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ABSTRACT
                This paper details plans for implementing a European
units/credits system for modern languages in adult education.
Included are a discussion of the rationale for such a system, the
aims of its planners, the language learning objectives to be
established for the courses, means for individualizing the program to
meet the needs of each adult learner, and linguistic theory as
related to the instruction of modern languages to adults. By
units/credits system is understood a study framework in which a given
subject matter is articulated into elements which can be grouped in
different ways by different classes of learners in accordance with
their needs and interests. Intelligent choice is then possible, and
can perhaps be encouraged by recognizing some coherent combinations
of elements as constituting "units" of study. Where the mastery of
such a unit is relevant to the acquisition of some formal
qualification, "credits" can be awarded. A system of this kind
appears to offer a promising framework for guidance combined with
freedom and flexibility in the, at present, badly unstructured field
of adult education. (Author/HW)

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COMMITTEE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION
AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Draft outline of a European units/credits system
for modern languages learning by adults

by

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1.1.1. The divisive effect of language differences seems
certain to prove to be one of the major obstacles to European
integration over the next generation.

1.1.2. In recent times language-based nation-states have
provided a favourable environment for a steadily increasing
scale of social organisation. The process has been greatly
furthered by mass education and the spread of standard
national languages, which make all citizens members of a
freely interacting community and facilitate the further
development of large-scale activities and institutions of
all kinds.

1.2.1. Today, the internal consolidation of our countries
is far advanced. However, the major developments of the last
thirty years have progressively weakened the self-sufficiency
of national cultures, even in day-to-day living. Mass travel
for business and pleasure over continental motorway networks
and air routes, electronic media, mass movements of immigrant
labour and at managerial level in multinational corporations,
supranational economic, cultural and political institutions,
interdependence of imports/exports in an increasingly
unified market, all conspire to render hard national frontiers
within the Council for Cultural Co-operation area increasingly
obsolete.

1.2.2. The discrete separation of national languages no
longer provides a framework for increasing internal integration,
but rather hindrances to an increasingly real and urgent wider
unity. For children born today, who will spend the greater
part of their lives in the Third Millenium, monolingualism
will become increasingly out-of-date in a world where an active
knowledge of an international lingua franca and some receptive
acquaintance with one or two others, will be required over
an unpredictably wide range of social situations. The effective
teaching of languages in schools is thus a matter of great
urgency, which, as so often in transitional situations, is
widely underestimated.

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1.2.3.   Young adults, however, and the early middle-aged, have
completed their full-time education, in most cases (especially
that of working-class children in the large monolingual
countries) without acquiring any effective knowledge of any
language save the standard form of the mother tongue. It is
to be expected that very substantial numbers of them will find
themselves at a disadvantage at some point in their future lives by
an inability to communicate with fellow Europeans of a different
mother tongue.

1.2.4.   The extent of the disadvantage may range from the
relatively trivial (inability to greet a visitor, to understand
an entertainment film, to ask the time of a passer-by) to the
disastrous (inability to summon help in sudden emergency, to
retrieve a key piece of information from a publication, to
negotiate a serious conflict of interest, to take employment
in another country).

1.3.1.   This situation gives particularly clear support to
the general argument for a "permanent education". Modern
life develops faster than educational planning can predict,
or, having predicted, make effective provision for. A
substantial proportion of educational resources should therefore
be reserved for enabling the disadvantaged adult to acquire the
knowledge and skills he now requires but which did not form
part of his full-time education.

1.3.2.   The knowledge and skills needed, often at short notice,
by the adult will not, in most cases, be the highly generalised
ones appropriate to the full-time education of the child and
adolescent before the "career watershed" is reached. Within
a life and career, the main lines of which are already laid
down, the possibilities of action are limited. Adults rarely
are able, or wish, to undertake the thorough study of an
extensive new area of knowledge as a whole, in all its
aspects. They rather require, on the basis of a sound grasp
of necessary fundamental principles, to acquire quickly the
factual knowledge and practical skills necessary for the immediate
performance of urgent tasks with which they are faced in various
aspects of their committed lives.

1.3.3.   This is not to preach a narrow vocationalism. The
recreational and liberating value of cultural studies is not
to be underestimated. Even in these studies, however, the
interests and motivations of the adult are generally more
concentrated, related to a more defined pattern of past
experience and future expectations.

1.3.4.   Given such a concept of the nature and objectives of
adult education, the transfer to this field of a pattern of
generalised courses and global examinations developed for
the schools is inappropriate. A better study framework can be
l ovided if a given subject matter can be articulated into
elements which can be grouped in different ways by different
classes of learners in accordance with their needs and interests.
Intelligent choice is then possible, and can perhaps be encouraged
by recognising some coherent combinations of elements as
constituting units of study. Where the mastery of such a
unit is relevant to the acquisition of some formal qualification,
credits can be awarded, allowing the qualification to be gained
in a variety of ways appropriate to varying, but congruent,
patterns of study and needs.

1.3.5.   A units/credits system of this kind appears to offer
a promising framework for guidance combined with freedom and
flexibility in the at present badly understructured field of
adult education.

2.1.   The aim of the European units/credits system for
modern language learning by adults is therefore to establish
a framework for adult language learning, based upon the
language needs of the learner, and the linguistic operations
required of him in order to function effectively as a member
of the language community for the purposes, and in the
situations, revealed by those needs.

2.2.   This aim is to be achieved by (a) an analysis of
language use sufficiently rich for widely divergent learning
objectives to be characterised and (b) a set of principles
according to which language learning units may be constructed,
corresponding to the communicative needs of the learner.
Suggestions may then be made whereby "credits" may be
attached to such units, and given appropriate recognition
on a European basis.

2.3.1.   The classification of language learning objectives
is based upon an analysis of the language-using operations
required of a member of a speech community. Each operation
can be described in terms of (a) the behavioural input-output
chain involved, (b) the communicative function performed,
(c) the notional/semantic content expressed, (d) the formal
linguistic resources employed, (e) the situation in which it
occurs. These dimensions of classification may be detailed
as follows:

2.4.1.   Behavioural This classification is exemplified by
Trim (CCC/EES (71) 135 pp. 52-54) and developed in detail in
the report of Dr. Bung. Any linguistic operation can be seen

as an encoding, decoding or transformation. That is to say,
a message is formulated in a language and then produced in a
specific medium; or a message in a specific medium is
identified, understood and interpreted in a language, or a
message in a specific medium and in a specific language,
having been identified, understood and interpreted, is then
reformulated in a systematically related way in the same or a
different language, and then produced in the same or a different
medium (this use of the term "transformation" is, of course, to
be distinguished from that in transformational generative
grammar).

2.4.2.   In this way, any linguistic operation by a speaker/
hearer can be represented by a vector, or string of ordered
numbers, of which the first represents an input, the last an
output, and the intervening ones posited intervening activities
in the chain (or, with a systematic ambiguity, overt message,
underlying linguistic construct, deeper semantic structure).

2.4.3.   This classification is exhaustive, in the sense that
there are no linguistic operations which cannot be accommodated.
It is thus a useful basis for operational descriptions. It
is however, quite uninformative as to the functional, linguistic,
semantic and situational characteristics of the message concerned,
and must therefore be further specified in these respects.

2.5.1.   Language functions have been discussed by Trim
(CCC/EES (71) 135 pp. 55-56) and developed in detail by
Wilkins (CCC/EES (72) 67 pp. 12-32). The categories developed
under this heading combine freely with those under behavioural
operation. Thus "reading a typewritten letter and replying to
it by telephone" may involve the understanding of straightforward
requests for factual information, and supplying that information
in a compact form. It may, on the other hand, mean understanding
legal phraseology and looking for indications of whether the
writer is outraged, vindictive, opportunistic, etc., when
threatening a lawsuit for damages, and replying in a firm but
conciliatory way without admitting legal liability, in order
to achieve a compromise settlement. A highly complex example
like the second one, will break down into a succession of
"moves" of a simpler character. The sentences of the letter
will include some that assert a version of the event in factual
terms, with others that make demands, express disapproval and
anger, threaten, etc. Individual sentences may combine components,
thus performing several of these functions at once. In the
telephone conversation, surprise, disappointment, sympathy,
concession, deprecation, scepticism, warning, persuasion,
conciliation, agreement are deployed and combined in a
communicative strategy.

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2.5.2.   These categories of communicative function do not
claim to be exhaustive, rather exemplary and suggestive.
Further research and experience will fill out and refine the
present categories.

2.6.   Conceptual categories are also developed by Wilkins
(op. cit. pp. 3-12). Thus the legal dispute in the example
as so far given is neutral as between, say, a physical
assault, a newspaper attack, a traffic accident, supply of
faulty goods, etc. The member of a language community, in order
to perform the communicative functions required of him must
be able to refer to events, things, places, ideas and the
relations between them. Within a European context, cultural
integration has progressed so far that the cultural content
to which any language user has to refer varies within very
narrow limits. The concepts necessary to communication may
therefore be ordered and classified to some extent independently
of the formal linguistic means by which they are expressed in
particular languages.

2.7.1.   However, while behavioural, functional and conceptual
factors constrain the use to which the speaker/listener puts
his linguistic resources, it is the system of the language
itself, its lexicon, syntax, morphology, phonology, which
defines the form of sentences and their interrelations in
sound and meaning, and necessarily the central object of
language learning. It is also especially problematic.

2.7.2.   Until some 15 years ago, gramatical theory was
concerned to establish a definitive classification of sentences
and their constituent parts. In his early works, Chomsky
showed convincingly that any attempt to enumerate sentences
and to account for their properties by segmentation and
classification alone must fail. While any given sentence can
be parsed and analysed in terms of sub-parts and their
arrangement, the set of sentences, being infinite and
having moreover an infinity of structures, cannot be specified
in this way. Members of a language community are constantly
being called upon to produce or respond to sentences they have
never heard before, and with a structure they have not met.
They do so with no apparent difficulty. This ability cannot
be simply ascribed to the sentence containing only sub-structures
previously encountered, since that would be equally true of many
non-sentences.

2.7.3.   A grammar of a language, as a theory of that language,
must therefore take the form of an abstract set of rules which
introduce, arrange and embed categories into phrase structure,
insert lexical items, rearrange, insert and delete elements
to convert the posited deep structures into acceptable surface
structures and finally convert these into a string of speech
sounds with appropriate length, stress, and intonation (or, in
writing, letters, punctuations and spaces).

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2.7.4   This transformational-generative model of a grammar
is now, with variations of varying importance, dominant, even
commonplace. In 15 years, the basic arguments have not been
effectively countered. An atmosphere has however developed
hostile to taxonomic classifications in linguistics. and to
attempts to use such classification as a basis for
rationalisation in language teaching. Indeed, the emphatic
contention that "highly abstract and highly specific principles
of organisation are characteristic of all human languages",
and "cannot be acquired through experience and training" can
easily lead to an extremely pessimistic relativism in respect
of pedagogic planning. Chomsky's celebrated address to the
Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in
1965 (reprinted in J.P.B. Allen and P. van Buren: Chomsky:
Selected Readings QUP 1971) has been widely interpreted in
this way. The editors themselves conclude: "As linguists,
we find ourselves led away from an exclusive preoccupation with
patterns of physical data in order to speculate about the
internal logic of language structure, and the nature of the
knowledge which enables a learner to achieve a creative control
of language. As teachers, we are no longer interested solely
in what a student says or writes; we are interested in using
this physical evidence as a means of making inferences about
what the student knows. In other words, we are no longer content
merely because a student can give a correct response to a
specific stimulus in a controlled repetition or substitution
exercise; in addition, we want to satisfy ourselves that by
giving the right response the student has really learned
something about the language." As stated, this is unexceptionable,
though it is doubtful whether the blinkered views attributed
to linguists and teachers were ever seriously held, or that
Chomsky's theory necessarily shows teaching on such a basis to
be ineffective. Note, however, the effect of the words: an
exclusive preoccupation with, solely, merely, in addition.
While the validity of the argument (against an either/or view)
depends in fact on these words, they place the behavioural
approach in a negative light, allowing the interpretation:
"What a person does is less important than what he knows" or
even: "provided the learner knows the rules of the language, his
performance as a speaker/listener is of little consequence".
This conclusion would surely represent a seriously retrogressive
step in education as opposed to attempts to realise the
interdependence of theory and practice.

2.7.5.   The above excursion seems necessary, since it would be
foolhardy to erect a system which were to fly in the face of
current linguistic theory. Fortunately there appears to be
no basic contradiction. Generative theory does not assert the
independence of competence and performance, but only that each
is underdetermined by the others. As stated above, a classifactory
apparatus can be developed, by means of which observed sentences

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can be formally described. Though this does not constitute a
theory of a language, it is useful for descriptive purposes
as part of a wider framework. In addition, generative grammar
posits that a grammar makes "infinite use of finite means".
The lexicon is large, but finite and in principle listable, as
are idioms and fixed collocations. Grammatical categories
are relatively restricted in number, as are phrase constituents,
aside from the results of the operation of recursive rules.
The rules themselves are finite in number, and classifiable
in terms of optionality/obligatoriness and productive yield.

2.7.6   There appears then to be no inherent reason (provided,
of course, we avoid such obvious errors as that classification
implies the learning of inventories seriatim) why a classification
of "linguistic resources" should not be feasible, and perform
the same functions within the units/credits system as the other
dimensions of classifications. It will, however, be readily
apparent that a great deal of further research will be needed
to realise this objective. Meanwhile, the received categories
of grammatical descriptions may still be used (e.g. as in
van Ek (CCC/EES (72)72, pp. 68-74)).

2.8.1.   A particular speech event, characterised as to the
type of behaviour involved, the communicative function,
notional content and linguistic form, is set in a situational
matrix.

2.8.2.   The analysis of the "context of situation" was first
closely studied by J.R. Firth (cf Synopsis of Linguistic
Theory in Studies in Linguistic Analysis ,ed. J.R. Firth, London
1957) and is developed in detail by R. Richterich
(CCC/EES (72) 49, pp. 8-14). Richterich's categories are of
(a) agents, characterised according to basic demographic
features, the number involved, their social, psychological and
locutionary roles, (b) time, i.e. time of day, duration,
frequency and temporal sequence of actions, (c) place,
geographical and topographical (e.g. open and enclosed
spaces, public, private and professional environments).

3.1.1.   The products of behavioural, functional, notional,
linguistic and situational classifications combine to give a
close specification of a minimal speech event, an irreducible
operational quantum.

3.1.2.   Such events rarely, if ever, occur in isolation, but
in coherent chains over which some parameters are held constant.
These claims form discourses (speaker and listener roles held
constant), conversations (other situational parameters held
constant, together with certain topic features and cumulative
mutual presuppositions) and other complex operations. These
complex operations, in which each participant employs a
strategy to steer and control a course through a changing

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situation, may be said to constitute the relatively independent operational modules of which our existences as members of language communities are composed.

3.1.3.   The number of possible modules is indeed astronomic. While the requirements of coherence reduce the number greatly below any simple numerical product of category intersections to form quanta and their possible sequences, it is highly unlikely that any particular fully specified module is experienced more than once in a person's life, apart from the most basic of social routines (most formulaic utterances being quanta rather than modules).

3.2.1.   It is obvious (as indeed from the argumentation in section 2. above) that to be a member of language communities is not simply to have ready-made modules at one's disposal. What then does it mean to be a member of a language community?

3.2.2.   Linguistic theory is not yet sufficiently advanced for a single integrative theory of language performance to be instituted. We are therefore not in a position to specify exactly what it means to be a member of a linguistic community. We can however say that it involves the ability to act as a speaker/ hearer, that is to identify, understand, interpret and respond appropriately to utterances produced by fellow members of the community, and in turn to produce utterances which can be identified, understood, interpreted and appropriately responded to by them. These abilities presuppose in the member of a speech community: (a) a knowledge of the linguistic system in use in the community (i.e. of the formal and semantic properties of sentences), (b) mental skills (of an encoding and decoding character) in the formulation and perception of appropriate messages in real time, (c) motor skills in the articulation and catenation of sentences,(d) perceptual skills in the acoustic discrimination of utterances (or correspondingly the visual discrimination of print and handwriting), (e) a knowledge of the conventions governing the appropriate use of language situations, (f) an ability to recognise and respond appropriately to situations(and, particularly, changes in situations) which have a significant linguistic component and (g) a command of the necessary strategies to steer and control linguistic operations.

3.2.3.   Taken together, these abilities and their presuppositions define the "communicative potential" of the speaker/listener. The aim of language teaching is to build up a communicative potential in the learner.

3.2.4.   Native members of a speech community acquire their communicative potential in childhood, in the course of their socialisation and maturation. The native language becomes the major structuring factor in their mental life. Later, as a

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result of second or foreign language learning, they may
become members of one or more additional speech communities.
They do so to a greater or lesser extent, but only rarely, if
ever, does the further language they acquire play the same
role in their lives as the native language, especially in
respect of the structuration of mental life.

3.2.5.   It seems highly unlikely that the aim of a "native-like"
proficiency in a foreign language can ever be a realistic
objective for more than a small professional elite working
intensively for many years. Other classes of learner will
necessarily achieve only a restricted competence and a limited
proficiency. The central problem of language course planning
is therefore how to achieve an optimal cost-effectiveness -
how to produce the highest possible communication potential in
the learner in relation to the resources deployed and expected
conditions of use.

3.3.1.   The variables in such a cost-effectiveness equation are
of course many, with extensive "trading relations" between
them. It appears that the following, at least, are involved:
the communicative value of what is learned. This in turn
has two main aspects: (i) referential and (ii) affective.

3.3.2.   referential value is established with regard to the
speaker's ability to express "what is the case", to describe
the real world in terms of events, things, people, places by
means of formulated propositions. The key question for cost-
effectiveness is how: How will the effectiveness of the
speaker/listerner's participation in social interactions be
affected by his ability to produce, or respond to the linguistic
item or category concerned? The answer will depend on several
factors - the centrality or dispensability of the item or
category in social life, the range and frequency of situations
in which it is employed, the extent to which the same
information can be conveyed by other means (contextual
redundancy) etc.

3.3.3.   By affective value is meant the value of the item,
feature or category in communicating the emotions and attitudes
of the speaker, or in directly establishing some social or
psychological relation between speaker and listener. Again,
cost-effectiveness requires us to enquire how the effectiveness
of social interaction is affected by the speaker/listener's
ability to produce or respond to the item, feature or category
concerned. Again frequency, dispensability and redundancy
largely determine the answer, which is however, perhaps less
easily calculable and more dependent on a wider view of the
situation.

3.3.4. Productivity is the extent to which the particular
feature, item or category learned is generalisable, and
transferable to a range of further sentences. Thus a
productive morphological affix (e.g. un-, ex-, -ness, -able)
will have a higher productivity value than a particular
lexical item (e.g. gold, cross, exact, etc.). Communication
value and productivity determine the numerator of the cost-
effectiveness formula.

3.3.5. Learning "cost" is the amount of resources, particularly
time, to be expended in learning the item, etc., concerned.
The value, which provides the denominator of the cost-
effectiveness formula, depends on a number of factors,
indirect and relative. Universals may be given a zero cost,
which means that a great deal can be tacitly assumed, and
included in language courses (and tests) without special
teaching. How much we do not yet know. The learning cost
of accidentals depends on both inherent and relative factors.

(a) The inherent factors may be dealt with first. They include:
(i) the arbitrariness of the sound-meaning relation. This
requires rote learning and is highest in the case of simple
morphemes and tagnames and quite high in that of most idioms;
(ii) the formal complexity of the structure to be learnt;
(iii) the conceptual complexity of the semantic content.

(b) Relative factors: (i) the degree of similarity between the
expressions in the native and target language; (ii) the prior
knowledge of the target language possessed by the learner.

3.4.1 The importance of the analysis of projected learner
needs for a proper cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit assessment
will now be apparent.

3.4.2. Within the framework of a permanent education, for
example, very different roles are ascribed to initial full-time
education and subsequent education. The first should not invest
in techniques which are subject to high obsolescence, but
concentrate on the deep understanding and mastery of permanent
underlying general principles of the widest application, which
will survive particular technological changes. In the
language field, an avoidance of over-specialised vocabulary
and fashionable idiom is implied, with priority given to
basic competence and a general proficiency.

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3.4.3.   The adult learner is, however, typically faced with
a specific need for a particular language, to be used for
specific purposes in certain relatively predictable situations
(though in an interaction between people, no one person can
control the situation and its development).   A BBC TV
cameraman, for instance, may learn at a month's notice that he
is to make a series of programme in Munich, using German
studio facilities.   He needs, urgently and rapidly, to
learn to produce and understand the restricted language of
studio floor control, as it affects the efficient performance
of his duties, which he already knows fairly exactly.   A
French woman of 50 may be going in 9 months' time to stay for
some weeks with her son, working for his bank in Zurich, and
married to a Swiss girl, with the aim of getting to know the
girl and her family, to lay a proper basis for a lasting
relation.

3.4.4.   If we consider these two cases, we can see that both
wish to enter the German language community, but in view of
the limited resources (especially of time) available to them,
only to a limited extent for limited purposes.   The technician
requires an apparatus of technical expressions, of orders,
signals, reports, stereotyped requests, and needs it whether
or not he already "speaks German".   If he does, he acquires
a specialised extension.   If not, he manages to work as a
cameraman but in other respects he may be entirely dependent
on the English of the travel industry.   The woman will probably
be able to talk French with her daughter-in-law, but will want
to be able to talk over family matters with the Swiss parents;
the affective side of language being perhaps quite as
important as the referential.

3.4.5.   The needs, motivations and objectives of these two
cases are so diverse that there is scarcely anything in common
between them.   Yet this diversity (and specificity) is probably
characteristic of adult learners.

3.4.6.   What conclusions can we draw? Firstly, that whereas
cost-effectiveness measures may be drawn up for school
teaching on the basis of inherent factors, together with those
derived from contrastive studies, relative factors predominate
in the case of adult learners.

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3.5.1.   Unit construction must therefore start from the analysis of needs and prior knowledge. It is for this reason that great importance is attached to surveys and investigations into these factors which provide the indispensable data base for intelligent educational planning.

3.5.2. . Reasonably accurate prediction of the types of speech event in which the learner will be involved - the behaviours required, the functions to be informed, the notions to be expressed, in terms of a restricted universe of discourse,   ? necessary linguistic resources for their expression and properties of the situations in which the speech event will be embedded - will enable an optimal selection to be made (within the limits of reasonable expectation) from the categories set up in these dimensions, to maximise communicative potential in the light of the time and (effective) effort available.

3.5.3.   Even so, the number of possible quanta and modules is such that considerable freedom is available to, course planners in the combinatons of factors in quanta, the construction of modules from quanta, and the combination of modules into units. It should again be emphasised that language learning is only to the most limited extent a rehearsal of concrete behaviours, and much more the development of a many-faceted communicative potential, and the skills and strategies for putting it into effect.   The concrete teaching materials are but means to that end, and actual test materials means for ascertaining whether it has been achieved.

3.5.4.   Ideally, each case requires individual treatment. In practice, a compromise must be reached between the overlapping optima for different learners in a learning system. Large-scale organisation makes available high-cost materials and facilities at a very low per capita cost, but entails the acceptance of a lower Highest Common Factor. Cost and effectiveness are then both reduced. Small-scale operation raises both cost and effectiveness, but excludes the use of high-cost facilities. Optimising the equation, of course, means identifying and exploiting the degrees of freedom in the system, while minimising the negative effects of uncontrollable factors.

4.1.1.   The units/credits system attempts to do this in a number of ways.

4.1.2.   Firstly, it is hoped that the application of the concepts presented will assist course designers to plan the content of courses multidimensionally. As experience and research accumulate, the value of even a purely conceptual scheme will progressively increase.

4.1.3. Secondly, it will enable the requirements of some statistically significant classes of learner to be articulated in some detail, and facilitate the creation of appropriately oriented courses.

4.1.4. Thirdly, it will encourage educational planners to think of language teaching in terms of a coherent metasystem, integrating various specific courses into an overall pattern.

4.1.5. In particular, it will encourage educational planners to deal with overlapping requirements by exploiting the principle of factorial analysis. It is at this point that the "unit" concept is of major importance. A unit is essentially a principled cluster of modules, which together provide the basis for acquiring the communicative potential to deal with a (substantial) defined language need. The range of needs characterising a particular class of learners can then be met by a corresponding range of units. The overlapping needs of two classes of learners may then be met by the shared use of a proportion of units, and an appropriate selection from other options. "Units" in this sense, may be concrete, i.e. actual sets of fully specified modules, or even concrete learning materials, or abstract, specified as to global content but free as to internal organisation. Clearly the higher the number of classes of learner, the greater the economy of a units system over globally different courses for each, and the greater its effectiveness over a single course for all. It therefore promises an approach to optimal cost-effectiveness.

4.1.6. An overall classification of adult learners in terms of needs can be expressed in unit terms. An examination of the system as a whole will then show that some units are common to many classes of learner, others to very few. Dependent of course on the size of the population in each class, we may say that the set of units common to most learners will constitute the "common core" of the language, those shared by few its "specialist extensions".

4.1.7. In addition, different proficiency levels may be recognised by successive units within the same need-defined area. Language learning is not simply an extension of scope from one behaviour situation and function to another, but also, and particularly, an increase in the power to make distinctions, to handle more complex linguistic material, to operate faster, more accurately and consistently, to increase the availability of items for recall as well as recognition, etc.

5.1.1. There is clearly no possible definitive breakdown of language learning content into a set number of units. The system as detailed so far simply provides a conceptual framework for the planning and evaluation of course objectives and organisation, and of examination syllabuses.

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5.1.2.   A units-credits system, however, implies that some
formal recognition is given to a student for having successfully
participated in a course identified with a particular unit, or
having otherwise given proof of having mastered the content of
that unit.

5.1.3.   Many adult educationists deny the usefulness of exam-
inations and qualifications in adult education. Their interest
in a units/credits system will be confined to the notion of
learning by units.

5.1.4.   There is, however, a call for some framework of
qualifications to be available to adults who need to demonstrate
a language proficiency as a condition of employment.

5.1.5.   There are indeed grounds for regarding language pro-
ficiency as a "key qualification", necessary to the effective
performance of a wide range of functions.

5.1.6.   There is also some evidence that motivation is sig-
nificantly increased by the existence of a terminal assessment.

5.2.1.   The units/credits system provides a possible basis for
the recognition of language proficiency in various ways.

5.2.2.   The multidimensional operational classification provides
a framework for the analysis of the content and standard of
existing and new examinations and tests and their placement in
a system of equivalences.

5.2.3.   Content:

(a) Grammatical content: what restrictions, if any, are
placed on the knowledge of the morphological and syntactic
system of the language expected of the student? What range and
degree of complexity of syntactic structure is represented?

(b) Lexical content: What is the size and nature of the
vocabulary expected of the student?

(c) Notional-semantic content: What is the range and complexity
of the meanings which the student is required to formulate or
comprehend?

(d) Communicative functional content: What is the range of
communicative functions the candidate is expected to perform
or respond to?

(e) Behavioural content: What is the range of language operations
that the candidate is required to perform?

(f) Situational content: What is the range of speech situations
in which the candidate is required to perform?

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(g) How is the content as defined above distributed over the various sub-parts of the examination?

5.2.4.   Standard:

Given that the content, and thus the hypothetical standard of the examination, what is demanded of the candidate who is successful in obtaining the various grades awarded for the different language skills in respect of:

(a) grammatical correctness in the analysis and production of text and utterance;

(b) correctness of spelling and pronunciation and accuracy of phonetic identification;

(c) correct choice and interpretation of vocabulary;

(d) appropriateness of language use and response to linguistic variety;

(e) richness of expression and range of comprehension;

(f) fluency in production and immediacy of response?

5.2.5.   It is desirable that arrangements be made for the continuous monitoring of existing and new examinations/tests to establish their potential equivalences internationally. Such a task might well be assigned to an existing national centre with adequate technical facilities and which could undertake such a European role.

5.2.6.   It is recognised that few, if any, existing examinations are explicit about their content and standard, which resides in a tradition established by continuity of examination over many years. The level of the examination must be deduced from the analysis of papers and marking schemes, which are usually confidential. Equivalences must therefore be established in consultation with, and the full co-operation of, the examining body concerned.

5.2.7.   Clearly, the number of levels and streams given separate recognition must, to some extent, be arbitrary, dependent on the need to distinguish reliably between different levels of proficiency which have important social implications. An important aspect of the scheme will be to devise measures which can characterise disparate examinations (and probably no two are exactly alike - the forty modern language examinations conducted in modern languages for adults in Britain appear to involve some 160 distinct tests) meaningfully on a common scale.

5.2.8.   In addition to any simple global evaluation, the units/
credits system could provide each examination with a "profile",
in terms of a functional analysis, which might be available to
employers, education authorities (for the selection of students
for advanced courses) and other interested persons in a handbook.

5.3.1.   If new examinations are assimilated to the units/credits
framework, it is greatly to be hoped that a dialogue will precede
their introduction so that the concepts of the units/credits
system may influence the planning of the examination from an
early stage. It must be emphasised, however, that it is not the
aim of the scheme to impose a dogmatism or inhibit experimentation.

5.3.2.   In addition to recognising initiatives taken by outside
bodies to introduce new examinations, the existence of the units/
credits system might itself stimulate the introduction of new
examinations where existing provision is seen to be inadequate.
Preliminary studies indicate certain priority areas.

5.3.3.   The first is for examinations, eventually for each CCC
language, that will effectively and realistically assess the
ability of a candidate to meet the language requirements of
everyday living in the country concerned. In particular, an
examination, with a rather carefully defined syllabus, success
in which will give an assurance to the candidate and other
interested persons, that he is able to meet the minimal require-
ments of everyday living, an examination at once thorough and
systematic, but pitched at the lowest effective level. This
"threshold level" has been the subject of a number of preliminary
studies (van Ek CCC/EES (72) 17 and 72, Wilkins CCC/EES (72) 67,
Bung (in progress)) and is regarded as the first priority. It
is a suitable target for mass language learning, and can be
popularised under the title of "language passport", holders of
which can be given various kinds of recognition and advantage.
It is envisaged that a special committee should be charged with
the implementation of this development.

5.3.4.   A second priority project would be to develop examinations
specially geared to media-based mass language teaching. These
should if possible be compatible with the threshold level
examination and given equivalence with it. Indeed, media course
planners may adopt the threshold level syllabus as their
definitive of content. However, the type of examination envisaged
is determined in its scope by what can reasonably be achieved
in a given time by learners of a given prior knowledge.

5.3.5.   A distinction must be made here between achievement
tests and proficiency tests. An achievement test, which
establishes whether a student has carried out a specified
learning task, is properly geared to a particular course of
study with defined content and objective. A proficiency test,
on the other hand, establishes whether a student is able to

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perform certain operations and is not concerned with the process
by which he comes to be able to do so. In the case of proficiency
examinations, the difficulty lies in ensuring that the general
ability is effectively tested by the sample of language resources
and activities which actually appear in the examination. With
achievement tests, the problem of sampling remains, but is much
reduced. It is difficult however to assess how far success in
dealing with the restricted material of the course implies the
achievement of the global course objectives. This problem is
of considerable importance for the development of the scheme,
since one of its prime functions will no doubt be to afford
a wider recognition to course-linked examinations in the
interests of heightened motivation.

5.3.6.   These will include not only large-scale media-based
courses, but also, if possible, small scale courses in which
students, in consultation with a course leader, determine their
own objectives and even their working method. The scheme
provides a framework within which the achievements of such
students may be evaluated and given appropriate recognition.
In this respect, the scheme should not be necessarily tied to
terminal examinations, but should consider the evidence afforded
by continuous assessment (see Henricson CCC/EES (71) 135,
pp. 26-28).

5.3.7.   Thirdly come examinations of restricted scope, where
for professional purposes only certain functions are needed,
not amounting to a global language proficiency. A reading
knowledge in one's special field is an obvious example. Another
is that of a secretary to a firm with various international
connections, who may wish, in each language concerned, to be
able to establish telephone connections, understand routine
business letters with the aid of a dictionary, etc. Such a
person would usefully be able to exercise these functions without
even reaching a threshold level overall. The units/credits system
can suitably be applied in such cases, allowing the secretary
a credit for each language in which certain defined secretarial
functions can be carried out, and using that credit towards
either a more generalised certificate in the language concerned
or towards an international language secretarial qualification.
Though this principle has been illustrated at a low proficiency
level it is applicable at more advanced levels.

5.4.1.   In due course, the scheme may involve the award of
certificates and diplomas in the language field. Indeed, any
scheme of equivalences should be drawn up with this possibility
in mind.

5.4.2.   Distinct types of certificate and diploma may be based
upon different analysis of learner needs: in some, one language
may be studied, more intensively over a narrow compass, or more
extensively as to operations and functions at a given linguistic
level. In others, languages may be combined with each other,
or other studies.

5.4.3.   In each language, a range of levels is required. As
has been indicated above, the number is largely arbitrary. For
practical purposes, five levels appear to underlie common
practice, though no individual bodies appear to examine at so
many levels. Equally arbitrarily, they may be labelled as
follows:

   1.   threshold,

   2.   basic,

   3.   general competence,

   4.   advanced,

   5.   full professional standard.

5.4.4.   Each level is to be defined by:

(a) the linguistic resources assumed (grammatical, lexical,
including idiom), phonological and phonetic;

(b) appropriateness of use and response (notional, situational,
functional) required;

(c) accuracy and consistency demanded in production and
reception;

(d) fluency and immediacy required;

(e) range of linguistic operations involved.

Some global definitions of level (notably the Defense
Language Institute's Definitions of Degrees of Language Skills,
1965) are available as a guide but much more research is needed
to arrive at a properly operational specification.

5.4.5.   Any examinable activity involves an input and an output
(stimulus and response), one of which must be, and both of which
are usually linguistic in form. The linguistic levels given
above determine what may be included by examiners as input (at
least to the extent that the candidate's ability to respond
critically depends on his prior knowledge of the item concerned)
or required as output. Since the input-output relations corr-
espond to language functions, the "modules" of examination
activity not only provide evidence on the candidate's level of
language proficiency according to the parameters described above,
but also give it a certain direction. Since the number of
possible "modules" is much greater than can be feasibly incor-
porated in any single examination, their selection and combination
gives a corresponding slant to the assessment of the candidate
and the content of teaching, which may or may not be appropriate
to his needs. A particular test, such as dictation or even simple
repetition of a spoken text, may, if well constructed,have a very
high correlation with overall proficiency assessed by a complex
battery of tests. It would seem highly economic to have an
examination consisting solely of this one simple test. Never-
theless, the effect of doing so might well be disastrous for
motivation and for course design.

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5.4.6.   The units/credits system would essentially involve the
preparation of an inventory of examinable activities from which
examinations can be constructed, and an assessment of the inherent
value of such activities (given appropriate linguistic content)
to different classes of learner in the light of their assessed
needs. A modular construction of tests may then be considered,
so that, in accordance with the general principles of units/
credits systems, flexibility may take the form of different
groupings of such modules into units, among which different groups
of candidates make a distinctive selection. (Dr. Bung's current
research is directed to this end.) At any level, certain
modules may be so indispensable as indicators of general
language proficiency, or of such universal inherent utility,
that they form a necessary component of any certificate or
diploma implying a general language proficiency at a particular
level. These will be grouped into units constituting the "common
core" of such qualifications. In particular, they will contain
tests of the ability of the candidate to comprehend and express,
by means of the linguistic resources appropriate to that level,
basic semantico-notional content to an appropriate degree of
delicacy, and to perform appropriately those communicative
functions which are the stuff of linguistic intercourse and least
bound to specialised situations and needs. The system of semantico-
notional categories and categories of communicative function
elaborated by Wilkins (CCC/EES (72) 67) should be further
developed and applied to successive proficiency levels on the
principle that advance from one level to another involves not
simply an extension of range across situations and towards
higher degrees of abstraction, but also a "recycling" whereby
further distinctions are made in semantic fields and communi-
cative functions already covered in a grosser way at a lower
level.

5.5.1.   Associated with common core units at each level,
certificates and diplomas of a purely linguistic character should
also allow for options between units which require the candidate's
linguistic proficiency to be brought to bear upon particular
fields of activity which are not of universal concern, but are
important for the life of some learners. These applications
of proficiency are important parts of a learner-centred,
motivation-based approach. As they are neither mutually exclusive
nor hierarchically ordered with respect to each other, it
should be possible to add any number of them as endorsements
for credit to a basic certificate or diploma. Optional units
of this kind should not be confined to the vocationally useful,
but should contain options of a cultural nature. In accordance
with the general principles of permanent education, strong encourage-
ment should be given to candidates (short, perhaps of actual
compulsion) to include at least one cultural option in their
preparation for a diploma.

5.5.2.   Consideration should also be given to the possibility of using the optional units, at different levels, in order to introduce a language component into certificates and diplomas, not primarily aimed at language proficiency, which might be introduced as part of a wider units/credits system for permanent education in Europe. For example, a diploma in European studies might contain one or more language units along with others relating to European history, art and architecture, social economic and political structure, commercial and industrial life, literature and philosophy. Such a diploma would have no necessary ordering among its units and language credits, or endorsements, could be taken at any time.

5.5.3.   Again, a close analysis of the language functions useful to the performance of some class of job at different levels would provide a basis for language units which would form part of a language diploma or a vocational diploma. As an example, we may consider the case of the language skills which may be required in secretarial work in a firm or other body with international connections. Among the language activities that may be involved are the following:

(a)   copy-typing of a foreign language (FL) text from print;

(b)   typing of a letter from a longhand FL script;

(c)   typing of an FL letter from dictation, taken down in longhand;

(d)   typing of an FL letter from dictation, using an FL shorthand system;

(e)   typing of a standard letter in an FL giving precise instructions as to its content, but not a literal dictation;

(f)   typing of a standard letter in an FL, given general instructions as to content;

(g)   typed acknowledgements in an FL according to a standard procedure but without any specific instructions;

(h)   composing non-standard letters in an FL from an LI original, involving close translation;

(i)   composing non-standard letters in an FL, given precise instructions as to content, but no text;

(j)   composing non-standard letters in an FL given only general instructions regarding its content;

(k)   abstracting the gist of an FL letter in LI;

(l)   providing a close translation of an FL letter in LI;

(m)   sending an FL telegram by telephone;

(n)   composing an FL telegram from an LI text, or instructions;

(o)   establishing telephonic connections with FL contacts
       (in and out);

(p)   giving and receiving FL telephone messages;

(q)   greeting and entertaining FL visitors;

(r)   answering queries from FL clients;

(s)   booking travel accommodation in FL;

(t)   interpreting at a business conference from FL to LI;

(u)   interpreting at a business conference from LI to FL.

5.5.4.   It is clear that these activities (the list is unlikely
to be complete) vary greatly in the demands they make upon a
secretary. They may also be further differentiated according
to the linguistic range and complexity of the letters, texts
and messages concerned, the variety of situations and kinds of
personal relations involved, the clarity of input, the speed,
accuracy and reliability of work demanded. A personal assis-
tant who can perform all these tasks to a high standard on a
bilingual basis is a highly skilled professional worker, and
commands so high a salary that no firm could employ her unless
her skills were in constant demand. A small firm, only part
of whose work involves intermittent foreign contacts might
prefer a secretary to be able to deal competently if slowly
with only the more elementary operations and call in pro-
fessional assistance where necessary.

5.5.5.   Modules can be established for each of these
secretarial tasks, differentiated in appropriate cases according
to the linguistic level of the input and output, and
the degree of skill demanded. The modules can be grouped into
units at the same level for convenience of examining, and the
units combined into certificates and diplomas. At the highest
levels (say 4 and 5), the content is sufficient to justify
an autonomous diploma. Level 4 might require full control of
the actual secretarial skills involved, with a modicum of
straight-forward interpretation. Level 5 might then add to
that a full mastery of the language in not only straight-forward
but also unforeseen and complex situations involving the
exercise of judgment and discretion and control over their
linguistic expression as well as a range of styles and an
ability to communicate effectively under adverse conditions.
At lower levels, the restrictions of range, knowledge and skill
would mean that the credit obtained would be capitalisable as
part of a wider qualification.

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5.5.6.   It must of course be borne in mind that the job demands upon a secretary may vary widely from one country to another, and that the linguistic content will be dependent on the nature of the business of the firm by which the secretary is employed.   Flexibility between modules is therefore all the more necessary.

5.5.7.   There appears to be no serious objection to the accumulation of credits required for such certificates and diplomas over a period of time.   The actual structure of each vocational units/credits cluster would, of course, depend on an accurate job-analysis, and should be arrived at in each case by an ad hoc committee containing, say, representatives of the profession concerned (employers and employees), institutions involved in teaching modern languages to that profession, and associations of teachers, in addition to members familiar with the units/credits system as a whole.   It is important to preserve the basic objectives of the scheme, and while deriving benefit from the experience of practitioners, to bear in mind the universal human tendency to think within the confines of the structure with whose operations one is familiar, and even identified.

6.1   Since a fully-fledged units/credits system requires full specification of linguistic, notional, situational and functional content, division into possible modules, their combination into units at different levels and the accumulation of credits for a range of certificates and diplomas, it is unrealistic to expect that the system can be perfected in a short time.   Yet large-scale media-based language-learning programmes have been launched or are being considered in a number of countries. How is the scheme to be developed and implemented quickly enough for it not to be simply left behind by events? We must be prepared to pursue short-term practical objectives energetically and, at the same time, long-term objectives clear-sightedly.

6.2   For this long-term perspective, the continued collection of information on the state of adult language learning and the decision-making bodies whose co-operation may be needed continues to be important, as does most certainly the encouragement of surveys and enquiries on a national and international scale, into adult language needs and motivations. In view of the great value to such a programme of the accumulated experience of successive investigations, a group of experts should be established to stimulate and guide fresh surveys, in the light of a developing model (cf. Richterich, CCC/EES (72) 49).   This group of experts might also consider how to investigate the effectiveness of multi-media courses, especially those organised along the lines indicated by the units/credits approach.

6.3   Finally, as the objectives of language learning are made more explicit, and the structure of language examinations becomes more functional, the implication for course construction, especially for the organisation of large-scale multi-media

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courses, should be thoroughly explored, as envisaged in the
phased plan of work, in order to harness the large-scale resources
of mass-media to achieve significant economies of scale.
Television, radio, tapes, discs, books, realia, courses, coun-
selling services, study groups, tests and examinations can be
brought together into a single integrated learning system.

The units/credits system can contribute effectively to this
development by giving international recognition to such courses
and thus giving them a wider international use, which in turn
radically reduces costs.

6.4.   As the units/credits system matures, it will doubt-
less be necessary to establish some kind of supervisory body
to exercise such functions as the award of internationally
recognised credits. A number of organisations actively involved,
or whose interests were affected, would properly be represented.
Any such administrative scheme would clearly require careful
consideration and negotiation in the conditions of the time, at
both national and international level.

7.1.   Immediate priority, however, attaches to the further
development of analytic categories, the closer definition of
needs and levels and the detailed elaboration of modules and
units, to provide the necessary basis for a full range of
learning and testing materials in appropriate media, upon which
an integrated international language learning system must
depend.