer, 2 September 1953.
- 14. "Parent-teacher members will wholeheartedly support whatever steps you decide should be taken to help our children learn another language early. In hundreds of communities all over the country there are lay advisory committees that work with educators and administrators. They help form school policies, study and improve school curriculums. These committees are made up of men and women representing major community groups. The P.T.A. often takes the lead in forming these advisory committees. Now if our parent-teacher associations—all 38,000 of themare well informed about new proposals for teaching languages in the elementary schools, they will do all in their power to see that other community groups understand the value of these proposals. They will do all in their power to bring such programs into the curriculum."—Mrs. Newton P. Leonard, President of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, in an address read at the Conference on the Role of Foreign Languages in American Schools, Washington, D. C., 15 and 16 January 1953.



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