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An evaluation of the traditional and conversational methods of teaching foreign languages.

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AN EVALUATION OF THE
TRADITIONAL AND CONVERSATIONAL METHODS
OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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AN EVALUATION OF THE TRADITIONAL AND CONVERSATIONAL METHODS
OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

BY

MARY JANE McCARTHY

A problem submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of
Science Degree

University of Massachusetts

1951

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the advantages of the traditional and conversational methods of teaching foreign languages, it will be necessary to present a short history of the development of each method.

The Traditional Method. The traditional method of teaching foreign languages has come through various phases of development up to the present time. The first languages which were taught in the schools were Latin and Greek; when modern foreign languages were introduced, they were taught in exactly the same way. Later there were several improvements made in classroom procedure, and the Direct method, the German Reform method, and the Reading method were introduced. While all of these movements have their differences, and strictly speaking there is no one traditional method of teaching foreign languages, the word traditional is used to designate the methods used by the more conservative schools and teachers, as opposed to those progressive schools and educators who have set up new aims, objectives, and methods for the teaching of foreign languages.

Modern foreign languages were first introduced into the schools in North America in 1708. In these early days they were taught by religious orders in some of the border towns near Canada. In these towns there were many French settlements, so there was a practical use for the language, for shopkeepers and others. The first modern language course offered in an American college was a French course at Harvard University in 1735.¹ Language courses were present in the curriculum of the high school almost from the beginning. In these first experimental days of the American

¹Gullette, et al Teaching a Modern Language p. 7.

education system, languages, as well as many other courses, were based on their counterparts in Europe. The American colonists had a difficult problem in establishing the schools, and there just was not the time necessary for innovations in manners of teaching. Because of this continuation of European ideas, languages were approached almost entirely through grammar and there was little or no oral work.

The Grammar-Translation Method. The very earliest method used to teach modern languages was simply to apply the same rules and principles which had been used more or less successfully in the teaching of the ancient languages. The fact that Latin and Greek had a grammar content which was much larger and more confusing than the modern languages meant only that the teacher would have to improvise to keep the students working as hard with these new languages. This was known as the grammar-translation method of teaching, and it consisted of three phases. First the student was required to learn by heart all of the rules, principles, and grammatical inflections of the language. As he proved that he knew each rule by being able to recite it verbatim, he would begin to apply this knowledge in the foreign language. He would be given a few easy exercises to translate. He would be given sentences which were dislocated from any text, in which he was to recognize the principle of grammar, or English sentences which he was to translate to the foreign language, and which involved the ability to recognize and use a particular grammatical rule. This entire phase was essentially grammatical and was made as complex as possible so that it would more nearly approach the pattern of the ancient languages. The next step gave the student practice in reading the foreign language. He was given a reader which he was expected to translate literally. The

stories in the reader were designed to give the student still more practice with grammar rules, and to fix firmly in his mind what he had already learned in the first phase of the instruction. After the student had satisfactorily passed through these two phases, he was simply expected to keep on reading until eventually he could read the language almost as well as he could read his own language. This last phase takes him out of the disconnected reading and starts him on the literature of the language. "After this he takes up the study of literature, and his goal is henceforth simply to learn to read German as readily and as intelligently as possible."² This is rather an ambitious aim for the final step in the process, since as far as can be judged, the student has not yet read anything in the language for enjoyment. All he has read so far he has had to take apart for grammatical points. He has not said one word in the language except what he may have read aloud from his reader. He has not had to think about the language at all except in terms of remembering rules. It hardly seems that after such rigid training he would be able to sit down and read foreign literature with the same attitude or enjoyment with which he would read English.

Because of the obvious difficulties and errors in adapting the method of the classical languages to the teaching of the modern languages, the strict grammar-translation instruction has all but disappeared. There are still teachers who feel that the grammar is the most important part of a language, but there are very few classrooms in which this extreme grammar instruction can be found.

Report of the Committee of Twelve. Since there was general dissatisfac-

²Elliot, A. M. "Modern Languages as a College Discipline" Methods of Teaching Modern Languages. p. 13.

tion with the results obtained in the language classes, the Committee of Twelve of the Modern Language Association investigated aims, methods, and objectives of modern language instruction in 1898. The Committee decided that the one objective which could be achieved, and the one on which all would agree, was the reading objective. They advised the use of a reading method. This method is not the traditional method, but is rather one of the many methods which have been assimilated into the way of teaching called traditional. The method "did not deviate much from the old grammar-translation method except that greater amounts were to be 'read' (that is to say, translated)."³ While this is probably true, the important work of the committee was not the establishment of a way of teaching, but the establishment of what was to be taught. The fact that they chose reading as the important objective gave others a basis upon which to build new methods. Grammar was not to be taught for its own sake, but for the ultimate aim of being able to read the language in an intelligent and personally satisfying way. Grammar would still be taught thoroughly, but in terms of usage rather than rules.

The two reform movements which had the most influence on the teaching practices in the United States in this field were the German Reform Method and the French Direct Method. Actually it was the German Reform which gave us our new method and the French work gave us only the name, for although we adopted the Reform method, in its modified form we called it a direct method.

The German Reform Method. In Germany, as in other European countries, the need to study a foreign language was a far more immediate need than it was in the United States. The Germans wanted conversational facility as

³Handschin, Charles H. "Historical Aspects of Foreign-Language Teaching." Modern Language Teaching in the Postwar Reconstruction of Education. ed. by J. B. Tharp. p. 47.

well as a good knowledge of grammar and foreign civilizations. At the time, the only thing that American educators were sure they wanted out of these language courses was a reading ability. But both teachers and students began to realize that this was not enough. By being able to read the foreign language, did the student accomplish any of the general aims of education? This was about 1900, when we began to realize that if students were to be educated for living, they needed to know more than a long list of rules for different subjects, which they could recite from memory. "In general education we were beginning to lay stress on a firsthand knowledge of and acquaintance with things, not with mere words."⁴ This doctrine was incorporated into our adaptation of the German Reform Method, and for the first time it was considered important to give the students a knowledge of the culture and civilization of the country whose language they were studying. In fact, this culture study soon became the most important part of some courses, and the language was taught only because of the assumption that the feeling of the culture could be better grasped through the use of the foreign language. This form of instruction still insisted on the knowledge of grammar, but the student was to use the foreign language he was studying orally as well as just reading it. Many classes used the foreign language exclusively, and many others used it at all times except for the teaching of grammatical principles. However, this was the ideal form of the new method, and many teachers would not accept it. The main ideas which were accepted and used, as judged by the textbooks of the time, were the inclusion of connected passages to point out grammar principles, instead of the isolated, disconnected sentences which had been used. The need

⁴Handschin, op. cit., p. 47.

for oral work was recognized and accepted, but not to the degree desired by some. It was in the reading passages that most of the changes were made, since teachers could easily use more interesting readings and at the same time continue to teach in the traditional way in which they were trained. But there was a great change in textbooks as a result of the direct method. The earlier textbooks were simply printed with grammatical notes and vocabulary, but the idea of the new textbooks is to give the students exercises to accompany their reading so they will come to understand both the text and the grammar principles, and at the same time combine their reading and their oral work. "---editors and publishers have vied with each other in producing texts for reading that are equipped with a lavish supply of modern exercises; questions that take up the plot of the story, functional grammar drills, exercises in vocabulary building, and free composition."⁵

The traditional method of the past was simply that way of teaching a language which was used in all schools, it was the only method. It was changed and improved, but essentially it was the same form. What is now known as the traditional method is that way of teaching languages which is opposed to the more radical procedures such as the conversational and Army methods. Just as the textbooks of 1900 show the influence of the German Reform and just how much of this reform was accepted, so the modern textbooks show what teachers who will not accept the newer methods and aims are doing in their classrooms.

The Modified Direct Method. It is the modified form of the direct

⁵Bagster-Collins, E. W. "History of Modern Language Teaching in the United States." Studies in Modern Language Teaching. p. 91.

method which has become traditional today. Coleman points out that several authors of language textbooks have been careful to state that they have designed their exercises to comply with the recommendations of the Modern Foreign Language Study, conducted in 1900, which are as follows: "to develop direct reading ability and enlarge the student's cultural background."⁶ They are still willing to concede to the beliefs of a great many teachers that conversation is simply a side line of the regular teaching; it is important, but grammar must be learned. Both the teachers and the textbook authors are backed up in this by the three other aims which are cited by the Modern Foreign Language Study, namely: "(1) extend the student's knowledge of grammar and syntax; (2) introduce him to easy selections from standard authors; (3) establish in him independent habits of thought and of work."⁷ Pittaro and Green point out that they are writing their textbook with reading ability as the chief aim, and they include grammar principles as an important part of the instruction, but have arranged them in such a way as to have them aid in the reading aim, not to be learned for their own merit. "With reading ability as the chief aim of instruction, a smaller body of grammatical knowledge and a slower progression are necessary than has been the case in the past."⁸ As was advocated in the reform, the reading illustrates the grammar principles, and is arranged in a series of interesting stories rather than in isolated sentences. Hills and Ford have presented their book with an emphasis on spoken language, but "----with due recognition of the present de-

⁶Coleman, Algernon Experiments & Studies in Modern Language Teaching p. 77.

⁷Ibid. p. 77.

⁸Pittaro, John and Green, Alexander Primer Curso de Espanol. p. iv.

mand for early and abundant reading."⁹ They have, therefore, included a reading section for each lesson in the book. These reading sections point out grammar principles which are also taught in regular grammar lessons. They teach grammar in the student's own native tongue, but keep some emphasis on the conversational approach by repeating the rules in the foreign language.

The Traditional Method Today. The traditional method today then, is a direct method which is an adaptation of the German Reform; its aim is the reading aim, and the procedure is to include some conversation, grammar, and vocabulary, all of which is taught so as to aid in achieving the reading objective. Although there are probably some few teachers who are still using the grammar-translation method, or a slight variation of it, it has been generally discouraged in education since 1900, and cannot be considered as traditional today.

The Conversational Method. The conversation method is the newest reform in modern language teaching. It has not been completely accepted as yet, and there are many who think that it has no place in the schools at all. This is not a new way of teaching languages; the Natural method included all of the same principles, and the Psychological method was a background for it. It is actually the success of the Army Specialized Training Program which has brought the naturalists, the psychologists, and the conversationalists into the foreground again with their claims that grammar and reading should always be preceded or replaced with conversation in the foreign language. It is the name, conversational, that is new, and not the method.

⁹Hills, E. C. and Ford, J. D. M. First Spanish Course. p. iii.

The Psychological Method. The Psychological method was introduced by Betis, Gouin, and Swan in France, in 1880. The main idea of these men seemed to be to teach as large a vocabulary as was possible. The emphasis was upon mental visualization; that is, the student was to visualize in his mind every action, or in this case every word. As he spoke his first words in the new language, the student was told to visualize mentally everything that he was saying. All vocabulary words and sentences are arranged in a psychological manner so that the student can learn more and remember longer. This procedure, which was also known as the Series method, "---has the merit of a carefully restricted and selected vocabulary, and of arrangement of the sentences in a psychologically connected series which makes it possible to teach a large vocabulary. It has the further virtue of holding the interest to a considerable degree."¹⁰ This series was supposed to correspond to the natural way of thinking of the student, and therefore make his learning more pleasant as well as easier. This movement is a background for the conversationalists only because it was applied to the conversational aspects of the language such as vocabulary. Actually it did not put as much stress on the spoken language as later advocates would have liked.

The Natural Method. The general outline of the procedure now urged by the conversationalists was first advocated under the name of the "natural" method, in 1865. It was developed by educators in Europe who felt that an academic study of foreign language was, if not actually useless, certainly not of very great value to their students. These students would leave school after studying a foreign language and might be in another country or speaking

¹⁰Handschin, Charles op.cit. p. 47.

to a native of some other country at any time. When American teachers try to teach their students to speak French because they might be in France some day, they are, in most cases, setting up a false motive, but in Europe these excursions into foreign countries are commonplace things. For this reason, the European student of languages must learn to speak the language. The method was based on the principles of arousing interest, teaching words through their natural grouping, and as much oral work as possible. The interest was immediately aroused by the use of the foreign tongue the first day in class. The aim was to inspire the student to a desire to learn more and more as quickly as possible. Words were taught in sentences rather than vocabulary lists. Certain words, such as bread and butter, which always go together in any language, were immediately taught together. The oral work comprised most of the class, since students began to imitate simple sentences immediately. Imitation of sentence models was used instead of the formal study of grammar. The student was given one sentence with a present tense verb in it, and was then told to substitute another verb using the same form. The same model was used for position of adjectives etc. The whole course was carried out on the basis of imitation, "---by judicious questioning the pupils are led to reproduce the phraseology they have heard."¹¹ Grammar is introduced only when it can be completely understood in the foreign tongue.

The advocates of the natural method say that the traditional way of teaching the grammar first and then letting the student speak the language only after he knows some of the rules for correct speaking, is all wrong. This method has a poor beginning, say the naturalists, due to the fact that

¹¹Kroeh, C. F. "The Natural Method." Methods of Teaching Modern Languages p. 154.

it is 'unnatural' and not the way that the student learned to speak his own tongue. After all, say the naturalists, the student learned nothing of grammar in his native tongue until after he already had acquired facility in speaking, and this is the way it should be done in foreign language. The student should first of all speak, "---the teacher's chief effort should be to see to it that his pupil shall of all things learn to speak the language he is studying."¹²

The Work of Gottlieb Heness. Although there have probably been teachers who used this natural procedure since the first language was taught, the credit for actually developing it to the point at which it could be called a method goes to Gottlieb Heness, who worked with it in 1865. Heness was using the object-teaching method to help children to overcome their native dialects when he decided it would be a good way to teach an entirely new language. Object-teaching consists of having the teacher discuss, in the foreign language, some object which is within sight in the room. "The teacher begins with short sentences about some object in sight, in such a way that the pupils cannot fail to understand him."¹³ In the case of teaching to overcome a dialect, the student would, of course, understand everything that was said, and the main idea would be to imitate accurately. After Heness decided he could use the same method to teach a new language, he started a school in which he agreed to teach the sons of several Yale professors to speak German fluently in one school year. The school year, however, consisted of forty weeks, five

¹²Thomas, Calvin "Observations Upon Method in the Teaching of Modern Languages." Methods of Teaching Modern Languages p. 13.

¹³Kroeh, C. F. op.cit. p. 153.

days a week, four hours per day. Only German was used in the classroom, and the method consisted in speaking the language as though English did not exist.¹⁴ Teachers who use this method today are told to begin with such short sentences, meanwhile showing objects, even though they do not have their students for four hours each day. Afterwards, by means of questioning, the pupils are led to reproduce the words until they know them by heart. The process continues, increasing in difficulty until the pupils are ready to start reading. When they begin to read, the teacher prepares them for the selection by telling them what difficulties they may encounter. In this way, they are able to read as a native would, without recourse to dictionaries and without confusion.

This natural method was never wholeheartedly accepted in the schools, and was in fact short-lived even as an experimental approach. Since it was such an extreme method, the traditional forces did much to keep it out of classrooms. It was characterized by lack of form, and it made very great demands on the personality, knowledge, and skill of the teacher. The teacher who had been trained in a traditional manner was not able or willing to cope with the plans of the naturalists. However, this method and others did much toward making people realize the necessity of some reform in language teaching. Because of this realization that something new was needed, the direct method was more readily adopted.

Contributions of ASTP to the Conversational Method. After the work of the Army Specialized Training Program during World War II, the need for improvement was again felt. The Army method was successful, but

¹⁴Kroeh, C..F. op.cit. p. 153.

there was much controversy as to whether it was suitable for secondary schools. However, while the controversy was going on, the modern advocates of the naturalists introduced the conversational method, which was partly the work of the naturalists, and partly the work of the ASTP. It was not so extreme as either method, but it did operate under the same principle, that the spoken language was the important thing. Textbooks were printed which took advantage of the work done by the Army, but realizing that the schools were not ready to accept the Army method completely, they devised a new conversational approach. As Harris states in the introduction of his book, "Since a foreign language course for civilian students must obviously be planned so as to give students some ability to understand, speak, read, and write the language, and some knowledge of the civilization, the problem which confronted us was to provide a systematic study of grammar, introduce a substantial amount of cultural material, and allow for training in reading, without losing the effectiveness of the intensive procedure."¹⁵ This problem was solved by including grammar lessons designed to use the preliminary conversations as a point of departure. The fine points of grammar are not included, but there is a systematic study of fundamentals. The conversations are arranged so that the entire first week of the language study is oral-aural drill. This is designed to enable the student to react in French immediately. The exercises are done with the book closed so that the student will have to understand the spoken language. In this way he learns to speak before he learns long vocabulary lists.

The conversational method strictly speaking is not an adaptation of

¹⁵Harris, Julian and Leveque, Andre Conversational French for Beginners. p. ix.

the ASTP work. Those who believed that the spoken language was the important thing first worked with the naturalists, but this type of training was not accepted. Because the Army did have success with their language courses, the conversationalists took advantage of the general approval and tried again to change the objectives of modern language teaching. This time they met with more success. Some of the factors of the ASTP course are included in the conversational procedure, but some of the more intensive factors cannot be included.

Claims Made for Conversational Method by Cowan and Graves. J. Milton Cowan, and Mortimer Graves, who worked with the ASTP on the foreign language program during World War II, and who have also worked on its partial adaptation to the conversational method to be used in secondary schools, have published a list of claims and have cited the parts necessary for a civilian program of conversational or intensive language instruction. An adaptation of the list is as follows:

1. The traditional method did not give the students a practical command of the language; the need now is for practical speaking command.
2. Better results are obtained by a more concentrated use of the students' time; a minimum of ten hours per week.
3. Major emphasis at first should be on the spoken language.
4. This course requires a trained technical linguist, and a native person should be responsible for the drill. However, conditions must be met as they are found.
5. This method is probably not new, but new materials are appearing.
6. Language should not be taught without grammar; grammar should be taught only when and if it becomes useful. The student should not learn as a child learns

his native tongue, he should use all the tools of his maturity, intelligence, and education.

7. The need is for intensive instruction with scientifically-trained personnel, but there is room for divergence as to detail.
8. This intensive study need not include an area study as it did with the ASTP, but even the mechanists acknowledge that language does not operate in a vacuum.¹⁶

Summary and Comparison of the Two Methods Discussed. A general summary and comparison of the traditional and conversational methods will serve to clarify the basis on which each group makes its claim for superiority.

The traditional method operates under the assumption that reading is the big aim to be achieved. Years ago, this meant the exclusion of every other part of the language, but now conversation, grammar, vocabulary and all other parts of language training are seen to be important. Conversation and pronunciation are important in giving the pupil the feeling for the culture which he will soon learn by reading the literature of the country. In the same way, grammar and vocabulary have importance only in the light of how they will aid in the attainment of reading ability. All aspects of the language are important, but they are all to be subjugated to the reading aim.

The conversationalists, in the same manner, subordinate all phases of language study to the one great aim of speaking the language as well and as quickly as possible. They do not exclude other elements of the lan-

¹⁶Cowan, J. Milton and Graves, Mortimer "A Statement of Intensive Language Instruction." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching. ed. by Maxim Newmark. pp. 568-9.

guage, but they do postpone them. The student learns a vocabulary which he can put to immediate use, any other words will have to wait. Grammar will be taught eventually in most schools, but not until the student is safely endowed with conversational ability and a good pronunciation. He will also begin to read after he has this ability, but the speaking must come first.

CHAPTER II

THE ARMY METHOD AS A BACKGROUND TO THE
CONVERSATIONAL METHOD

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THE ARMY METHOD AS A BACKGROUND TO THE CONVERSATIONAL METHOD

Much of the work done by the conversationalists has been inspired by the overwhelming success achieved by the Army in their foreign language courses. Because of their success with new methods and new aims, it was felt that innovations were needed in high school language courses. The story of the Army method will help to clarify some of the factors included in the conversational method.

The History of the Army Method. During World War II, the United States Government realized that if we were to fight our wars in foreign countries, it would be necessary for our soldiers to know about the place they were fighting, and to be able to speak the language. Colonel Jesse I. Miller was placed in charge of the training of soldiers for the special problems of occupation. One of these problems was that of teaching soldiers to speak foreign languages in a far more speedy and efficient way than they were learning in the high schools and colleges throughout the country. Mortimer Graves, Administrative Secretary of the American Council of Learned Societies, and J. Milton Cowan, Executive Secretary of the Linguistic Society of America, were put in charge of the organization of a nine month intensive language program. The main idea of the course was to concentrate on fundamentals; there would be no time for literature, and grammar was to be taught only when the student wanted it and felt that he needed it. If he asked for explanation of a certain grammatical principle, it would then be given.

"The principles at the bottom of teaching in the Intensive Language Program were: concentrate on the fundamentals of the language he is studying and keep him from

twisting it into the shape of the English he is used to; start with the spoken language and drill, drill, drill. ---concentrate on the colloquial form of the language; explain the grammar when the effort to talk turns up something that needs to be explained; get the voice instruction from a native, if at all possible; and practice talking and listening up to the point where fatigue dictates a rest."¹

There was also an area study included in the course to acquaint the soldier with the customs of the people, and such knowledge of landscape differences which would be useful to him.

Concentrating on these principles, the Army started a program, in 1942, for training soldiers in foreign language in a time-saving economical way. The so-called Army method which resulted from this program has been responsible for many changes in the methods of secondary schools in teaching languages. There have been many exaggerated stories of the success of this program, and they have resulted in the adoption of other methods not previously considered valid, or in the adoption of a new method which combines the best of the Army plan with the best of the earlier methods.

Steps in the Army Course. The "Success Story" of the Army method has a three-fold credit line. It goes to the Linguistic Society of America, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the War Department.² The actual program consisted of two parts, Language Guides and Basic Courses. The Armed Forces proceeded on the theory that they could teach soldiers to speak even the most complicated of foreign languages in the same way that they learned to speak English when they were children; by imitating

¹Hyneman, Charles S. "History of the Wartime Area and Language Courses." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching p. 81.

²Language Went to War p. 1.

what he heard others saying. The Language Guide part of the program consisted of two or three phonograph records accompanied by some printed matter. The material was self-teaching and could be used with one hundred or fewer men. The main idea was to teach them how to pronounce some useful phrases in the foreign language, and thus feel more familiar with it. They would begin by learning some phrases which are commonly used, and thus they could continue practice among themselves. "It was discovered that this process made learning so much like a game that it not only became interesting but actually enjoyable to the soldiers."³ The procedure was as follows; the special phonograph records would first give the phrase in English, next, the phrase was spoken twice by a native speaker, the student would then be given time to repeat and imitate, referring to his printed material which had the phrase written in phonetics. He was to refer to this material only if he found it necessary; it was preferable to imitate what he heard on the record.

This was all that comprised the first part, or Language Guide part of the program. "But rather than turn soldiers out on their own, with nothing but this smattering of introductory words and phrases, the Army then set to work to devise more extensive courses in many of the more widely-used languages."⁴ This was the second part of the course, called the Basic Course. It was designed to be a more extensive course, requiring one hundred and fifty to two hundred hours for completion, but arranged in such a manner that completion was not necessary to receive value from the course. The procedure is quite similar to the first part

³Language Went to War, op.cit. p. 2.

⁴Ibid. p. 2.

of the program. Records are used in this course, but the services of a native speaker are preferred wherever this is possible. The records may then be used for personal practice away from class. The speaker is called the Guide, and he has a manual printed in his own language. This is to enable him to teach the soldiers even though he may not know a word of English. The course consists of twenty-four twelve-inch double-faced records. The records having been studied thoroughly, with or without the services of a Guide, the soldier can then rely on printed material since his accent will have been fixed. The materials, like those of the first part of the course, are self-teaching, but the services of a capable teacher are desirable. The entire emphasis is on the spoken language and no attempt is made to teach formal grammar. Grammar is not taught later, after the soldier can speak the language, but is left completely out except where a note on some grammatical points will simplify learning. A mastery of the entire Basic Course gives the student a vocabulary of 1,000 to 1,500 words, a good pronunciation, and fluency with the words he knows; "---he is successfully launched as a speaker of the new language; and to learn more need only talk with the native speakers."⁵

Peacetime USAFI Courses. With the end of the war, the United States Armed Forces Institute made certain additions and changes in this program, certain modifications which enabled soldiers to study languages for high school and college credit. They offer two intensive courses, one a spoken language course, and the other a correspondence course which includes some of the more traditional elements of foreign language study, since it was deemed necessary to include certain essentials for high schools.

⁵Language Went to War, op.cit. p. 2.

However, even in the correspondence course, conversation and pronunciation maintain their place of primary importance, although the reading aim is also realized. For example, the Beginning French course is described as "A course emphasizing the development of reading ability with correct pronunciation and active usage stressed to the fullest extent possible in correspondence instruction."⁶ The second course is designed to further the same skills, and there is a prerequisite of previous study in the language.

The spoken language course is designed to concentrate on conversation and, therefore, almost no printed material is included. The services of a native are seen to be essential for this course. Grammar is again subordinated to the desire to speak the language. "Grammar is reduced to a minimum, but an attempt is made to include the materials essential for learning to speak the language."⁷ This course teaches speech in simple situations, speech in slightly more complicated situations, and is taught by means of phonograph records.

Comparison of the Army and Conversational Methods. The ASTP placed all emphasis on the spoken language. Even in their peacetime courses, conversation was stressed, but because of lack of urgency of the aim, other elements could be included so that soldiers could get school credit for their courses. This spoken language, which was emphasized to the exclusion of all else in the Army program, is not exactly the same as that urged by the conversationalists. The soldiers studying under the ASTP learned

⁶Catalog of the United States Armed Forces Institute. p. 118.

⁷Ibid. p. 132.

to speak in special situations, their vocabulary was highly specialized for their own needs. The reason the ASTP placed spoken language in the most important position was because their students were going to start speaking the language immediately in the foreign country. Grammar in this course was not postponed; it was eliminated unless it was expedient to teach it. The conversationalists, on the other hand, realize the necessity of teaching grammar, but insist on functional grammar. If the soldier could make himself understood with fully grasping a certain grammatical principle, his conversation would never be interrupted for an explanation. Reading was also eliminated, not postponed. If the soldier could read the language, and if he wanted to, he was allowed to do so on his own time, but he was never expected to make a report of his reading progress. There are many differences between the conversational and Army methods, and it is only in the one goal, spoken language, that they are in complete agreement.

Advisability of Adapting the Army Method to Secondary Schools. Since the conversationalists agree with the ASTP that speaking should be the aim of language teaching, it would seem logical to accept the method with which the ASTP accomplished this goal. There is general agreement that this program did accomplish a great deal in teaching soldiers foreign languages in a short period of time, but there is disagreement as to whether their method can be adapted to civilian secondary schools. A study of the aims and objectives and the requirements for success with the Army will show whether or not the aim or the method can be successfully employed in the secondary schools.

Aims and Objectives of ASTP. Since the language schools were set up during the war, their aim and objectives were already present; the

men had to be taught to speak to the people with whom they would come into contact in the foreign countries where they were fighting. This was the aim; it had to be accomplished in a minimum of time because the service of these men was needed immediately. There was no time for an academic study of the language because this would do nothing toward achieving the stated aim of fluent conversation. The originators of the Army method knew what was desired, and their job was to set up a procedure of teaching which would give the soldiers the facility in language which was demanded. There were not several aims to be accomplished, the standards had already been set up for the soldiers to achieve; there was no lack of time during each day, for the main job of these soldier-students was to learn the language, and they were given ample time for classes and private study; they held no other jobs, they studied no other course. There was no lack of equipment or finances. The United States Government was ready to provide anything which was necessary to the fulfillment of the needs of the ASTP.

Requirements for the Army Method. The method, aims, and objectives of the Army method have been described, but a statement of the requirements for success will serve to show why the conversationalists do not urge the adoption of the entire ASTP course, but rather an adaptation thereof. Assuming that the success of the Army course is owing to the procedure which was used, the same elements would have to be in a high school course of that type. The soldiers who were enrolled in this course were hand-picked; they were not allowed to fall behind or fail and repeat, those who could not keep up were dropped out of the class. The language course was the only course which the soldier was studying; he was given the time necessary for his class; there was no limit on the daily length of the class.

The group was a small one, ten soldiers at the most, and even this group could be broken up for individual work. The conditions were ideal; anything that was needed was granted. As stated by Wooley; "The Army Method makes four requirements: 1. students of high I. Q. are selected; 2. the classes are small; 3. often two instructors are used; 4. students have ample time."⁸

First Requirement: Students of High I. Q. Examining these four requirements for the use of the work of the ASTP, it becomes obvious that there are many difficulties in meeting these requirements in the secondary schools; at least as these schools are organized today. As the courses are now planned, foreign languages are electives, and while guidance teachers try to discourage those who have no aptitude from taking these electives, the group which is found in language classes is not a highly selective one. If high school foreign language classes were grouped, it would probably be on the basis of college-preparatory and non-college-preparatory students, since the Army method would not satisfy the present needs of the college group. However, even if it were possible to group language students on the basis of I. Q. alone, these groups would still not correspond to the Army groups. The soldiers who were selected for this particular type of training were not only of a very high I. Q. but "a very high percentage of Army 'beginners' had had previous language training, while in normal classes beginners are really beginners."⁹ A very small percentage of high school students in language courses have had

⁸Wooley, E. O. "Five Decades of German Instruction in America." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching p. 79.

⁹Pargment, M. S. "On Learning a Foreign Language." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching p. 604.

any previous training in languages, and while there are some students who come from homes in which French is spoken, they are a very small minority, and those from Spanish-speaking families are generally limited to certain sections of the country. Therefore, it is obvious that the high schools cannot fulfill the first requirement for the use of the Army method.

Second Requirement: Small Classes. The second requirement of small classes is equally difficult to achieve in the secondary school. While foreign language classes may be smaller than some of the other classes in the school, this is not by plan, but merely through the accident of enrollment. If a great many students elect a language, the administrators cannot separate them into five or more groups for several reasons. In the first place, there are only a certain number of class periods in a day, and other classes have to be scheduled. The school finances would probably not merit the hiring of the additional teachers that would be needed if the groups were cut down to ten or fifteen students. The importance of this small class is very obvious when considering a class in conversation. The only way that students can learn to speak a language accurately is by speaking it often, and if the economy of time which was one of the more desirable aspects of the ASTP is to be achieved, the classes must be small for each student to be given ample time to speak. In the average high school language class, no student could receive enough attention and have the opportunity to speak the language often. As Pargment says, "The size of the A. S. T. P. classes was from three to four times smaller than that of our ordinary classes, which means that students could be given from three to four times as much actual practice in the use of the language."¹⁰

¹⁰Pargment, M. S. op.cit. p. 604.

So, the second requirement for successful use of the ASTP method is also impossible to meet, unless some pupils are denied the chance to elect foreign languages, in order to cut down the size of the classes, or unless foreign languages are given the place of primary importance in the curriculum of the school, and provided with as much time as they request for their classes.

Third Requirement: Use of Two Instructors. The third requirement for the use of the Army intensive program of training is the use of two instructors. Under the present organization of the typical high school, such a plan would be most impractical. Since the two instructors in the Army were a competent teacher and a native speaker, they did not teach simultaneously. The value of having a native instructor was to have him preside over pronunciation sessions, where his capabilities as a teacher were not so important as his capabilities as a listener. The use of the native instructor did not take any time away from the regular instructor who taught vocabulary and such grammar as was used. With the time given to high school language classes, any class period given over to the native instructor would be something taken away from the regular teacher, rather than something added to the effectiveness of the course. There are very few high schools which would be able to pay two instructors to teach one course, and there are very few which would be able to secure the services of a foreign instructor, since they usually prefer college work. The ASTP was not concerned with the special teacher training of the native, nor with his natural aptitude for teaching. Perhaps with the maturity of their students, and with the special selection of students, this was not necessary, but with high school students, a teacher must be adequately prepared

in the procedures of teaching adolescents, not just in the field he will teach. The officials of the ASTP believed that because "the materials are self-teaching, a group can work under the direction of someone who knows nothing at all about the technique of teaching a language, or a single soldier can work on his own."¹¹ It is doubtful whether the average high school student is mature enough to learn from someone who knows nothing at all about how to provide conditions for learning. The question of whether or not the student would work on his own to acquire more knowledge brings up the question of motivation, and whether the students are given enough basic training to enable them to go on by themselves. "Do we give our students such a basic training as will enable him to go beyond the stage of imitating the teacher and memorizing what he is telling them---"¹² If the high school teacher relied entirely upon phonograph records and imitation of sounds as did the ASTP, how much application would the students make to other material in or outside of the classroom? How much transfer of training is there unless the course is taught with the idea of making transfer possible and easy? If a student learns to pronounce a word solely by imitation, there is no guarantee that he will be able to pronounce the next word which has the same letters, unless he has been told that those letters are always pronounced the same way.

Fourth Requirement: Ample Time for Students. The fourth requirement for the effective use of the ASTP method is that the students have ample time to devote to their studies. As was the case in the necessity for smaller classes, this is not practical in high school classes. "To accom-

¹¹Language Went to War. p. 2.

¹²Schaeffer, Rudolf F. "The Peacetime Value of Army Language Teaching to the Trainee." Sch. & Soc. LIX (May 13, 1944) p. 347.

plish the same results obtained by the Army we must either organize such periods of intensive language instruction or follow the custom prevailing in most other countries where foreign language instruction is begun at the age of 10 or 11 and continues for six years or more."¹³ The soldiers enrolled in this course spent a minimum of twenty-five hours per week on their studies. In order to do this in secondary schools, the entire curriculum would have to be re-organized, and there would have to be general agreement that the foreign language courses should be given the greatest amount of high school time. If they had such importance, the enrollment in the classes would be much higher than it now is. It would be impossible to agree on such an assumption, since foreign languages would not be the most important subject in accomplishing the aims of secondary education. If Army conditions were to be secured, and they would have to be to guarantee success with the method, the students enrolled in this course would have to engage in very few extra-curricular activities, and these activities would have to be very carefully selected. The discipline would have to be very rigid. The use to which the students put their knowledge of languages after high school would have to increase greatly to warrant such an intensive course as this.

Motivation in the ASTP. As to motivation, a high school student could never be motivated in the same manner as a soldier in the ASTP. Many of these men had returned from fighting in Europe, many others were kept from going overseas by their selection as candidates in this school.

¹³Fayer, Margaret L. "Middlebury College and the Army Method of Teaching Languages." Sch. & Soc. LX (July 29, 1944) p. 79.

In either case, a man who knew that he would not be kept in the course unless he showed ability, aptitude, and progress, would be amply motivated to do his best work in and out of the classroom. As Hutchinson says, "---two very important contributions to its success are, 1) very high motivation, 2) the greatly increased number of hours put in the classroom."¹⁴ This type of motivation cannot be present in high school students, there is no fear present, and the desire to succeed is not so intense since the consequence of failure is not so drastic. Of course, the fear element in motivation is not desirable for high school students, for if he studies with fear, he is likely to feel such a dislike for the subject that he will avoid all further contact with it. In general, fear as a motive for adolescents is to be avoided. It is dangerous, and as Douglass said, it is actually reprehensible.¹⁵ However, it is only the kind of motivation in the ASTP which cannot be met in secondary schools, and if the same high degree could be obtained, that would be all that was necessary.

Use As a Factor of Motivation. Another factor of motivation in the course given to the soldiers was the possibility of a career in language after the war. There is no such practical motivation in high school students. The only ones who have a practical reason for electing foreign languages are the college-preparatory students, and unless college entrance and placement tests are reorganized, the Army conversational course would not fulfill their needs. As for others, they could not plan a career with the meager language training they would receive in the time-limited high school course. As for actual use of the language for the soldier-

¹⁴Hutchinson, Mark E. "The Wartime Language Program as Related to Postwar Language Teaching." Sch. & Soc. LX (July 15, 1944) p. 34.

¹⁵Douglass, Harl, and Mills, Hubert Teaching in High School p. 71.

student and the high school student, there can be no comparison. The purpose of the soldier's training was to put the language to immediate use, the high school students have varied purposes in studying languages, but very few of them will have the purpose of using the language immediately following their graduation.

Impossibility of Meeting Requirements of ASTP in Secondary Schools. Since it has been shown that these four requirements for the use of the Army method cannot be fulfilled in high school, the method as used in these schools would not be the Army method. Any success achieved by the ASTP could not be expected to result from a different type of course. The soldiers were under orders, they were selected to insure a homogeneous group. In high schools the students are uneven in mental equipment and desire to learn, the classes are large and the time is limited. It would seem impossible, under these conditions, to achieve the success which is claimed for this method, and it is for this reason that the conversationalists do not claim that their method is a complete adaptation of the Army method, although they do require many of the same factors.

Unsuitability of Aim of ASTP to Secondary Schools. Assuming, however, that these four requirements could be met, there is still the question as to whether the method should be adapted to secondary schools, whose students are adolescents and have problems peculiar to this age group. They need more guidance and individual attention than would be possible under an intensive program. The aim of the Army Specialized Training Program was the "rapid training for special and temporary linguistic assignments."¹⁶ The

¹⁶Koch, Ernest "Functionalism in Foreign Language Teaching." Modern Language Journal XXXI (May, 1947) p. 267.

Army proceeded on the assumption that the spoken language was the most important thing, and considering the aim of the ASTP, the assumption was a fact. The program was set up to give a special group of men a quick course in foreign languages. The program was carried out in an emergency with a special and limited goal. The men were expected to use the language in limited situations and were expected to use it immediately. Few high school students ever use the language in any practical situation, and almost none of them use it immediately. The aims of foreign language instruction in secondary schools as stated by Bent and Kronenberg are as follows:

- "1. To develop tolerance for, an appreciation of, and a better understanding of other people.
2. To study the literature, philosophy, history, culture, and mores of people of other countries through the medium of their own language.
3. To give those who are linguistically minded and enjoy translating an opportunity to pursue this interest."¹⁷

These aims seem to negate any possibility of accepting the aim of the Army method as the aim of the high school courses. Since the method must operate under the objectives and aims, the Army method would be unacceptable for high school use.

Aid Given to Language Teaching by ASTP. While the Army method in its entirety cannot be accepted for high school classes, the attention given to the training of pupils in speaking a foreign language has been a valuable aid to the advocates of the speaking aim in foreign language. "The armed forces rendered a gallant service to language instruction when, for

¹⁷Bent, Rudyard K. and Kronenberg, Henry H. Principles of Secondary Education p. 357.

purposes of their own, they put the emphasis where it always should have been; on spoken language."¹⁸ The ASTP, however, was valuable not only as a basis for the superiority claims made by the conversationalists, but also was of importance as an innovation which caused educators to re-examine the methods, aims, and objectives of modern language teaching.

Frauenfelder, William "Lessons From the Army Language Courses."
Sch. & Soc. LX (August 19, 1944) p. 123.

CHAPTER III

ADVANTAGES CLAIMED BY THE TRADITIONALISTS

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The methods of work of both the traditionalists and the conversationalists have been discussed, and it is now important to describe what each group claims to be the special advantages to be gained from adapting classroom procedure to their method of teaching languages.

Statement of Problem. Because of the popularity of the Army method of teaching foreign languages, and its subsequent adaptation to the conversational method for secondary schools, this study is an attempt to evaluate the claims made by traditionalists and conversationalists, and to judge the effectiveness of each course for the secondary school.

Criteria for Judging the Effectiveness of a Foreign Language Course in Secondary Schools. The following are criteria which have received consideration in determining the effectiveness of foreign language teaching in secondary schools:

1. The course must provide adequate motivation for adolescents.
2. The course must be one which will have some practical value for those taking it.
3. The aim of the course must be one which can be adopted by all secondary school pupils who enroll in the course.
4. The course must be one which satisfies the stated aims of secondary education.
5. The course must be adaptable to the secondary school, regardless of its success in any other area.

The following requirements stated by Bent and Kronenberg for the curriculum apply equally to a language course, for if the curriculum is to satisfy these conditions then each individual course included in it must also satisfy them.

"The curriculum for any school or division should be constructed specifically for those who will pursue it, and the selection of content should be based on a study of that group. Since the secondary school is designed for adolescents, it is essential that the curriculum be based on a study of this group. The study should include the following, which furnish a basis for the curriculum:

1. The characteristics, interests, and needs of adolescents --those which are common to all and those for special groups.
2. The experiences of youth which are natural for them.
3. The society in which the adolescent lives.
4. The aims and purposes of the secondary school in that society."¹

Claims Made By the Traditionalists. The traditionalists point out that the advantages of their method are of a twofold nature. Superiority is claimed both for method and objectives. These are those who say that regardless of the ultimate aim, it is well for the student to learn something of grammar, and there are others who admit that the conversational method is a sound one, but only if speaking is to be your only aim.

Learning of Grammar. Among those who say that the superiority is in the method, some insist that not only is the learning of grammar essential, but it should also be interesting. The naturalists wanted to make the whole study of language an easy thing for their students, but the traditionalists say that even though grammar may be difficult, interest will make it worth a little effort. Making things easy is not the only way of teaching; "--suppose the learner occasionally has a sensation that he is working? What of it? There are worse things in the world than that."² Facts and laws of language should be as interesting as any other facts and laws. If a student can be interested in learning, experimenting, and applying a law in science, he should also be able to find the same interest in applying the laws of grammar.

¹Bent, Rudyard op. cit. p.207.

²Thomas, Calvin op. cit. p. 16.

This of course rests mainly with the teacher; if the teacher finds grammar difficult and boring, she cannot expect much more of her students. The traditionalists also claim that students really do like to work. Problem-solving in other courses arouses their interest even though they may have to work hard at it. Actually they would prefer to be working hard, if they are interested in the work, than to be wasting their time. In fact, the traditionalists claim that students show "---the greatest respect for the teacher who gives them work to do, insists upon their doing it and does not seem over anxious to make things easy."³

While emphasizing the reading aim, the traditionalists seem to feel that all parts of the language, grammar, conversation, and reading, are important if the student is really to gain anything valuable from his study. Any method which is to be used successfully, "---cannot leave out of sight the facts that the grammar bears a most important relation to the language; that the literature is, after all, the one great treasure-house which must be opened to the student;---"⁴ Grammar must be learned, but poetry and literature must not be completely subordinated to it, rather they should be understood more thoroughly by first understanding the essentials of grammar.

As language is one of the humanities, those who study it should study it thoroughly. Why should they go into it at all if they do not achieve some grasp of the subject? They should also gain an insight to the culture of the language they are studying, and the traditionalists claim that this cannot be done by a superficial ability to converse simply in the

³Thomas, Calvin op.cit. p. 17.

⁴Sumichrast, F. C. "Notes on the Teaching of French." Methods of Teaching Modern Languages. p. 52

language. So, the traditionalists feel that whatever the aim, if languages are studied at all, they should be studied thoroughly. They particularly insist on the study of grammar, whether one wants to read or speak the language.

"The study of grammar should be carried on for two distinct purposes. It should, in the first place, especially in case the pupils have never studied any foreign language, serve to give them an insight into the mechanism of language, bringing into clearness those fundamental grammatical concepts which are absent or vague in their minds in connection with the mother tongue. Secondly, it should work toward creating correct speech habits in the foreign language. ---The committing to memory of paradigms of declensions and conjugations is a minor but necessary part of the grammar work of the elementary course. In order that this work may not become mechanical, the forms should be used in complete sentences; that is, functional grammar is recommended instead of formal grammar."⁵

Inclusion of Conversation. Others of the traditionalists believe that the smattering of conversational ability should not be included in the course. At least they say that it should not be included as an aim of the course. To them, reading is the only feasible aim, and it is not one which can be in any way subordinated. In order to keep reading as the major aim, and to achieve this aim, the reading or traditional method is not only the best one, it is the only one possible. They claim that because of the small amount of time devoted to foreign languages in the secondary schools, the conversational aim would only serve to send the students out with a mediocre, incomplete knowledge of the language. The reading aim, whether one believes it to be the best aim or not, is the only one which can approach success in the schools. Both cannot be taught, because if

⁵"Syllabus in Modern Foreign Languages, University of the State of New York," Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching. p. 311.

one is stressed the other will be neglected. They feel that it is better to send the student out with a good reading ability than with the ability to read a little, and speak a little.

In originally deciding which aim should be the aim of language courses in secondary schools, the value to each student had to be determined either along educational or practical lines. Beginning with the conversational aim, the traditionalists first maintain that it has little value educationally. The traditionalists say that the ability to speak a language does not depend on any amount of educational training, it depends simply on the practice one has had, and the opportunity for practice. This opportunity is not provided by the school. The traditionalists also claim that since education deals with the acquisition of new ideas, conversational ability has no place at all in education. "It is a trick, a craft, a technique, quite comparable with the ability to telegraph, or to write shorthand."⁶ Even if you wanted to impart conversational ability to your students, it would be impossible to teach them to speak in all ways as a native, since they would constantly refer to their native tongue after leaving school. It has no practical value because it could not be taught to that degree of proficiency which would enable the student to use it commercially. Since it is a skill which is quickly forgotten due to lack of use, the traditionalists claim that there is no value in it at all. The traditionalists are somewhat backed up in this claim by William Brickman who worked with the Army course during World War II, and who says; "Experience as an instructor in an Army blitz course in German and as a co-worker overseas of graduates of that course has convinced the pre-

⁶Thomas, Calvin op.cit. p. 25.

sent writer that initial conversational facility is lost much more rapidly than acquired."⁷ The Committee of Twelve also gives strength to the traditionalists' claim that the speaking aim is not the most important thing, although they would not agree with the extreme view that conversation has no place at all in the school. "---in our general scheme of secondary education the ability to converse in French or German should be regarded as of subordinate importance."⁸

Reading Aim. Since the traditionalists have convinced themselves that the speaking aim has neither practical nor educational value, they turn to the reading aim. They claim that it is only through reading that a student can really get to know the culture of a nation, and only through reading will the student really feel that he is accomplishing something in his studies. The value "---lies in the gradual working of one's way into the intellectual life of another people."⁹ And if one is to work his way into the intellectual life of the nation it can be done only through literature. If it is to be done through the study of language at all, it must be done through reading. It could be done without any use of the foreign language at all, if as Nicholas Murray Butler says, "The chief purpose in studying French should be to gain an understanding and appreciation of France."¹⁰ But, as the controversy is over what method to use in teaching languages, the question of whether or not it is necessary to teach them at

⁷Brickman, William W. "The Teaching of Foreign Languages: Comments on the A. S. T. P." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching. p. 599.

⁸"Report of the Committee of Twelve." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching. p. 191.

⁹Thomas, Calvin op.cit. p. 27.

¹⁰Brickman, William op.cit. p. 599.

all is not considered. The real value, then, of teaching the language is in learning to read. This must be a thorough and scientific knowledge, because if the student is to take away ideas from his reading, he must understand the fine shadings of the author's use of vocabulary and grammar, or there will be the danger of taking away erroneous impressions.

"This accent on content, this development of precision reading for a purpose not only means that the formal aspects of grammar will have to receive new stress, but it means also that there must be a return to translation."¹¹ The student after he has learned to read well, can perfect himself by repeated reading, and he can use oral practice to get the feel of the passage he is reading. Among the aims adopted by the Modern Language Association, that given first place was literary culture. In order to gain this literary culture from his reading, "---it must be accurate reading; for without accuracy there can be no thorough intelligence and, of course, no genuine literary culture. And this accuracy implies sound grammatical knowledge, and precise, often minute, grammatical criticism."¹² However, at the same time, the traditionalists realize that it would be disastrous to return to the grammar-translation method in its complete form, and they stress the point that the reading must be pleasurable. The only way to make reading pleasant and at the same time to insist upon grammatical perfection is to increase the amount of reading that the students do. In this way, the grammar will become familiar to them, and they won't have to check each principle as they come across it.

¹¹Koch, Ernest op.cit. p. 270.

¹²Joynes, Edward S. "Reading in Modern Language Study." Methods of Teaching Modern Languages. p. 32.

Psychological Value of the Traditional Method. Finally, the traditionalists believe that regardless of aim or method, the conversational courses are not psychologically beneficial to the student. "The almost exclusive attention to oral skill is not well-balanced instruction."¹³ The average high school student is not emotionally equipped to subdue himself to the intensive type of course necessary for fulfillment of the conversational aim of rapidly acquired speaking facility. High school students would not want to spend all their time in class on conversation, even though they might prefer it to reading, they react better to a variety in classroom procedure.

Claims Made by the Conversationalists. The conversationalists also claim superiority both for their method and for their objectives and aims. As the traditionalists, they do not claim that the student should be taught only to speak, with reading and writing ignored completely, but they do maintain that a foreign language course should start with speaking and gradually continue until the student is able to read without help. They maintain that speaking is the first aim because languages are most useful when they are spoken; it is the spoken language that is necessary for real practical value. In everyday life, the use of the language is in its spoken form, and the conversationalists, and the naturalists in an earlier time, believe that this is what the students should learn, and that they can learn it only by repetition. "The basis of all language, whether literary or scientific, is the phraseology of every-day life, and this can be learned only by imitation."¹⁴ They believe that their students

¹³Fayer, Margaret L. op.cit. p. 79.

¹⁴Kroeh, C..F. op.cit. p. 158.

must learn to speak first, and then after ample imitation they will not have to stop and think of each grammatical rule, but will simply repeat unerringly.

Motivation and Interest in the Conversational Method. The method is superior, say the conversationalists, because it had the advantage of immediately arousing the interest of the student. If he enters a foreign language class and starts to learn rules the first day, he is only preparing for some value in the future. After the acquisition of a certain number of rules he will be able to speak or read. However, if he starts speaking the first day of the class, he has the feeling of having received a value already, and wants to improve it. The student is immediately engaging in a form of activity, which is generally conceded will aid any learning situation. By the use of this method, the students "---got off to an unusually fast start, acquired an easy and natural pronunciation, were relatively unself-conscious about using a foreign language, and quickly developed a feeling for the language."¹⁵

Army Success as a Background for the Conversationalists' Claims.

The conversationalists do not make many explanations of their claims for the success and obvious psychological advantages of their method, for they feel that the value has already been sufficiently proven by the success of the Army Specialized Training Program with an intensive method. Everyone seems agreed that the Army accomplished "its" aim remarkably well, there is also general agreement that high school students do not leave their foreign language classes with a very thorough knowledge of any phase of

¹⁵Harris, Julian and Leveque, Andre op.cit. p. ix.

the language. "The 'dribble method' of learning languages (three hours a week for years) has failed to give students practical command of any language. It may, of course, have had other educational values, but the need now is for practical speaking command."¹⁶

After taking for granted that the older method has not been successful, and that their method has been extremely successful in achieving its goal, the conversationalists set out to prove that the speaking aim is the important aim for the language classes today. They feel that with the modern facilities of transportation and communication, there is a much more practical way of learning the culture of a nation than by reading it. It is becoming more and more feasible that high school students may be taking their language courses to 'speak to the natives.' There are more opportunities in this country to speak to foreign people in their own tongue, and there are many more opportunities for, or necessities for, Americans to be abroad. If the high school boy of today learned a language thoroughly in its conversational aspect, he might well have opportunity to use it in the foreign country before too many years passed. The idea of learning languages simply to be cultured has no place in education today, say the conversationalists, just as no other subject which will not be of some benefit to the student in his later living has a place in modern education. "Americans generally must be made to realize that the 'oceans have shrunk,' that the United States is no longer isolated, physically, spiritually, or intellectually. To attempt to maintain an isolationist point of view is unrealistic, impractical, 'burying one's head in the sand.' For national defense in the immediate present and for broad humanitarian world under-

¹⁶Cowan, J. Milton and Graves, Mortimer op.cit. p. 568.

standing in the more hopeful future, knowledge of foreign language is essential."¹⁷ And for such a practical need, it is important to be able to speak the language, not just sit at home and read great literature, even if there were any assurance that this would be done.

Additions Needed in Army Aim. It is generally accepted that the wartime courses in languages had to concentrate on a single aim, that of speaking the colloquial language, but the conversationalists realize that this aim is not enough to satisfy the needs of civilian peacetime students. They realize that cultural studies, reading ability, and other language facilities are also important but they feel that the primary aim of language instruction should be "---the oral expression of thought."¹⁸ They believe that in first concentrating on speaking ability the other aims will be more readily realized. They do not feel that a thorough study of grammar is as valuable as it is believed to be by some of the traditionalists. The Language Teachers Association of New York City, agrees with the conversationalists on many of these points.

"---the peace-time objectives of foreign language teaching must be broader and deeper than the war-time objectives, and must at the same time include them. We therefore urge a return to the fourfold aim of foreign language teaching: Speaking and comprehending, Reading and writing, and that the conditions be provided in the way of length of course, class size etc. which will make possible the attainment of this fourfold aim.

In the early years, speaking and comprehending should be the core of the work. ---Grammar should

¹⁷Doyle, Henry Grattan "A Program for More Effective Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the United States." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching. p. 648.

¹⁸Gardiner, Catherine A. "Oral Command the First Objective in Foreign Language Teaching." Sch. & Soc. LVIII (July 17, 1943) p. 43.

be incidental and taught only in so far as it is conducive to fluency and ease in comprehension."¹⁹

At the Rockefeller Language Conference in 1944, there was general agreement that the training in speaking should precede training in reading, since it was through speaking ability that all other skills could be most easily learned.

The conversationalists realize that their recommendations for an intensive language course would necessitate a reorganization of the curriculum in most high schools, but they feel that the benefits to be gained from such a course would justify any amount of change which might be necessary. Doyle of George Washington University, agrees with them that this is one of the reforms which should be made in the teaching of foreign languages. "A minimum of six years of foreign language instruction, beginning at least as early as the first year of junior high school (grade VII) and continuing through the senior high school (grade XII) should be provided, available to all students capable of doing the work."²⁰

Summary of Claims. The main points in the claims made by the conversationalists and the traditionalists for their methods may be summed up as follows: The traditionalists claim:

1. Reading should be the main aim of language instruction.
2. Language should be studied thoroughly if at all, conversation is included.
3. Students are willing to work to acquire gram-

¹⁹Jackson, Eugene "Foreign Language Program for the Secondary Schools of New York City." Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching. p. 630.

²⁰Doyle, Henry Grattan op.cit. p. 649.

matical perfection, if their interest is once aroused.

4. Grammar should be functional.
5. The conversational method is not psychologically good for the students.
6. Grammar is essential, but can also be interesting.
7. Some say conversational facility should not be included at all.

The conversationalists make their claims as follows:

1. Conversation is the primary aim of language teaching.
2. Reading ability will come through speaking ability.
3. The method arouses student interest.
4. The method employs student activity which is the basis for learning.
5. Psychologically the students get a better start through immediate use of the language.
6. The traditional method has failed its students.
7. Oral expression of thought is the epitome of language instruction.
8. In the modern world, speaking a language is what is needed.
9. Longer periods are needed for classes, and they should be provided.

CHAPTER IV

EXPERIMENTS AND STUDIES IN LANGUAGE METHOD

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Before evaluating the claims made by the traditionalists and the conversationalists, it will be first necessary to examine several studies and experiments which have been made with each method to see whether or not these studies prove any of the claims. The experiments which have been made in methods of teaching foreign language have been carried on by an experimental use of one method and then a comparison with past results under another method, rather than by actual controlled experiments.

Criteria for Judging the Effectiveness of Studies and Experiments.

The following are criteria which have been considered in judging the effectiveness of the studies and experiments in language method, and also in judging their applicability to this study.

1. The study must be applicable to the secondary school.
2. The experiment performed or the study made must be practical for use with an adolescent group.
3. The groups studied must be controlled and equally paired.
4. The results of the experiment must not be made unreliable by uncontrolled variables.
5. The materials used must be adequate to the experiment.
6. The experiment or study must provide for adequate testing of results.
7. Results of the experiment or study must be stated in precise terms based on facts, not as general conclusions which cannot be tested and proved.

Study Made at the University of Southern California. The language department at the University of Southern California undertook such a study in the intensive type of language teaching. The study was made by using the intensive method experimentally, and then comparing results with the results achieved with the traditional method. The study was made from May 24, to June 26, 1943.

Procedure. The study was carried out by using the complete form of the conversational method, not an adaptation of the method, as outlined in the ASTP courses, for the entire four week period. Only one class was used, and the method of teaching the class was as follows:

2 hours of conversation.

1 hour of history.

1 hour of civilization.

1 hour of records and singing.

2 hours of supervised study.

Results. After the four weeks were up, the study showed that the intensive course was very successful at the University of Southern California. It proved that in such a short period of time college students could learn to speak the foreign language adequately when they had been trained in the intensive method. Before coming to the conclusion that the intensive course could be successful in colleges, various factors of the study were measured on the following considerations: the marks achieved in the course, the ability to speak the language, and a general comparison with past results in language courses.

Conditions Necessary for Success. Those who were responsible for this experiment feel that it would be successful wherever it was tried, providing the following conditions were fulfilled.

1. A class not larger than 15 students, with smaller groups for certain phases of instruction.
2. An occasional class with a native speaker presiding.
3. The use of English at an absolute minimum.¹

Weaknesses. For this study, there are many weaknesses evidenced. In the first place, high school students do not have to be taught in four weeks, so the intensive program is not necessary because of lack of time. In the second place, the high schools cannot devote seven hours a day to the study of foreign languages unless they eliminate all other subjects from the curriculum. The class cannot be as small as 15 students, and in most schools a native speaker cannot be readily available. The only condition of the experiment which can be met is that English be at a minimum. The experiment as it was carried out has no weaknesses, since it was actually an experimental study rather than an experiment, but it cannot be applied to the secondary school. It does prove, however, that the Army method can be successful with civilian students under like conditions.

Study Made at Duke University. Duke University has also adopted the modern conversation aim in their foreign language classes. While their study is still in the early stages, they do have something to report.

Procedure. The conversational aim is adopted, and in order to achieve

¹Von Hofe, Harold "Intensive Language Study at the University of Southern California." Sch. & Soc. LVIII (November 27, 1943) pp. 430-431.

the objectives, they have introduced much work with phonograph records. It was first done by setting up voluntary language labs, in which the students practiced conversation and used the phonograph records. Since the students did not have time to attend these labs, they were incorporated into the regular class time.

Results of the Study. At present, the department of foreign languages feels that it is too early to report on any success, but because of the success, although haphazard attendance, in the voluntary labs, they feel sure that their incorporation into class time will guarantee success on a more certain basis.²

Weaknesses in the Study. Again, the weaknesses concerned with the study, only apply when it is transferred to the high school. At Duke, they realized that the conversational method needed a lot more time than the older method, and thus lengthened the class time. Needless to say, this still took the same amount of time from the students as did the voluntary labs, but because they were then a part of the class, they had to find the time to attend. If this much time could be taken in the high school, it would cut down or eliminate all of the extra-curricular activities of the students, which would not be practical with adolescents.

An Achievement Experiment in Junior and Senior High Schools. George A. Rice, Assistant Professor of Education at the University of California, undertook a study of achievement in French and Spanish in junior and senior high schools, with a consideration of the factors which condition achievement.

²Letter from Gifford Davis, Associate Professor of Romance Languages, Duke University.

Procedure. The study was carried out from the fall of 1925, to the spring of 1926. It was made in both rural and city schools, so as to rule out any discrepancies in type of school. The teachers were asked for certain information about their classes, and they were then grouped accordingly. Many factors were considered in this experiment as conditions which might affect achievement, such as vocabulary, length of study, and study of a second language. The factor which will be considered here, is the effect of the time spent on grammar to comprehension. The classes were divided into two groups, one in which grammar was stressed, and one in which it was not. The students were paired according to I. Q. so they would be even groups.³ After the year's study in the language, the group was given an Iowa Placement Test in the language, and the scores were compared. Table I shows the results which the two groups made in this test.

Table I⁴

Scores in Comprehension Test of Iowa Placement Test by 30 Classes Where Grammar Had Been Stressed and 30 Classes Where Grammar Was not Stressed, with Group Median for 210 Classes.

	Span. II	Span. IV	Span. VI	French II	French IV	French VI
Grammar not stressed, median	36.1	52.4	69.9	21.2	38.2	41.3
Group median	32.9	52.1	68.4	16.1	27.5	36.3
Grammar stressed, median	31.8	50.7	66.2	12.7	22.4	38.1

Results of the Experiment. The table shows that for the first two years of a language a minimum of grammar brings very good results in com-

³Rice, George "A Study of Achievement in French and Spanish in Junior and Senior High School, with Considerations of Some of the Factors that Condition Achievement" Experiments and Studies in Modern Language Teaching. pp 435-436.

⁴Ibid. p. 457.

prehension, but as the student continues his work in the languages, a systematic study of grammar brings ever increasing dividends.

Weaknesses in the Study. This experiment is valuable because it was carried on with two controlled and paired groups. It backs up the conversationalists in their claim that no systematic study of grammar is included, but since the traditionalists also agree that it is a functional study of grammar which is necessary, it simply corroborates their opinion. However, since there was no rotation plan for teachers, there was one factor which was variable and which may have made a difference in the experiment.

The Milwaukee Experiment in Reading. The Milwaukee Experiment in Reading was an attempt to discover whether or not specific and increased attention to a particular phase of a language did result in greater attainment in the skill emphasized. The experiment was performed from 1930, to 1932.⁵

Procedure. The schools involved, five parochial schools and two public schools, were sent instructions stating that they were to concentrate all their efforts on teaching their students to read the foreign language which they were studying. They were not to neglect other phases of the course, but all vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, were subordinated to the reading aim. The students were to be paired by I. Q. tests, and progress was to be measured by the American Council Test and the Columbia Research Test in reading, silent reading, not translation.⁶

⁵Coleman, Algernon et al "The Milwaukee Experiment in Reading." Experiments and Studies in Modern Language Teaching. p. 145.

⁶Ibid. p. 146.

Results. At the conclusion of both the first and second years of the experiment, it was discovered that the student failed to go far above the mean in the standardized reading test, and in fact, went far below it in some cases. The following table shows the results of a reading test.

Table II⁷

American Council Alpha French Test, Forms A and B; Reading

School	No. of Cases	Semesters of French	Form A Median	Form B Median	National Norm
1. Washington	42	1	7.3		6
	42	2		11.6	9
	14	2	8.1		9
	14	3		11.0	12
	32	3	12.6		12
	32	4		15.3	15
2. North Division	20	1	4.7		6
	20	2		8.4	9
	13	1	6.3		6
	13	2		6.8	9
3. Bay View	34	3	8.8		12
	34	4		10.0	15
4. Pio Nono	20	1	3.6		6
	20	2		2.3	9
	18	3	6.3		12
	18	4		7.0	15

This table shows that in the schools included in the experiment, only Washington school exceeded the mean in either form of the test, while in Pio Nono school, they fell far below the mean. In the North Division school, which was not included in the experiment, they fell below the mean, but not so much so as at Pio Nono.

⁷Coleman, Algernon op.cit. p. 185.

Weaknesses in the Experiment. The results of this experiment are subject to two interpretations. The first is that the theory was disproved, there is no success achieved by concentration on one particular phase of the language. This would eliminate concentration on the conversational aspect as well as the reading phase, but the experiment is not so conclusive as to warrant any general rule to be drawn from it. For instance, there was difficulty in finding the material which the student needed to read under this type of procedure, and they were forced to use inadequate textbooks which were not geared to the experiment. It was also difficult to find a test which really tested what the students had been taught so intensively. Therefore, the other interpretation is that the experiment may have been successful, but the results were not properly tested. In either case, the experiment gives no definite basis for drawing any conclusions.

Cheydleur's Experiment in Language Method. Frederic D. Cheydleur conducted a somewhat similar experiment in reading to see if concentration on this skill would increase the student's reading ability.

Procedure. The experiment was carried on in 44 high schools and 13 colleges, representing a cross-section of the United States. In order to avoid the difficulties of the Milwaukee experiment, this experiment was conducted only in schools where the Chicago French series, by Helen Eddy, was used, since this was the only group of textbooks geared to the reading method. The schools taking part in the experiment were asked to submit the I. Q.'s of the students, their marks in the language, and their marks in other subjects which they were studying. The groups were then equated according to this data. The cooperating schools were then sent

a series of American Council tests and the Eddy tests which accompanied the Eddy series of textbooks. The results were then compared with national means in order to reach conclusions.

Results of the Experiment. After drawing up all the comparisons between test scores, Cheydleur reached a number of valid conclusions. An adaptation of them is as follows:

1. The reading method is superior for vocabulary building.
2. It is superior for attaining the reading objective.
3. It is inferior for attaining mastery in grammar.
4. It is superior for attainment in the combined objectives of vocabulary, grammar, and silent reading.
5. The pronunciation of the students learning languages under this experiment was as good as those trained under an eclectic or direct method.
6. In the first year of high school it is better for the students than an eclectic or direct method.
7. In the second year of high school achievement with this method falls somewhat below the norm of those trained in an eclectic method.
8. Since students attain higher marks in the reading method, not so many drop out after the first year, and the enrollment goes up each year.
9. The students gain an improved reading technique and a widened cultural background.
10. The modified direct method or an eclectic method may be better after the first two years of a language.⁸

Weaknesses in the Experiment. There are no actual weaknesses in the

⁸Cheydleur, Frederic C. "Attainment by the Reading Method." Experiments and Studies in Modern Language Teaching. pp. 141-2.

way in which the experiment was performed, nor in the conclusions drawn, but since Cheydleur points out that in the second year the students in the experiment fell somewhat below the norm, it seems to give a little strength to the conclusion of the Milwaukee experiment, that concentration on one factor does not necessarily guarantee success in that phase of the study.

Conclusions Drawn from Experiments in the Conversational Method. The conclusions which may be drawn from experiments and studies in this method are few, since most of them consist of an experimental approach rather than an experiment, but those which may be drawn are important. They are as follows:

1. The method of the ASTP can be successful with civilian students, as well as with soldiers, as was shown both at the University of Southern California and at Duke University.
2. As was shown at Duke University, success will not follow unless all of the conditions are present which were present in the ASTP courses. In this case, there was an absence of sufficient time, and the course had only slight success.

Conclusions Drawn from Experiments in the Reading Method. There are more conclusions to be drawn from these experiments and studies than from the others, some of them definite, some inconclusive. They are as follows:

1. A systematic study of grammar is not necessary for the first two years of language study.
2. Concentration on one aspect of study does not seem to bring success in that aspect with high school students. This is important, though not conclusive, because it suggests that concentration on conversation might be similarly inconclusive.
3. Different testing methods must be used for different types of teaching. This is important, since it is necessary to realize that the conversational method cannot be tested by reading method goals and standards.

General Conclusions. Many general conclusions can be drawn from these experiments and studies, but there are only three which have importance for this study. They are as follows:

1. The Army method can be successful with civilian students. This is an important conclusion because there were many who doubted the possibility of this success with adolescent students, lacking the type of motivation which the soldier-students had.
2. No method can be properly evaluated unless there are tests which will test what was taught. This presents one of the biggest difficulties in accepting the conversational method into the secondary schools, for the students are still responsible for passing college entrance exams, which are not oral.
3. A concentration on grammar produces no especially good results. This is important, for it adds emphasis to the belief that a functional grammar is most practical.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

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The history of the conversational and traditional methods has been discussed, as have the advantages claimed for each method, and experiments and studies have been examined, which prove the truth of the claims or point out new advantages. The remainder of this study will be an evaluation of these claims and conclusions drawn from them.

Restatement of the Problem. The issue to be decided in this study is whether or not the conversational method is really as fruitful as its advocates claim, and whether or not it can be adapted to the secondary school. The problem is an evaluation of each method so that advantages and disadvantages are noted, and the method which may best be used in high schools is chosen on the basis of its adaptability to the aims of education and upon the outweighing of its disadvantages by its advantages.

Claims of Traditionalists. The traditionalists have made certain specific claims for the superiority of their method. Following is a list of these claims together with a discussion of their validity.

Traditional Claim that Reading Should Be the Aim. The traditionalists claim that reading should be the primary aim in language instruction. They do not exclude all other concomitant results, but maintain that if there can be one all-important objective, it is reading; the acquisition of ability to read in the language as fluently as in the native tongue. They claim that reading is the only aim which is practical and which can be carried out after leaving school. This is probably true as far as opportunity for use of the language is concerned. However, it is extremely doubtful that any student upon graduation from high school will use his leisure time in the reading of books in a foreign language, if others are available. In the first place,

it is difficult to obtain reading material in foreign languages which would be of any interest to the student, and even if the material could be obtained, it is likely that the student would prefer to read in his own tongue. "---few pupils ever engage in much reading in foreign language purely for their own pleasure and benefit."¹

The traditionalists claim that the reading aim and method are the best ways of imparting the culture of a nation. Some feel that it is this culture which should be the aim of language study, and that the goal could be better achieved by study of the customs of the people through English. This is possibly true, but it is still necessary to teach foreign languages for those who enjoy them, and for those who need them for college studies. It is the reading method which gives the students the best knowledge of culture, for no matter how much conversation is done in class periods, it would be impossible to get as thorough a knowledge of the culture of a nation as could be achieved in reading about it during the same amount of time.

Traditionalists Claim that Language Should Be Studied Thoroughly in all Aspects. Those who believe that a thorough study of language is the only profitable study of language, believe that all phases, including grammar, conversation, and reading, should be given equal stress. Theoretically, this may be true, but in five hours a week, which is all most high schools give to language study, such a thorough study is impossible. If educators were to insist on this complete knowledge as a goal, they would have to drop languages from the curriculum, because they are not even approaching the goal, and they have no hope of doing so. Since most students study a language

¹Bent, Rudyard op.cit. p. 358.

for a period of two years, it is immediately clear that they cannot finish these two years with the ability to speak, read, write, and understand, as well as a very highly educated native who has complete knowledge of his language. Since this is an extreme view, not held by all traditionalists, it does not seriously affect the value of the method.

Traditional Claim of the Importance of Grammar. The traditionalists claim that grammar is essential and also interesting. The first part of this claim is obviously true. Grammar is the form of the language, around which the matter of vocabulary takes its shape and meaning. Grammar is certainly essential, no matter what the ultimate aim, for without it students could only string words together with no idea of how to make meaning out of them. They could not read the language if they did not recognize some verb forms, they would not know if they were reading fact or fantasy, whether the incident would happen, did happen, or was happening. But can grammar be interesting? To be interesting to a particular person, a subject must touch a corresponding interest in the person, or awaken a desire, or fulfill a desire which is already there. Some students will have a natural interest in the workings of grammar, and only a very poor teacher could manage to destroy this interest. However, these students are very few. The majority of students probably did have some interest in languages when they elected the subject, but most likely it was centered around reading or speaking, without thought to the necessity of learning grammar first. Since problem-solving is a valid and interesting way of teaching, any of the principles of grammar which can be placed on a problem basis should be presented in that way. If the teacher has knowledge of some of the phrases in the form of riddles or problems, in which grammar

principles change the meaning of the phrase, these should be presented to the student. In many cases, these phrases show that the grammar in the language is important because it can change a meaning completely, and they also show that such a thing is not possible in English, in exactly the same way. The students would at least want to know enough grammar to solve the problems, and once started off, the teacher might find it easier to continue the study of grammar with the interest of the students. If the teacher knows the reason for the student's selection of language as an elective subject, she could then motivate the student by convincing him that the only way to achieve his goal is to learn the grammar which leads to that goal. The claim is true, grammar is essential, and can be made interesting to the student.

Traditional Claim for Psychological Superiority. Among the traditionalists are those who claim that the conversational method is not psychologically good for the students. They claim that no matter how good the conversational aim might be, it is not good for the student to spend his time on a single phase of the work. This is undoubtedly true; students do react better to a variety of learning activities. However, it is really no criticism of the conversational method, since the conversationalists do not concentrate on one thing only. Even while concentrating on conversation, there are different topics discussed, there is some grammar included, phonograph records are used, and some reading material is provided, so that a variety of instructional materials and activities are used. The high school student might find the intensive qualities of the Army-based conversational course too much for him, but at present there is no danger of that, because the time for such an extremely intensive course is not available

under the present organization of the secondary schools.

The traditionalists also claim that students are quite willing to work to acquire perfection in a subject once their interest is aroused, and if there is a possibility of reaching perfection. This certainly is true, and their interest in grammar can be aroused, even though it may be difficult. Once an interest is aroused, students are of course willing to do what is necessary to achieve fruition of the interest, to fulfill the desire. However, if the teacher, after she has aroused an interest in grammar and made the students feel that they have a need for grammar, then proceeds to demand a complete, academic study of the fine points of grammar, the interest will soon be lost. The students realize, even if the teacher does not, that they cannot know all of the grammar content in the language in the short time they devote to the study, and they also realize, although again the teacher may not, that such a knowledge would satisfy neither a need nor an interest. It is for this reason that the traditionalists now claim that it is a functional grammar content that should be included in the language course. The traditionalists and the conversationalists are in complete agreement on this phase. They differ only in that the traditionalists want this functional grammar geared to reading, and the conversationalists want it geared to speaking. However, there can be no argument but the functional grammar should be taught. If there are points of grammar which will not be used by the student, there can be no point in teaching them and requiring memorization.

Traditionalist Claim that Conversation Has no Place in Language Teaching. There are some language teachers who feel that conversational facility should have no place in a language course because it is of no use

to the student. This is rather an extreme viewpoint, and cannot be proved to be valid. Most of the students will probably never speak the language after they leave school, but most of them will not read the language either. The argument holds true for both aims. If language courses were limited to those students for whom they had practical value, they would become required courses for the college-preparatory students, and would not be open to any other student. The question of including conversational phases in the course should depend upon each particular course. If the students express an interest in speaking the language, and they would naturally want to speak it to some degree in every class, then it should be included.

Claims of Conversationalists. The conversationalists also made certain specific claims for their method and aim. The following is a statement of these claims and a discussion of their validity.

Conversational Claim that Speaking Ability Should Be Main Aim. The conversationalists, naturally, claim that conversational ability should be the primary aim of language instruction. They base this claim on the assumption that the spoken language is the useful language, that in everyday life it is the spoken language that has practical value. This would be true in the study of English, but it hardly seems credible that Spanish or French would have a great practical value in the daily life of the American student. The facts are the same as they are for the reading aim. The evaluation must be made on some basis entirely apart from the practical use of the language, because very few students will ever be called upon to use the language in a practical situation. They also claim that reading ability will come through speaking ability. If the reading was closely correlated to the progress made in speaking, and the extent of grammatical learning, this would be true. In fact,

they claim that those who learn the language by the intensive conversational method are able to read far in advance of those who learn the language in the regular way.

Conversational Claim that Their Method Arouses Student Interest. The method arouses students' interest and employs activity which is the basis for learning. These two claims go together because it is the activity which arouses the interest. The conversationalists claim that because the student is taking an active part in the class he is immediately more interested in it. This is not necessarily true. Because a student must recite in a foreign language each day, or perhaps to converse rather than to recite, is no guarantee that he will have an active interest in the subject. On the whole, conversational courses probably do arouse more student interest than do the reading courses, but the credit is due not to the stimulating conversations carried on in these classes, for they can be at best halting attempts at conversation, but rather to the lack of stimulating literature in the reading courses. If those teaching by the reading method would provide their students with material which would interest them in English, rather than forcing the great classics on them, the interest would be comparable to that evoked in the conversational courses. Perhaps a student does elect a foreign language with the idea of seeing how he sounds speaking the language, but he must realize almost immediately that it will be a long time before he can sound like a native. If the courses were equalized, that is, if the students were allowed to have as active a part in selecting the literature as he has in selecting the topic for conversation, the interest would probably be about the same. In time, the reading method might

evoke greater interest since the student would undoubtedly advance faster in this method than he could in the conversational method under present school organization.

Psychologically the students get a better start through immediate use of the language, say the conversationalists. This is probably true to some extent, for the student can leave such a class after the first day and feel that he has already made some progress since he has at least heard the language and spoken and understood what was going on about him. The same effect could be gained, however, by handing him a sheet of paper with some printed words whose meanings were as obvious as the spoken words in the conversation class. The students are supposed to get a feeling for the language from hearing it spoken immediately. In very few cases would it be the first time the student had heard the language spoken. This might have been true in the courses offered by the ASTP in Japanese or Burmese, but almost every student would have heard some French or Spanish spoken, probably just a few phrases in a movie, but enough to negate the psychological effect of the very sound of the language to him. The psychological effect of starting off with interest aroused and with the feeling of accomplishment is not exclusive to the conversation course.

Conversational Claim that Traditional Method Has Failed Its Students.

Most people would agree unhesitatingly with this statement, because it is an accepted fact that students who study languages do not seem to have a great store of knowledge of the language, or any practical command of it, after completion of the course. However, it is only those teachers who have tried to teach conversation, grammar, and reading thorough-

ly who have failed. Those who tried to teach their students to read in the language usually succeeded. The fact that the students do not use this knowledge after graduation is generally because they have no practical reason for using it, and they find greater recreation and relaxation from reading in English. The conversationalists will probably find the same thing to be true of their students. After they have learned to converse in a foreign language, they will find little practical use for it after graduation, and they will very seldom be able to occupy their leisure time with a conversation in Spanish or French, even if they desire to do so. In this, the graduates of the traditional course have an advantage, if they really wish to read in the language, they can, but the conversationalist cannot speak the language unless he can find someone to speak it with him. From lack of use, the ability to speak fades as quickly as the ability to read.

Conversational Claim that Oral Expression of Thought Is Most Important.

The conversational claim that oral expression of thought is the epitome of language experience cannot be true for the secondary school student. No matter how great his ability and interest, he simply will not have the opportunity to use the language and to epitomize his knowledge in the oral expression of thought. Very few will travel to foreign countries, and even fewer will take up careers where they will express their thoughts in a foreign tongue. Very few of the college-preparatory students will find college courses in which they actually have to express all of their ideas in the foreign language. In a modern world, speaking a language is what is needed, say the conversationalists. Again, this is a statement which does not hold true in the majority of the cases. If, in the modern world, knowledge and tolerance for other nations is needed, it can be achieved by reading of the foreign cus-

toms and ideals in a much better way than by knowing how to speak a language which is native to a country which is practically inaccessible. In fact, the reading of the customs and ideals in English would undoubtedly have as much, if not more, value than the reading of them in the foreign language.

Longer Class Periods Are Needed. The fact that longer class periods are needed and should be provided is true, no matter what method is used. In Europe, languages are studied for a minimum of six years, and the results achieved are better than those achieved by our methods. If the student is to get any practical command of any phase of the language, he must have more contact hours with it, for otherwise most of what he is learning is counteracted by continual contact with English.

Comparison of Methods as Regards Motivation, Aims, and Grammatical Knowledge. The conversationalist has an advantage at the beginning of language study. Any student if he had his choice of speaking Spanish or studying Spanish grammar and then reading in the language, would choose speaking. However, under present school conditions, the conversation is likely to go very slowly, and the student is bound to be discouraged and disappointed with his inability to really speak the language. The traditionalists, on the other hand, can make the grammar course interesting, and by providing good reading material, can continue to keep interest at a high peak.

It is in this field that there can be no compromise between the two groups. The conversationalists hold that the speaking of the language is the important aim, and the traditionalists hold that it is only through

reading that the students will derive any benefit from the language.

On the matter of grammatical knowledge, there is agreement between the two groups, but it is to the conversationalists that the credit is due. Both groups maintain that it is a functional grammar which is necessary. The conversationalists first brought attention to this point in their courses in which grammar was subordinated to the ability to speak. Actually, those who study under the traditional method probably know more grammar, but it is a relative difference, because students under both methods learn just as much grammar as they need to accomplish their particular aim.

General Conclusions. Unsuitability of Conversational Method for Secondary Schools. The conversational method, as it has been adapted from the ASTP method, cannot be used with success in the secondary schools. In the first place, as was demonstrated by the ASTP, by Duke University, and by the University of Southern California, fifteen hours is about the minimum time which can be spent on the lessons per week to assure success, and in most cases, much more time is used. The high school cannot offer more than five hours per week for class time, and the method cannot be successful with this amount of time. In the second place, it cannot achieve the aims of secondary education in foreign languages. The aims, as stated by the Committee of Twelve, were involved with the reading method, that students should be taught to read, and conversation should be of secondary importance. The aims as stated by Bent and Kronenberg, to develop tolerance and understanding of other people, to study literature, philosophy, history, and culture, and to give the linguistically minded a chance to translate, can only be accomplished by the reading method. Understanding and a know-

ledge of literature and philosophy would not be learned even by the native except through reading. Therefore, the conversational aim in the high schools could neither satisfy its own conditions for success, nor the stated aims and objectives of language study. Nor would the intensive qualities needed in the course be suitable for adolescent students.

Reading Method Best Suited to the Aims of Secondary Education. The reading method was actually evolved to satisfy the stated aim of the Committee of Twelve, and it is the best means of accomplishing the aims stated by Bent and Kronenberg. With the many improvements made in the original reading method, such as functional grammar, and the many new textbooks which have been geared to the method, it is the best and most practical for high school.

Recommendations. Since the conversational method has become so popular, not only with the general public, but also with many educators, and since it does have some merits as regards motivation of students, and actual measurable success, the following recommendations are made:

1. Whatever time can be spared from the regular course should be devoted to training in the spoken language, and the conversational method should be used for this. Perhaps for one period a week, conversation could be the aim of the class, and phonograph records and the immediate use of the language should be practiced in this period.
2. If the school day or the class period is lengthened for unit teaching, teachers and educational leaders should make a study of foreign language aims, including student aims, and publish a new list of aims, or clarify the old ones. Since there is so much disagreement as to the best aims, this should be done in any case, but with the lengthened period, the conversational method might be introduced entirely, since it would then have a chance for success. However, colleges, as well as secondary schools, would have to agree to the aims, and change their requirements and entrance exams accordingly. If this were done, the reading aim could then take the subordinate position, or be eliminated entirely, with cultural pursuits being undertaken in English.

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Letter from Gifford Davis, Associate Professor of Romance Languages, Duke University, April 29, 1951.

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