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A Comparative Study: Two Methods of Teaching French 101-102 at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1959-1961

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY:
"
TWO METHODS OF TEACHING FRENCH 101-102
AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA
1959 - 1961

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Virginia Nelson Anding

January, 1962

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare and make a limited evaluation of two methods of teaching beginning French at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Method I represented the traditional approach, and Method II represented a transition from the traditional to the laboratory approach. This study was undertaken to determine whether Method II would result in loss of the traditional skills of grammar, vocabulary, and reading at the end of one year of instruction.

Two groups of beginning language students were equated on the basis of scholastic aptitude test results; the groups were restricted to students of freshman and sophomore academic standing with no known previous acquaintance with the French language. A standardized achievement test in French was administered to ascertain the achievement under Method I and Method II in developing the traditional language skills.

Statistical results revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in achievement in grammar and vocabulary, but that the group taught by Method I scored significantly higher than the group taught by Method II in paragraph reading.

The study concluded that Method II resulted in no educational loss in the development of grammar and vocabulary. The difference between the reading scores of the two groups may have been due to the difference in the amount of reading undertaken by the groups. It was not found feasible to draw conclusions relative to oral-aural achievement.

It was suggested that in teaching beginning French, Method II be continued at the College of William and Mary. Because research indicates a lack of conclusive evidence on foreign language methodology, it was further suggested that additional experimentation and investigation on foreign language teaching be undertaken here and at other institutions.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY:
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CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Man possesses the ability to reason which enables him to attain knowledge, draw conclusions, and engage in original thinking. It is through symbols that man creates; through the symbols of language, man communicates his creations.

The role of the language teacher is to enlighten man with symbols through which man can express himself logically and clearly. Through the successful study of only one foreign language, man becomes aware of the field of linguistics, becomes interested in the problems of language, and recognizes the need for adequate communication of his ideas. The teacher must orient his student in the language being studied and attempt to open the student's mind by pointing out the relationship of language to the student's personal life and to his intellectual and cultural development.

For,

. . . the study of a foreign language . . . provides a new experience, progressively enlarging the pupil's horizon through the introduction of a new medium of communication and a new culture pattern, and progressively adding to his sense of achievement.¹

In introducing a student to a foreign language, the teacher should inform

¹"Teaching a Foreign Language," PMLA, LXIII, Part 2 (December 1958), p. 99.

the student of the new areas which a knowledge of a foreign language opens to him, so that he may have definite and challenging goals, as well as a purpose related to himself.²

There are several reasons for undertaking the study of a foreign language. Twentieth century economic and political affairs are one of the most important reasons. During the nineteenth century, America practiced a policy of isolationism. With a high rate of immigration, the concept arose that speaking a foreign language was un-American. This concept gained recognition, and native Americans demanded that only the English language be taught in order to attain a monolingual population. But in the twentieth century, new and faster means of communication and transportation brought the world closer together and invalidated America's nineteenth century monolingual concept. Because of these changes, America invested intensely and widely abroad. Language study is now practical, as all areas of life are concerned with foreign affairs, increasing the need to communicate. In fact, language study is advocated by the Soviet Union and has become part of cold war propaganda.³

Aside from national needs for language study, development of the language skills offers a variety of advantages to the language student. Aural understanding increases enjoyment of foreign travel and foreign movies, and it is an asset in foreign business affairs. The ability to speak a language is useful in pleasurable or business pursuits. Students

²Merle L. Perkins, "General Language Study and the Teaching of Language," The Modern Language Journal, XL (March 1956), pp. 113-119.

³Franklin D. Murphy, "Languages and the National Interest," PMLA, LXXV (May 1960), pp. 25-29.

may increase knowledge by learning to read foreign scientific and journalistic articles and broadening the horizons of the mind through an understanding of the thoughts of other nations. Gaining an insight into the structure of language better the understanding of one's own language and increases vocabulary and ability in written expression. The overall result of the study of a foreign language should be an acquaintance with all aspects of a foreign country.⁴ It is toward this enriching aim, as well as toward the exercising of the intellect, that language instruction strives.

In an attempt to fulfill these cultural and intellectual objectives, two approaches to language instruction prevail in the field of modern languages today. The traditional approach emphasizes grammar and translation; the laboratory approach is primarily concerned with oral-aural comprehension. Because there appears to be value in each approach and because experimental comparative data in this area are limited, additional research is needed to discover the relative effectiveness of these two approaches. The present study treats two methods of teaching beginning French at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Method I was derived from the traditional approach; Method II combines elements of the traditional and laboratory approaches and serves as a transition from the traditional to the laboratory approach. Detailed descriptions of these two methods may serve as a helpful introduction to this study.

⁴"Teaching a Foreign Language," loc. cit.

Description of Method I

The primary aim of Method I (traditional) was the development of reading ability through the study of grammar and direct translation. Because the second year of the program stressed reading ability and reviewed grammar, the first year course was planned to develop skills requisite for performance in the second year: grammar and direct translation. A basic knowledge of written expression and reading ability formed the most adequate language foundation possible within the curriculum framework which existed in 1959. The second year of the language program consisted of direct translation and grammar review in the first semester and intensive and extensive reading in the second semester.

In September 1959 the beginning French course was organized into classes of 20 to 26 students; each class met three times weekly, one hour at a time with one instructor. Each instructor received a brief syllabus which outlined the textbooks and course objectives which consisted of emphasis on grammar and translation with limited pronunciation and aural work; no conversation practices were attempted. The syllabus did not contain suggestions on teaching practices, but permitted each instructor to teach as he envisioned the course; aside from the course syllabus and a departmental final examination, there was no attempt at standardization of course procedures.

The first two weeks of the course were allotted to the study of basic pronunciation rules. These rules pointed out the fundamental sound differences between French and English; vowels, nasals, accents, and the consonants r, d, t, and l were emphasized. The students pronounced word lists designed to drill the pronunciations peculiar to the French language.

Only very general and common pronunciation rules were introduced, and no intonation work was undertaken.

After two weeks (a total of six hours) of pronunciation drill, grammar was introduced and a grammar text used. Grammar rules, vocabulary, and common idioms were drilled. Exercises in written expression consisted of translating from English to French. With the introduction of grammar into the course, pronunciation drill was discontinued as a part of the course requirement; however, some reading aloud was undertaken so that the general pronunciation rules which were presented during the first two weeks of the course might be retained by the students.

Following two months of concentrated grammar drill, a reading text was added for direct translation practice. One five minute dictation in French based on the reading was given weekly to include some aural comprehension work. Extensive (or free) translation was ignored. The emphasis on grammar and direct translation was the substance of the course for the second semester.

Description of Method II

After a review of Method I, it was decided that this approach did not offer satisfactory fulfillment of the departmental aims, with specific regard to oral-aural comprehension. In fact, failure of Method I to develop oral-aural comprehension necessitated repetition of basic pronunciation and intonation rules in the advanced courses. To remedy this deficiency, a new two year program was introduced in September 1960; this new program was designed to serve as a transition from the traditional to the laboratory approach by initiating a plan to spread mastery of the language principles over a two year period. The first year of the new

program was to retain development of the traditional skill of grammar, introduce direct translation, and establish a thorough foundation of oral-aural comprehension. The objective of Method II was to present all the language skills with emphasis on application of the language to give the student the best background possible in a beginning French course. The second year of the new program was to emphasize reading ability. There were to be two second year course offerings in the first semester; course A emphasized direct translation and grammar review with a minimum of oral-aural work in order to consider those students who continued the study of a language begun in a high school which offered little oral-aural work and those Method II students who had neither oral-aural interest nor oral-aural ability. Course B was designed for those students with oral-aural aptitude; translation and grammar review were retained as the primary offerings of the course, but an oral-aural approach was added to increase performance in this area. The second semester course of the second year of the new program was to consist of extensive and intensive reading with oral-aural work.

Under Method II, the pattern of the beginning course was expanded into a five hour per week program. The students were organized into lecture and drill groups. There were two lecture groups of 45 to 70 students; the lecture groups met twice a week, and each lecture lasted for one hour. In these groups new grammar and vocabulary were introduced by one professor. The large lecture groups were subdivided into smaller sections of 12 to 15 students; each small group met three times per week with an individual instructor for one hour per session. These sessions served as drill classes to review the material presented in the lecture, to answer individual questions, and to test the students; conversational

French was practiced as much as possible, while spoken English was minimized. Organization of the course into the lecture and drill group design assured each student's receiving the same introduction to course material in the lecture; individuality and flexibility in teaching procedures were retained in the small drill classes; in this way, the new method included a degree of course standardization not present under Method I.

The first four weeks of the course were devoted to oral drill in both the large lecture and small classes. A pronunciation syllabus, based on the vocabulary in the grammar text, was used. No phonetic symbols were taught; phonemics were presented to show the sound similarities and differences between French and English. A clay cross-section of a human head was used in demonstrating the actual physical production of French articulation. Of these four weeks of oral drill, three weeks were allotted to the study of pronunciation and syllabication rules; in the fourth week, thought groups and intonation were stressed, as well as classroom commands and elementary conversation. At the end of this four week period, the students recorded prepared and sight sentences on a tape recorder in order to diagnose and correct individual pronunciation problems.

At the end of the four weeks of oral work, the grammar text was introduced. The students had already acquired a rudimentary vocabulary due to the pronunciation drills. The exercises were written and oral; they consisted of translation from English to French and fill-in-the-blanks of French sentences; in addition, all written exercises were drilled orally by reading them aloud. Thus, some oral-aural work was continued in each drill session. Five minute dictations were given weekly in the lecture classes. Introduction of direct translation and the reading text was delayed until the second semester to permit assimilation of vocabulary and

grammatical structure. The French text was read aloud in French and translated into English; oral question and answer periods based on the reading were conducted in French. No extensive reading was attempted. Little free conversation was undertaken; in general, conversation work was restricted to discussion of the texts.

Although most of the course content in Method II consisted of development of grammar and vocabulary with limited emphasis on translation, oral-aural comprehension was stressed, and oral-aural methods were applied in the development of the traditional skills of Method I: grammar, vocabulary, and reading.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to compare and make a limited evaluation of Methods I and II in teaching beginning French at the College of William and Mary in order to determine whether Method II due to its emphasis on oral-aural comprehension results in any loss or gain in the development of the traditional skills of vocabulary, grammar, and reading at the end of one year of instruction.

It is the opinion of the writer that this study is a contribution to the teaching profession and to the College of William and Mary.

Definition of Terms

In order to present an accurate account, the writer deems it necessary to clarify several terms which occur frequently in the paper, as follows.

French 101-102 is the title of the beginning French course at the College of William and Mary, which includes "training in pronunciation,

aural-oral comprehension with the use of audio-visual techniques".⁵

The other language skills of writing and translation are also developed.

The traditional approach is the approach to language through structural analysis of grammar with little emphasis on pronunciation and oral-aural comprehension.

The laboratory approach emphasizes the practical aspects of the language, stressing pronunciation and oral-aural comprehension. Other language skills, reading and writing, are included.

The oral-aural approach stresses the development of two language skills: speaking and hearing. Ideally, no written material is included; the oral-aural approach is conversational in nature.

Departmental aims encompass the development of all language skills: hearing, speaking, reading, and writing the foreign language. "Language skills . . . may never be perfected, and may be later forgotten, yet the enlarging and enriching results of the cultural experience endure throughout life."⁶ Departmental aims are determined by the Modern Language faculty at the College of William and Mary.

The French 101-102 Committee of the Department of Modern Languages consists of those members of the Department who are actively engaged in teaching French 101-102; the writer is a member of this committee.

Procedure

The writer has followed this procedure: (1) historical survey of the development of the laboratory approach and of the experimentation

⁵Bulletin of The College of William and Mary - Catalogue Issue, 55 (April 1961), p. 208.

⁶"Teaching a Foreign Language," loc. cit.

previously conducted on the laboratory versus the traditional approach in foreign language methodology; (2) gathering of the data: Cooperative School and College Ability Test scores, group equating, and examination of the standardized test results (Cooperative French Test); (3) presentation and statistical analysis of the data for both groups; (4) comparison and evaluation of Methods I and II on the basis of the data; (5) summary, conclusions, and implications of this study.

Limitations

The investigation was conducted from 1959 to 1961 and was restricted to two groups of William and Mary freshman and sophomore students enrolled in French 101-102. Additional limitations of the study are that only subjects were used who had had no previous exposure to the French language, who completed both semesters of beginning French at William and Mary, and who took the Cooperative School and College Ability Test (SCAT).

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SURVEY

Because Method I represents the traditional approach and Method II represents a transition from the traditional to the laboratory approach, historical investigation on the traditional versus the laboratory approach is helpful in comparing Methods I and II at the College of William and Mary.

Current writers on the methodology of teaching a beginning language course agree on the four basic language skills, namely: reading, writing, hearing, and speaking. But there is no general agreement as to the best approach in developing these four skills. To resolve this problem, several methods have been proposed. The following list includes some of these suggestions: (1) The grammar method consists of memorization of vocabulary and rules with exercises based on translation from English to the foreign language. (2) The natural method is oral imitation of the teacher (or the way in which one learns his native tongue) without formal study. (3) The psychological method is based on the theory of association of ideas and mental visualization; all the material is memorized. (4) The phonetic method is oral in approach, and its main aim is pronunciation; reading is omitted. (5) The reading method consists of the study of texts with grammar and vocabulary introduced only in relation to the text.⁷ (6) The dialogue

⁷"A Critical Review of Teaching," Report of the Committee of Twelve (Boston) D. C. Heath and Company, 1900; pp. 16-30.

method consists of memorizing short conversational dialogues and practicing them.⁸ (7) The intensive method stresses the spoken language and its colloquialisms.⁹ (8) The linguistic method is oral in approach and emphasizes the basic structural units and patterns in a language through drill.¹⁰

No one of these methods is applicable for the teaching of all four basic skills, as each method omits or de-emphasizes one or more skills. In recent years combinations of these methods have evolved into two main approaches: the traditional approach and the laboratory approach.

Description of the Traditional Approach

The traditional approach of teaching a beginning foreign language course stresses the skills of grammar and translation. The primary objective of the traditional approach is the development of the ability to read a foreign language. Reading ability is the prime objective because it is considered by the Traditionalists the easiest skill to master, it can be practiced by the student on his own time, and it is the most useful skill for the average student to develop.¹¹ This is the idea that within a limited exposure to the language, it is better to master one skill well

⁸Fernand L. Marty, Language Laboratory Learning (Wellesley) Audio-Visual Publications, 1960; p. 21.

⁹Charles S. Hyneman, "History of the Wartime Area and Language Courses," Bulletin of the Association of University Professors, XXXI (Autumn 1945), p. 438.

¹⁰Simon Blasco (ed.), Manual and Anthology of Applied Linguistics (Washington, D. C.) U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, U.S. Office of Education, 1960, p. 2.

¹¹Frederick B. Agard and Harold B. Dunkel, An Investigation of Second-Language Teaching (New York) Ginn and Company, 1948, pp. 117-246.

than several poorly. A reading knowledge demands more intellectual exercise than speaking. Exponents of the traditional approach feel that "When you can read a (foreign) language with ease, you are close to a speaking knowledge";¹² that is to say, that once one can read a language, the ability to speak can be developed quickly when necessary because the thought patterns of the foreign language have already been learned.

The two principal methods used in the traditional approach to achieve the aim of reading comprehension are grammar and translation. Grammar is the study of the structure of a language. It is a means for analysis of the distinctive characteristics and features of the language.¹³ This structural approach to language is presented in units of expression and language patterns. It requires memorization of rules and their applications; it consists of rules ". . . learned as a means by which words could be put together into phrases and sentences."¹⁴ According to its proponents, the study of grammar exercises the ability to reason and develops logic due to its inner organization; one structure at a time is presented in given order. Through the study of grammar, the student becomes cognizant of the structural differences between his native language and the foreign language, and he acquires an insight into different thought patterns. A knowledge of grammar is necessary for written expression. Exponents of the traditional approach feel that since grammar acquaints the student with structural meanings and thought patterns, it is then the foundation for oral expression; consequently, pronunciation and oral-aural comprehension are

¹²H. R. Huse, Reading and Speaking Foreign Languages (Chapel Hill) University of North Carolina Press, 1945, p. 83.

¹³Perkins, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁴Huse, loc. cit., p. 83.

de-emphasized.

Translation is the second principal method taught under the traditional approach. Intensive reading or direct translation is used at first to build vocabulary and to integrate words and construction. Texts are studied in detail to show the application of grammar structure and idioms. Extensive reading or free translation succeeds the intensive; extensive reading is undertaken for comprehension only and is meant to increase the reader's speed and understanding. When the student has mastered intensive reading and is adept in extensive reading, he may engage in literary translation, which includes the analysis and appreciation of style.

Description of the Laboratory Approach

The laboratory approach to teaching a beginning foreign language course places emphasis upon the skills of oral-aural comprehension and yet retains development of the skills of grammar and translation. The primary aim of the laboratory approach is application of the language in all situations. The philosophy behind this functional aim is the theory that the learner must experience the foreign language, that he must participate actively in order to gain insight into the thought patterns of the language.¹⁵ This theory favors the use of the active method wherein action reinforces meaning.¹⁶ As a UNESCO report indicates,

¹⁵Ernest F. Haden, "Descriptive Linguistics in the Teaching of a Foreign Language," The Modern Language Journal, XXXVIII (April 1954), p. 171.

¹⁶The Teaching of Modern Languages, Studies deriving from the International Seminar organized by UNESCO at Nuwara Elija, Ceylon, in August 1953 (Amsterdam), Drukkervij Holland N.V., 1955, p. 62.

If language is a skill and skill is the result of habit, the logical conclusion is that in order to secure the ultimate objective, i.e., the development of skill, then efforts must be made to develop habits The overall plan should bring together . . . separate sets of habits into a unified whole.¹⁷

Exponents of the active method as a part of the laboratory approach distinguish between responding to and using a language; they consider responding to a language as putting meaning to spoken or written symbols and using a language as producing meanings and symbols;¹⁸ the active method stresses using the language, and it provides for the development of the practical skills: speaking and hearing with understanding.

To develop the skills of speaking and aural understanding, drill is used to attain good pronunciation and intonation. Phonetics, the scientific study of language through the description of written sounds,¹⁹ is not introduced because it tends to develop poor spelling habits. Instead of phonetics, phonemics are presented. Phonemics make the student aware of the physiological differences in the production of sounds and include the physical reproduction of sounds.²⁰ Cumulative drill "reveals the . . . rationale behind the pattern practice"²¹ and makes the student aware of similarities and differences of the sounds of the language.

In addition to pronunciation and intonation drill, dictation and reading aloud develop oral comprehension. Simple conversation in the foreign language is introduced. Once an oral-aural foundation is established, traditional methods are used to develop the skills of grammar and

¹⁷The Teaching of Modern Languages, p. 53.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁹Blasco (ed.), op. cit., p. 5.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 2.

translation. The transition to grammar is achieved through practice sentences used in pronunciation drill. However, these two methods of grammar and translation are modified in the laboratory approach so as to maintain and increase oral-aural comprehension. Grammar is more descriptive than prescriptive, and it is taught inductively as applicable principles to clarify relationships.²² Vocabulary building is associated with the learning of essential structural features.²³ Reading is developed for comprehension and perception of total meaning²⁴ to give the student a broad base upon which he can expand his knowledge.

Through the laboratory approach the student acquires the abilities to understand and converse in a foreign tongue, as well as the skills of written expression and reading. The development of these skills with emphasis on their practical aspects is for the student "A vehicle of communication . . . (It) can liberate the individual and liberalize his concepts."²⁵

The basic difference between the traditional and laboratory approaches is the point of emphasis. Traditionalists concentrate on grammar and translation, while exponents of the laboratory approach stress the practical language skill, oral-aural comprehension.

²²Margaret Gilman (ed.) Reports of the Working Committees, The 1956 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (Providence) Brown University Press, 1956, p. 63.

²³The Teaching of Modern Languages, loc. cit.

²⁴Haden, op. cit., p. 175.

²⁵Ludington, op. cit., p. 15.

Development of the Laboratory Approach

In summarizing the historical development of the laboratory approach prior to World War II, Byron J. Koekkoek reports²⁶ that the first mention of the laboratory approach is found in Jespersen's How to Teach a Foreign Language, published in 1904. Here Jespersen predicted that recording equipment would be used in the teaching of modern foreign languages. Koekkoek continues to tell us that records, for listening purposes only, were in use in 1918. Phonetics laboratories with rudimentary earphones and complex equipment were set up in the 1920's. According to Koekkoek, no other advances in the development of the laboratory approach occurred until World War II.

During World War II, the United States Government recognized that there was a need for people with language training to translate and interpret. Due to the fact that Americans rarely had the opportunity to use a foreign language actively, it was found that most Americans who claimed a knowledge of a foreign language could only read and write that language, not speak it with any degree of fluency.²⁷ This lack of oral competency created a need to develop an oral-aural approach in language teaching, emphasizing the practical aspects of the language, including a modern, not archaic, vocabulary.

To meet this challenge the Army Specialist Training Program (ASTP) was established in April 1943 by the United States Army. Intensive in

²⁶ Byron J. Koekkoek, "The Advent of the Language Laboratory," The Modern Language Journal, XLIII (January 1959), p. 4.

²⁷ Francis Millet Rogers, "Language and the War Effort," The Modern Language Journal, XXVII (May 1943), p. 300.

nature, the program aimed at developing oral fluency. The enrollees had 15 or more contact hours per week for nine month periods in the language. Class size was restricted to no more than ten students. Each class had two teachers: a linguist, or the course director, conducted one hour, while four hours were spent with a drillmaster or a native speaker for drill purposes.²⁸ Grammar was taught inductively, as an aid to conversation, and less emphasis was placed on translation;²⁹ reading ability was developed for direct comprehension purposes only, rather than for structural analysis. The Army program also included the use of phonograph records on which the students could record and then hear their own pronunciation.³⁰ Believing that all language is idiomatic and grammar is its means of organization, the ASTP attempted to promote learning by substituting habits for rules.³¹ In order to enable a student to attain maximum fluency in minimum time, the Army based its program upon the theory that a speaking knowledge should precede a reading knowledge.³² The ASTP was terminated in April 1944; within one year, it had proved that intensive instruction of a language to small groups could produce a degree of language mastery.

²⁸Richard Reid, "The Drillmaster in the Speaking Approach Courses in Romance Languages at Clark University," The Modern Language Journal, XXX (December 1946), pp. 530-540.

²⁹"Applications of ASTP Method to Civilian Teaching," A Survey of Language Classes in the ASTP (New York) The Modern Language Association, 1944, pp. 28-29.

³⁰Koekkoek, op. cit., p. 5.

³¹William Edgerton, "A Look at ASTP as Student and Teacher," The Modern Language Journal, XXXII (March 1948), pp. 209-215.

³²Mark E. Hutchinson, "The Wartime Language Program as Related to Postwar Language Teaching," School and Society, 60 (July 15, 1944), p. 33.

The ASTP had a revolutionary effect on postwar modern language methodology. Throughout the United States language programs were revised to place emphasis on oral fluency and the practical aspects of the language. However, the Army program had advantages that civilian programs could not share: the students were carefully selected for language aptitude and high rate of learning ability; the classes were small, informal, and had a minimum of 15 hours per week of contact with the language; highly skilled teachers and native "informants" conducted the classes. In addition, the Army introduced supplementary aids consisting of dialogues, recordings, films,³³ and emphasized modern speech.³⁴ The incentive for learning in the ASTP was produced by appealing to the patriotism of the learners; situations in which language training was invaluable were within the immediate scope of the learners. The Army was able to create for its language program more favorable conditions than could be produced in civilian institutions of learning.

Because the ASTP was able to produce results, imitations of this program appeared in many American colleges and universities. To this movement impetus was added by former ASTP teachers who wrote articles in which they expressed their opinion that the ability to speak a language is a definite aid to reading the language. Graduates of the ASTP were polled; they reported that they felt they had successfully learned a

³³ Benjamin Rowe, "The Army Streamlines Language Instruction," The Modern Language Journal, XXIX (February 1945), pp. 136-141.

³⁴ Ephraim Cross, "Language Study and the Armed Forces," The Modern Language Journal, XXVIII (March 1944), p. 293.

foreign language quickly under the intensive method.³⁵ To those acquainted with the Army program, the ASTP had sufficiently demonstrated that the rate of learning a language is dependent upon contact hours with the language, small classes, and increased student participation through conversational drill.³⁶ As a result, during the immediate post-war years, foreign language methodology became more intensive in nature. Modern languages were emphasized as "living languages"³⁷ after World War II, and the oral-aural method gained national prominence.

To meet the demands of the American people for the inclusion of oral-aural comprehension as an integral part of a foreign language course requirement, colleges increased the number of weekly contact hours from the traditional three hours per week to a minimum of five hours per week. Pronunciation and conversation drills were considered as workshop or laboratory classes; since science courses generally put theory into practice in a science laboratory, it was logical for the modern language courses to label the conversation sessions language laboratories. The "lab method" originally meant spoken language practice without using mechanical apparatus.³⁸

The first American university to teach languages through the hearing method with mechanical devices was Northwestern University, which

³⁵Einar R. Ryden, "The G. I. Looks at the ASTP," The Modern Language Journal, XXIX (October 1945), p. 502.

³⁶George A. C. Scherer, "A New College Language Course for Beginners," The Modern Language Journal, XXIX (October 1945), pp. 503-508.

³⁷Edwin H. Zeydel, "The ASTP Courses in Area and Language Study," The Modern Language Journal, XXVII (November 1943), p. 459.

³⁸Koekkoek, loc. cit.

used recordings, phonographs, and earphones in 1943. This "laboratory" heralded the language laboratory as a room devoted to recording equipment for language instruction.

From 1945 to 1960 the ASTP influence on foreign language methodology was discussed on all levels of language teaching. The use of sound equipment, notably the tape recorder, gave impetus to the language laboratory trend. The tape recorder was considered a means to supplement the teacher by permitting individual attention because it enabled each student to hear himself speak, advance at his own rate of learning, and have additional and increased practices.

With engineering advances in the tape recorder and sound equipment, the language laboratory has evolved from direct conversation practices into a distinct functional workshop or laboratory, containing mechanical apparatus specifically designed and designated for oral-aural language learning.

Experimentation

Limited comparative data on the laboratory approach versus the traditional approach are available. This lack of data arises from the inadequacy of oral-aural comprehensive examinations. The measurement of oral fluency is difficult due to the complex process of scoring; the scoring of oral competency must be done by the actual examiner, requiring judgment on his part. This problem is peculiar to oral comprehension and pronunciation testing; validated aural comprehension examinations such as the Cooperative French Listening Comprehension Test³⁹ are available. In

³⁹The Cooperative French Listening Comprehension Test, published by the Educational Testing Service in 1955, is administered by tape or orally. The purposes of this test are to measure aural comprehension and achievement.

spite of the difficulty posed by the scarcity of adequate oral comprehension tests, some surveys and experiments on the laboratory approach have been conducted. The remainder of this chapter concerns all of the comparative data on the laboratory approach versus the traditional approach that the writer was able to find.

One of the first studies was conducted from 1944 to 1947 by Dr. Harold B. Dunkel and Dr. Frederick B. Agard.⁴⁰ This investigation was not a controlled experiment, but a survey to examine comparatively "experimental" and "conventional" courses. The experimental courses were those using a variation of the oral-aural approach; the conventional courses followed the traditional grammar-translation approach. The conclusions of the three year investigation among high schools and colleges are quoted here:

The experimental courses evaluated . . . failed to produce near-native oral-aural or reading proficiency in the American student of a second language in one or two years. In other words, within the total instructional time available for these experiments, the newer procedures and techniques have not proved themselves impressively in training students of average aptitude and motivation.⁴¹

This investigation is significant because it was one of the first comparative studies undertaken and brought attention to the need for scientific comparative experiments in this area. The Agard and Dunkel investigation points out that the oral approach had not been specifically defined in aim, method, and testing techniques, for the oral approach is adapted to each institution; consequently, it differs in its form from school to school. This factor increases the difficulties of scientific

⁴⁰ Agard and Dunkel, op. cit.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 293-294.

experimentation; the flexibility encountered in implementing the oral approach renders objective results vague.

The Agard and Dunkel investigation focuses on the elusive nature of the oral approach, the lack of data obtainable, and the complexity of factors that hinder language measurement and experimentation. The Agard and Dunkel study shows that there is a need for a definition of an oral-aural standard. The conclusions do not differentiate between secondary schools and colleges; also, Agard and Dunkel did not define their usage of the terms "near-native oral-aural" and "average aptitude and motivation." In spite of these two weaknesses, the writer agrees with the overall conclusions of the investigation, and she considers the Agard and Dunkel study valuable.

Nordmeyer and White compared a ten hour intensive beginning German course to a five hour traditional beginning German course in 1944 at Yale University.⁴² In both courses the primary objective was interpretative reading. The reported results indicated that the students in the intensive course attained more oral proficiency than those in the traditional courses but were weaker in sight reading and grammar. The conclusion was that the students in the intensive course did not fulfill the literary objectives of the beginning German course.

The writer finds that the Yale University report lacks statistical data, which omission may arise from a reluctance on the part of the experimenters to present discouraging documentation. The writer has included the Yale experiment as an example of the unscientific manner in which most of the experiments on the laboratory approach have been reported: vague, inconclusive, general, and lacking in statistics.

⁴²George Nordmeyer and James F. White, "Intensive German at Yale," The German Quarterly, XIX (January 1946), pp. 86-94.

At the University of Georgia, Bovée conducted a four year experiment from 1944 to 1948.⁴³ The purpose of the experiment was to discover the amounts of permanency of retention of the ability to read a foreign language that occurs through the traditional approach as opposed to the oral approach. In 1944 the first year language course involved reading only; the students were tested in June and again in November. The second year, oral work was introduced into the first year reading course, and the students were retested in November 1946. The third experiment introduced oral and written practice into the reading course. In the fourth year of experimentation, development of all language skills (reading, writing, hearing, speaking) was attempted. Table 1 shows the results of the four November reading retests. On the basis of these results Bovée concluded that oral work enhances the possibilities of retention of the ability to read a foreign language.

TABLE 1
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA RETENTION EXPERIMENT RESULTS

Year	Advanced	Stationary	Retrograded
1945	60%	26%	14%
1946	85%	15%	0%
1947	92.5%	7.5%	0%
1948	93.34%	2.22%	4.44%

⁴³ Arthur Gibbon Bovée, "The Present Day Trend in Modern Language Teaching," The Modern Language Journal, XXXIII (May 1949), pp. 384-391.

In the opinion of the writer, the University of Georgia experiments are weak and invalid. The nature of the test administered is neither cited nor discussed; since the course in which the experiments were conducted was a reading course, the writer assumes that the test administered was one in reading comprehension, but Bovée does not clarify this. A second weakness is the use of the term "advanced"; the students tested in November advanced over their June test scores, but the June test scores were not included by Bovée and the material in which the students advanced was not specified. Thirdly, the number of students which participated in the experiments was not included in the report. These major weaknesses serve to render the Georgia experiments inconclusive.

In the second University of Georgia experiment in which oral practice was introduced, there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of the total number of students who advanced. However, since the nature of the oral work was not defined, this experiment may not be considered scientifically valid.

Bovée's overall conclusion (that oral work enhances the possibilities of retention) is inconsistent with the nature of the third and fourth experiments. The third and fourth experiments included the development of all language skills, and the results of these two experiments seem to show that a greater percentage of the total number of students who advanced is achieved through the development of all language skills, not oral work alone. Bovée's experiments are of some educational value, but offer no conclusive findings.

The following discussion treats the comparative experiments which

were conducted at the University of Texas from 1946 to 1949.⁴⁴ The first year of the experiment was conducted from 1946 to 1947 with two groups. Group A received traditional instruction for a year with a total of only five hours of pronunciation instruction; exercises were both written and oral. Group B, the oral group, studied pronunciation for two full weeks, attended listening sessions for one and one half hours per week throughout the year, and did all exercises orally. To test the two groups, the experimenters administered the Cooperative French Test⁴⁵ and an auditory test which they compiled. Table 2 shows the median scores achieved on the Cooperative French Test and the auditory test after one year of instruction. In this experiment only the total median scores for the auditory test are available; no progressive auditory scores were published. Although the median of Group A was 13% higher than that of group B on the grammar, vocabulary, and translation test, group B had a 38% higher median on the auditory test, giving group B a total of a 10% higher median. There is a noticeable, but diminishing, difference in the scores of the two groups on the Cooperative French Test, but according to the authors the overall difference (including the auditory scores) between groups A and B is less than has often been assumed for college students under these or similar conditions.

⁴⁴ Lee Hamilton and Ernest F. Haden, "Three Years of Experimentation at the University of Texas," The Modern Language Journal, XXXIV (February 1950), pp. 85-102.

⁴⁵ The Cooperative French Test is designed to measure achievement in reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary. Published by the Educational Testing Service and revised in 1951, it yields a score for each part and a total score.

TABLE 2

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDIAN SCORES ON THE
COOPERATIVE FRENCH TEST AND AUDITORY TEST 1947

1947	Group A (Traditional)	Group B (Oral)
<u>Cooperative French Test</u>		
First Semester		
Midterm	46	37
Final	49	42
Second Semester		
Midterm	60	54
Final	69	65
Total Median Scores	244	198
<u>Auditory Test</u>		
Total Median Scores	177	244
Total Median Scores <u>Cooperative French Test and Auditory Test combined</u>	410	422

The second University of Texas experiment was conducted from 1947 to 1948 with two groups; group D was taught the traditional approach in which four weeks were devoted to pronunciation and exercises were written and oral; group E was taught the oral approach which included four weeks of pronunciation and phonetics, and all exercises were done orally. Tables 3 and 4 contain the progressive median score results on

the Cooperative French Test and the auditory test. From these test scores it was concluded that grammar should be minimized since group E received no formal grammar instruction and attained nearly the same median score as group D on the Cooperative French Test.

TABLE 3

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDIAN SCORES ON THE
COOPERATIVE FRENCH TEST 1948

1948	Group D (Traditional)	Group E (Oral)
First Semester		
Midterm	34	33
Final	35	34
Second Semester		
Midterm	49	47
Final	61	62
Total	179	176

TABLE 4
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDIAN SCORES ON THE
AUDITORY TEST 1948

1948	Group D (Traditional)	Group E (Oral)
First Semester		
Midterm	40	38
Final	29	39
Second Semester		
Midterm	29	30
Final	77	72
Total	175	179

A possible explanation for the scores of group E is the individual teacher who taught group E. No formal texts were used by group E; the teacher was the sole source of information for this group. Without specification of the teaching approach used the second University of Texas experiment is of general interest only and offers no basis for a conclusive finding.

The third University of Texas experiment conducted from 1948 to 1949 concerned the influence of direct and imitative spelling and phonetics on language learning. Since this experiment is not directly related to the present study, the writer has elected to include only the overall results of this experiment. Group G learned spelling and phonetics formally with written material; group H learned through imitation which restricts all learning to the oral-aural approach. From auditory and

grammar test results the experimenters concluded that if one can speak the language, one can understand that language, but that being able to understand a language does not mean that one can speak it. The writer has included a mention of this experiment because it suggests that oral practice is of more value than aural for fluency.

The overall conclusions from the three experiments at the University of Texas were that emphasis on formal grammar is of doubtful profit in a first year course, that listening devices are valuable for developing aural comprehension, and that the methods of an oral approach are vague and in need of investigation and definition.

The University of Texas experiments appear to lack sufficient data for full comprehension of the results. Discussions of the nature of the auditory testing should have been included and the teaching methods should have been defined. Also, the experimenters failed to discuss what equating of the groups, if any, was done, and what the language aptitude of the students was. Another conclusion drawn by the Texas experimenters is that listening devices seem to be of value in developing oral comprehension and that there is a need for definition of the oral-aural teaching methods.

At Harvard University in 1949 an experiment in a beginning German course was conducted to determine the achievement of reading ability in the oral-aural approach.⁴⁶ Group A was taught under the traditional approach with emphasis on grammar and translation; the oral-aural approach was used with group B. On a reading examination administered in

⁴⁶William McClain and Harry Zohn, "A New Approach to Elementary German at Harvard," The Modern Language Journal, XXXV (November 1951), pp. 549-551.

June 1950 the same percentage of groups A and B passed the test; group B achieved better oral-aural comprehension and better ability to compose in German. The conclusions from this experiment were that the oral-aural approach produced the same reading achievement as the traditional approach, and at the same time it developed more language skills than were developed under the traditional approach.

The results of the Harvard experiment are significant in that they strengthen the hypotheses of exponents of the laboratory approach that the oral-aural method is of more overall value in developing the language skills than the traditional approach. However, since no statistics or other detailed information with regard to teaching methods and testing techniques was included in the report, the Harvard experiment remains of general interest only.

In 1951 the University of Tennessee conducted an experiment on the effect of a language laboratory on aural comprehension.⁴⁷ In this experiment, the students attended a traditional language course for three hours per week and spent one hour per week in a language laboratory for recording and listening purposes. The results of the aural comprehension test which was administered showed that the average mean for the previous three years had doubled. The conclusion was that mechanical devices are of value in developing aural comprehension.

On the basis of the information given, the writer concurs with the conclusion of this report, but she is aware that this experiment is not comparative in nature, that the lack of statistics weakens the conclusion, and that the test administered was not defined. The University

⁴⁷Walter E. Stiefel, "Bricks Without Straw - The Language Laboratories," The Modern Language Journal, XXXVI (February 1952), pp. 68-73.

of Tennessee report is cited in this chapter because it relates to the conclusion drawn by the University of Texas experimenters that mechanical listening devices aid in developing aural comprehension.

In 1952 the University of Missouri conducted a comparative experiment on the traditional and laboratory approaches.⁴⁸ The traditional approach group met four hours per week; emphasis was placed on grammar and translation with little oral work. The group in the laboratory approach met five hours per week; three hours per week were conducted in the traditional manner, and two hours per week were spent in the language laboratory with tape recorders and listening devices. Although the statistical results were not published, a report on testing the two groups is available. The report states that there was no difference in the grammar test results, but that the laboratory approach group was superior in reading, vocabulary, and aural comprehension.

Neither the statistical results nor the manner in which the groups were matched was included in the report. The omission of these facts serves to negate the value of the experiment as one producing scientific data and to make the report acceptable only as general information in favor of additional class contact hours with a foreign language and mechanical devices for developing aural comprehension.

Purdue University established a language laboratory in 1948.⁴⁹

The Purdue beginning French courses have four contact hours per week; two

⁴⁸J. S. Brushwood, "The Missouri Plan for Oral Improvement in the Traditional Language Course," The Modern Language Journal, XXXVII (December 1953), pp. 415-418.

⁴⁹John T. Fotos, "The Purdue Language Laboratory Method in Teaching Beginning French Courses," The Modern Language Journal, XXXIX (March 1955), pp. 141-143.

hours are spent in the classroom where grammar is taught inductively and pronunciation through imitation; the two hours spent in the laboratory are for drill purposes. The report, published in 1955, stated that on the Cooperative French Test the average mean was 56.7, while the average mean at Purdue is 60.1, and secondly that Purdue surpassed the national reading average by ten points.

This language program at Purdue has apparently achieved noteworthy results with its adaptation of the laboratory approach. However, the results are equivocal because the groups were not equated. A more detailed report would have been of more value.

In 1955 a one semester experiment on the effects of the oral and conventional approaches was conducted at the State Teachers College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.⁵⁰ The main difference between the two groups tested was that the students in the oral group had dictations and used tape recorders. Table 5 shows the percentage results on the 1949 edition of the Cooperative French Test. Auditory ability was not tested. The oral group did not perform as well as the conventional group in reading comprehension and grammar, although the percentage of vocabulary learned was the same for both groups.

The Eau Claire experiment appears to be noteworthy in that the performance of the oral group was lower than that of the conventional group. But, one semester comparative experiment of this nature is of little scientific value. The omission of information concerning the language aptitude of the students, teaching methods, or instructional

⁵⁰ Elson McMullen, "The Intensive Method: An Experiment," The Modern Language Journal, XXXIX (October 1955), pp. 293-294.

TABLE 5
EAU CLAIRE COOPERATIVE FRENCH TEST RESULTS

	Oral Group	Conventional Group
Reading	58%	64%
Vocabulary	70%	70%
Grammar	55%	71%

system renders this report inconclusive. Further experimentation on the oral and conventional approaches by Eau Claire would have been of wider general interest and would have had more educational value.

Comparative experiments on the traditional and laboratory approaches were conducted at Wayne University from 1954 to 1955.⁵¹ Consisting of first and second year French students, group C represents those students receiving no laboratory drill, while group L attended the laboratory sessions. Tables 6 and 7 show the median score results for the first and second year students on the A. C. E. Cooperative French Test. From the test results it was concluded that there is no appreciable anticipated loss found in reading by the laboratory approach as contrasted with the traditional approach and that the laboratory produces a greater gain in total score for second year language students than for⁵¹ Theodorer students.

⁵¹Theodore Mueller and George Borglum, "Language Laboratory and Target Language," The French Review, XXIX (February 1956), pp. 322-331.

TABLE 6

WAYNE UNIVERSITY FIRST YEAR FRENCH MEDIAN SCORES
ON THE A.C.E. COOPERATIVE FRENCH TEST

	Fall 1954		Spring 1955	
	C (Non Labo- ratory)	L (Labo- ratory)	C	L
Reading	43.9	46.9	46.9	43.9
Total	56.1	49.3	46.9	44.1

TABLE 7

WAYNE UNIVERSITY SECOND YEAR FRENCH MEDIAN SCORES
ON THE A.C.E. COOPERATIVE FRENCH TEST

	Fall 1954		Spring 1955	
	C	L	C	L
Reading	*	*	59	65
Total	*	*	62.6	69.6

*No median scores available for the second year French group for the fall 1954.

These results are of little scientific interest since the report includes no description of the approaches or definition of the term "laboratory session." Also, no information as to the equating of the groups was presented.

A second experiment conducted at Wayne University concerned the relationship between the course grade and the number of laboratory visits and involved the same groups who participated in the first experiment. Table 8 shows the number of students, expressed in percentages, who earned the course grades, A, B, C, D, and E. To compare the grades earned with the number of laboratory visits, the L group was subdivided as shown in Table 9 and differences noted. The conclusions show that there is a relationship between the course grade and the number of laboratory visits.

The conclusions are in agreement with the data. A greater percentage of the students who attended the laboratory sessions received A, B, C grades than the non-laboratory groups. Secondly, the laboratory students who received A, B, C grades maintained a higher laboratory attendance record than the laboratory students who received D and E grades. This experiment is significant because it contains documented data and because it is the only experiment available which has investigated the relationship between the number of laboratory visits and the course grade. In concurring with the conclusions of the Wayne University experimenters, the writer assumes that laboratory attendance did not constitute part of the course grade for the laboratory groups; this factor is not mentioned in the report. One criticism is the lack of detailed discussion on the content of the laboratory visits; another criticism is that the letter grades A, B, C, D, E require further information.

TABLE 8

WAYNE UNIVERSITY PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS
WHO EARNED VARIOUS COURSE GRADES

Grade earned	Fall 1954		Spring 1955	
	C (Non- Laboratory)	L (Laboratory)	C	L
First Year Students				
A and B	37%	56%	30%	44%
C	39%	25%	40%	31%
D	16%	18%	23%	15%
E	8%	0%	7%	0%
Second Year Students				
A and B			36%	70%
C			43%	30%
D			14%	0%
E			3%	0%

TABLE 9

WAYNE UNIVERSITY GRADE AND LABORATORY VISIT
COMPARISON FOR GROUP L

Grade Earned	First Year Visits	Second Year Visits
A	40	38
B	31	22
C	31	19
D	25	0
E	19	0

The series of experiments at Wayne University included a free composition test average for the two groups; this average was based on a possible 100 per cent total score; the averages are shown in Table 10.

TABLE 10

WAYNE UNIVERISTY FREE COMPOSITION TEST AVERAGES

First Year French		Second Year French	
C (Non- Laboratory)	L (Laboratory)	C	L
72.6	78.5	72	81

The conclusion reached from this experiment was that laboratory drill did not hinder the development of sentence pattern or the increasing of vocabulary on the part of the laboratory students. Although the conclusion is in accord with the data presented, the unknown nature of the composition test weakens the value of the experiment.

A University of Maine report in 1957 stated that the introduction of the oral approach and the language laboratory in 1954 had increased the language enrollment beyond the language requirements.⁵² In the academic year 1950-1951 67% of the students continued language study beyond the requirements, while in 1955 to 1956 80% continued. From this, the University of Maine concluded that the laboratory approach produced greater incentive in the student than the traditional approach.

⁵²Wilmarth H. Starr, "The Maine Language Program," PMLA, LXXII, Part 2 (September 1957), pp. 1-10.

In current articles there are many reports which imply that an increase in language enrollment results from the introduction of a language laboratory. This report from Maine is the only one that the writer found that included some statistics.

From 1959 to 1960 a study on high school students in elementary and intermediate language classes was conducted at Ohio State University.⁵³ The purpose of the study was to discover the effect of the language laboratory on oral-aural comprehension, phonetics, and reading ability. Both groups had five hours per week of contact with the language; the laboratory groups (A) listened to tapes, recorded, answered questions orally, and had no written material. The non-laboratory groups (B) had only written material, no oral-aural work. Group placement was carried out by random selection, but no equating of the groups was undertaken. The groups were tested by a battery of four tests: 1) the Cooperative French Test; 2) a listening test compiled by Ohio State University; 3) a speaking test consisting of vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency; and 4) a phonetics test. Table 11 shows the means and the standard deviations obtained by both groups on these four tests. The conclusions of the experiment were that the laboratory groups (A) had higher scores in reading, vocabulary, and grammar (subparts of the Cooperative French Test) than the non-laboratory groups (B), and that there was no appreciable difference between the oral achievement of groups A and B. Table 11 also indicates no significant difference in phonetics, but in listening the laboratory groups performed much better than the non-laboratory groups.

⁵³ Edward D. Allen, "The Effects of the Language Laboratory on the Development of Skill in a Foreign Language," The Modern Language Journal, XLIV (December 1960), pp. 355-358.

TABLE 11
 MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION RESULTS FOR FOUR TESTS
 USED IN OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXPERIMENTATION

Test	A (Laboratory)		B (Non-laboratory)	
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.
<u>1. Cooperative French Test</u>				
elementary	57	23	39.4	20
intermediate	38	18	25	16
<u>2. Listening</u>				
elementary and intermediate combined	51	12.6	35	9.4
<u>3. Speaking</u>				
elementary	2.2	.36	2.0	.43
Intermediate	2.5	.34	2.5	.173
<u>4. Phonetics</u>				
elementary	9.7	3.16	7.9	2.34
intermediate	13.8	.345	12.6	1.86

Although the exact nature of the tests administered was not discussed, this experiment has some scientific value, particularly with regard to the results of the oral test which showed no significant differences between the laboratory and non-laboratory groups. This fact could arise from the undisclosed detailed content of the oral work presented

to the laboratory group or from the unknown language aptitude of the students in the laboratory group. The experiment was conducted with high school students. However, it is significant to note that the laboratory groups performed better than the non-laboratory groups in reading, grammar, and vocabulary; this fact strengthens the conclusion of Harvard University that the laboratory approach is more effective in developing the language skills than the traditional approach.

Summary of Historical Survey

It is interesting to note that the laboratory approach evolved from the oral approach which was developed during World War II by the United States Army. The oral approach, in turn, grew from a national emergency which made American language educators aware of the deficiencies of language methodology prior to 1943. National interest in language instruction did not come from an educational framework, but from the armed services. Language teachers were forced to reexamine both their objectives and methods in order to develop means for teaching the practical language skills which a global war demanded for survival.

During the immediate postwar years, imitations of the Army oral method spread throughout the United States. The values and weaknesses of the ASTP were debated and discussed, but few scientific comparative experiments were conducted. Even with the introduction of the language laboratory as a special workshop for oral-aural training, language educators seemingly remained satisfied with opinion as to its merits, rather than demanding evidence. Many articles have been written acclaiming the laboratory approach and the language laboratory, but too few of these articles contain scientific findings.

There are three main reasons for this lack of necessary data. The first reason is our present inability to measure objectively the skill of oral performance. Second, validated oral-aural standardized tests have not been developed. Third, there seems to be no agreement among exper-

ents of the laboratory approach as to the oral methods which produce the best results.

Research on the effect of the laboratory approach as opposed to the traditional approach on language learning is limited. Among the comparative experiments discussed in this chapter, there were only four points in which the conclusions of two or more experiments were compatible.

(1) The need for an oral-aural standard and definition of the oral or laboratory approach were conclusions of Agard and Dunkel, and Hamilton and Haden. (2) The laboratory was more effective in the development of all the language skills was reported by Bovée, McClain and Zohn, Mueller and Borglum, and Allen. (3) The conclusion that mechanical devices aid in the development of oral-aural comprehension is found in reports by Hamilton and Haden, Stiefel, and Brushwood. (4) Nordmeyer and White, and McMullen reported that the laboratory approach was less successful in the development of the skills of grammar and translation than the traditional approach. In spite of these agreements, no investigator presented a thorough discussion of the system and methods used, student aptitude, or equated groups. Investigators Nordmeyer and White, McClain and Zohn, and Brushwood reported no statistics; Hamilton and Haden, Nordmeyer and White, Mueller and Borglum, and Allen did not define the test administered in the experiments.

Before concrete conclusions on the laboratory versus the traditional approach may be drawn, answers to many questions must be determined. The following eight questions are considered by the writer as the most pertinent problems to be solved by language educators and researchers.

1. Is intensive translation compatible with the nature of the laboratory approach? The laboratory approach was born out of a need and out of a demand for practical application of the language. It is

considered by foreign language educators more useful to learn to read for comprehension purposes than to translate word by word.

2. Should a traditional method in grammar instruction be applied to the laboratory approach? By definition, the laboratory approach retains development of the traditional skill of grammar but repudiates the traditional method.

3. Are traditional grammar textbooks and readers a detriment to skill development in the laboratory approach? This is a major problem which confronts exponents of the laboratory approach. It is only in the past six years that the laboratory approach has become a national trend. In addition, the very nature of the laboratory approach remains undefined. This explains the lack of adequate texts and readers compiled for use in the laboratory approach and causes traditional books to be used. This does not imply that traditional texts and readers belong in the laboratory approach courses.

4. Are all students interested in mastering oral-aural comprehension? In a world in which science, mathematics, and graduate work are being stressed, there are students who wish to learn only to read a foreign language in order to supplement their major areas of concentration and in order to meet graduate school requirements in reading a foreign language. There is no evidence that the laboratory approach fulfills the interests and needs of all students who enroll in language courses. Students who have personal problems in speech and poise are reluctant to perform orally; this reluctance could result in negligible learning in all areas under a laboratory approach. Observation in classroom situations supports this comment.

5. Does the Cooperative French Test or any standardized achievement test measure adequately the objectives of the laboratory approach? Current standardized achievement tests in French were constructed for testing in traditional systems; as such, they cannot be expected to measure successfully the content of laboratory approach systems.

6. Is the laboratory approach continued beyond the beginning language courses or do the students have to adjust to the traditional approach? The laboratory approach is adaptable to all levels of language learning, but in adapting it to literature courses, an additional requirement is reevaluation of the overall objectives of the language course offerings and of the course content and texts; teachers must also be informed as to the differences in methodology under the laboratory approach. No student who completes successfully one year of a language under the laboratory approach should be limited to the traditional approach in his second year of language study. This should also be applied to the student who encounters the traditional approach in the first year; orientation to a different approach in the second year can result in confusion and a loss of objectives for that student. This conflict arises more frequently on the college level than on the secondary level because entering college students often continue the study of a language begun in high school. The laboratory approach is an offspring of higher education and only recently has it made inroads into the secondary school curriculum. College language courses must prepare to assist students from traditional systems in their adjustment to the laboratory approach.

7. Does traditional preparation train teachers for teaching in the laboratory approach? Language teachers on all levels of education have been trained in traditional courses; they must become aware of the

implications of the laboratory approach. Summer institute courses and in-service training programs are necessary on all levels if the laboratory approach is to succeed.

8. What is the laboratory approach? Its objective is practical application of the language through the development of all language skills with emphasis on oral-aural comprehension. Its method and standards are undefined; each institution which adopts the laboratory approach imposes upon it methods and standards peculiar to that institution. Until there is national acceptance of the more common methods and standards in use, there can be no universally applicable standardized tests, no adequate texts and readers, and no sufficient teacher training. Faculty opinions favor the laboratory approach, but comparative experimentation on the traditional versus the laboratory approach has infrequently supported these opinions; experimentation in this area has been limited by the subjective nature of testing language learning, particularly oral competency. Further investigation on the nature of the laboratory approach is needed so that additional experimentation may be conducted.

In summary, analysis of the available experiments reveals no major finding or general agreement on the effect of the laboratory versus the traditional approach in the development of the language skills. The published experiments show that there is a need for consistent definitions and additional experimentation in order to replace the current vagueness and opinion-making with fact and scientifically-reached conclusions. As Agard and Dunkel state:

Because of the wide range of factors which must be taken into account, language experimentation is extremely difficult . . . greater efforts must be made . . . if results even remotely approaching conclusions are to be obtained . . . The millennium in language teaching has not yet arrived.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Agard and Dunkel, op. cit., pp. 300-301.

CHAPTER III

THE INVESTIGATION

Prior to September 1960 the Department of Modern Languages at the College of William and Mary offered a three hour per week program in the beginning French course. The method used was traditional in nature and emphasized structural analysis of the language: grammar and translation. In September 1960 a new method of language instruction was initiated as a part of a two year program in order to offer the beginning students greater opportunity for mastering language fundamentals. The pattern of the new program for the first year was expanded from three to five weekly contact hours; two hours per week consisted of lectures which retained a traditional approach, while the remaining three hours were designated drill sessions in which small groups were drilled in the language disciplines. The new method combined elements from the traditional and laboratory approaches. The present study consists of a comparison and limited evaluation of the effects of these two methods on the development of three language disciplines (grammar, vocabulary, and reading) in order to discover whether Method II results in loss of the development of these specific skills.

Gathering of the Data

The comparative study undertaken at the College of William and Mary is limited by the following factors.

- (1) Although separate groups participated in the two methods,

the investigation cannot be considered a controlled experiment. The students were not selected for the French 101-102 course; they elected to enroll.

(2) As an instructor in the Department of Modern Languages at the College of William and Mary, the writer taught both methods in the French 101-102 course and is, therefore, an unmeasurable factor.

(3) The final examination administered by the Department in June 1960 to the Method I group could not be administered in June 1961 to the Method II group because a college regulation prohibits the administration of the same final examination for two successive years.

(4) The same final oral examination was administered in June 1960 and in June 1961, but the oral scores for the students of Method I were not evaluated because oral achievement did not constitute part of the course grade prior to September 1960. Without this statistical data, a comparative study of oral achievement is not possible.

(5) There is no information with regard to the study habits and motivation of the students of both groups.

(6) The Cooperative School and College Ability Test (SCAT) scores provide the basis for equating the groups in scholastic aptitude; no other verbal and quantitative scores are available.

(7) Achievement measured was restricted to three skills: grammar, vocabulary, and reading.

(8) Textbooks (grammar and reading) were different for the two groups.

The data for the investigation were gathered from two sources. The SCAT scores were used for equating the groups. The Cooperative French Test is a standardized achievement examination which was administered in June 1960 to the Method I group and in June 1961 to the Method II group.

It is designed to measure the achievement of two or three semesters of college French or three to six semesters of high school French. A manual limited to administration and scoring procedures accompanies the examination. (The writer was unable to locate validity and reliability data in this manual or in The Fourth Mental Measurements Yearbook or in The Fifth Mental Measurements Yearbook.) There are three subdivisions of this 40 minute test: reading (paragraph comprehension), vocabulary (multiple choice) and grammar (selection of the correct form). In addition to the total score, there is a separate score for each subpart.

Hereafter, the students taught by Method I are referred to as group I, and the students taught by Method II as group II. Groups I and II are composed of those students who were of freshman and sophomore academic standing, on whom SCAT scores were available, who completed both semesters of beginning French at the College of William and Mary, and who had no previous formal acquaintance with the French language. Junior and senior students were omitted because it is impossible to measure the degree of transfer of learning that is present when upperclassmen are measured with underclassmen. Transfer students were omitted because SCAT scores were not available for them.

Groups I and II were admitted to the College of William and Mary by the same committee and under the same admissions policies.⁵⁵ A t-ratio on the basis of SCAT scores was initiated to discover whether groups I and II were comparable in scholastic aptitude. The t-ratio was 3.20 revealing a statistically significant difference between the groups in favor of group II. Because of this significant difference in total

⁵⁵ Interview with Armand J. Galfo, Member of the Committee on Admissions, The College of William and Mary in Virginia, July 4, 1961.

academic aptitude between groups A and B, another method of equating was necessary. The common mean for both groups on SCAT was 310.5; the investigator chose to include those students of the two groups whose SCAT scores were within the range from 300 to 320. The number of cases in group I was thus decreased from 117 to 81 and in group II from 69 to 55. The t-ratio for groups I and II within the 20 point SCAT range was 1.64; the groups were equated in this manner.

Statistical Results

The statistics presented and analyzed here concern the investigation of two methods of teaching beginning French at the College of William and Mary and the two groups of students who participated. The statistics consist of the means, standard deviation units, and t-ratios attained on the Cooperative School and College Ability Test (SCAT), total Cooperative French Test, and the three subparts of the Cooperative French Test: grammar, vocabulary, and reading.

Table 12 shows the means and standard deviation units for all tests and the t-ratios attained by groups I and II on SCAT and the Cooperative French Test. The groups were considered equated on SCAT since the t-ratio was 1.64. The t-ratios indicated no significant difference between groups A and B either on the Cooperative French Test or on its vocabulary and grammar subparts. Table 12 indicates that group I scored at a higher level on the reading subpart of the Cooperative French Test than group II.

TABLE 12

MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION SCORES, AND t-RATIOS FOR GROUPS I AND II
ON SCAT AND COOPERATIVE FRENCH TEST

Test	I (Method I) (81 students)		II (Method II) (55 students)		t
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
<u>SCAT</u>	309.5	6.05	311.1	5.11	1.64 > .05
<u>Cooperative French Test</u>	86.5	15.42	89.1	12.35	1.08 > .05
Grammar	24.7	5.4	26.0	3.81	1.64 > .05
Vocabulary	33.7	6.1	34.1	5.35	.40 > .05
Reading*	28.0	6.4	25.2	5.58	2.71 < .05

*Reading was introduced only in the second semester of Method II, while reading was stressed in both semesters of Method I.

Evaluation of the Statistics

Table 12 which contains the t-ratios for groups I and II forms the basis of the following evaluation of the statistical results of the investigation.

The t-ratios for groups I and II indicated that there is no significant difference between the grammar and vocabulary achievements of the two groups. This fact strongly suggests that Method II was as effective as Method I in developing the skills of grammar and vocabulary for the groups studied.

The t-ratio of 2.71 in reading suggests that group I was able to develop better the skill of intensive reading under Method I than group II accomplished under Method II. Under Method II, reading was delayed until the second semester in order to allow the students more time to master grammatical, oral, and aural skills and to build a vocabulary than the students had previously been permitted under Method I, in which reading was introduced during the first semester.

To explain more fully the t-ratio of 2.71 in reading, a brief description of the reading texts used by groups I and II may be helpful. Group I used Basic French Reader by J. Harris and A. Lévêque (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1956). Group I translated a total of 63 pages into English and did little reading aloud in French. Basic French Reader is written in a conversational style, which utilizes primarily four tenses: present, imperfect, future, and past indefinite; common current idioms and vocabulary are used throughout the reader.

Group II used En Passant by A. Langellier and P. Langellier (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1957). 33 pages were read by group II. En Passant uses a variety of current vocabulary words and idiomatic expressions; nearly all of the verb tenses occur throughout the text. The style varies from poetic description to dialogue. En Passant was introduced in the second semester; the students read it aloud in French, translated it into English, and answered in French oral questions based upon the text.

In reading instruction, Method I emphasized and drilled direct translation. Method II, part of a two year program which allows for the development of reading ability in the second year rather than in the first year, retained direct translation but placed a like emphasis upon

oral-aural reading drill. Under Method I, more reading practice took place; the text (En Passant) used in Method I is better qualitatively than the text (Basic French Reader) used in Method I because it offers a greater variety in sentence construction and verb tense usage. Practice is necessary for the development of reading skill; the Method II students read one-half the amount that was read by the Method I students. When the difference in amount of material read and drilled is recognized, the t-ratio of 2.71 in reading does not seem to denote an educational difference between Methods I and II in the development of reading skill, and might be an expected difference. Although Method II placed less emphasis upon the development of reading and stressed the formation of an oral-aural foundation, similar scores in vocabulary and grammar were attained by both groups. However, the difference in the level of reading achievement is not meaningful although the statistical difference is significant.

The standard deviation units on the total Cooperative French Test revealed less variability in learning progress. This difference in variability may have resulted from the increase of course standardization which occurred under Method II. The design of Method II seems to have resulted in more uniformity in learning on the part of Group II and lessened the variable learning pattern that is noticeable in standard deviation units of group I.

Although statistical data in oral work were filed for group II, there are no statistical data concerning oral achievement for group I. In an interview on June 21, 1961, with Professor Pierre C. Oustinoff, Chairman of the Department of Modern Languages, the writer was informed that it is the considered opinion of the French 101-102 Committee of the

Department of Modern Languages that group II demonstrated a definite improvement in oral ability over group I. This estimate of improvement was based on all of the students who were present for the French 102 final examination in June 1960 and in June 1961; no attempt was made at group equating or at delimiting the number of cases. Although there is no statistical evidence on oral achievement, the fact remains that more emphasis was placed on the development of this skill under Method II than not under Method I; this may have resulted in improvement in oral performance among the Method II students over the Method I students. There is no statistical evidence with regard to differences in aural achievement for either group.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was undertaken to determine whether Method II, in comparison to Method I, resulted in loss or gain of development of three specific language skills (grammar, vocabulary, and reading) as measured by the Cooperative French Test. The statistics revealed that there was no significant difference between the two methods in the development of grammar and vocabulary, but that the group taught by Method I scored higher than the group taught by Method II in reading achievement. When the statistical difference in reading scores is interpreted in terms of course content and emphasis, this difference ceases to be meaningful.

Method I restricted its concentration to the development of two skills: grammar and direct translation. Departmental faculty members cited additional limitations of Method I as large classes and a lack of sufficient contact hours. With Method II, class size was reduced by one-fourth and two contact hours per week were added to the traditional three hours per week. With smaller classes and increase in contact hours, Method II attempted in the first year to develop oral-aural comprehension without undue loss in traditional language skills. In implementing a five hour beginning course in Method II, traditional methods were applied in the large lecture sessions, which met two hours per week, while oral-aural drill, incorporating the fundamentals of grammar and vocabulary, was the principal approach in the small drill classes. Method II is part of a two year program in which translation is introduced

in the second semester of the first year but not emphasized until the second year. Although the statistical results of the Cooperative French Test seem to indicate a significant difference between the two methods in developing the skill of reading, any difference between the two methods in this area cannot be validly measured until the end of the second year of language study when the amount of reading covered will be comparable for the two groups. In spite of the fact that reading received less emphasis under Method II than under Method I, some mastery in reading ability was achieved under Method II; this observation is supported by the evidence of mean scores: group I had a mean raw score of 28 in reading, while the mean for group II was 25.2. The statistical difference in the amount of achievement in reading between the two groups is not meaningful in educational terms, and Method II does not result in any appreciable loss in reading score in the first year.

Under Method I grammar was treated in a formal manner; in Method II, an oral-aural approach was used to drill grammar. The same grammatical structures were taught in both methods, but the approach to grammar principles differed between the two methods. In spite of the change in approach, the Cooperative French Test revealed no significant differences in the amount of grammar achievement of the two groups and no loss in the degree of grammar mastery on the part of the students taught by Method II.

In the area of vocabulary, there is no significant difference between the scores of the two groups. Vocabulary building is dependant upon usage; group I used vocabulary in a narrow situation: written from English to French and read from French to English. This reading and writing method of vocabulary building was retained by Method II, but an oral-aural usage of vocabulary was added. Encountering words in all

possible areas of language should result in a better command of vocabulary, but the amount of vocabulary achievement of the two groups was comparable; the oral-aural usage of vocabulary which was added by Method II resulted in no loss of vocabulary building for the Method II students and in no gain over Method I.

Without data on oral-aural achievement, no conclusion in this area can be drawn. However, oral-aural work was emphasized under Method II and merely acknowledged under Method I.

Method II attempted development of more language skills than Method I, and the results of the Cooperative French Test revealed no educational difference between the two methods in the development of grammar, vocabulary, and reading in the first year of language study. One may conclude that this study reveals no educational difference between Methods I and II in developing grammar, vocabulary, and reading because the statistics showed no loss in mastery of grammar and vocabulary and the loss in reading score may be explained by the differential amounts of reading undertaken. One may further conclude that Method II may be of more educational value than Method I because it provides a broader language foundation than was present under Method I.

Although further comparative investigation on foreign language methodology is necessary at the College of William and Mary before the value of the beginning language program may be assessed, the following three implications have been drawn by the French 101-102 Committee of the Department of Modern Languages as a result of a discussion of their general impressions of Method II. (The writer is a member of this Committee.)

(1) Beyond the first year, students who are not interested in oral work have the opportunity to enroll in traditional courses of reading and grammar, modified by the inclusion of extensive reading. Not all students are required to continue oral work in the second year, for a good program must be flexible in order to satisfy learners' needs.

(2) Data on oral-aural work are to be recorded in written form so that yearly comparisons of achievement may be made. (Oral-aural data for the students taught by Method II were recorded in June 1961, but no written records of oral-aural achievement were maintained in June 1960.)

(3) A comparative study on the language laboratory versus Method II as described in this study is to be conducted during 1962; this study forms the foundation upon which future studies at the College of William and Mary are to be conducted. A language laboratory was put into operation in September 1961. Several teaching procedures of Method II were retained.

From the historical research necessary for conducting the present study, the writer has detected a national trend in foreign language methodology towards oral-aural teaching procedures in general and towards the language laboratory in particular. Although the available research reports indicate a need for additional experimentation and investigation, the writer has drawn up the following list of suggested studies which may be of value to future investigators at the College of William and Mary and at other institutions. This list is based upon problems not solved by the present study; however, solutions to these problems would be of national interest.

(1) Studies at the College of William and Mary on the language course

offerings beyond the second year should be undertaken in light of the new two year program and its new approach to language instruction.

(2) Research on the relationship of grammar mastery and reading skill may be of educational value. Both Methods I and II at the College of William and Mary were based on the concept that some knowledge of grammar must precede the introduction of a reading text. The two methods differed as to the point in the course at which reading should be introduced: Method I presented reading in the first semester; Method II delayed the introduction of reading until the second month of the second semester.

(3) Additional research in methodology in this area would be of service to all language teachers. Method II at the College of William and Mary stressed oral-aural skills for four weeks before grammar was formally introduced in the course. The level of grammar and vocabulary achievement was comparable for the two groups tested; oral-aural work in the first year indicated no loss in grammar and vocabulary mastery.

(4) Studies on the effect of grammar, reading, and oral-aural work on vocabulary building would be of national interest. The results of the vocabulary subpart of the Cooperative French Test at the College of William and Mary revealed no significant differences in the amount of vocabulary learned by the two groups under Methods I and II. Method I developed vocabulary through grammar and direct translation practices; vocabulary practice was conducted primarily in written form. Under Method II, vocabulary was developed mainly through oral-aural drill and grammar exercises; reading was de-emphasized; less vocabulary practice occurred in written form under Method II than under Method I. Yet, the vocabulary subpart of the Cooperative French Test examines vocabulary in written form only, and the results of the two methods were comparable. No loss in vocabulary occurred under Method II.

(5) A study of some interest would be the desirability of course standardization and its effect on learning progress. The design of Method II in the first year increased standardization in the course through the lecture and small drill group pattern. The scores of the group taught by Method II indicated more uniformity in learning than occurred under Method I.

On the basis of historical research and the results of the investigation undertaken in this thesis, the writer finds that oral-aural teaching practices with specific regard to the laboratory approach constitute a national trend in foreign language methodology, but that additional investigation and experimentation on foreign language teaching are needed on a nation-wide basis and at the College of William and Mary. In the present comparative study undertaken at the College of William and Mary, the results of the Cooperative French Test indicated no educational loss in the development of grammar, vocabulary, and reading under Method II as compared to Method I.

Although assessment of the new William and Mary language program in the first year may not be made at this interim point in its evolution, it is possible that the new program, because of its comprehensive nature, may be more appropriate in a liberal arts curriculum than was Method I. It is the aim of a liberal arts curriculum to open all horizons possible toward cultural and intellectual enlightenment; it appears that this is the aim of the new language program, as well as the educational objective of the College of William and Mary in Virginia.

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