

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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NEWSLETTER

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Contents:

Page

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Editorial  |
| 2  | Social Psychology and Speech - Howard Giles  |
| 8  | A Communicative Methodology in Foreign Language Teaching -<br>William T. Littlewood  |
| 10 | Short Review: The Role of English and French as Languages of<br>Communication between Anglophone and Francophone West African<br>States, Carew Treffgarne (John Norrish) |
| 11 | Short Review: Fluency and Language Teaching, Richard Leeson<br>(S. J. Burke)   |
| 11 | Autodidactic Elements in Foreign Language Teaching - Mabel Sculthorp   |
| 12 | Report on Ninth IATEFL Conference  |
| 13 | Recent books noted   |

## EDITORIAL

One of BAAL's main functions, and one of its most valuable contributions to the applied linguistic scene, is the provision of seminars and conferences. These would seem, at first sight, to divide themselves into those (mainly with restricted access) which aim to concentrate the minds of participants on matters of agreed professional interest, and those (mainly with open access) which aim to spread the views of a variety of workers in the field to the profession as a whole. There is, however, a third type of meeting in which the result, sometimes intentionally and sometimes by accident, is to map out new relationships, to rephrase the questions which people are asking, and to establish new areas of interest. In retrospect, the recent post-Bullock Seminar in Southampton may be an example of this third type. In this seminar people who have been working in the fields of applied linguistics, mother tongue teaching, and foreign language teaching (including EFL) met to discuss a variety of relevant issues. Admittedly, a somewhat cynical observer was heard to remark at the end of the first day that it was a pity 'The Space Between' had already been used as a title for another series of conference papers. However, it seems likely that by the end of the seminar, and in the weeks since it finished, the space may have been - at least partly - filled in.

Whether the relationship between applied linguistics and the teaching of mother tongues is going to be clearly defined in the near future remains to be seen. We shall soon find ourselves in a position to start defining if we can agree that there are not 'two sides', but two sets of people with common concerns and important insights to contribute to each other. But this does depend on the recognition by everyone involved of

- (1) the limitations and strengths of scientific analysis in this field, and
- (2) the vital importance of the serious educational issues (as distinct from narrowly linguistic ones) with which educationalists have been concerned for many years.

Applied linguistics must contribute seriously to the discussion of mother tongue teaching; it must be seen to be capable of addressing itself to the 'normal' language learning situation and not only to the highly formal and artificial school foreign language situation. Let us hope

that the process is beginning.

### SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SPEECH.

Although sociolinguistics has made great strides in informing us when, how and on which linguistic levels we modify our speech (Ervin-Tripp, 1969; Hymes, 1972), it has paid little attention to why we do this. Do not people's moods, motives, feelings and loyalties shape our linguistic behaviour? By highlighting factors such as these, sociolinguistics may be directed towards a richer theoretical base. In particular, social psychology has in recent years been investigating interpersonal speech style shifts.

Four relevant theories are to be considered here: similarity attraction, social exchange, causal attribution and intergroup distinctiveness.

1. Similarity attraction processes: In its simplest form, similarity attraction theory proposes that the more similar our attitudes and beliefs are to others, the more likely we are to be attracted to them. Interpersonal accommodation through speech (i.e. the fact that when two people meet there is a tendency for them to become more alike in their accents (Giles, 1973), speech rates (Webb, 1970), pause and utterance lengths (Jaffe & Feldstein, 1972; Matarazzo, 1973), vocal intensities (Natale, 1975) and so forth) is but one of the many devices a person may adopt in order to become more similar to another. Specifically, it involves the reduction of linguistic dissimilarities between two people in terms of their languages, dialects, paralinguistic features, etc. Since increasing similarity between people along such an important dimension as communication is likely to increase liking as well as intelligibility (Triandis, 1960), accommodation perhaps reflects a speaker's desire for social approval. Indeed, it has been shown that the greater one's desire for other's approval, the more similar their voices will sound to yours (Larsen, Martin & Giles, 1975). Moreover, Natale (1975; 1975a) has found that speakers with high needs for social approval converge more to another's vocal intensity and pause length than those with low needs for social approval.

2. Social exchange processes: Social exchange theory states, in its simplest form, that prior to an act we weigh up its potential rewards and costs to us (Homans, 1961). And so, if we can do (or say) either A or B, we will tend to choose the alternative which maximises the chances of a positive outcome and minimises the possibility of a very unpleasant one. Engaging in convergent speech acts should then incur more potential 'rewards' for the speaker than 'costs'. Rewards in this instance could include a gain in the listener's approval as already mentioned, while the potential costs would include the expended effort involved or a loss of personal (and sometimes group) identity. Studies in many cultures have shown that the more prestigious the accent you possess the more favourably you will be perceived on certain dimensions (Giles & Powesland, 1975). This is particularly true in Britain where standard-accented speakers are viewed as far more intelligent, self-confident and determined than non-standard, regional-accented speakers, even by the latter themselves. In addition, what one has to say will often be considered more persuasive and of a better quality, and also more likely to gain the co-operation of others than had it been voiced in a less standardised accent (Giles, 1973a; Powesland & Giles, 1975; Giles, Baker & Fielding, 1975). These rewards for accent accommodation in Britain have, however, been based on male data (cf. Kramer, 1975). A recent study investigating evaluative reactions to British female accented speech suggests that there may be additional rewards for women (Elyan, Smith, Giles & Bourhis, in press). It was found that not only are standard-accented women stereotyped as more competent than their non-standard-accented counterparts, but they are also perceived as less weak, more independent, adventurous and feminine than the latter. In other words, upward convergence for women may glean a greater array of rewards than the same speech strategy adopted by a male. Hence, these findings shed great light on the reason why women in the United States and Britain adopt more prestigious-sounding speech than men (Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1974).

3. Causal attribution theory: Research in causal attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1973) suggests that we under-

stand others' behaviour and evaluate the people in terms of the motives and intentions we attribute as the cause of their behaviour. For example, we do not just observe a man donating money for a good cause and simply evaluate him positively as kind and generous. We consider as best we can his motives first. In this case, an attribution of a motive of personal gain for this act might lead us to assess him somewhat negatively as machiavellian and insincere. We would expect that such processes operate also in perceiving speech accommodation. For instance, it has been shown that when French Canadian listeners attributed an English Canadian's accommodation to their language as due to a desire to break down cultural barriers, convergence was perceived very favourably. Yet when this same accommodative language was attributed to pressures in the situation forcing the other to converge, positive feelings were not so strongly evoked by the recipients (Simard, Taylor & Giles, 1976). However, this is all to consider convergence or interpersonal accommodation as an active process, while non-accommodation has assumed a subordinate, passive role. This latter orientation is unfounded, particularly given that non-accommodative language can be used by ethnic groups as a symbolic tactic for maintaining their identity and cultural distinctiveness. This was exemplified a little while ago when for the first time the Arab nations issued their oil communiqué to the world not in English but in Arabic. Likewise, one witnesses the efforts of many ethnic minorities throughout the world attempting to maintain their own dialects and languages as an expression of cultural pride (Fishman, et al., 1966; Giles, in press). Moreover, it may well be that under certain conditions people not only want to maintain their own speech style but wish to emphasise it in interaction with others (cf. Bourhis, Giles & Lambert, 1975; Doise, Sinclair & Bourhis 1976). In these cases, speakers want to accentuate the differences between themselves and others (cf. Wolff, 1959; Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963) perhaps because of the others' outgroup membership, undesirable attitudes, habits or appearance. Such a process of social dissociation we have termed 'speech divergence' (Giles, 1973); it is the opposite of convergence in that it

involves speakers modifying their speech away from their interlocutors. At this point, it seems theoretically useful to draw upon our fourth and final socio-psychological approach - Tajfel's (1974) theory of intergroup relations and social change.

4. Intergroup distinctiveness: In its very simplest terms, Tajfel proposes that when members of different groups are in contact they compare themselves with each other on dimensions which are important to them such as personal attributes, abilities, material possessions, etc. He suggests that these 'intergroup social comparisons' will lead individuals to search for or even create dimensions on which they can make themselves positively distinct from the outgroup. The possession of such a positive distinctiveness by the ingroup will ensure that they have an adequate social identity. In other words, people experience satisfaction in the knowledge that they belong to groups which enjoy some superiority over others. Thus, given that speech style is for many groups a salient and valued dimension of their social identity (Giles, Taylor & Hourhis, 1976; Giles, Taylor, Lambert & Albert, 1976), it may well be that speech divergence is an important strategy for making oneself psychologically and favourably distinct from outgroup members.

These four social psychological theories, then, may all contribute to accommodation theory, the concern of which is to explain some of the processes underlying convergence and divergence. While this approach is clearly still in its theoretical infancy, it should have a contribution to make to sociolinguistics; indeed, if a methodology and complete theory of speech behaviour is ever to be developed, it is going to have to be an interdisciplinary one, drawing on insights from social psychology as well as from linguistics.

Note: This survey has been edited, with permission, from a paper presented at the BAAL Annual Meeting at the University of Exeter, September 1976.

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A COMMUNICATIVE METHODOLOGY  
IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING.

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As a result of the considerable interest and activity devoted to the 'communicative approach' in foreign language teaching, we can point to a number of concrete gains. To mention but three: the need to match course objectives to learners' communicative needs has become axiomatic; the analysis of language and real speech in functional terms has made it possible to specify more accurately not only the nature of these needs, but also how they may be realised linguistically; and this has already enabled the learner-based objectives to be embodied in syllabuses and materials - perhaps tentatively and provisionally, but then, what has ever proved definitive in the language-teaching field?

We now have syllabuses and materials, then, which will be subject to constant refinement, revision and multiplication. However, the writing of syllabuses and materials is essentially a pre-classroom activity. What happens when the materials appear in the classroom? How does the communicative language teacher teach? Answers to these questions are likely to be varied and vague, for there has so far been little systematic discussion and intensive work on the implications of communicative principles at the methodological level. The teaching process is ultimately controlled not by the materials but by the teacher, and there is nothing to prevent communicatively-based materials from being subjected to grammar-translation treatment (the text-books from audio-visual courses are not infrequently treated like this, the tapes and filmstrips having been permanently assigned to the store-cupboard). Equally, there may be nothing to prevent a teacher with only an old grammar book at his disposal from teaching 'communicatively', whatever 'teaching communicatively' may mean. In other words, although maximum economy lies in a situation where syllabuses, materials and methods all embody the same approach, the methodological problem is in principle separate, and requires separate attention. Although it is premature to make generalisations and prognoses, perhaps three main foci of interest can be perceived or predicted at the present time.

The first field of attention might be called 'old techniques applied to new materials', and characterises a large proportion of what is offered by communicative teaching materials produced so far. Thus, they may still contain reading pieces or dialogues for exploitation (probably using established question-and-answer techniques), but the content has been selected and sequenced on functional grounds; there are drills, but they are more clearly and explicitly contextualised and the responses are presented as performing a specific communicative function; there may be completion exercises or multiple choice exercises, but the emphasis is on choosing an appropriate response for a specified communicative purpose; and so on. In other words, the pupils are engaged in activities not dissimilar from those of a decade ago, but different principles determine the choice of material.

The second field of interest might be called 'new techniques to complement the old'. Some or all of the established techniques for presentation, practice etc. are kept, probably in the form just described, but new ways are sought for giving pupils opportunities for language use in preparation for communicative activity in the real environment. Role play and simulation exercises are important here, as are techniques for creating communication situations and promoting the motivation to communicate, whether as a framework for practising specific language structures or for the free exchange of meanings. The language-teaching literature and published materials offer some ideas and assistance in this respect, but, so far, they are inadequate to what pupils need if our teaching is to bring them close to their objectives in terms of communicative ability.

The third field of interest implies the possibility of more radical change, and aims to develop a new methodology based on a thorough-going re-examination of our assumptions about learning and teaching in controlled environments. Teaching methods to date, for all their differences, have had one important feature in common: they have seen themselves as methods for teaching language, which can be objectified, divided into discrete items, selected, presented, rehearsed and tested, within the 'school-subject' paradigm of learning and teaching. We are now seeking methods of teaching not language, but communication through language and the old paradigm is not necessarily suited to the non-discrete, open-ended, developmental nature of communicative ability. Certainly, foreign language learners proceed very differently when left to follow their own natural processes, and while this proves nothing in itself, it nonetheless encourages us to ask questions about the type of progression and learning environments which formal teaching imposes at present, and to consider the alternatives. Indeed, there are so many questions that future developments in this area are totally unpredictable. The only certainty is that useful insights might come from any of the many fields of study which deal with human interaction and communication, and that the term 'applied linguist' will become increasingly a misnomer for those engaged in exploring what these fields have to offer.

It must again be stressed that the problem of a communicative methodology is still largely unmapped terrain, and that these generalisations and predictions are provisional in the extreme. They may need to be drastically revised after the BAAL seminar on the topic to be held in Bath in April 1977.

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Short Reviews: Carew Treffgarne - THE ROLE OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH AS LANGUAGES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICAN STATES. London: Africa Educational Trust, 1975. pp 143. £2.00

This survey of the Languages Regues in their respectively adjoining areas of West Africa is the product of a journey through the relevant countries in the months closing 1973 and opening 1974. The work is divided into three major sections dealing respectively with (1) the linguistic complexity of Africa, the Introduction; (2) the Areas of Contact in West Africa where a need is becoming apparent for communication across the barrier of the Anglophone/Francophone divide and (3) taking up the last one hundred pages, Current Provision for Communication Purposes, in which additionally a number of recommendations are made.

As Miss Treffgarne makes clear, the survey does not attempt any kind of examination in depth, but rather claims to cover a wide area; it was seen by the author as a Document which would lead to future work in depth and which would present much information, not necessarily new or original, but brought together in one place for the first time. Viewed in this light, the document is without doubt a success and should be recommended reading for anyone interested in the field of language or language development, particularly in West Africa. It should be of equal interest to both sides of the linguistic divide which is all too infrequently crossed, whether for linguistic or political reasons; for although the survey presupposes bilingualism in its readers (pp 24, 43 and passim), this is still not a common phenomenon. The situation is improving, however. At least one director of an Anglophone university Language Centre has recently taken an intensive French course (but in France) and the English Centre for Francophones to which the survey refers (110 and passim) has now come into being, helped by an ODM grant of £25,000. This is in the University of Ghana.

An important point made by the survey is the lack of any simple parallel between the teaching of English and French as Foreign Languages in the area. Differences between the number of hours taught (more of English to French L<sub>2</sub> speakers than vice versa), standards and approaches in exams, differences in oral competence all make the situation far more complex than might at first appear.

Finally I would like to take issue with the author who, following Prator (1968), expresses misgivings about departures from an international standard affecting comprehension. Those in agreement with this view would cite Indian English as an example. This reviewer has his doubts, however, since there are problems as to what kinds of English are best understood in certain environments in a second language situation. There will be an opposition set up between the classroom model ("unreal") and the "live" one used outside. I would stress, however, that this survey is a most useful contribution towards increased communication between countries linguistically divided in West Africa.

Reference: Prator, C.H. (1968) "The British Heresy in TESL" in Fishman, J.A. et al. (eds) Language Problems of Developing Nations, Wiley & Sons.

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Richard Leeson - FLUENCY AND LANGUAGE TEACHING, Longman 1975. pp.202. £2.25

Richard Leeson's book is an interesting attempt at defining fluency - a concept much alluded to in language teaching but little understood in anything more than an imprecise, intuitive way.

Deriving concepts from a wide range of theoretical positions - behaviourist, neo-behaviourist, cognitive, information processing - and drawing on experimental research data, the author endeavours to produce a model of fluent verbal behaviour and to relate this to course design, and techniques and materials in foreign language teaching. As such, it serves well the aims of Applied Linguistics.

The greater part of the book is devoted to identifying and analysing, within the framework of a fairly conventional communication model, some of the major components of fluency and their inter-relationships. Thus, following an introductory survey of first and second language learning similarities and differences, consideration is given to the tentative and interpretive ends of the model, to the various components and processes of encoding and decoding, to the nature, role and significance of pausal phenomena, and to the semantic component, the key element, dominating, as it does, the whole communicative process, and linking cognition and language. Throughout the discussion the essential coherence and complexity of fluent verbal behaviour are stressed. The final chapter of the book investigates some of the implications of the model for foreign language teaching, the general conclusion being that a move towards communicative curricula would be appropriate. Included are examples of particular exercise types, ranging from the manipulative to the more creative, and designed to concentrate on the critical interfaces of the speaking/listening process.

At many points in the book, the author rightly stresses the need to treat the various proposals with caution, based as many of them are on inadequate and fragmentary data and on inferential and hypothetical models of how language works and how it is acquired. He also refers from time to time to the possible roles of motivation and intelligence and suggests that these and other related elements may not be particularly central to fluency. This may be so but it could be argued that the various 'non-linguistic' cognitive and psychological states, events and skills should be given much greater prominence in any model, particularly when that model is applied to language learning and teaching. Here again, of course, the precise nature and possible significance of such elements, given our current state of knowledge, remain unclear.

Leeson's book, then, is perhaps best seen as a useful investigation of some of the central components of fluency, but one which, of necessity, must make many assumptions, must pass over what are possibly very critical areas of which little is known, and must make proposals which can only be regarded as tentative.

The book could be a little easier to read than it is, and some pruning of quotations and of the occasional repetitive section could have been effected. These aspects, however, detract only marginally from the valuable summarising, synthesising and direction-pointing role of the book.

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#### AUTODIDACTIC ELEMENTS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

At the request of UNESCO, a preliminary inquiry is being undertaken in the UK into the foreign language learning habits of adults and older adolescents, with special reference to methods and materials that can be controlled by the learner, working either completely on his own or under tuition to some extent. The project is confined to the acquisition ab initio or to the furtherance of knowledge of the most widely used European languages, including English as a foreign language.

CILT has agreed to be responsible to the Ministry of Overseas Development for the project, and the Department of Education and Science is kept fully informed

through the Steering Committee: C. Vaughan James (Chairman - CILIP), C. J. Brumfit (University of London Institute of Education), Vivien Cook (North East London Polytechnic), Miss Sheila Innes (BBC), Keith Rawson-Jones (publishers' representative). The researcher for the project is Miss Mabel A. L. Sculthorp, formerly Director of the Language Centre, University of Kent at Canterbury, who will be grateful to receive information or comment as soon as possible from anyone who has a special interest in autodidactic methods or materials or who knows where such methods are used as part of the teaching methodology. Her address is Blue Orchard, Fairlawn, Chestfield, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3JZ.

Between February and June sample institutions will be asked whether they are willing to receive a visit from the researcher and supply information needed for the return of questionnaires drawn up for international use by the researchers of the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Saint-Cloud, who have been working on the scheme in Paris since May 1975. The report from the UK is to be submitted to UNESCO in July 1977.

Mabel Sculthorp

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Note: Since the Newsletter is intended to facilitate exchange of information and ideas, reports of conferences and seminars organised by other groups in related fields to ours would be welcomed by the editor. Below is a short account of the ninth annual conference of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language.

CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, HELD AT OXFORD COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION, 4 TO 7 JANUARY 1977  
THEME: THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

The IATEFL conferences are large undertakings, with more than 500 people passing through, and around 100 papers being presented. The size has its advantages - it means, for example, that there is a very full and comprehensive permanent book exhibition - but it also means that there are a large number of papers which clash with each other, and very little chance of distinguishing good papers from the bad or indifferent. Necessarily, then, one's impression of the conference depends on the success or otherwise of the hit or miss attack on the papers offered.

Two preoccupations seemed to emerge strongly in the discussion this year. One was the use of 'authentic' materials, either naturally - with recordings taken into the classroom undoctored from the tape recorder - or packaged with varying degrees of editorial sophistication. Problems in the collection, preparation, and use of such materials were much discussed. Surprisingly, the other main concern was not the 'notional' approach which has been reflected in so many recent textbooks, but the old problem of what model is appropriate for various categories of learner. A number of papers reopened this question, possibly as a natural extension of the discussion of English for Specific Purposes.

Perhaps this observer was unlucky (or unskilled) in his choice of papers to hear - and anyway some of the more popular speakers were in rooms too small to accommodate a large audience - but the discussion after the papers was generally rather unexciting and there was little formal opportunity to question or to discuss the major theses of papers. This may be inevitable in such a large gathering, but the most lasting impression was nevertheless one of slight disappointment that so many textbooks were being marketed in an area about which we seemed to know so little.

RECENT BOOKS NOTED

Academic Press:

ed. Mary Sanches & Ben Blount - Sociocultural Dimensions of Language Use, £12.40

Edward Arnold:

Roger Gurney - Language, Learning and Remedial Teaching. £2.00 PB

Exeter University:

ed. C.S. Butler & R.R.K. Hartmann - A Reader on Language Variety. £1.00 PB

Harper & Row:

S.J. Keyser & P.M. Postal - Beginning English Grammar. \$10.95

Heinemann:

T.C. Jupp & S. Hodlin - Industrial English. £6.50

Methuen:

Sara Delamont - Interaction in the Classroom. £1.40 PB

Newbury House:

Florence Steiner - Performing with Objectives. £4.25 PB

Earl Stevick - Memory, Meaning and Method. £4.25 PB

Oxford University Press:

ed. Gunther Kress - Halliday: System & Function in Language. £2.50 PB

Penguin:

Eugene Linden - Apes, Men and Language. 90p PB

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Comments, please, on these or any other recent books will be gratefully received.

Please send correspondence and contributions for future issues to:  
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