Language Learning Journal, Winter 2005, No 32, 4–17

Out of this nettle, drop-out, we pluck this flower, opportunity: re-thinking the school foreign language apprenticeship

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'We can never, by school teaching, provide for all the language needs of the nation.....It cannot be too clearly understood that *school teaching must be, in the nature of things, incomplete....we require other and different opportunities for adolescents and adults who may wish to study languages, not as part of their education but as instruments to various definite ends...'* Leathes Report to the Prime Minister (1918) para 178[1]; emphasis added.

SUMMARY

The assumption that the *purpose* of school foreign language teaching is to serve *instrumental* ends may largely underlie the present adolescent dropout. I go back to Stanley Leathes's masterly report to the Prime Minister in 1918, because he was the first to distinguish between *educational* and *instrumental* purposes (Leathes's word was ends) in language teaching and that there is, for each, a proper time. (For Leathes, and in this paper, the two terms refer to the *purposes* of the teaching. They are not *descriptions* of any particular language-teaching *activities*).

Assuming an *instrumental* rationale for early starting, the Nuffield Report and government papers have said, in effect: 'the nation needs linguists, therefore language teaching, probably French, must start at seven'. But in English speaking countries no 7- or 11-year-old's eventual foreign language needs (Leathes's 'definite ends', *in which language*? *and to do what*?) can be predicted. (In non-English-speaking countries, of course, the need to get the global language, English, with instrumental purpose, can be predicted from an early age).

If the *educational* purpose of MFL teaching, for speakers of English, were recognised by all concerned, at stage one of a two-stage course, it would be possible to combine an active introduction to one or more languages, with growing 'language awareness' and further efforts to make the 'language playing field' less uneven than it still is, for far too many. (While recognising the limited progress made in literacy since the Bullock Report, 1975, I recall, in para. 9, that it has taken 30 years for government even to accept the need to tackle the key recommendation made by Bullock, that 'one-to-one adult time' must be provided in school for children deprived of it by family circumstance, if they are to learn how to 'do things with words'.)

Another reason for planning the foreign language apprenticeship in two stages is that, while early choices (such as choice of which language) must depend on school resources, really instrumental choices can only be made later by the individual learner. A two-stage apprenticeship would include a carefully planned diagnostic element, preparing learners (and parents!) for the important choices to be made at stage two of the journey, motivated by emerging adult interests, both academic and vocational. Leathes saw instrumental purposes being best served by Further Education ('in day and evening classes'). My two stages could both fit into the school programme. I go back to the proposals of Dearing (1995-6) and Tomlinson (2004). Their new thinking points clearly to a school course in two stages, with *purposes* re-shaped at KS4. At stage one, the main emphasis would be on what the French have called 'l'éveil aux langues' ('awakening of language awareness'). I cite the European EVLANG project and two models currently being 'road-tested' in schools in the UK as pointing ways forward. An apprenticeship foreign language would also be studied with new targets at 14 and priority given to 'learning how to learn'.

At stage two (14-19) the dropout would be countered firstly by offering real choices which could not have been made at age 11, still less at 7. Secondly, our early (educational) apprenticeship will have equipped our pupils with the *tools for* (*and, we may hope, a taste for) foreign language learning*. Thirdly, there are lessons to be learned from the numbers now coming back, at university, so soon after dropping out, to (non-degree) MFL study. Many more might return earlier if offered real choice (which must include, of course, for some, the chance

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to pursue a language on an academic or a vocational course or for the sheer interest of it).

Recovery from the dropout could be further encouraged by the restoration of a crucial ingredient at stage two, now lost by too many learners, namely, *intensive immersion in the chosen language*. Ways of doing this are cited which were road-tested successfully in the 1970s and 80s. With this vital ingredient restored and with the different *purposes* of the two stages of the school course clearly recognised, we can surely transform dropout into opportunity.

RE-THINKING THE SCHOOL FOREIGN LANGUAGE APPRENTICESHIP

1 (a) Adolescent Dropout. Response to a false prospectus ?

'Nine out of ten students drop their foreign language at 16+' was how Trevor McDonald introduced his Nuffield Report, *Languages: the next generation* (Nuffield 2000). The press next day drew the grim conclusion:- 'Sixth Formers shunning foreign languages' (*Times*)..and....'Students shun languages for computer studies'. (*Independent*). (Since 2000 the picture has darkened. 'Shunning' can now start at 14+, and with government sanction.)

The collapse of entries for languages at A level, especially boys' entries, was not news. Boys' entries for the most popular school language, French, for instance, had fallen from 11,221 in 1965, the year before CILT opened, down to 5,224 in 2000, when Nuffield reported, and the fall continues (down to 4,591 in 2005).

The important point that Nuffield went on to show was the effect that dropout from A levels was having on applications for degree studies. As Nuffield put it (2000: 54), 'In Higher Education...languages are in crisis. Most university departments are regarded as operating in deficit... an increasing number are under threat of closure or reduction. Some have already closed...'. Did this mean that the supply of language graduates, and so of teachers, was drying up and that 'a foreign language for all' in schools would soon become impossible? Other school subjects were being abandoned for that reason (e.g. Physics in girls' schools). Was language teaching, especially by men, heading that way? The Nuffield Report issued a much needed challenge to the nation about its communications with its neighbours and called (p. 6) for the 'education system to be re-geared'. What we needed was a forward-looking examination of the rationale for retaining a MFL for all, as English becomes ever more widely accepted as the 'global language' and as it becomes harder to predict when our pupils are aged only eleven (still harder when they are seven!) what 'definite ends', in which language, any particular pupil will want to pursue. Instead of addressing this dual challenge, the debate has mainly perpetuated old misconceptions.

One such misconception is that the English are a monoglot race, whose children perform dismally at MFLs compared with pupils abroad. This neglects the factor of motivation, so crucial in language acquisition. In non-English-speaking countries the need to get English, the global language, is predictable for all children from an early age, and this has immense implications for learners' priorities and planning. Comparisons with our pupils' performance at MFLs are meaningless. It might make more sense to compare our pupils' French with (say) French pupils' German, but we hear less of that.

1 (b) The Dearing-Tomlinson proposals

For whatever reason, despite the clear indication in the Nuffield Report that the school MFL apprenticeship needed 're-gearing', the only re-gearing suggested was a start at age seven, for all, with instrumental purpose unchanged. We discuss this particular *cul de sac* in some detail later.[2] A more carefully considered way ahead, taking account of the fact that *instrumental* purposes must be chosen by learners and may change as they grow up, was offered in two papers on the curriculum by Dearing (1996) and Tomlinson (2004).

The effect of their analysis, to which I am sure planning will have to return, was to envisage the school course as a process in two stages. This was, in fact, precisely what policy after 1918 would have introduced if it had followed the Leathes's analysis, simply because when pupils are young they cannot 'choose' to follow an instrumental purpose nor could their primary school offer the chance to meet their choice. So we might have had long ago a two-stage language teaching process such as I am proposing.

I hope that, by starting with the Leathes Report, I shall not be misunderstood. I am not suggesting for a moment (and nor did Leathes) that foreign language teaching should not have a central place in the school curriculum. I want to argue, on the contrary, for it to have a more assured, because a more justifiable, place than now, but with the *purpose* behind each stage clearly thought-out, and better understood by everybody concerned (especially by parents).

I am arguing for a *preparatory* (Leathes's word) apprenticeship up to KS4, an apprenticeship that would include quite a lot of 'learning how to learn' and the basic introduction to 'awareness of language' that is necessary to make a purposeful choice of foreign language possible. If such a two-stage programme seemed necessary in 1918, how much more desirable it must be now, with English widely accepted as the 'global language' and a much greater number of foreign languages to choose from, with an expanding Europe and a 'global village' electronically brought together as never before. The 14-19 course could then offer a variety of pathways, both vocational and academic, in which (most important) the *choice* of pathway would be made *by the learner*. To meet such choice I suggest we go back to the rich menu of 'intensive immersion' initiatives offered by cooperation of schools with FE and University Language Centres, that are described in Hawkins 1988 (I quote some examples in Part Two of this paper). With real choice offered and a vital ingredient of language learning ('immersion') restored we might answer the hard questions about the rationale for MFL as a compulsory school subject which have been raised in recent debates.

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2. Rationale? A philosopher questions, CILT and a professor answer, and a Vice-Chancellor quotes Milton

In his thoughtful pamphlet *Why Teach Foreign Languages in Schools*? (Williams 2000) the educational philosopher Kevin Williams gave what he called *A Philosophical Response to Curriculum Policy*. It was the subject of an invited public debate at the Institute of Education, University of London, when it appeared. This essay was a balanced critique of government policy that avoided stridency and whose questions demanded answers. Williams's conclusion, after examining a range of 'rationales' that have been offered for the present curriculum policy, was as follows (p. 42): 'A strong case can be made that every person should be entitled to the opportunity to learn at least one other language over an extended period of perhaps one year but the compulsion to do so should not extend beyond one year. The decision to retain MFLs in the post-2000 curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 is therefore well meaning but misguided'. How far this conclusion contributed to the subsequent government decision (2002) that the foreign language, which had been a 'foundation' subject since 1988, should now only be 'available' at KS4, we can only guess.

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It is fair to say that in the debate provoked by the pamphlet and the meeting at the Institute of Education (which was attended by Jacqui Smith, Education Minister) the philosopher did not have it all his own way. Bernardette Holmes of CILT argued effectively against the backward step of retreating to pre-1988 policy. She was able to show the very healthy effects on MFL studies that had followed from the (Conservative) Government's 1988 decision to make MFLs a 'foundation subject' for all.

Helpful re-thinking of *reasons* for foreign language teaching was continued in the inaugural lecture of Professor Rosamund Mitchell of Southampton University, *Foreign Language Education in an Age of Global English* (27 February 2002). This widely appreciated paper offered (p. 6) a comprehensive analysis of six different 'rationales' that have been proposed for MFL education.

Regarding two issues Mitchell's analysis touches closely on the argument of this paper. Firstly, as to the 'purpose' of a MFL for all, she could not accept the assumptions of the Nuffield national inquiry. She saw reason for 'scepticism about the adequacy of a solely *instrumental* rationale for school language teaching'. At the same time she noted that such a rationale had been reasserted by Nuffield.

Secondly, regarding Williams's criticism of Government policy, and his proposal that 'compulsion should not extend beyond one year', Mitchell did not refer directly to it, but on Williams's main conclusion she is clear (p. 26): 'Regarding the shift to MFLs as an optional 'entitlement' subject at KS4, all of us who believe in the more educational/citizenship rationales for FL study must argue against this. We must also question the logic of the government paper, which argues that lack of student motivation makes this necessary'.

Where both Williams and Mitchell agreed was in challenging the assumption made, as if it needed no argument, in the post-Nuffield debate, of an instrumental rationale for 'a foreign language for all'. It is a fair summary of these two contributions to conclude that for teachers to say, or imply, 'you are learning this foreign language, that the school has chosen for you, because you are going to need it when you leave school' is simply not true. To see this, adolescents only have to ask their parents how 'necessary' they have found for their career (or leisure interests) the particular foreign language offered to them at school. An instrumental rationale at age eleven or seven is a false prospectus.

The wider debate on rationale points clearly to a school apprenticeship in two stages, with an early educational stage preparing pupils for the opportunity, post-14, to 'change gear', and, with careful diagnostic guidance, choose their own way forward to study a language to meet their real needs. The educational stage of the apprenticeship must both show them how to learn and equip and encourage them to change gear if they want to.

3. *Déjà vu* ? An earlier debate

In this connection it is relevant to recall a debate about the purpose of foreign language study which engaged many of us in the early 1960s and which may again claim attention. It concerned conditions for entry to the new post-Robbins (1960s) universities, with the 'Shakespearean' names (York, Lancaster, Kent etc.). What were they to do about the centuries-old requirement of a foreign language qualification for university entrance? One of the most cogent contributions to that debate was made by Eric James, High Master of Manchester Grammar School (which sent more of its students than most schools to university) who, as Lord James of Rusholme, became founder Vice-Chancellor of the new University of York in 1963. In a succinct booklet (*An Essay on the Content of Education* 1949) he had rehearsed the case that he would later make into policy at York. Together with the other new universities, he refused to fall into line with traditional policy and impose a foreign language requirement for all entrants. (For fuller discussion of the debate on James's essay and the York decision, see Hawkins 1981 pp. 41 *et seq*).

The language requirement was abandoned by all universities (except Oxbridge) by decision of the Standing Conference on University Entrance, only four years after York, in 1967. The reintroduction of a language requirement was, however, unequivocally recommended by the Nuffield committee (p. 93) and 'within a five-year period'. The 1960s debate may yet re-surface and as a contribution to the debate James's 1949 essay, though not mentioned in Nuffield, is still worth reading. While fully recognising the *vocational* value of foreign languages, James was not convinced that they could contribute anything to *education* except for specialists and that could not justify a language requirement imposed on all comers.

In his essay he quotes Milton (*Tract on Education* 1644): .....the monsieurs of Paris who take our hopeful Youth into their slight and prodigal custodies and send them back again transformed into Mimics,

Apes and Kicshoes...though a linguist should pride himself to have all the Tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them as well as the Words and Lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man, as any Yeoman or Tradesman competently wise in his Mother Dialect only (p. 18).

James told me he had written most of his essay while fire-watching during the war on the roof of Winchester College, where he was a form master. A point he made was that, though he had qualified to enter Oxford to read chemistry by passing his French in the London Matriculation examination (and with distinction!), this entry qualification had left him quite unable to discuss his subject with French-speaking chemists when doing research for his PhD. I argued that this was more rightly a criticism of the London Matric than of the principle of a language requirement for university entrance (a point that I have discussed more fully in Hawkins 1981). I did tell James, however, that I was very grateful to be reminded of Milton's lovely word 'Kicshoes' (now 'kickshaw' in the Oxford dictionary) since sadly lost, the 17th century transliteration of the French *quelquechose*. This was the same Milton who, for security reasons, wrote the minutes of Cromwell's Council of State in Latin – his Latin was no mere 'kicshoe'. He could do 'the solid things' with it!

James saw the need for *vocational* language competence but argued that the time to get it was after, not before, the student had begun the university course and therefore knew which language was going to be needed and what particular tasks it must meet. He was a Vice-Chancellor who meant what he said, and so he ensured that, at York, students' 'vocational purposes' would be fully met, once students got there, by 'service courses' in a new model Language Teaching Centre. For the building and initial staffing of the York LTC he sought and obtained generous funding from the Nuffield Foundation (and I had the privilege of directing it for its first 16 years). Current results achieved at the York LTC under its present distinguished direction[3] surely go some way to justifying James's vision of the way forward concerning language entry requirements for higher education, in an age of global English. The relevance of this for the present argument is that for the foreign language to serve instrumental purposes, the choice of language and of the uses to be made of it cannot be made until the learner attains a certain maturity.

4. Two purposes: Educational and Instrumental

The distinction between two *purposes* of language teaching is, of course, not a black and white one. Readers of this paper must all have experienced frequent shifting, perhaps in a single lesson, between an activity aimed at 'definite ends' and one which awakens greater awareness of a language or a culture. Many steps along the journey into the MFL could serve either of the two purposes. Being able to 'do new things with words' may provide a useful, perhaps essential, instrument but the sheer pleasure of acquiring it can itself be highly motivating.

I have tried to convey, in my book *Listening to Lorca* (Hawkins 1999), something of the sheer relish of communicating, in Spanish, with two very different *purposes*. One was as I sat on the grass in the sunlit garden of the old royal palace in Santander, with García Lorca's BARRACA group of student volunteers, listening as they rehearsed their play for the evening performance and then, at night, watching their splendid performance on a trestle stage in the former royal stables, lit by the headlamps of their clapped-out trucks. A very different purpose not so long afterwards took me to a camp in a cold, rain-swept Southampton field, trying to interpret for the doctors, as we sloshed our way from tent to tent, struggling to vaccinate hundreds of anxious Basque children, to whom Britain had given refuge after the bombing of Guernica, and who, after a storm-tossed sea journey from Bilbao, were desperate to be spoken to in their own language.

Very different purposes can motivate the student to keep at the learning. But the motivation must come from the learner and it may take time to mature during the apprenticeship. Some experienced teacher trainers with whom I have discussed Leathes's two purposes, have told me that they have often seen teachers frustrated by early teaching materials whose purpose was overly *instrumental* (how to survive in given situations that the adult may face) and which left no room for fantasy, poetry, imagination, or for following the whim of the learner. In this connection I cited (Hawkins 1981 p. 167) the eight-year-old who in the middle of Julian Dakin's MFL tape-recording session, insisted on telling him the news that had to be imparted at once '...my guinea pig died with his legs crossed'. I asked whether as MFL teachers we had underestimated the importance, when children are learning how to 'do things with words', of letting them guide us to the 'meanings that matter' for them.

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Is it seeing the early stage as solely instrumental, rather than preparatory, that makes the dropout at 14 look so catastrophic? One only has to look at the present distribution of the three main languages, French, German and Spanish, taken at GCSE (some 50% French, 20% German and 8% Spanish) to see that the real catastrophe would be if the present distribution were prolonged, unchanged, throughout HE and FE. With the coming enlargement of Europe and the shrinking of the global village with which Britain must communicate, would an education system geared only to produce such a distribution of linguists, up to A levels and beyond, be satisfactory?

5. Lessons from Latin?

Historians like Leathes, surveying this ground and charged to consider the role of the new schools to be set up after 1918, would know well enough how teachers of Latin had seen their discipline move from serving instrumental purposes, to purely educational ones. The change came in the 17th century, as Latin was found increasingly unsuited to the linguistic demands of new science and the amazing discoveries of the New World, and an eager search began for ways of rebuilding Babel, communicating across existing languages. When Milton (1608-1674) learned his Latin at St. Paul's School, London, in the 1620s, it was still intended to be used instrumentally,

"the early introduction to foreign languages must be an integral element of a linguistic apprenticeship whose purpose is clearly educational"

and it was in fact so used when, as a staunch supporter of Cromwell, acting as Secretary of the State Council (1649-60), he preferred, for security reasons, to keep the minutes of the Council in Latin. By mid-century, however, Latin was ceasing to be the widely needed *lingua franca*. Milton's near contemporary, Isaac Newton (1642-1727) who learned his Latin at Grantham Grammar School (Margaret Thatcher's old school) in the 1650s, would use his Latin to write his *magnum opus*, but he was the last English scientist to do so, in 1687. The great Latin teacher, Comenius, whose *Didactica Magna* appeared in Czech in 1632 and Latin in 1633, was already, in his *Via Lucis* (issued 1668 but actually written during his stay in England in 1641), proposing plans for an international auxiliary language for scholars, to replace Latin and was adjusting his teaching of Latin to the subtle change from instrumental to educational purposes. His early advice 'percept before precept' ('go to meet the language and only then induce rules, or precepts, from your observation') only worked if the learner was using the language daily, as a *lingua franca*. As Louis Kelly showed, in his magisterial *Twenty-five Centuries of Language Teaching* (1969), the young Comenius and the older Comenius taught Latin in different ways for pupils whose purposes for its use were already changing.

6. Confusion of purpose. Two consequences

Failing to be quite clear what we are aiming at can lead to confusion. Consider the wrong emphasis given in recent debates to two side issues,

(a) *diversification* at secondary level and
(b) *early starting* at primary school.

Both are of considerable interest in themselves but discussion of both has, I believe, been confused by assuming an inappropriate *instrumental* purpose for the school foreign language course at too early a stage.

6.1 Diversify!

Throughout my years in teaching, whenever questions were raised about languages other than French, the only answer available was: 'diversify!' The assumption always was that the purpose at school was instrumental ('the nation needs linguists') and that whatever language was begun at school was going to be used for adult purposes. Some schools have responded to the call with determination and great resource. Calday Grange Grammar School, in the Wirral, which I happen to know well, now offers its First Years a choice of nine languages, including Mandarin Chinese (and this year offered pioneering home visits to China and Russia). These are most admirable initiatives. The good lessons in language (and cultural) awareness, to be learned by the whole school from such exchanges, are incalculable. As examples of the 'educational' role of foreign language teaching, in a great trading democracy, they may be priceless. But to assume an instrumental purpose for pupil choices at this level is to ignore the problem of the unpredictability of any 11-year-old's ultimate, adult, foreign language needs. The pupil at Calday Grange now starting Mandarin Chinese may well find, when arriving at A level or degree studies, or when seeking employment, that adult interests dictate one of a score of other languages that even such an enterprising school could not foresee when his course was chosen.

But perhaps Calday Grange, 'diversifying' the choice of languages on offer so impressively, only got its timing wrong? Wider possibilities could be provided within the school course at the 14-19 stage, provided we add one important component which I will discuss in more detail later. What matters is to have our purposes clear at each stage. The same applies to early starting.

6.2 Early starting. Younger is better?

In both the Nuffield Report, and in government papers, great reliance has been placed on 'starting earlier', in terms that suggest it is the panacea that will cure all our ills. Nuffield recommendation 6.4 reads: 'In tandem with the development of designated international primary schools, the government should declare a ten-year target to provide an entitlement for all pupils to learn a new language from age 7, based on 10% of curriculum time...' But where is the evidence that, by itself, starting early will avert adolescent dropout? (See Footnote 2 for one example pointing to exactly the opposite).

Nor is it the case that the general claim 'younger is better' needs no argument.

The only authority for 'younger is better' cited by Nuffield was Tony Blair: 'Everyone knows that, with languages, the earlier you start, the better'.[4] But this is a common misapprehension about classroom teaching which a mass of research does not support. (The immigrant child's getting a second language under natural conditions, powerfully motivated by the need to survive in a new land and culture is, of course, a quite different matter). Nuffield might, at least, have looked at David Singleton's scholarly summary of recent research, which he concludes thus (1989: 137): 'The available evidence does not consistently support the hypothesis that younger second language learners are globally more efficient and successful than older learners'.

Again I don't wish to be misunderstood. I have long argued for introducing pupils to foreign languages before the inhibitions of adolescence intervene, if only a steady supply of really well-trained teachers can be secured. But the early introduction to foreign languages that is needed must be an integral element of a radically re-geared linguistic apprenticeship whose purpose is clearly educational, not instrumental, preparing pupils to make informed and apt choices at the (adolescent) instrumental stage and to attack that stage properly equipped with the tools for language learning. That was precisely the aim of the movement which has come to be called 'awareness of language' (AOL).

7. 'Awareness Of' or 'Knowledge About' Language?

Whereas in recent years the 'Awareness of

Language' movement, perceptively chaired by Carl James of Bangor, with its widely read journal edited by Peter Garrett of Cardiff, has gone from strength to strength, first across Europe and then world-wide (its conference last year in Spain attracted 120 participants from 21 different countries), the influence of AOL on school currricula in the UK, after initial interest, has been disappointing. We have not approached the possibility that I tried to sketch (Hawkins 1981): 'the integration of the foreign language apprenticeship vertically into a language education that is continuous through primary and secondary school, and horizontally as part of a 'trivium':- 'mother tongue – awareness of language – foreign language', with 'language' as a 'bridging subject', bringing nearer the Bullock dream of 'language across the curriculum'. The notion of language as a bridging subject had more support in Europe, where it became *une matière pont*, as we shall see when we discuss the five-nation EVLANG projects funded by the European Union.

However, there has lately been a re-awakening of interest in 'awareness of language', in the UK, possibly encouraged by examples from abroad, but certainly due to the resilience and influential presentation by exponents like Peter Downes and Nick Jones. AOL will certainly have a major role to play if arguments for a two-stage language apprenticeship, with mainly educational purpose at stage one, are accepted.

Modern linguist exponents of it have preferred to call the new approach to language in the curriculum 'awareness of language' (AOL) rather than the alternative, later adopted by English teachers and in government papers, 'knowledge about language' (KAL) because they felt that 'knowledge about' carried a hint of merely conveying information, of 'filling up pots'. Clearly 'knowledge about' must be a part of the apprenticeship but *becoming aware* conveyed better *the intention to awaken pupils' minds* to the power of language both to inform and to *mislead* (as with clever political propaganda, use of 'loaded words' in advertising, or hidden prejudices about class, race or belief, cf. Hawkins 1999 p. 274). AOL sought to awaken pupils' minds to such aspects of language, which they might otherwise leave unexamined. This approach, 'awakening to languages', was captured by our French colleagues, when, after some discussion (possible alternatives are discussed on p.19 of Candelier 2003), they called their European project *éveil aux langues* (EVLANG).

The case for AOL in the UK was argued determinedly within the Nuffield Inquiry committee, by Peter Downes, and it was given some limited support in the Nuffield Report, resolution 6.6 of which reads: 'modules of language awareness should be introduced into the National Literacy Programme in primary schools. The content would be designed to bridge the gap between English, literacy and foreign languages. A number of models of effective language awareness teaching already exist and could be used as the basis for trial schemes before wider implementation'.

8. AOL from theory to practice

Nothing immediately followed from this Nuffield proposal, except that 'knowledge about language' and 'language learning strategies' got a mention in the government's non-statutory Guidelines for MFL at KS2 in the National Strategy to be fully implemented by 2010. This was at least evidence that the argument of Nuffield resolution No. 6.6 had been accepted, even if not immediately acted on. What I want to re-examine now is what would be the priorities at KS1, KS2 and KS3 if the language curriculum were to be avowedly educational in its purpose. Let me try to summarise them at the successive stages.

For young language learners, of course, getting the mother tongue comes first. And much will depend on foundations properly laid, so we begin there.

9. At KS1. A less cruelly uneven language playing field

Despite a lot of progress on literacy, I believe too little thought is still given to the cruel unevenness of the language playing field for many pupils. Failure by so many to develop real 'awareness of how language works' must surely underlie uncertainty when the going into a second language gets hard (see also Chapter 10 of Hawkins Ed. 1996).

"Failure to develop real 'awareness of how language works' must underlie uncertainty when going into a second language"

Comenius, in his *Schola Infantiae* (1651), a treatise on parenthood during the child's first seven years, stresses the significance, for the child's whole attitude to life, of first impressions: the mother's voice, her smile, her patience and, of course, the values conveyed, often unwittingly, by what she says to the child '...by the tales told at their mother's knee do men live or die.'

Readers of the Bullock Report (1975) may have been reminded of Comenius's words on first impressions conveyed by parental language, by this passage on p. 55: 'It has to be recognised that many adolescent pupils are simply not ready to cast themselves in the role of future parents and for them the study of language in parenthood...through films, demonstrations and practical experience, would lead to an awareness of the adult's role in the young child's linguistic and cognitive development'.

This was a plea for ante-natal *language* courses for immature parents. But not all deprivation of 'adult time' is due to parental immaturity. 'Vacuum homes' can also be caused by poverty, illness, anxiety or simply never having known real family life. How are children in such homes to learn what the Oxford philosopher J.L.Austin called 'how to do things with words' (Austin 1962)?

Since Bullock, of course, 'literacy' has had attention and some progress has been made, under a succession of administrations, but it is significant that the key recommendation made by Bullock, after three years of national debate and a scrupulous questioning of witnesses, has never been implemented. It came on page 67 (I summarise): Children who have been deprived of 'adult time' at home in one-to-one interaction with an interested adult, doing things with words, should have such individual adult dialogue facility restored in school

(‘as often as possible’, said Bullock, and with specially trained teachers’ aides).

Interestingly, in July 2005 the Secretary of State for Education, Ruth Kelly, announced that, since other measures to close the gap (in literacy) between pupils from poor homes, and those from more affluent backgrounds, have clearly failed, the government now proposes to increase ‘one-to-one’ adult time for underperformers in school. But why has Bullock’s key recommendation, for precisely such a measure, made 30 years ago, never been met? It may, of course, have been easier to settle for a modicum of KAL in primary literacy programmes, but speaking with an adult about things that matter (and careful listening) must come first.

It may be relevant to contribute some evidence from the work that we tried to do at York throughout the 1970s, while Bullock was deliberating (described in *A Time for Growing* Hawkins E. Ed. 1971). Our annual summer ‘language schools’ offered to slow learning pupils, aged 9 to 14 (all volunteers recommended by their teachers) three weeks of one-to-one language activity with a full-time personal tutor, with whom a close relationship could be made. Our tutors were York University and College of Education students and some selected 6th Formers (17- and 18-year-olds) from local schools. The summer language school became so popular that each year we had a queue at the door when we opened, of children from the previous year, begging, sometimes with tears, to be allowed to attend again. We thus had regular opportunities, over ten years, to assess the effect of simply building pupils’ confidence in doing things with words. Teachers in the pupils’ schools, reporting on them each September after they had attended the summer school, were unanimous in appreciation of the effect of having their own sympathetic adult to practise their use of language with for three weeks.

“The education of the ear is a prerequisite for effective foreign language study.”

There have been other accounts of similar involvement of university students in transmission of language (cf. work at Imperial College London described by S Goodlad 1979). Another possible source of adults for one-to-one ‘doing things with words’ could surely be retired parents who know about talking with children. It is hard to see how a national strategy could meet present needs without exploiting these two sources of tutors.

Until Bullock’s key recommendation is fully met, and for many more children than have so far been imagined, we cannot be said to be offering the young citizens in our democracy anything like the level language playing field that the democratic form of government assumes. And it is there that our attack on the adolescent dropout from foreign language studies should really begin.

10. (a) Still at KS1. Education of the ear

The other priority at KS1 must be ‘learning to listen’. The late Peter MacCarthy, Head of Phonetics at Leeds, best known perhaps for his perceptive writings on the pronunciation of French and German, wrote (1978: 14): ‘The education of the ear, then, is a prerequisite for effective foreign language study’. In his work with 10-year-olds in schools in Leeds in the 1970s, testing pupils’ listening, he found that many, well over half, just about to begin exploring a foreign language in their secondary school, were quite unable to use their ears with discrimination. It is surely important that young pupils learning to ‘do things with words’ and in a foreign language should be as familiar with the ways in which language works to convey meanings via the ear as they should become with written forms.

10. (b) Learning to listen while singing and ‘thinking with the ears’

Education of the ear should start at KS1 and there can be no better introduction to careful, discriminating listening than learning to sing accurately in English and other languages, preferably folk songs. A close correlation has been established by research between singing accurately in tune and many other aspects of learning through the ears. In this connection I have listed in the bibliography two books to have on the shelf in the staffroom:

1. Furth H and Wachs H *Thinking Goes to School*, especially their chapter on ‘Thinking with the Ears’, and
2. Kavanagh J F and Mattingley I G *Language by Ear and Eye*, in which the two pathways of learning are interestingly compared.

At the KS1 stage of ‘awakening to language’ in the remodelled apprenticeship, a sympathetic and imaginative music teacher is a crucially important ally.

11. At KS2. MFLs with what purpose?

Instead of assuming instrumental purposes, which at age seven we can only guess at, we should, at KS2, continue the process of education in language begun at KS1. But the education in language can now take on a broader concept of literacy and begin exploration of the multilingual dimensions of our school, our town, our nation, our world, a wider concept of language awareness.

The present picture, at KS2, thanks to the encouragement of having a widely trusted National Director for Languages, Lid King, to advise on and stimulate all the work, is one of ‘widespread and ambitious planning by local authorities’ (Director’s *Update* July 05). There are so many interesting initiatives at KS2 that the final outcome in classrooms, even at the end of the decade, is difficult to foresee. It is to be hoped, however, that whatever final shape the KS2 apprenticeship assumes, the purpose of the apprenticeship will be seen, by all concerned as ‘preparatory’ and ‘educational’, not ‘instrumental’.

An important part of the ‘awakening’ must be a growing awareness of languages other than English, many more now brought closer to us by European developments and by growing UK trading and cultural and leisure (Olympic!) interests. How do they, including the many (over 300?) now spoken in our pupils’ homes, relate to English? What has English borrowed from them, how do they sound, how are they written, and do their grammars work like English?

These aspects of the multilingual world with which our contacts are ever closer have been an important part of the agenda of the Awareness of Language Association, as the Nuffield committee acknowledged (p. 43): 'A number of models of effective language awareness teaching already exist and could be used as the basis for trial schemes....'. There was, in fact, a rich flowering of such schemes in the 1960s and 1970s, partly responding to the wake-up call issued in 1959 by the Central Advisory Council for Education for 'rethinking the whole basis of the teaching of linguistics in the schools'. It would be a pity if these thoughtful schemes were to be forgotten.[5]

As to more recent examples of classroom 'action research' on language awareness, I have space to describe three recent developments which may point possible ways forward, one from abroad and two nearer home. Since most progress has been made in Europe by the teams working with Michel Candelier, we start with the EVLANG Project.

12. EVLANG: The Balance Sheet

A mine of information on this cooperative action research project – EVLANG – by teachers in five countries (Austria, Spain, Italy, France and Switzerland) is now available in Candelier 2003. Here the director of the project describes the work of 'innovation and research' that took place (generously financed by the European Union) in the five countries concerned, between December 1997 and June 2001. Those working together on this European project came from a variety of backgrounds. 30 were researchers at university and educational research institutes, some teacher trainers plus, of course, the teachers in the more than 160 primary classes who took part in the five countries (see website: http://jaling.ecml.at).

In his 'bilan' Candelier acknowledges the project's initial indebtedness to the AOL movement in the UK (p. 29): 'L'éveil aux langues tel que nous le concevons descend en ligne direct du concept de langage en tant que matière pont ("bridging subject") à travers le curriculum qui avait été présentée en Grande-Bretagne par Hawkins dès 1974...'

The main aims of the EVLANG project can be summarised under three main headings (Candelier 2003: 23):

1. ('attitudes') more positive attitudes of pupils towards linguistic and cultural diversity and greater readiness to learn new languages
2. ('aptitudes') metalinguistic and communicative capacities for attending to, and thinking about, languages as well as learning new ones.
3. ('développement d'une culture langagière = savoirs relatifs aux langues') awareness of and knowledge about language, supporting and reinforcing the above aptitudes and attitudes; promoting greater understanding of the multilingual and multicultural world in which the learner lives.

And the balance sheet ? Candelier usefully sums up (p. 338) the overall conclusions of the evaluation under the heading 'Résistances et Atouts' ('oppositions and trumps').

About the positive trumps he is clear:

- greater diversity of languages in schools and development of 'education in European citizenship' (two particular aims of the Council of Europe)
- greater tolerance of differences (in language and culture), even the avoidance of 'intercultural violence'
- fuller understanding of what is needed for 'développement global' of pupils
- strengthening European social cohesion as well as practical things like
- pupils' greater readiness to learn languages
- teachers knowing exactly what to teach and enjoying it
- pupils with 'better educated ears'
- new pupils arriving in school from other cultures made more welcome and, most importantly,
- welcome by parents of this new approach to language.

"promoting greater understanding of the multilingual and multicultural world in which the learner lives."

I cannot envisage any teacher training course in Britain being able to disregard Candelier's fascinating 'bilan'.

The approach has, of course, met some problems. One of these concerns a misunderstanding of the purpose of the primary curriculum subtly different from the one discussed here. Candelier refers to the strong pressure met during the work on EVLANG, from parents and public opinion (and what Candelier calls 'la volonté politique de satisfaire cette demande') for children to be taught the useful 'global language' English and so to resist any other approach. This is, of course, to assume a purely instrumental purpose for the primary language course. As I have argued, the same mistaken assumption has been made here, especially by the 'volonté politique', though perhaps with less justification here than in the EVLANG countries, where the need of most adults for the 'global language English' can be predicted from an early age. It seems, from Candelier's comment, that for his pioneering approach to make headway in the EVLANG countries he and his colleagues will need to continue educating parents and public opinion, just as we shall. I shall be very interested to learn what our EVLANG friends think of the case I am arguing for a 'two-stage' school language apprenticeship, overtly educational at first but becoming instrumental (and so necessarily pupil chosen and driven) at adolescence, as adult interests and needs, and capacity to choose, all emerge.

Back in the UK, so far as the primary school is concerned, two thoughtful 'action research' projects point to interesting ways forward. For an account of the first I am indebted to Nick Jones, adviser for MFL in Coventry LEA. He writes as follows:

13. "Pathfinding" in Coventry

'In 2003, Coventry received substantial funding from the DfES to be a pathfinder for the introduction of MFL into the KS2 curriculum (for pupils from 7 to 11).

The pathfinder, led by Nick Jones, aimed to address 'head on' some of the main challenges of primary MFL and develop a delivery model which took into account the local context, the constraints of the KS2 curriculum, teacher expertise and the need to ensure that transition between KS2 and KS3 served the needs of pupils.

Coventry is not only blessed with a range of traditional community languages in its schools, such as Punjabi, Urdu and Gujerati, but, in recent years the linguistic landscape has substantially evolved with the arrival of pupils from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. In some classrooms it is not uncommon for up to 15 mother languages to be spoken. Therefore, the absurdity of overlooking this vast resource and teaching all pupils, from the outset, a single foreign language was quickly acknowledged.

The Coventry scheme is now established in over 50% of local primary schools. The teaching of languages has shifted from being a twilight activity to one which is delivered during taught time.

"It is hoped that the pupils will acquire an interest in the phenomenon of language through experiencing a number of different languages"

The Coventry delivery model focuses on developing a framework of language learning skills strongly linked to the embryonic KS2 MFL framework. These skills are developed through encounters with a range of languages from the local and international communities.

The programme does not require the class teacher to be an expert in a specific language. He or she is able to work alongside pupils investigating patterns in languages, similarities and differences across languages and preparing pupils for future language learning through the development of their capabilities in the four main language skills. Thus languages are at the heart of the primary school curriculum and teachers are free to establish strong links with a range of other subjects including literacy, citizenship and ICT.

Materials developed in Coventry have a strong link to ICT and pupils have the opportunity to pick out key words in a spoken story, explore word order in various languages in relation to titles of famous books and to discuss how correctly ordered numbers, days of the week and months in one language can help the pupils to put them in the correct order in another language.

Although there has not, as yet, been any research into the long-term effectiveness of such an approach, a recent HMI visit highlighted the fact that some pupils, within the scheme, had already achieved the equivalent of A level on the Common European Framework. Thus routes for progression had successfully been developed within a multilingual programme'. N.J.

A second project which will help us to see the way forward comes from a former president of ALL and of the Secondary Heads Association, Peter Downes. I am indebted to him for the following account:

14. "Discovering Language"

'The Project, under Peter Downes's direction (2005-2007), is called 'Discovering Language' and is a project of the Secondary Heads Association, financed by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Pupils in the nine primary schools involved will spend two years in the project during which they will be introduced to the basics of six languages, some from Western Europe (including Latin) and others from farther afield (Japanese and Punjabi). Crucially they will learn how meanings are conveyed in different languages e.g. some by 'synthetic grammars', very different from the 'isolating grammar' of English, which conveys meanings mainly by the *order* of largely unchanging words. They will learn about the different ways in which languages convey messages in written form; they will become aware of the interrelation of languages through borrowing and have some idea of how languages change over time. It is hoped that the pupils will acquire an interest in the phenomenon of language through experiencing a number of different languages, rather then having a longer exposure to one language which may or may not be continued in the secondary phase. Potentially this approach could overcome the problem of primary-secondary continuity which has bedevilled national languages policies for many years.

It is important to note that the teachers in the primary schools are NOT specialist linguists. They receive training in the use of published teaching materials in the various languages and guidance notes on how to draw out the language awareness dimension. Interactive whiteboards and internet sites are being effective in the course. These non-specialist teachers are supported by a visit every few weeks from a local co-ordinator who is part of the project's working group. The classroom teachers find they are able to make curricular cross-references to history and geography. Good use is also being made of music to sing songs in the foreign languages.

Peter Downes has recruited a distinguished committee of linguists and educationists to guide his project and the findings of their study will be evaluated by a university department. The evaluation will show to what extent pupils who have experienced this approach in years 5 and 6 have a different and, hopefully, more effective approach to learning languages in the secondary school. The evaluation will be both qualitative and quantitative: pupils and teachers will be interviewed at the end of the primary phase and then again at the end of Year 7. The end-of-year tests in Year 7 will be analysed to see if, matching like with like in terms of general ability, pupils from the project schools have made better progress than those from non-project schools'. P.S.D.

These two interesting examples of 'action research' point ways forward for KS2 in a primary school language curriculum whose purpose is educational.

15. At KS3. MFL with educational purpose

At KS3, as a vital part of 'learning how to learn' pupils should apply themselves to *a specific* 'apprenticeship foreign language'. Choice of the 'school apprenticeship language' must be made by the school, constrained to a large extent by staffing resources. At this stage, teachers should be graduates

or native speakers of the language chosen so as to provide good models. As much learner's choice as possible will be offered in order to maximise motivation, but choice of the apprenticeship foreign language must be for the school to make. It will be desirable, to motivate KS3 learners, that they have a recognised target at 14 to aim at and achieve. The target, after three years, could well be of GCSE standard for most pupils, since the pupils' experience in primary school will have given them many of the tools for language learning. What we want now to add is the indispensable element of learning how to learn, actually getting to grips with the four language skills. Many readers will rightly ask: how would such a KS3 experience differ from what we do now? For most schools it might only be in minor ways. They will already be exploiting the possibilities offered by technology (especially ICT) and 'doing interesting things with words' in the foreign language with native speakers on 'meanings that matter' to young learners. Another stratagem available to them (according to the DfES an 'overarching objective') will be exploitation of the Languages Ladder. It will be invaluable to have accurate descriptions of the steps in a language ladder, informed by accurate, up-to-date accounts of the syntax.

16. How a first MFL can help learning a second

On another aspect of 'learning how to learn' a foreign language at KS3 we can, however, be more categorical. I refer to the question posed, and answered, in a paper which deserved to make a greater impact than it did. *The National Curriculum Working Party Report* (Harris 1990) made the following challenging recommendation (Para. 3.21):

> One of the most valuable general skills which the study of a modern foreign language can impart is the enhanced ability to learn other languages at a later stage. To be fully effective, however, this needs to be a conscious objective of the course.

The Report went on to list 'the factors likely to be important...if enhanced ability to learn other languages is to be the conscious objective':

- 'inculcation of a good sense of linguistic structure'
- 'appreciation of the network of word forms and meanings within and between languages (how meanings are conveyed in different grammars)'
- 'conscious techniques of memorisation'
- 'enhanced skills of listening (tuning of the ear, recognition of sound patterns)'
- 'speaking (training the vocal organs to reproduce new sounds accurately)'

What was so challenging in this catalogue of new classroom priorities was the concept of deliberately aiming the MFL course at helping the attack on some later language. I see no reason why MFL learners in KS3 should not have a demanding examination target to aim at after only three years (GCSE type, building on the 'awareness of language' apprenticeship).

The way progress at KS3 in an apprenticeship language should be assessed is, of course, important and calls for more action research with practising teachers.

17. Still at KS3 – Community languages as 'apprenticeship languages' ?

There is one exciting possibility whose relevance may have been given new point by recent developments in our big cities. I first saw it being partly exploited in Australia, 25 years ago, where a school chose as its main foreign language a language spoken by a substantial ethnic minority (migrant workers) living within the school catchment area. (In the school I visited, in Adelaide, the 'foreign language' was Italian, spoken by a large migrant worker community.)

And taught in 'reciprocal courses'?

I would link this possibility with the experience we had over a number of years at York with what we called 'reciprocal' courses where speakers of two languages take turns as tutor and learner, both teaching and learning from each other. Thus a school would not only adopt as its apprenticeship language for some pupils a community language spoken in its catchment area, but arrange for that language and English to be 'reciprocally' taught/learned by pupils. By bringing together two (small) matched groups of learners, working alternately in the two languages, with bilingual group mentors guiding and helping, as at York, such reciprocal language teaching/learning could be richly rewarding for education of a community, in ways going far beyond mere language teaching. (The reciprocal courses at York are described in detail in Hawkins 1981/87, pp. 193/4).

"the study of a modern foreign language can impart the enhanced ability to learn other languages at a later stage."

18. Diagnostic Guidance

Building on the apprenticeship in 'learning how to learn', our purpose in the foreign language classroom changes. The apprenticeship must teach the pupil a lot about his or her own capacities and interests. Here the educational psychologists must help us and the work by our colleagues in EVLANG on 'aptitudes' and 'attitudes' will also be most helpful. Real instrumental choices of MFLs to be made by the learner will call for sympathetic guidance, and the best guides may be former pupils who have made their language choices and lived with hem. What kind of curriculum to offer at the 14-19 stage we examine in Part Two.

PART TWO
14 TO 19: THE INSTRUMENTAL STAGE ?

19. Attracting back the adolescent dropouts

Perhaps the first question to face about our 14-19 stage is how we make it more likely that pupils who now drop out of language classes at KS4 will stay with the subject or come back to a different language. My answer, which I am sure can be improved by experienced teachers (who I hope will accept my argument, but critically), must be in three parts.

1. We have the evidence of numbers of 18-year-olds at universities who currently return to a foreign

language only two years after dropping out. Why not earlier ?

2. Our educational and diagnostic first stage would be geared to giving pupils the 'tools for language learning' which at present so many lack.
3. We would restore at the 14-19 stage a vital ingredient which has proved to be a turning point for many learners in the past but is now missing for most. It could motivate 14+ returners, as it has done, I would suggest, to most of those who read these pages. It is the opportunity to use the foreign language in intensive immersion.

20. Lots of 18+ returners. Why not earlier?

Students returning to foreign language study for clearly instrumental purposes at university, who produced an explosive growth of 'service' courses outside degrees, were designated SODS (Specialists in Other Disciplines) by Coleman (1996). They now clearly outnumber language degree students, with more men than women! When the SODS were asked why they had signed on for a language, so soon after dropping out, most replied 'for my career'. They now saw its relevance to their emerging adult interests, in a way they had not felt about the language they had dropped at school (cf. Footnote 3).

"Each year some 10,000 students from UK institutions opt to spend a term or more abroad as part of their degree studies"

Another aspect of the post-school return to languages is the growth of study abroad. Each year some 10,000 students from UK institutions opt to spend a term or more abroad as part of their degree studies (on Socrates/Erasmus schemes), taking in their stride the foreign language learning that this involves.

And this swing-back to language study may soon not be limited to 'academic' takers. If enlightened re-thinking of national apprenticeship training schemes makes the progress that it promises to make, school leavers opting for vocational courses will be encouraged to study a language as part of their apprenticeship. Their choice of language will, of course, as with Coleman's SODS, be motivated by choice of career and so will not be predictable until adult interests and priorities begin to emerge.

The SODS' swing back to language study, so soon after dropout, rated only a brief mention in the Nuffield Report (p. 54): 'There are now more higher education students studying a language outside language degrees than within them'). But Nuffield made no attempt to examine the implications of this. I try to address two implications in this paper:

i. That the KS2 and KS3 apprenticeship should specifically prepare for later return
ii. That the 14-19 (instrumental) stage should restore a vital missing ingredient.

21. The missing ingredient: Intensive Immersion Learning

The sheer number of languages from which adolescents will have to choose points to radical re-thinking of the school's role. How will schools cope with the diversity of languages likely to be needed? There is an approach which will, I believe, prove to be an aspect of the 14-19 curriculum which will attract young language learners, as it did when road-tested in the 1980s. It is an element of foreign language learning that has been lost for too many pupils in recent years. I have called it (Hawkins 1988) the 'missing ingredient', intensive immersion.

Offering this precious element of the apprenticeship now denied to too many may be the only part of my 'two-stage' proposal which has financial implications. I believe, however, that what I am proposing has been shown to work in the past with marked success and its absence from the foreign language experience of most young learners may well have been an important factor in the growing dropout. It is not hard to see why.

There always have been two quite different kinds of language learning. The first is acquiring the language as a by-product of meeting real needs. It is the way the baby gets the mother tongue. The baby meets a succession of needs which demand the use of language. The needs come first, then their satisfaction. And real needs are powerful motivators. This kind of language learning is sometimes replicated when, for instance, the immigrant, immersed in a new culture, meets new needs which can only be satisfied by use of language, or when the school pupil enjoys a study visit abroad. This can also be the case with the written language (subject to conditions discussed in Hawkins 1987, pp. 280 *et seq*.) when the learner goes to a text motivated to satisfy specific needs. In all these contexts, language acquisition again becomes a by-product of satisfying real needs.

Classroom, teacher-led, learning is a different way of approaching a second language. In the classroom neither the motivation to learn nor the particular language and specific items of language learned spring from satisfying immediate needs. The learner has to suspend disbelief (imagining that the language is needed) but the attention is immediately focused on the teacher's agenda. What kept many of us working at our foreign language when the going got hard, was the opportunity to be immersed in the language, transacting meanings that mattered to us with native speakers (and writers) as a supplement to classroom exercises. I have compared it with the great satisfaction, when learning to swim, of getting into the water and finding that it will support one. Of course the two approaches constantly interplay, for fortunate learners, with the classroom having a valuable part in strengthening the by-product learning. But the immersion sessions are what chiefly motivate young learners. Older learners may get along better in classroom learning because suspending disbelief demands self-discipline. When teaching, in China, for instance, I met mature learners who had enjoyed little opportunity for intensive immersion or by-product learning of spoken English, and yet, being exceptionally strong-willed and self-motivating, they had made remarkable progress in speaking the language by a mature suspension of disbelief.

Most of us now teaching have had experience of immersion learning through study sessions abroad. With the ending of selection, however, when foreign languages were offered to all (or most) 11-year-olds,

it was not found possible to make available to all learners the experience that had been the turning point of learning for those now teaching. Opportunities for well-planned study abroad, for all learners, in all languages, not dependent on home background, could not be provided and have now almost dried up.There is, however, another way to offer immersion with native speakers. It is by means of intensive immersion courses in regional language centres.

22. Regional Language Centres

In the CILT symposium *Intensive Language Teaching and Learning* (Hawkins, 1988) we collected over a score of examples of successful initiatives which pointed the way forward to widespread use of 'intensive immersion'. The most successful examples were collaborative partnerships between colleges and universities and local schools. The considerable impact that such intensive sessions made in the 1980s is now largely forgotten, as the result of the drying up of funds then available, at FE and HE level, for extra-mural experiments. Yet these courses provide examples of the kind of experience which could well attract back our adolescent dropouts. The following account, taken from the CILT symposium, is given by Diego Garcia-Lucas, Deputy Director of Lancashire College:

> *Lancashire College, Chorley*
>
> 1. At Winstanley Sixth Form College (Wigan) we have run two intensive courses for sixteen-year-olds in Spanish. The courses occupied the first two weeks of September, from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm each day. The students were complete beginners in Spanish who wanted to qualify to take A level. Starting from scratch, they ended the two weeks with a working knowledge of the language at O level standard. They then joined the A level class at the Sixth Form College and continued their studies to complete the A level course. There were twelve students in each course. Two tutors took turns to stay with the students at all times, including coffee and lunch breaks. Spanish was the only language spoken throughout the course.
>
> 2. At a comprehensive school in Leigh (Lancashire) it was decided to phase out the teaching of Russian and introduce Spanish. 35 fourteen-year-olds who had been studying Russian needed to change to Spanish. We ran an intensive course of one week similar to the one described above. This took the students from zero knowledge of Spanish to the level of the Lancashire County Graded Test Level 2, which they successfully passed.
>
> 3. We divided the students into three groups. Three teachers were involved, who remained with the pupils all the time, including coffee and meal breaks. The language spoken throughout was Spanish. The experience of using Spanish, even at lunch time, acted as an incentive to other pupils at the school who were learning French to use their French during their breaks. (Garcia-Lucas 1988: 110)

What is specially interesting in this account is the effect of the native speakers' engagement with the pupils in social interaction. This provides specific opportunities, never available in the school classroom, for the by-product learning, acquiring language as a by-product of meeting real needs, that we discussed earlier. Government papers have raised the prospect of employing far more native speakers as language teachers. I suggest that it would be perhaps the most economical way to utilise native speakers to base them in such regional language centres, working closely with groups of schools in collaborative courses such as these. When I made my submission to the Nuffield Inquiry I made two suggestions about such courses:

1. that a high priority should be given to their provision in every region
2. their costs and management should be shared between industry/commerce and education (they might be open to schools in school hours, to adults in the evenings).

> **"specific opportunities for by-product learning, acquiring language as a by-product of meeting real needs"**

CONCLUSION

To sum up, I am proposing what the Nuffield Report called a 're-gearing' of the school language apprenticeship. It would have two stages whose different purposes would be clearly defined and well understood by all concerned, especially by parents.

Stage One. The Educational Stage (from 5-14)

a) At KS1 (as recommended by Bullock) the opportunity for *all* children who have missed 'adult time' at home, to have the chance to 'do things with words', one-to-one, with an adult who possesses the language in which the school apprenticeship is going to be delivered. The aim would be to offer a much less uneven language playing field for all potential voters in our democracy. Where Bullock called for specially trained language assistants, I suggest supplementing them by involving students and retired parents on a national scale.
   At KS1 also a serious attack on 'education' of the ear, through discriminating listening, largely exploiting music and folk song in various languages
b) At KS2 building further on education of the ear by listening to, and 'doing simple things with words' in languages other than English, and in so doing, learning a wider, richer concept of 'literacy'. This would be reinforced, in later years of KS2, by courses in 'awareness of language' in which teachers of all forms of language and literature, as well as music and science, would cooperate
c) At KS3 learning how to learn language would be given practical application in a serious attack on a specific apprenticeship language, chosen largely by the school but with as much pupil choice as is feasible. Choice of apprenticeship language might include one of our (300 ?) community languages, taught in 'reciprocal courses' with English in which indigenous and

community pupils teach, and learn from, each other.

The apprenticeship language would be assessed after three years by public examination of similar standard to GCSE (the primary school awareness of language courses having sharpened for pupils the 'tools for language learning').

d) At KS3/KS4, in close cooperation with parents, on-going diagnostic guidance for young learners advising them as to their own linguistic abilities and interests and as to the nature of language choices and opportunities likely to be met, in the 14-19 stage, as various career pathways begin to emerge.

Stage Two (from 14-19)

This stage would take on clearly instrumental purposes. These might, of course, be motivated not simply by vocational needs, but by a wish to continue with academic study or by developing adult interests. Whatever the language purposes are, however, they must be chosen by the learner, after careful diagnostic guidance.

To make learner's choice a reality, the 'missing ingredient', intensive immersion, would be restored to school programmes for all-comers, regardless of home background.

For teachers in schools one great advantage of this two-stage approach, with well recognised purposes at each stage, would be that the students concerned at each stage would be motivated by purposes matched to their age. Adolescents, our present dropouts, would have the opportunity to work at a language that they had themselves chosen, with proper guidance and after suitably planned preparation.

Such a two-stage school course offers the best hope (if I may adapt Hotspur's striking image) of 'plucking from the nettle of dropout the flower of opportunity'. It points to the attainment of clearly defined purposes at each stage, with satisfaction for the young learners, and their teachers, support of parents, and profit for the nation.

NOTES

1 **The Leathes Report, 1918**
The Report to the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, *Modern Studies* (HMSO Cmd 9036, 1918), chaired by Stanley Leathes, a Cambridge history don, was the only national commission that has ever studied all aspects of modern language learning. It was one of two distinguished committees set up at a dark moment of the Great War (1915), by Lloyd George's predecessor Asquith, to consider how the new, post-war, state-maintained secondary schools that were being planned, should teach science and languages (the teaching of the classics, it was felt, had been well enough done in the independent schools to serve as a model). Leathes, for the first time, distinguished clearly between the 'educational' and 'instrumental' functions of the school course and saw post-school ('further education in day and evening classes') as the place for 'instrumental' teaching (skills in a specifically chosen language aimed at meeting what Leathes called 'definite ends'). The committee was reporting, of course, before gramophone, tape-recorder, radio and TV were available and before English was widely accepted as the 'global language'. The Leathes committee shared the belief that lifelong further education in day and evening classes would be given high priority after the war, through the county colleges planned in the great 'Fisher' Act. Sadly these hopes came to nothing in post-war financial stringency and, with them, Leathes's thinking about the roles of school and FE was forgotten.

2 **Can starting early, of itself, avert adolescent dropout?**
A relevant point was made by Gamble C. J. and Smalley A. in *Modern Languages*, VI, 2, 95 (1975), in their article criticising the NFER evaluation of the Pilot Scheme (1963-74) . They pointed out an aspect of the Pilot Scheme that had been overlooked in the post-Burstall debate (and may have lessons for present discussion of early starting). This was *the very small number of pupils* on which the final judgement of early starting had been based. They concluded: '....Burstall's findings... are therefore based on observation of Cohorts 2 and 3 (the main body of pupils studied) comprising some 11,300 pupils at the beginning of the project and a mere 1,237 pupils in 1973'. These early starters had every attention and encouragement that their primary schools could offer, yet the number dropping out (for a variety of reasons) after transfer to secondary school, matches closely the nine tenths dropout of 11+ starters to which Nuffield was later to draw attention. It certainly does not suggest that early starting **by itself** will avert early dropout.

3 **18+ returners at York University**
The latest figures from York (2005) show that of the 6,000 students currently at the University, nearly one third (some 1,900) are studying languages on non-degree programmes in the university's *Languages for All* scheme. Students on the scheme have all paid an extra fee to enrol. Most have chosen a language not met at school. There are 13 languages on offer (including Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Arabic and Portuguese). 120 students are taking Japanese, at three levels, 300 taking Spanish at five levels, plus 180 taking Italian at three levels.

4 (2000) *Languages: the next generation*
Final report and recommendations. London: The Nuffield Foundation, p. 40.

5 **Early 'language awareness' materials**
The wake-up call for re-thinking language teaching materials came in 1959 from the Central Advisory Council (England), under its then chairman, the economist Geoffrey Crowther. Foreseeing the imminent disappearance of Latin from the curriculum for most pupils, they asked what could possibly be put in the curriculum to 'do what Latin does'. They could not agree on a single answer (some simply wanted to put Latin back as a compulsory element) but they were all agreed in calling for 're-thinking the whole basis of the teaching of linguistics in the schools'. In response to this a group chaired by Michael Halliday set to work and, in 1971, a set of imaginative materials for the English classroom was published by the Schools Council with the title *Language in Use* (Doughty *et al*. 1971). I have never understood why these imaginative materials were neglected in so many schools and failed to make the impact they deserved. It was in his introduction to this material as chairman that Michael Halliday was the first UK linguist to refer to 'awareness of language' The term was already widely used in the USA (see Eschholz P. *et al*. 3rd Ed. 1982). Early innovative materials in the UK are reviewed in Hawkins 1984.

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