New Installations

THE NEW SONY LANGUAGE LAB AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

by Del Wahn

The Foreign Language Laboratory at the University of Southern California recently purchased a 46 position Sony cassette lab which was designed and installed by Educational Electronics of California, Inc. This brings our total number of student booths to 138 since we are still using two other 46 position cartridge labs. We decided on EEC since the maintenance provided by the company over the years has been satisfactory and the reliability of the equipment acceptable.

It may be of some interest to other lab directors to learn about our new lab at USC since it is the first Sony installation of this kind in the United States. When we first decided to add to our facilities, it was felt that a new lab should provide more than just language study capability. So talks were held with faculty in various departments to determine their desires and degree of interest. The overall task was then discussed with industry representatives and the EEC proposal for a multi-purpose lab was accepted. The basic requirements for the new facilities were outlined as follows:

1. It was to be flexible and simple enough to operate in class or library mode without the assistance of a technician.

2. It was to be multi-purpose so that language, music, and communication students could use it at the same time.

3. All equipment was to be of current manufacture, designed for laboratory use, field tested, and with a reasonable certainty of future service and availability of parts. The laboratory as finally designed and installed provides three main capabilities:

1. Standard Level III Language Lab

2. Two rows of stereo for music listening

3. Conversation panel for communication classes and simulations

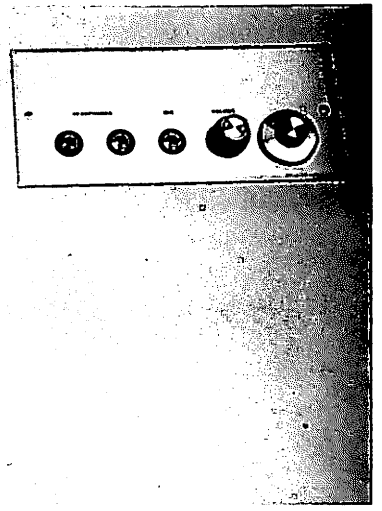
The Sony cassette recorder (Model ER6CD) provides true Level III capability, i.e. independent record and erase of both student and master tracks. Thus, all library tapes can be mass-produced in the student booths; no high spead duplicator is needed. The recorder,

complete with matching headset/microphone combination, has been field tested in numerous European installations and found to be quite reliable.

Operation of the deck is easy to master, being completely solenoid operated through pushbutton switches. All logic and switching is solid state and the amplifiers employ special noise cancelling circuits reducing background hiss and noise to an inaudible level. The student microphones also have good noise cancelling features. The Instructor Control Panel (ICP) includes row programming and a set of control buttons which allow the lab attendant to operate the student decks by individual rows or combinations of rows. Thus, any number of duplicate cassettes can be easily pre-recorded. The console includes seven program sources. All but one have stereo capability.

1. Two 2 track, 2 channel tape record/playback reel-to-reel machines.
2. Two turntables.
3. One 2 track, 2 channel tape playback machine.
4. One AM/FM tuner.
5. One half track single channel cassette record/playback machine.

Any program may be connected to either reel-to-reel machine to make stereo or monodupes or to the cassette to make monodupes. All programs may be switched to a pair of external speakers which are driven by two 30 watt amplifiers. Additionally, any program is available in the other two labs by means of program switches on the



respective panels. Input programs from the other labs also appear as programs in this new lab. The control panel has provisions for external program sources such as portable recorders or motion picture projectors; all such auxiliary inputs can be recorded. Teacher supervision on the ICP includes Program Call (for recording live voice), Program Monitor, Student Monitor, Intercom, and All Call.

Two rows in the lab include student amplifiers for stereo listening, which are installed next to the Level III decks in 16 booths. Stereo distribution to these positions is accomplished through individual program switches.

A group conversation panel and position status or call-in panel also add flexibility to this lab. Each of these is laid out to conform exactly to the booth arrangement in the lab for easy correlation between the panels and the lab itself. The status panel contains a light for each position. When the position is in use, the lamp glows at half light; when the student calls in, the lamp is at full brilliance. Light emitting diodes are used in place of the lamps to reduce failures and replacement.

The group conversation panel enables the instructor to set up as many different groups as desired, using miniature plugs to connect up to eight students located anywhere in the room. Groups may communicate through the instructor at the ICP or directly with each other, depending on the type of communication net desired. In summary then, what we have is three labs in one: a language lab, a music lab, and a communication lab. All of these activities can go on simultaneously within the space limitations of 46 positions. We are hopeful that in the future our lab will be flexible enough to meet new demands which we tried to anticipate when we drew up our plans.