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Editorial

This issue of *Education* features six papers, all concerned with language education at secondary level. The languages treated are Maltese, English, Italian, German and Spanish. The opening article offered by David Little gives a theoretical framework to the concept of learner autonomy and L1/L2 metalinguistic knowledge. Little's introduction serves as a good foundation for the more practical but related issues dealt with in different ways in each of the other articles.

The Faculty of Education's teacher education programmes are "built on the belief that systematic and consistently effective pedagogy emerges only from persistent academic activity that seeks to fuse innovative ideas, concepts and theories in education to the everyday practice of teaching" (see Editorial to *Education* Vol. 1, No 3). This is why the students' teaching practice sessions, and the B.Ed. (Hons.) and M.Ed. dissertations are so central to teacher education. There are several references in this journal to the Faculty's students' research. Their research findings are particularly significant for two reasons: first of all because they emerge out of the harnessing of theory with practice; and secondly because they are locally based. In this way, the continually emergent theory is locally validated, with the result that innovative classroom practice will be much more relevant within the local context and so will have longer lasting effects in terms of more efficient teaching and learning.

Historical Background

While interest in language learning has been increasing steadily during the last decades, language teaching methodology has been taken more and more seriously and has evolved as a result of empirical research.

The grammar-translation method, based on the teaching of Latin, and dominant for many centuries, was finally challenged by a succession of divergent approaches. Going back to Claude Marcel (1793-1876), who proposed that the teaching of reading should be given priority in foreign language teaching, Howatt (1984) points out that Marcel's distinction between 'analytic' and 'synthetic' methods of instruction was revived again in the seventies (e.g. Wilkins 1976). In the meantime, numerous scholars have given life to a variety of language teaching methods, starting with the Direct Method, with its entire emphasis on the spoken aspect of languages. This idea was introduced by Blackie (1845), who was followed by Henry Sweet (1899) who believed that accurate pronunciation is the foundation of successful language learning. Sweet's idea received widespread recognition in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Around the mid-twentieth century, the linguistics movement of Bloomfield and Fries in the US, whose original purpose was to describe unknown languages, was extended for use as a language teaching device, and came to be known as the Structural Approach. Trager and Smith's (1951) *Outline of English Structure* provided a structural analysis of English from which no less than ten courses were developed for a huge variety of learners of English (see Howatt 1984:268).

The technological advances in the use of recording made the audio-lingual method, not only possible, but lead to the establishment of the language laboratories then believed to be the ideal way to learning languages. The theory behind the audiolingual method is the aural-oral approach to language teaching, which contains the following beliefs about language and language learning: (a) speaking and listening are the most basic language skills, (b) each language has its own unique structure and rule system, (c) a language is learned through forming habits. These ideas were based partly on the theory of Structural Linguistics and partly on Behaviourism.

The Communicative approach eventually developed as a reaction away from grammar-based approaches such as the aural-oral approach, in the belief that the teaching of languages should lead learners to express and understand different kinds of functions, such as requesting, describing, expressing likes and dislikes etc. The Notional-Functional Syllabus arose in supply to this demand.

In the last 15-20 years the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Cooperation has set up several

projects on language teaching methodology and has been instrumental in developing the Functional-Notional approach (eg. Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). The notional-functional approach has been initially set out for the teaching of English as a foreign/ international language. That work known as *The Threshold Level*, first published by the Council of Europe in 1975, was a first attempt to specify how a learner should be able to use a language in order to act independently in a country in which that language was the vehicle of communication in everyday life. Since 1975, *The Threshold Level* has been used on a large scale by the designers of syllabuses, for curricular reform, for examination development, for textbook writing and for course design. The selection of situations and topics, with the associated specific notions has stood the test of time, as has the framework for general notions and funtions. For instance *Waystage 1990* (van Ek & Trim 1994) presents an intermediary objective below *Threshold Level*, with the target group being that of general beginners. Analogous descriptions to *The Threshold Level 1990* (van Ek & Trim, 1993) have been produced for more than 15 European languages including Maltese (Borg & Mifsud, forthcoming).

The Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe has the overall aim of making the free movement of men and ideas in the European area easier by increasing the scale and effectiveness of language learning. The promotion of language learning and teaching is considered to be a necessary and permanent aspect of the work of the Council of Europe because it gives essential support to all other aspects of international cooperation. The aims of the Modern Languages Project are:
– to facilitate the free movement of individuals;
– to further understanding between peoples through personal contact;
– to improve the effectiveness of European cooperation;
– to overcome prejudice and discrimination.

Such cooperation depends on the ability of all sections of the populations of member states to communicate directly and effectively with each other (see Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, 1989).

A "new-style" workshop operation, initiated in 1990 by the Modern Languages Section, involves sets of workshops with each set focused on a particular theme related to language learning and teaching, and a programme of research and development in the field of approximately 2 years duration to be carried out between the A and B workshops.
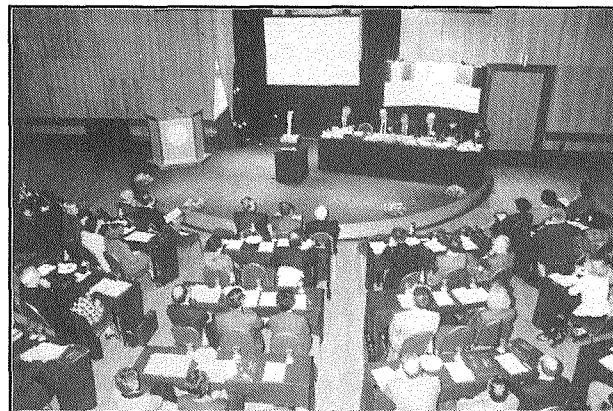
This operation has been deeply concerned with aspects of learner autonomy. Out of 13 pair workshops, 3 sets were devoted to the study of learner autonomy: Workshop 2a and 2b entitled "Learning to learn languages: investigating learner strategies and learner autonomy", Workshop 6a and 6b entitled "Learning to learn languages in vocationally oriented education, and Workshop 13a (with a follow-up 13b held in Malta) entitled "Language and Culture awareness in language learning/teaching (L2 and L1) for the development of learner autonomy (age 11-18)".

The main areas dealt with in Workshops 13A and 13B were
– cultural knowledge and cultural awareness achieved through different perspectives: sociological, anthropological, historical and literary;
– language awareness and the development of communicative skills (oral, written, e-mail etc) aiming at communication across cultures;
– pedagogical approaches in the development of learning/teaching procedures for raising awareness and learner autonomy.

During the research and development phase of workshop 13 a number of projects were carried out in Malta on these themes in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Education Division. Mifsud and Eynaud in this issue refer to the results of two of these projects.

The promotion of learner autonomy, understood as "the active exercise of learner responsibility for his/her own learning" (Holec 1988), is an important aspect of the approach to the learning and teaching of languages for communication developed by the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe. Learning is a life-long process and language learning is no exception. Adult life is far too diverse and too subject to change for any educational curriculum to attempt to provide a

detailed preparation. In modern language learning at school, the student has to overcome the fear of the unknown which can lead to the dislike, even hatred of the foreigner, to intolerance and prejudice (see Trim's Preface to Holec 1988). Learning to communicate effectively with linguistically and culturally diverse European citizens requires this willingness and ability to act independently as a socially responsible person, to take charge of one's own learning. This is believed to lead to a more democratic European citizenry.

This volume

In what follows I briefly review the articles presented in this issue of *Education*, and I will try to weave the common threads that give unity to this volume.

David Little offers a detailed overview of theoretical issues in first/second langauge learning, and argues that metalinguistic knowledge is an integral part of first language acquisition and subsequently plays a very important role in all language learning.

Little, in this artlicle, elucidates the passage of the internal metalinguistic knowledge to the external, more conscious level. Metalinguistic knowledge is a central component in the development of critical reflection, and as such we need a method to help learners "construct their own knowledge and to re-think their thinking at the stage of hypothesis/rule testing".

This point is taken further and explained from a practical point of view by Camilleri and Galea. Their focus is on the teaching of L1 grammar, explained as a process of "raising to the level of consciousness the unconscious native speaker knowledge". It is a process that entails great access to metalinguistic knowledge, and in fact provides ample opportunity for its reharsal. The methodology suggested here also moves towards the inculcation of learner autonomy in the classroom despite the traditional school setting we are familiar with.

In the second part of his article, Little moves on to talk about the difference between learning the native language and second and foreign language learning. We must be aware that there are grades of "foreignness" in a non-native language. English is more widespread in Malta than Italian, while exposure to Italian is much greater than that of German and Spanish.

Mifsud, for instance, talks about 'culture awareness' in English language teaching. I think that this aspect is particularly important in English language teaching/learning in Malta, because while the English language is widely spoken and written, being as it is an official language and the main language of education, there is much less awareness of British culture, even if it is the British variety of English that stands as model (Camilleri 1995:88). Mifsud reports on a project called the Malta Culture Awareness Project which sought to facilitate language learning through culture as a powerful source in the affective dimension that leads to more tolerance and appreciation of diversity.

Eynaud provides us with some interesting data regarding the amount of time Maltese students report themselves as spending in front of Italian T.V. In this particular research study conducted in Maltese schools by Camilleri and Grixti and reported in the same article, the aim was to exploit this exposure to the Italian language and culture on T.V. locally, to develop learner autonomy.

David Little also talks about the use of the target language as a medium of instruction in foreign language teaching/learning, and its implications for the performance of appropriate target language tasks and the organisation of language as a social process. Martinez and Conrad follow on from here and look into the methodology in-built in the currently used textbooks in Malta.

Martinez puts the teaching of Spanish in Malta against the background of the worldwide growth in importance of the Spanish language. He briefly outlines the introduction of Spanish as a foreign language in Malta which is rather recent compared, for instance, to Italian, French and German. He then moves on to a more detailed review of the textbooks currently in use in Maltese secondary schools. Like Herbert Conrad, Martinez refers to B.Ed. (Hons.) student dissertations and their contribution to the development of language pedagogy grounded in local context.

Conrad's article, in fact, highlights the contribution of B.Ed. (Hons.) students of German at the University of Malta. The focus is on the development of course evaluation and course development with regard to the teaching of German as a foreign language in Malta.

I would like to conclude by refering to Little's statement that "we shall achieve the full effect of learner autonomy in second/foreign language classrooms only when it is also an explicit and central goal of our mother-tongue pedagogy". The improvement of the teaching/learning of Maltese in our schools is crucial to the development of all other language pedagogies.

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Learner autonomy – the first language/second language: some reflections on the nature and role of metalinguistic knowledge.[1]

David LITTLE

Introduction

Learner autonomy is classically defined as "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (Holec 1981:3). Such an ability presupposes a positive attitude towards the process, content and goals of learning, and is sustained and strengthened by a developing capacity for "detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little 1991:4). The freedom that characterizes the autonomous learner is not absolute, but conditional and constrained. Learning, whether developmental/experiential or formal, is always embedded in an interactive, social process (self-instruction entails an internalization of this process, so that our capacity for learning on our own develops out of our experience of learning in interaction with others; cf. Little 1991:5). This explains the paradox that learner autonomy can be fully understood as a theoretical construct and effectively pursued as a pedagogical goal only when we take full account of the social context in which learning takes place.

The argument in favour of fostering learner autonomy has been conducted in both social and psychological terms. In adult education, for example, there has been a tendency to stress "the need to develop the individual's freedom by developing those abilities which will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives" (Holec 1981:1.). The link between educational purpose and political ideal could scarcely be plainer. Other explorations of the theory and practice of learner autonomy, by contrast, have focussed on the psychological dimension of learning, emphasizing that we can only ever learn on the basis of what we already know, and that no two individuals have exactly the same store of knowledge. Barnes (1976:23), for instance, makes this point by appealing to Kelly's (1963) psychology of personal constructs:

> The universe [...] is open to piecemeal interpretation. Different men contrue it in different ways. Since it owes no prior allegiance to any one man's construction system, it is always open to reconstruction. Some of the alternative ways of construing are better adapted to man's purpose than others. Thus, man comes to understand his world through an infinite series of successive approximations. [...]

> Life is characterized [...] by the capacity of the living thing to represent its environment. Especially is this true of man, who builds construction systems through which to view the world.
>
> (Kelly 1963:43)

Barnes's point is that learning in formal contexts depends on communication, but communication will be effective only to the extent that it takes account of the personal constructs of each participant in the learning dialogue. This argument has clear implications for power relationships in the classroom and demonstrates the ultimate impossibility of separating the psychological from the social dimension of learning both generally and in the theory and practice of learner autonomy.

In the case of second and foreign language learning, the interaction of the social and psychological dimensions is central to our understanding of the language learning process and the means by which it is most effectively promoted. It is now widely accepted that proficiency in a second or foreign language – understood as a capacity for spontaneous language use – is developed procedurally, by using the target language as a medium of communication (see, for example, Bialystok and Hakuta 1994:158); thus if instructed language learners are to achieve a specified level of proficiency, their learning must be firmly embedded in the performance of appropriate target language tasks. This has clear implications for the organization of their learning as social process. At

the same time, however, language learning in formal contexts is inevitably an intentional process shaped by various analytical procedures which depend on but also produce various kinds of analytical knowledge. The capacity for critical reflection and analysis on which I have suggested learner autonomy partly depends, develops in interaction with these analytical procedures and analytical knowledge, including metalinguistic knowledge.

Metalinguistic knowledge, defined as knowledge about the structures, functions, and processes of language, is the central concern of this article. My purpose is theoretical rather than practical: not to offer detailed guidelines for pedagogical practice, but to sketch a framework within which such guidelines might be elaborated. I am particularly concerned to explore the origin and nature of metalinguistic knowledge and the role it plays not only in second/foreign language learning but also in mother tongue education. I begin by suggesting that the development of metalinguistic knowledge is an integral part of first language acquisition, and I distinguish two sources of metalinguistic knowledge, one internal and the other external to the learner. Next I discuss the relation between metalinguistic knowledge and the acquisition of literacy in the mother tongue. And finally I focus on the role played by metalinguistic knowledge in second/foreign language learning, with particular reference to the interaction between the development of mother tongue literacy and second/foreign language learning.

The development of metalinguistic knowledge as part of first language acquisition

Karmiloff-Smith (1992:31) proposes that there is a fundamental difference between human and non-human intelligence:

> Unlike the spider, which stops at web weaving, the human child – and, I maintain, only the human child – has the potential to take its own representations as objects of cognitive attention. Normally developing children not only become efficient users of language; they also spontaneously become little grammarians.

In other words, humans "spontaneously go beyond successful behaviour", so that normally developing children "are not content with using the right words and structures; they go beyond expert usage to exploit the knowledge that they have already stored" (ibid., p. 32). Karmiloff-Smith argues that

what makes this possible is a repeated process of "representational redescription" (ibid.), which she defines as "a process by which implicit information in the mind subsequently becomes explicit knowledge to the mind" (ibid., p. 18).

Karmiloff-Smith's model of representational redescription posits four levels at which knowledge is represented and re-represented. She labels these Implicit, Explicit-1, Explicit-2, and Explicit-3 (1992:20). At the Implicit level, information is encoded in procedural form and new representations are independently stored. In first language acquisition, Implicit level knowledge underpins language use that is context-bound and relatively inflexible. At Explicit-1 level, representations are "reduced descriptions that lose many of the details of the procedurally encoded information" (ibid., p. 21) but as a consequence become more cognitively flexible. As an example Karmiloff-Smith offers the redescription of "zebra" into "striped animal", which makes possible the analogy between an actual zebra and a zebra (pedestrian) crossing. Although Explicit-1 level representations are available to the cognitive system as data, they are not available to conscious access and verbal report (ibid., p. 22). At Explicit-2 level, representations are accessible to consciousness but not to verbal report, whereas at Explicit-3 level, representations are accessible to both consciousness and verbal report.

By proposing more than two levels of representations, Karmiloff-Smith is arguing against a dichotomous relation between procedural and declarative knowledge – and it should be noted that in her model, mature humans possess knowledge at all levels. She is also arguing that metalinguistic knowledge can be both unconscious and conscious – unconscious in the example of the four-year-old child who pointed to a typewriter and said to her mother: "You're the typewriter, that's a typewrite" (Karmiloff-Smith 1992:31); conscious and verbalizable in the example of the ten-year-old who explained that he said

> "my watch" because it belongs to me, but I said: "you hid the watch" because there are no other watches there. If you'd put yours out, I would have had to say "you hid my watch", because it could have been confusing, but this way it's better for me to say "you hid the watch" so someone doesn't think yours was there too.

> (Karmiloff-Smith 1992:50)

The unconscious metalinguistic knowledge that exists at Explicit-1 level is the inevitable product of the

internal operations of the mind; without it, creative language use, in the Chomskyan sense, would be impossible. By contrast, although metalinguistic knowledge at Explicit-2 and Explicit-3 levels is to an indeterminate degree continuous with that at Explicit-1 level, the closer we come to verbalizable knowledge, the greater the likelehood that it derives from external as well as internal sources. For example, parents, siblings and caregivers may talk to children about language in many different ways, and from this children can derive folk theories about linguistic form and process which supplement their own intuitions. More generally, the species-specific mechanisms of first language acquisition are activated and fed by the child's interaction with others, so that the operation of universal biological processes is constrained and coloured by an almost infinite variety of historical, social and cultural factors.

Metalinguistic knowledge and the development of literacy

Wells (1981:240f) distinguishes three major phases in the child's linguistic development. In the first phase, "language functions first and foremost as a means for the regulation of activity and interaction"; in the second phase "the child gradually takes over the language of his community and, in the process, absorbs the cultural values and working assumptions that are encoded in that particular community's use of language"; and in the third phase "the function that language performs of representing the objects and events of experience is drawn upon to provide a 'tool for thinking' and a means of communicating to others the results of the thinking process". For most children growing up in western societies, this third phase of linguistic development is closely bound up with schooling and the acquisition of literacy.

The written language has developed its own characteristic functions, which according to some scholars entail "psychological changes, altered forms of representation and forms of consciousness" (Olson 1991:149). Thus Goody has argued that "it was the setting down of speech that enabled man clearly to separate words, to manipulate their order and to develop syllogistic forms of reasoning" (1977:11), and that "writing presents us with an instrument capable of transforming our intellectual operations from the inside; it is not simply a question of a skill in the limiting sense but a change of capacity" (1986:255). This concern with the effect of literacy on cognitive functioning can be traced back to Vygotsky's argument that "the acquisition of literacy automatically

results in an increased decontextualization of mediational means" (Wertsch 1985:36). Luria and Vygotsky found, for example, that literacy affected the way in which subjects categorized familiar objects: literate subjects "grouped objects on the basis of abstract word meanings", whereas nonliterate subjects "indicated a strong tendency to group items on the basis of concrete settings with which they were familiar" (ibid., p. 34).

Arguments such as these can easily give the impression that there is an essential discontinuity between early language development and the acquisition of literacy. This is very far from being the case, however. Learning to read and write depends on analytical processes – both conscious and unconscious – which would be inconceivable without the developing metalinguistic knowledge which, as Karmiloff-Smith proposes, is an involuntary part of first language acquisition. What is more, Wells found that educational success is determined by the place given to literacy and the value attached to it in the child's early experience (1981:259), and that the best predictor of attainment in literacy is the "extent of children's own understanding of the purposes and mechanics of literacy" when they start school (ibid., p. 263).

If the acquisition of literacy depends on the prior development of (mostly) unconscious metalinguistic knowledge, it also has the power to greatly enhance the learner's unconscious but also conscious metalinguistic knowledge. The fact that it does not do so automatically and invariably means that the way in which literacy is developed and the educational uses to which it is then put remain fundamental issues for theorists of schooling in general amd mother tongue education in particular.

Wells (1981:253) suggests that when we talk about the effect of literacy on cognitive functioning, it is necessary to distinguish between reading and writing. He argues that, complex though the process of reading undeniably is, "it is particularly in the creation of written text that the individual is made most aware of the symbolising function of language" (ibid., p. 254; for a similar conclusion, see Hildyard and Hidi 1985:303). It is important to notice, however, that this awareness of the symbolising function of language may have much in common with Karmiloff-Smith's Explicit-1 level of knowledge, since it is not necessarily conscious, analytical and self-referential. It is also important to notice, as Wells points out, that it "is not literacy, as such, [...] that is of such significance, but rather the symbolic manipulation of experience

through the sort of language which is most characteristic of written text" (ibid., p. 255). In other words, certain forms of spoken language are also apt to make the same demands and have the same effect as the creation of those kinds of written text that Wells associates with higher levels of cognitive functioning.

How, then, are we to promote the growth of higher cognitive functions within mother tongue education? Donaldson's answer to the question requires the development of that capacity for "detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" which I associated with learner autonomy at the beginning of this article:

> What is going to be required for success in our educational system is that [the child] should learn to turn language and thought in upon themselves. He must become able to direct his own thought processes in a thoughtful manner. He must become able not just to talk but to choose what he will say, not just to interpret but to weigh possible interpretations. His conceptual system must expand in the direction of increasing ability to represent itself.
>
> (Donaldson 1978:88f)

In a similar vein, Astington (1994:183) points out that in traditional systems of schooling, children do not have to think about their thinking, whereas in progressive systems they are thought of as constructing their knowledge and thus needing to think about their thinking. She argues in favour of progressive systems on the ground that in their cognitive functioning human beings are naturally "second-order systems":

> First-order systems have mental states, they have beliefs, desires, and intentions, as do second-order systems. However, beyond that, second-order systems have concepts of these mental states, they have beliefs, and they can attribute beliefs and other mental states to themselves and others.
>
> (Astington 1994:183f)

Arguments of this kind declare the need for a pedagogy that develops learners' literacy on the basis of their largely unconscious metalinguistic knowledge, but goes on to engage them in tasks that require a high degree of conscious analysis. The role of the teacher in such a pedagogy is to support learners as they develop the capacity to deal with ever more demanding tasks, identifying the limits of learners' present capacity and facilitating further growth by focussing attention on the "zone of proximal development", to borrow

Vygotsky's celebrated notion (see especially Vygotsky 1978:79-91). A general sense of how this support may be articulated is provided by Bruner's description of the effective tutoring of young children:

> To begin with, it was [the tutor] who controlled the focus of attention. It was she who, by slow and often dramatized presentation, demonstrated the task to be possible. She was the one with a monopoly on foresight. She kept the segments of the task on which the child worked to a size and complexity appropriate to the child's powers. She set things up in such a way that the child could recognize a solution and perform it later even though the child could neither do it on his own nor follow the solution when it was simply told to him. In this respect, she made capital out of the "zone" that exists between what people can recognize or comprehend when present before them, and what they can generate on their own [...]. In general what the tutor did was what the child could not do. For the rest, she made things such that the child could do with her what he plainly could not do without her. And as the tutoring proceeded, the child took over from her parts of the task that he was not able to do at first but, with mastery, became consciously able to do under his own control. And she gladly handed these over.
>
> (Bruner 1986:75f)

Note that in this account the gradual handing over of control to the learner – in other words, the development of learner autonomy – is not an option that the tutor may or may not adopt according to ideological preference: it is essential to the success of the tutoring process. Note also that the handing over of control to the learner is more than a psychological phenomenon. In order to gain the psychological benefits of successful learning, the learner must gradually assume control of the social interaction that gives outward form and substance to the learning process. Once more we are reminded that the social and psychological dimensions of learning are inseparable.

When we are concerned with the development of literacy via the performance of writing tasks that require increasingly high degrees of conscious analysis, pedagogical support must inevitably focus not only on the process by which the tasks are performed, but also on an analytical understanding of the linguistic resources at the learner's disposal. This understanding comprises elements of metalinguistic knowledge derived from the theories of language and literacy

current in the society of which the learner is a member. At the same time, as the learner's skill in task performance develops, so too will that metalinguistic knowledge that grows as it were from the inside out, as an involuntary part of every individual's linguistic development. The interface between these two kinds of metalinguistic knowledge, the one conscious and external, the other largely unconscious and internal, is problematic. In some respects it seems certain that there is continuity between them, whereas in others there may well be discontinuity. But such problematicity is beside the point as far as pedagogical procedures are concerned: it is enough that an analytical focus (metalinguistic knowledge from the outside) provided an indispensable scaffolding for the performance of tasks that gradually generate a skill, one of whose components is metalinguistic knowledge of the internal, largely unconscious variety.

The argument of this section of the article applies to mother tongue education understood as that part of the curriculum specifically concerned with the development of learners' linguistic skills. But it applies with equal force to mother tongue education understood as all those parts of the curriculum mediated through the mother tongue. For as Bruner has pointed out,

> the language of education, if it is to be an invitation to reflection and culture creating, cannot be the so-called uncontaminated language of fact and "objectivity". It must express stance and must invite counter-stance and in the process leave place for reflection, for metacognition. It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it.
>
> (Bruner 1986:129)

In the light of this argument, it is hardly surprising that for Bruner the goal of all education is what I have defined as learner autonomy:

> If [the learner] fails to develop any sense of what I shall call reflective intervention in the knowledge he encounters, the young person will be operating continually from the outside in – knowledge will control and guide him. If he succeeds in developing such a sense, he will control and select knowledge as needed. If he develops a sense of self that is premised on his ability to penetrate knowledge for his own uses, and if he can share and negotiate the result of his

penetrations, then he becomes a member of the culture-creating community.

> (Bruner 1986:132)

Learner autonomy and metalinguistic knowledge in second/foreign language learning

In general, then, if we want our educational systems to develop learners' higher cognitive functions, we must adopt a pedagogy that makes it possible for teachers to support learners in the "zone of proximal development". In order to achieve its cognitive goals, such a pedagogy must possess certain social characteristics. Specifically, it must be organized in such a way as to allow the teacher to give regular and close attention to individual learners, and its discourse structures must allow the free negotiation of meaning, the sharing of power, and the gradual transfer of control from the teacher to the learners.

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) provide a full account of the theoretical (Vygotskyan) foundation and practical application of just such a pedagogy. In their project, primary classes were divided into groups of five or six learners, which rotated around a number of different activity centres, one of which was controlled by the teacher. This procedure had two closely related benefits: it allowed the teacher to interact in a focussed and concentrated way with five or six learners at a time, and it required those learners who were not working with the teacher to discover how to conduct learning conversations among themselves, supporting one another in the zone of proximal development. Naturally, these learning conversations were likely to derive some of their principal characteristics from the conversations controlled by the teacher.

The successful implementation of such a pedagogy for mother tongue education (whether understood in its narrower or its broader sense) will create expectations and capacities in our learners that should be transferrable to the learning of second/ foreign languages. In particular, learners who are familiar from mother tongue education with the structures, requirements and processes of group work bring to the second/foreign language classroom a ready-made framework for the development of proficiency via target language use. But what about the analytical skills and metalinguistic knowledge that learners have developed as part of their growing literacy in their mother tongue?

I have argued in relation to the development of mother tongue literacy that it is necessary to

distinguish between two kinds of metalinguistic knowledge – that which grows as it were from the inside out as an inevitable part of expanding linguistic competence, and that which derives from theories of language and literacy current in the society of which the learner is a member. I have also argued that the interface between these two kinds of metalinguistic knowledge is problematic, but essentially irrelevant to our pedagogical concerns. Paradis (1994) makes the same point in relation to second/foreign language learning, insisting that "metalinguistic knowledge formally learned in school, is not integrated into linguistic competence and does not become available for automatic use' (p. 393). He goes on:

> This does not mean that metalinguistic knowledge cannot be useful in the process of learning another language, whether by focusing attention on some aspect of the linguistic data that would otherwise have gone unnoticed, or by allowing one to check one's output, or to deduce who does what to whom through a conscious identification of case markers, and thereby improving one's practice. But it is the practice, not the metalinguistic knowledge, which improves automatic performance (and by implication, linguistic competence)
>
> (ibid., p. 405)

In second/foreign language learning as in mother tongue education, then, metalinguistic knowledge can provide learners with a basis for analysing their performance, reflecting on the learning process, setting learning goals, and choosing particular learning strategies. In other words, it can provide a stimulus and framework for the performance of tasks calculated to develop proficiency, even though it cannot itself become part of that proficiency.

There is, however, an obvious and important difference between second/foreign language learning and the development of mother tongue literacy skills. Vygotsky (1986:159) puts it thus:

> It is well known that to learn a foreign language at school and to develop one's native language involve two entirely different processes. While learning a foreign language, we use word meanings that are already well developed in the native language, and only translate them; the advanced knowledge of one's own language also plays an important role in the study of the foreign one, as well as those inner and outer relations that are characteristic only in the study of a foreign language.

In terms of the central concerns of this article, we can expand Vygotsky's point by saying that whereas in our first language we develop proficiency and unconscious metalinguistic knowledge before we develop conscious metalinguistic knowledge, from the beginning of second/foreign language learning we can bring a measure of conscious metalinguistic knowledge to bear on the learning task. This fact has an important corollary: whereas in our first language literacy is acquired on the basis of a developed oral proficiency, in second and foreign language learning we can in principle learn literacy in advance of oral proficiency.

Second and foreign language pedagogy has always used the technology of writing to support learning – for example, learners have traditionally compiled lists of the vocabulary they need to master, and have been encouraged to write down grammatical rules and examples of their application. There are, moreover, many educational systems that produce learners whose second or foreign language writing skills are better developed than their oral skills. This is not surprising, since in most circumstances writing is less "immediate" than speaking, and thus permits a higher degree of "off-line" processing. But the fact that the social and psychological dimensions of learning are so strongly interdependent should encourage us to seek ways of exploiting the early development of creative writing skills in the second or foreign language to support the development of oral skills. For example, if a class of learners is given a writing task – perhaps a brief description of themselves and their interests – preparatory whole-class discussion, including analysis of the linguistic resources needed to perform the task, embeds the individual act of writing in a context of oral and social interaction, while the writing process itself inevitably maintains an analytical focus on the words and structures each individual learner decides to employ. The texts that the learners produce can then be used as the basis for further interactive oral tasks – they can be shared with other learners, and they can serve to prompt oral self-descriptions and discussion. In turn these oral activities can feed into further writing activities, and so on. In this way, it is possible to establish a chain of learning tasks in which writing interacts with speaking and the use and further development of "external" metalinguistic knowledge interacts with the use and gradual growth of proficiency, including the development of "internal" metalinguistic knowledge (for a sustained example of this approach in practice, see Dam 1995).

Of course, we may expect that learning a foreign language has an impact on the learner's awareness of

his or her mother tongue. Vygotsky (1986:195f.) makes the point as follows:

> Success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language. The child can transfer to the new language the system of meanings he already possesses in his own. The reverse is also true – a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language. The child learns to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations.

This reciprocal – or "dialogic" (Bialystok and Hakuta 1994:184) – relation between first and second/ foreign language learning turns upon the role played in either case by both unconscious and conscious metalinguistic knowledge. It must be emphasized, however, that the full potential of this "dialogic" relation between first and second/foreign language learning will not be realized spontaneously: its effect inevitably depends on the development of a critical pedagogy focussed socially and cognitively on the growth of learner autonomy.

Conclusion

I began this article by proposing that learner autonomy is sustained and strengthened by a developing capacity for "detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action". While arguing that the social and psychological dimensions of learning are ultimately inseparable, I associated the capacity for critical reflection and analysis with the psychological dimension, and identified metalinguistic knowledge as a central component of that capacity.

I followed Karmiloff-Smith in arguing that the growth of metalinguistic knowledge "from the inside out" is an essential part of first language acquisition; but I went on to argue that explicit, verbalizable metalinguistic knowledge may also be derived from sources external to the learner, for example, the theories about language and literacy that are current in the society of which he or she is a member. I then considered the role of metalinguistic knowledge in the development of mother tongue literacy, suggesting that the acquisition of literacy depends in the first place on largely unconscious, "developmental" metalinguistic knowledge, but that the exploitation of literacy with a view to developing higher cognitive

functions depends on analytical processes that both presuppose and promote the further growth of explicit and (at least in part) externally derived metalinguistic knowledge. Turning my attention to the role of metalinguistic knowledge in second/foreign language learning, I followed Paradis in arguing that although externally derived metalinguistic knowledge cannot be converted into the "internal" metalinguistic knowledge that is part of proficiency, it can be used to stimulate, frame, focus and monitor the language use that does promote growth in proficiency, and thus in "internal" metalinguistic knowledge. I illustrated this point with an example that showed how literacy skills can be used in the earliest stages of second/foreign language learning to help develop oral proficiency. Finally, I noted that second/foreign language learning necessarily has an impact on the learner's awareness of his or her mother tongue. Those parts of my argument that have to do with formal education carry important implications for the social organization of learning, especially as regards power and control. This fact should lead us to see learner autonomy, defined as "the ability to take charge of one's learning", not as an optional extra but as a prerequisite of successful learning. It has been the purpose of this article to suggest that we shall achieve the full effect of learner autonomy in second/foreign language classrooms only when it is also an explicit and central goal of our mother tongue pedagogy: if the social and psychological dimensions of learning are ultimately inseparable, so too are the cognitive effects of first, second and foreign language learning.

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First-language grammar in the classroom: from consciousness raising to learner autonomy

Antoinette CAMILLERI and *Audrey* GALEA

According to students grammar lessons are boring and tedious. If you ask them why they will tell you that almost all they do in grammar lessons is to study and to practice 'rules' (see Micallef 1995). When asked how they feel about learning 'grammar', Form 3 students at a Juniour Lyceum stated that grammar *"...tad-dwejjaq, fiha qabda regoli, u li fiha ma nifhmu xejn. Kollox trid tistudja bl-amment għall-eżami"* (it is tedious, full of rules that we do not understand. Everything has to be studied for the exam). When asked why they think they should learn grammar they replied that without it *"ma niktbux Malti tajjeb u importanti għax tkun fl-eżami"* (we cannot write Maltese correctly, and it is important for the exam). Form 1 students were also asked to give their opinion about grammar and grammar lessons. They think that they need to study grammar *"biex nispellu tajjeb"* (to spell correctly); and that grammar is *"dik li toqgħod tagħmel ħafna jien, int, huwa, hija. Konna ndumu nimlew pages fil-Year 6 biex għamilna tal-Junior!"* (full of conjugations. We used to fill pages of them when we were preparing to sit for the 11+ examination). Little do they know that as native speakers they make constant use of grammar in their everyday communication!

Whilst talking no one ever really thinks about the linguistic components he/she is making use of, or about the grammatical system which makes communication possible. Every individual born with the faculties of thought and speech continuously and unconsciously resorts to his/her native speaker knowledge of language in the course of daily business.

Only after we understand the nature of language, and hence the nature of grammar, can we attempt to change the quality of language teaching in general, and of pedagogical grammar in particular. One of our main criticisms of the currently-available syllabus and accompanying textbooks for the teaching of L1 grammar in Maltese schools, is that they emanate from a mistaken understanding of native speaker knowledge and, therefore, of what first-language education ought to be about. For instance, the grammar section of the syllabus puts great emphasis on the

Semitic structures of Maltese, and leaves very little room for up-dated synchronic descriptions. The kind of learning that is expected to take place, furthermore, is more fit for a second-language learning environment than for the teaching of Maltese as a native tongue.

Maltese students, with Maltese as a first language, already come to the classroom equipped with a substantial linguistic baggage. Of course, in our society, much is expected from the school as far as literacy goes: "the children go to school to learn to read and write", is what parents generally think. On the other hand, children do not go to school to learn L1 grammar. They already know it. Even before coming to school they can already understand and produce an infinite number of grammatically correct and original sentences in Maltese. To illustrate the theoretical backbone of our argument we will pursue the Chomskyan elucidation in the theory of **universal grammar (UG)**.

UG is defined as "the language faculty built-in to the human mind consisting of principles and parameters" (see Cook 1991). **Principles** of language are those aspects of human language present in all human minds, such as the principle of structure dependency. Let us use the following example as an illustration of this principle. Look at the following sentences in English.

1. Mary has hurt herself.
2. Has Mary hurt herself?

The first sentence is a statement. The second sentence is a question. In order to turn the statement (sentence 1) into a question (sentence 2), the speaker unconsciously follows the instruction: "Start from the sentence 'Mary has hurt herself' and move the second word 'has' to the beginning". While this instruction produces a correct question as in sentence 2, it does not work in the following example.

3. The man who has run away shouting was attacked by a wasp.

*4. Has the man who run away shouting was attacked by a wasp?

Sentence 4 is incorrect. It is ungrammatical in English. In sentences 3 and 4 we cannot follow the same instruction for sentences 1 and 2 "Start from the sentence 'The man who has run away shouting was attacked by a wasp' and move the fourth word 'has' to the beginning". The speaker needs to know enough about the structure of sentences to be able to distinguish between the structure of sentences 1 and 3. Inversion questions in English, and indeed in all other languages, involve a knowledge of structure, not just of the order of the words. Structure-dependency is one of the language principles built-in to the human mind.

Such principles common to all human language are necessary to enable speakers of language X to learn language Y. In fact, principles of structure-dependency apply also to interlanguages[1]. Indeed, no-one has yet found sentences produced by second language learners that breach the known language principles such as structure-dependency (Cook 1991:23).

Language **parameters**, on the other hand, are those aspects that vary from one language to another within tightly-set limits, such as the pro-drop parameter. Parameters are set in a child's mind during the early years of infancy, and they are what makes the learning of second, third and foreign languages difficult. The pro-drop parameter refers to the presence or absence of the grammatical subject in a declarative sentence of a particular language. Look at the following examples.

5. *English*:   She works in Berlin.
6. *German*:   Sie arbeitet in Berlin.
7. *Italian*:   (Lei) lavora a Berlino.
8. *Maltese*:   (Hi) taħdem Berlin.

English and German demand the presence of the grammatical subject like 'she' and 'sie' in sentences 5 and 6 above. Italian and Maltese, on the other hand, allow the pronouns 'lei' and 'hi' as in sentences 7 and 8, that stand for the grammatical subject, to be dropped. The pro-drop paramater variation has effects on the grammars of all languages; each of them is either pro-drop or non-pro-drop (Cook 1991:24).

Thus, all human minds are believed to possess the same language principles, but different parameter settings. Learners do not need to learn structure-dependency because their minds automatically provide it for any language they meet.

It is not so for parameters. In order to set the value for parameters a learner needs to be exposed to huge amounts of the new language. Language input is the evidence out of which the learner constructs knowledge of grammar. The child learns the first language by encountering actual sentences of the language. By the time the child reaches school age, there is comparatively little left for the teacher to do as far as the acquisition of first language grammar (paramaters) is concerned. Few mistakes occur with regard to aspects of grammatical accuracy by native speaker pupils. By school age children already know **how to operate** correctly their first language (L1) grammatical system.

L 1 grammar is internalised in the mind of the native speaker
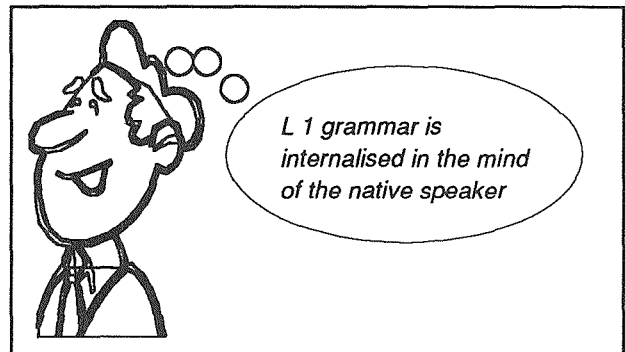
This, therefore, brings us to the crucial question: So what is the point of teaching L1 grammar at school? The point is that this aspect of language education should not be so much concerned with teaching **the** grammar, as with teaching **about** grammar. In fact, it should be concerned with **learning** (as opposed to teaching) **about** L1 grammar. For the purposes of this paper we shall not go into the issue of why we want students to learn about L1 grammar.[2] We shall go straight into a relation of how we should go about helping students learn about L1 grammar.

The Method

The grammatical system of the L1 is internatilized in the minds of the native speaker students. Thus, knowledge about L1 grammmar essentially consists in "raising to the level of consciousness the unconscious native speaker knowledge" (Camilleri 1988:21). Nora Galli de Paratesi (1993) sustains that:

Language learning implies reflection on language: it is the problem of grammar, suggested not as abstract and arid knowledge of a theoretical and terminological kind, but as a **reflection on the essential characters of language organisation in real use.** (our emphasis)

Within this view, the L1 grammar lesson develops in four stages. The students will be provided with contextualised language and will be required to employ their observational skills to decipher particular grammatical structures apparent in the chosen texts, and on the basis of which they then make hypotheses and draw conclusions on the structure of the language. The main steps in the lesson are the following:

1. The presentation of contextualised data.
2. Observation and discussion on the grammatical structure(s) in the text.
3. Making hypotheses about the grammatical structure(s).
4. Testing the hypotheses by looking at more data.
5. Verifying or modifying the hypotheses.

1. All language to be analysed is presented 'in context', whether it is spoken or written. Contextualised data is important for a variety of reasons. First of all, as Culler (1976:24) explains, language forms and structures are "members of a system defined by their relations to the other members of that system". Furthermore, contextualised data is likely to be more motivating and to have additional eduational value (see Madsen & Bowen 1978).

As we tried out this method we could actually feel the students' interest in language learning grow over a period of several weeks. A word of caution to the teacher is needed though. The teacher needs to select texts very carefully. They must be particularly rich in the structures being analysed and, if possible, should not contain exceptions to the rule that would confuse the students at this stage.

2. The contextualised language data will be used for observation by the students. At this stage a lot of help from the teacher is required. The teacher initially needs to guide the students to notice particular constructions, such as the different plural forms in Maltese, using a series of questions, or other exercises, eg. "List the nouns that appear in the text. How can we group members belonging to this list?". For a detailed example see Micallef (1995, Chapter 4). Initially, the teacher has to guide and help the students to become aware of structures, but if this method is used regularly, the students will start experimenting and using their own methods of analysis.

3. After the oral discussion of the particular structures, specific hypotheses can be drawn up by the students themselves. To take the case of the different plural forms in Maltese, students will at this stage, be able to make hypotheses like "There are two ways of forming the plural in Maltese. One way is to add letters to the end of the noun in the singular, another way is to change the order of the letters inside the word". It is a pleasure hearing young learners analysing their native language and inferring about grammatical structures. As time goes by the students themselves will start exercising caution in making hypotheses and give the exercise careful thought, rather than guessing haphazardly as they might try to do initially.

4. The next stage will involve looking at some more data and basically repeating the first three steps. In this way, the hypotheses formulated at the third stage will be refined on the basis of further data.

5. At the end, the verified and refined hypotheses on the particular language structure(s) that have been generated by the students themselves, can be checked with a formal grammatical description provided by the grammarians of the language.

The grammarian makes hypotheses about the grammatical system internalised in the mind of the native speaker
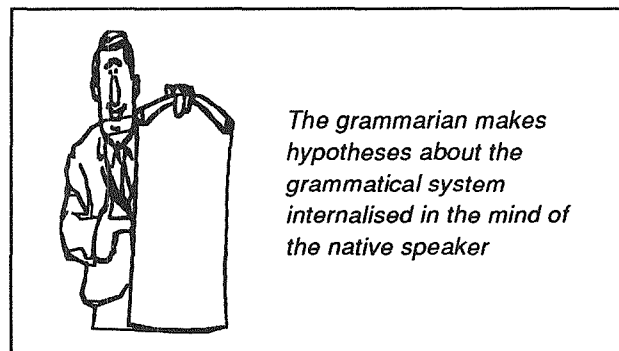
Our point of departure in this article was the need to appreciate the knowledge of language that the learners possess, so that instead of trying to teach them what they already know, we can help them go further by sharpening their observation skills and enhancing their metalinguistic sophistication. We would also like to argue that such a process, as outlined in the five steps above carry additional pedagogical value in that they stimulate autonomous learning skills, and cognitive strategies such as observation, comparing and contrasting, grouping, and the formation, testing, acceptance, rejection or modification of hypotheses.

It is a bottom-up process with a high element of discovery through personal work rather than the distribution of ready-made input. Following Balbi (1996) such method makes room for a pedagogy of choice by allowing students to make conscious and unconscious choices about what to say and how to say it; for a pedagogy of time, which allows students time to answer questions, to solve problems, to understand

input in an atmosphere of tolerance; and for a pedagogy of cooperation where pair-work and group-work are forms of social organisation that lead to autonomy.

Conclusion

We are aware that this is an innovative methodology in the teaching of L1 grammar in Malta. It has now been tried out by several student-teachers during their B.Ed. (Hons.) teaching-practice sessions, and evaluated in different contexts such as private schools, Junior Lyceums, Area Secondary Schools and Trade Schools (see Cauchi 1996). We are, therefore, very confident in its local applicability and motivational value, as well, of course, in its scientific soundness.

Notes

[1] 'Interlanguage' is a technical term that refers to the type of language produced by second- and foreign-language learners who are in the process of learning that language.

[2] For a discussion on this issue see Camilleri (1988). See also Little's article in this volume.

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Culture Awareness in English Language Teaching

Mary Rose MIFSUD

Introduction

This paper describes the Malta Culture Awareness Project aimed at introducing a culture component in English teaching in the lower forms of the secondary school. The research was based on the belief that "a culture component in language teaching actually improves language learning and makes students more tolerant of cultural diversity". The assumptions are that culture awareness (a) facilitates language learning and (b) makes students more tolerant and appreciative of diversity. Indeed these very assumptions underpinned the Council of Europe Project "Language Learning For European Citizenship", which was launched in the light of the socio-political phenomena that created the "House of Europe" in the last 20 years (Neuner 1994). Our assumptions were also substantiated by Byram and Zarate (1995, *Preface*) "the Council of Europe believes that teachers of languages (and also of other subjects as history and education for citizenship) have a central role to play in preparing young people for full and active democratic citizenship in the new Europe".

The Project

The four-phase Malta Culture Awareness Project consisted of :-

- **The First or Pilot Phase. January to May '94.** This was carried out with one class of girls aged 14+.
- **The Second or 'Selling' Phase. July '95.** This consisted of a two-day seminar for 15 teachers of English and the setting up of the **'Culture Team'**.
- **The Third Phase. September '94 to May '95.** This phase saw the implementation of the project in six different schools.
- **The Fourth Phase. July '95.** This phase consisted of a seminar for all state school teachers teaching English at Form I level, and saw the launching of the new official English syllabus that included a culture component.

Seven teachers who made up the Culture Team participated in a year-long project in six secondary schools (Two Area Secondary Schools, two Junior Lyceums, one Trade school and one private school).

The project involved some one hundred and eighty sutdents of the first three years of Secondary and Trade Schools and covered approximately two hundred and ten teaching hours to culture teaching, an average of thirty hours per class.

Local networks between secondary schools were developed, giving rise to their own strategies for culture and language teaching. Strategic use of human resources was also made through the roping in of British students and other British residents in Malta. Teachers organised meetings between their classes and foreign students enrolled at their schools. A chance encounter with an English Headmistress and a class on an outing, also led to a structured meeting with other students engaged in the culture project. As Byram and Zarate (1995:13) point out these types of encounters proved to be "a powerful source of affective and unconscious learning".

a) **The project methodology** consisted mainly of the setting up and the continual support and development of a Culture Team by the project organiser. Team members were released from school one afternoon a week to attend the English Language Resource Centre where they could find materials, and engage in collaborative planning and evaluation among themselves and with the project organiser. The teacher of the pilot phase played the role of coordinator and animator when the organiser was not available. Some thirty hours of meetings were devoted to (i) planning and evaluating lessons, (ii) desiging and processing student questionnaires (iii) discussing the project with British visitors and visiting consultants.

b) **The teaching methodology.** This covered a number of traditional teaching methods connected with the four language skills. 'New' strategies included (i) the time-line (ii) the shoebox, (iii) local networking and the tapping of human resourcs.

The time-line. Teachers encouraged students to compile a calendar covering (Maltese and British) events of personal, school, national and international significance. Children learnt about them, shared their knowledge with fellow classmates, and wrote about them to both overseas and local students.

The Shoebox. Classes filled shoeboxes with articles that they thought best represented themselves and their school, their youth culture and their country. The process included various strategies like discussion, prioritising, categorising, researching, as well as the four skills. These shoeboxes were then exchanged with others from foreign classes. The foreign box was then discussed and the opinions gleaned from its contents were compared with those that the students had held hitherto.

Local networking. A number of classes from different schools started corresponding with each other and kept each other informed about the status of their project.

c) **The research methodology.** Action research procedures were used. As a result of the introduction of a new component in language teaching and learning, the research had to address the **problem** of expanding an already full syllabus. There was the felt need of discovering how this new component could be integrated into the syllabus so teachers would not see it as an 'add-on'. We aslo wanted to avoid the mere transmission of information and adopt strategies that would create culture awareness while helping students learn the four skills.

Owing to the need for teachers to integrate this innovative aspect of language learning with the syllabus, teachers found that they themselves had to become learners. Reports showed that teachers viewed this role switch as a significant contribution towards their professional development and one that increased their job satisfaction. The enthusiasm thereby generated, mitigated the trials of hunting for 'culture' materials and experimenting with syllabus-integration strategies which included (a) linking particular grammatical points with a culture topic, (b) exploiting culture-oriented passages for listening and comprehension exercises, (c) couching creative work topics in target culture contexts, (d) exchanging letters on local and target culture topics with both local and foreign classes.

One students' and two teachers' questionnaires were administered. Teachers' kept journals and wrote group and individual reports. They supported their claims with written and taped evidence of students' work. The project organiser kept her own journal and other records.

The project was a great success with both teachers and students as evidenced by :-

- The widespread student enthusiasm reported by all teachers of the Culture Team.
- The students' responses to the final questionnaire, of which 95.16% judged culture lessons as 'interesting' or 'more interesting than the usual English lessons'.
- The sutdents' work exhibited during the July '95 seminar for teachers of Form I.
- The contagious enthusiasm displayed by the Culture Team members themselves while addressing the seminar participants.
- The Culture Team's positive questionnaire responses. While acknowledging the extra work the project involved, the teachers described it as 'a breath of fresh air', 'professionally rewarding', 'a good motivator for students', 'a challenge that had a great impact on students'.
- Parents' encouraging remarks about the positive influence the project was having on their children's learning of the English Language.

Questionnaire responses of participating teachers showed that all felt that the culture project had had a positive effect on their students' knowledge, skills and attitudes. This was corroborated by the students' questionnaire answers which showed that:-

- 80% recollected the British customs and festivals discussed in class.
- 91.03% felt the need to learn about British people in order to improve their language learning and general knowledge and to be able to cope when in Britain.
- 64.8% felt they could now definitely communicate better with a British family while a further 29.65% felt they could communicate 'a little better'.
- 92.41% reported 'not minding' or actually 'being pleased' to have a British family move in next door.
- Prodded to make a choice between a *descriptive* and a *judgmental* comparison between British and Maltese people, 75.17% chose the descriptive while 24.83% opted for the judgmental.

Asked to continue the sentence "*I think British people are........*" students came up with a number of adjectives of which 17.94% were negative (boring, snobbish), 58.9% were positive, (nice, friendly, polite), and 23.07% were neutral (busy, sporty).

Conclusion

The teachers' training, intervention and guidance is essential to the successful teaching of a foreign culture. Teachers should be sensitised to the need of enriching and upgrading their own

knowledge of the target culture. There seems to be a need for close collaboration between pre and in-service teacher training agencies. Perhaps it is time for these two agencies to look at their complementarity and to find ways of making the experiential learning of the target culture a required part of language-teacher training.

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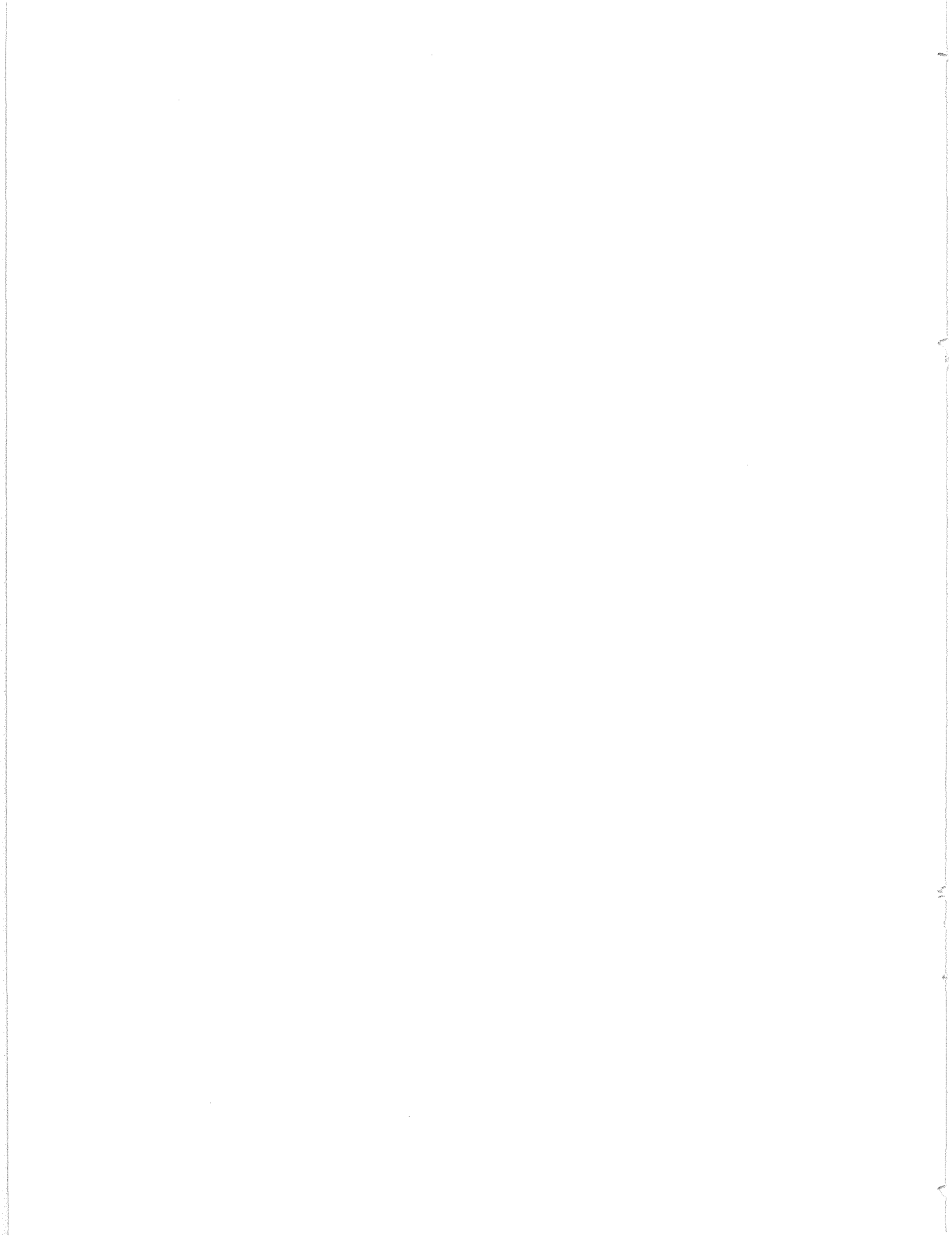
The teaching and learning of Italian in Malta: toward a new dimension

Joseph EYNAUD

In talking about the presence of Italian in Malta one needs to look at the linguistic influence of a succession of many foreign rulers. After the Arabic domination (870-1092) that marked the semitic base of the Maltese language, the Normans who took over Malta in 1091 introduced Latin as the administrative language. From around 1400 onwards the official language used between the local Maltese government and the Central government in Sicily was not only Latin but also the Sicilian dialect (Wettinger 1993).

The taking over of the Maltese Islands by the Knights of the Order of St. John and their long domain (1530-1798) marks a fundamental stage in Maltese linguistic history. The Tuscan dialect adopted by the Knights as their official language became the language of culture on the Islands. From the second half of the XVI century, official documents were written in Italian. This, however, did not hamper Maltese writers from making use of other Italian dialects, especially Sicilian and Neapolitan (Eynaud 1979).

The brief period of French rule (1798-1800) does not entail important changes from a linguistic point of view. However, the primacy of the Italian language is put in jeopardy during the English domain (1800-1964). After the relative calmness of the first years, the English rulers started to make reservations against the use of the Italian language, perceived with suspicion following the Unification of Italy. These events brought about the much discussed issue of The Language Question that characterised the socio-political history of Malta up to the Second World War.

The year 1934 was decisive: the Constitution of Malta was modified so that the Maltese language became an official language alongside Italian and English. At a successive stage the Italian language was ousted from the University and the law courts. The definite degrading of Italian from official language came about in the month of May 1936. The subsequent entrance of Italy in the war of 1940 closes definitely the Language Question.

The 1964 Maltese Constitution elevates the status of the Maltese language, promoting it to National Language, with English as the other Official language. Paradoxically the Italian language again gains position, at least, as to the number of Italian speakers in Malta. Today, all political controversies of the first half of this century are forgotten, and Italy has become the greatest partner of the island, not only in the political and economic fields but also in the cultural spheres.

The diffusion of television programmes by RAI and other private Italian networks has rendered the Maltese viewers almost completely dependent on Italian television, at least until the recent arrival of cable television. As a consequence, the young generation not only absorb and reproduce Italian modes of saying, but look up to Italy as a way of life to admire and imitate.

The Maltese Society

The position of the Italian language in Malta and in Maltese schools is therefore very strong. In 1963, 10,000 primary school students chose to study Italian probably because they felt its need. It was important, if not vital, for them to understand and follow TV programmes, such as cartoons, news, sport, the Olympics, the World Cup, quizzes etc. Between 1957 and 1962, when the first local channel was set up, the Maltese could only watch the programmes of RAI TV. In the mid-seventies, the private Italian television networks increased the exposure to Italian language and culture of the Maltese of all ages and of every social background. This continuous exposure to Italian language and culture had to leave its effects.

In fact, television has been crucial in putting the teaching of Italian on a very strong platform. As Caruana (1996) clearly shows, at the start of secondary education, a significant number of Maltese students already have a basic comprehension of the Italian language very largely due to their exposure to Italian via television.
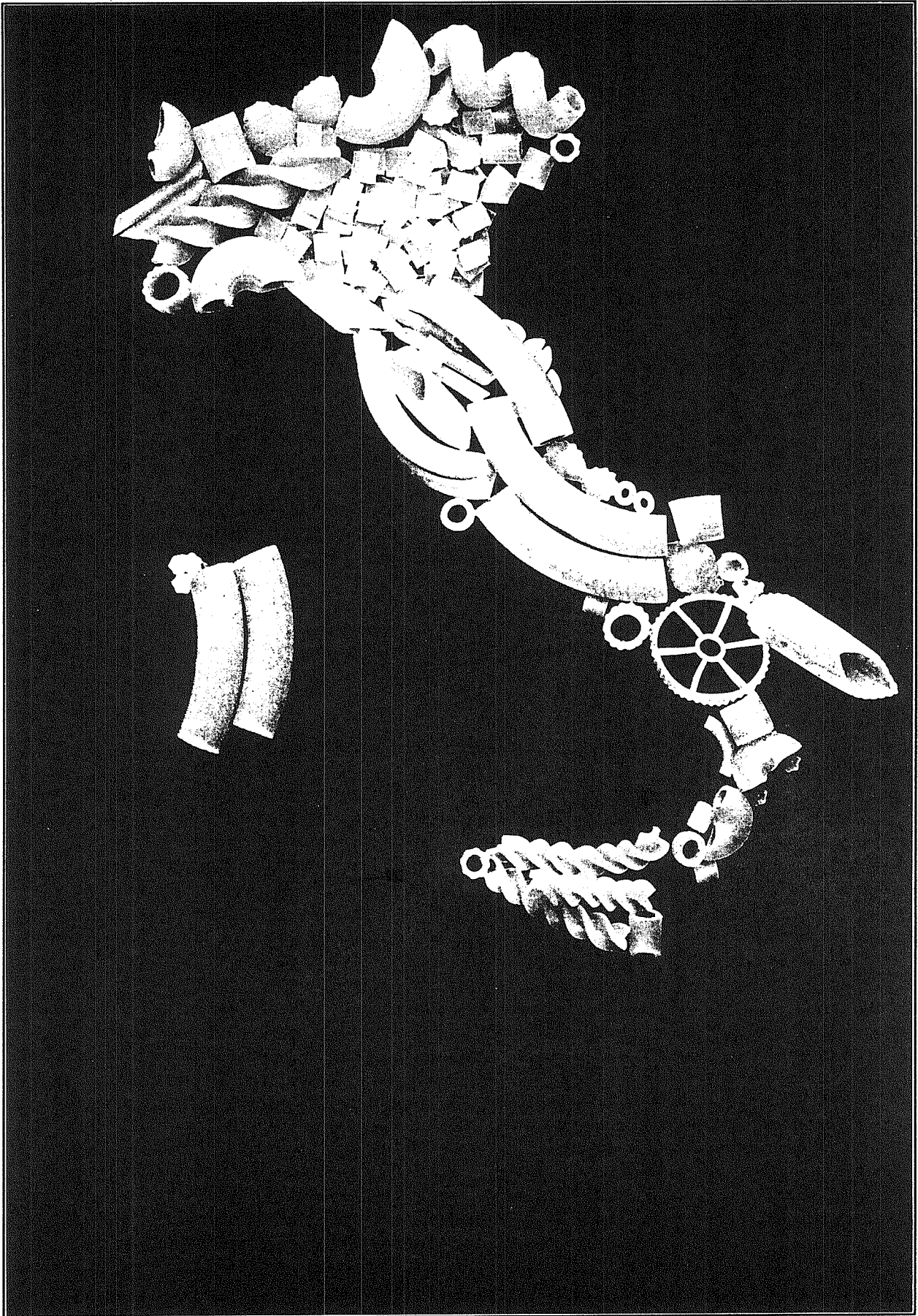
A survey carried out by Bartolo (1994) shows that 68% of a sample of 180 primary school pupils follow Italian TV programmes, 28% follow English programmes and 4% follow Maltese TV. From the same sample it results that more than 40% spend at least an hour in from of the TV set daily.

Another survey by Pace (1986) shows that out of 400 children aged 10 to 17, only 16% follow Italian TV for less than an hour daily. Only 5% declared they do not understand Italian.

Over 2000 students sit for the Italian school leaving matriculation examination with a 65% pass rate. Over 300 sit for the advanced level every year with a 70% pass rate.

As Caruana (1996) rightly concludes, it would be mistaken to classify Italian as a foreign language in Malta. It ought to be considered as a third language to which many students are exposed before undergoing the process of its formal teaching and learning. The presence of the Italian media clearly puts the Italian language in an advantageous position in comparison with languages such as French, German and Spanish, also taught in local schools:

> Many Maltese students develop refined aural comprehension skills at a very young age even before initiating the process of the formal learning of Italian
>
> (Caruana 1996:149)

Cultural Awareness

Byram (1993) states that while cultural awareness can be described rather than defined, "the promotion of the understanding of, and respect for, other cultures is one of the most important aims of modern language studies".

Considering the widespread exposure that Maltese students have to Italian television, and hence to the Italian language and culture, and given the increasing importance of cultural awareness in language learning, in what follows I report the conclusions drawn by two student-teachers, Camilleri and Grixti, at the end of a project on the subject. The two B.Ed. (Hons.) students carried out two projects within the framework of the Council of Europe Workshops 13A and 13B, aimed at enhancing learner autonomy in language learning. The work was based on cultural awareness.

Camilleri (1996) conducted the study in two different schools: a secondary girls' state school, and a co-ed private secondary school. She outlines her purposes as follows:

1. Equipping students with the necessary skills of autonomous learning, so as to enable students to improve their competence in Italian independently of the classroom setting.

2. The development of conscious awareness of the cultural aspects implicit in language, and of the structure, function and grammatical rules that make up the same language.

The lessons were based on short video recordings, obviously recorded from Italian television stations. The video was therefore the major teaching aid used during the lesson, and the videoclips selected for the lessons included advertisements, news reports and film selections. All were original Italian productions.

A typical lesson plan included the following steps:

1. Watching the videoclip.
2. A brief discussion of the recording where the teacher encouraged students to point out and talk about aspects of cultural interest.
3. Watching the video for the second time in order to give students the opportunity to observe accurately the aspects discussed.
4. Small group discussions whereby students were encouraged to elaborate further on the cultural aspects observed, and to communicate their findings to the other groups.
5. Distribution of handouts with exercises that require a general comprehension of the recording and the understanding of the cultural aspects included.
6. Working out the exercises and explanation of homework. Homework consisted in another exercise which required the students to deepen their knowledge about the topics discussed during the lesson. In order to be completed the homework usually required the students to watch specific programmes on television, or to use other sources of information to extend their awareness about culture and to develop their language skills.
7. Listening to the spoken language of the videoclip, while following a written transcription of the speech recorded. This exercise was intended to help the students become aware of pronunciation and spelling.

The students were also asked to keep a diary in which they recorded those cultural aspects observed on television during their free time at home. The purpose of the diary was to instil in the students the idea that learning is an active ongoing process which can take place without the teacher's presence and assistance.

Autonomous learning requires an active role in the learning process. It often involves more effort and presupposes motivation on the students' part. It therefore turns out ot be a rather demanding and difficult process of learning for them. In fact, the first problem encountered was precisely that of how students could be motivated to work harder on their own so as to improve their competence. Undoubtedly the use of video is an excellent aid in language teaching as it provides the students with the opportunity of observing language being used in a natural setting.

Initially, the aim of the lesson was more focused upon cultural awareness rather than on language. But in actual fact, as the lessons progressed, the two aspects proved to be quite difficult to separate. In the second part of the experiment carried out in a co-ed private school, therefore, specific exercises of language were included to help students reflect on its function, structure and meaning. Text analysis of the language used in the video clip facilitated comprehension and rendered the lesson more interesting and motivating. It also lead to more learner participation. The use of video also provided excellent support for students with special needs who benefited greatly from the fact that language was accompanied by constant visual input. Furthermore, the auditory input provided the students with the opportunity of listening to native spoken language. One particular exercise aimed at the development of written language skills required the students to listen to speech while following a written transcription. This exerciese was extremely useful in enhancing native-like pronunciation and correct spelling as it entailed reflection on the students' part as they compared the written and spoken modes.

Grixti (1996) carried out a similar study at a boys' Junior Lyceum in the southern part of Malta. The project was launched through an introductory lesson on the concept of "culture". The aim was to equip the students with the basic notions which they would need in order to participate in this project. A discussion took place on those cultural elements that Maltese people share with the Italians, and others that distinguish the two nations.

A questionnaire was distributed to the students to gather some initial information as to their exposure to television and their attitude to the Italian language in general. The salient results are summarised below.

1. The students in all classes are exposed on average to 22.6 hours of television on Italian channels per week. Seventy-four per cent of students claim to understand absolutely all that is being said during such programmes.

2. The majority of students in the sample said that TV boosted their language acquisition and a substantial number stated that they learnt more Italian from television than during their lessons at school.

3. The students in form 3 are attracted to the language by intrinsic factors whilst those in form 4 mentioned extrinsic motivations such as obtaining an additional school leaving qualification.

4. Although students watch a lot of TV, their favourite programmes are predominantly American, dubbed in Italian. This creates a problem because the culture thereby projected is not Italian, and the students are not aware of this fact.

During one Italian lesson per week, the students watched a video clip, about three minutes long, and with the teacher's help and with the use of pre-prepared handouts, they tried to identify the cultural elements presented in the clip. Grixti (1996) notes that this part of the project was very successful. The use of the videorecorder and of programme clips with which the students are very familiar, turned the lessons into a very motivating learning experience. The students enjoyed it and participated actively. The teacher himself enjoyed preparing and delivering the lessons more than usual.

Furthermore, on the basis of this project Grixti (1996) concludes that:

1. Television is a powerful educational tool which all students possess at home and to which most students have high exposure. It would be gravely wasteful not to utilise it as a learning experience.

2. Very often teachers seem to underestimate students' abilities. The performance of some students who participated in this project was outstandingly high.

3. This approach to language seemed to motivate students greatly. In a post-modern world, education has to go beyond the limited world of the classroom. Didactic approaches which ignore this fall miserably short on stimulus.

4. With the teacher's help, and with the use of handouts, even the slower learners managed to participate successfully. This project was a significant step forward in the direction of learner autonomy.

I sincerely hope that this project will stimulate established teachers of Italian to work together with the Italian methodology section of the University and to be in line with modern European trends in foreign language teaching.

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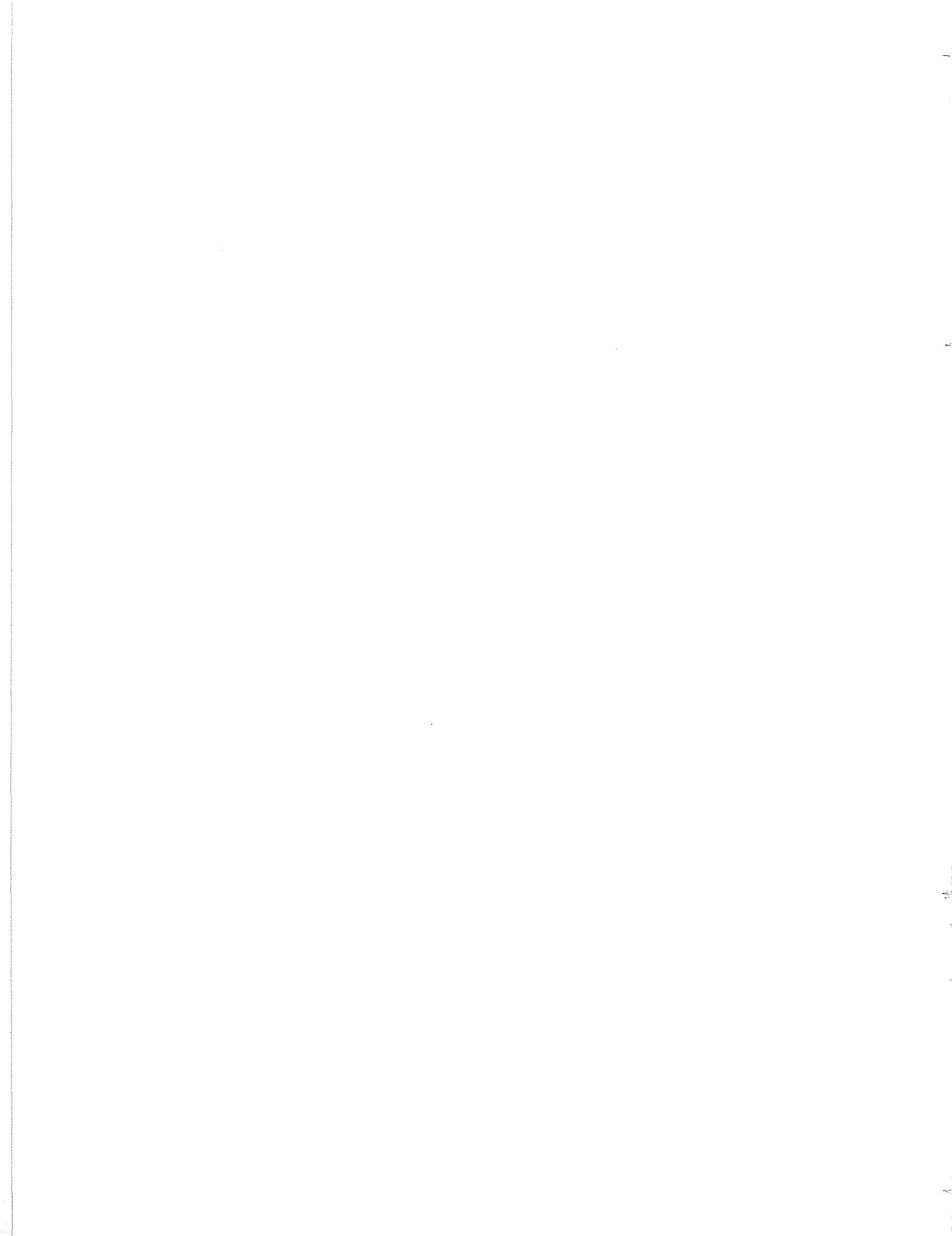
The teaching of Spanish in Maltese secondary schools: an overview of the current state and needs

Juan Manuel Martínez FERNÁNDEZ

This contribution looks at the teaching of Spanish in Maltese secondary schools. However, before looking more closely at its establishment and development in Malta, it is probably desirable that we review the growth of Spanish in the world. In this manner we will be in a position to better understand the specific context of the teaching of Spanish in Forms III, IV and V in Maltese secondary schools.

Spanish, a growing phenomenon

The world-wide growth of the Spanish language is unquestionable.[1] In the United States there are 24.2 million Spanish speakers (1990 national census). This means that the US is the fifth largest in terms of the number of Spanish speakers after Mexico, Spain, Argentina and Colombia. Spanish is in fact the most widely-spoken language in the US after English and in some southern states it is spoken all over.[2] We shall not concern ourselves here with the type of Spanish which is produced as a result of the contact with English or the socio-cultural implications of speaking Spanish or *chicano* in the US,[3] but it is clear that with more than 350 million speakers, the language of Cervantes is the second most important after English as a world language. Most specifically, it is the second most chosen language amongst students who study more than one foreign language.

One of the reasons for this growth is undoubtedly the increasing commercial importance of Spanish America, particularly for its neighbours to the north and to the east. Brazil seems on the verge of designating Spanish as a compulsory second language at secondary school level. This would seem to be the message of a recent declaration by the Brazilian Deputy Minister of Culture in which she declared that Brazil would soon be needing more than two hundred thousand teachers of Spanish "to attend to the educational needs of the country in view of the establishment of Spanish as a near compulsory subject".[4]

The *Instituto Cervantes* was established in 1991 to cater for the increasing demand for Spanish around the world. In the academic year 1993/94, this institution had 19,300 students in thirty centres and is currently in the process of opening new centres in Bremen, Chicago and San Antonio in Texas. The *Instituto Cervantes* concerns itself not only with the teaching of Spanish and the development of new methods for this task,[5] but is also engaged in the organisation of a wide variety of cultural activities as part of its mission to develop Hispanic culture.

In Spain, teachers of Spanish as a foreign language are organised in a variety of professional associations[6] such as ASELE (Asociación para la Enseñanza del Español como Lengua Extranjera), APE (Asociación de Profesores de Español), and AESLA (Asociación Española de Lingüística Aplicada) which every year convene conferences and publish journals and proceedings. In addition teachers of Spanish can count on institutional support from the *Instituto Cervantes*, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as from publishers specializing in material for the teaching of Spanish such as SGEL, DIFUSION, SANTILLANA, EDELSA/EDI 6, EDINUMEN, etc. The teaching of Spanish as a foreign language is clearly undergoing considerable growth in all its facets.

Spanish in Malta

Malta has not been immune to this increasing world-wide interest in Spanish, and the Círculo Hispano-Maltés has provided a range of courses at various levels to which an increasing number of students have been attracted over the last ten years, although it must be said that Verdala International School had been offering Spanish from as long ago as 1977. A year ago, the European Community School joined Verdala in the teaching of Spanish and both schools now prepare their students for the International General Certificate of Secondary

Education with the former also offering students the possibility of sitting for the American Advanced Placement examination.[7]

As far as the state sector is concerned, Spanish was introduced into Form III of the secondary schools in scholastic year 1988/89 with an initial intake of 55 students. In order to attend to the anticipated demand for teachers, the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta started offering Spanish as one of the options available within the B.Ed. (Hons.) course in 1991, with students choosing this option during the first three intakes being able to do so without the customary A level in the subject. The first intake of teachers of Spanish graduated in academic year 1994/95. Another 12, 5, and 2 teachers should be graduating in 1996, 1997 and 1998 respectively, and this pool of thirty qualified teachers should adequately cater for the projected demand in this initial phase. As a consequence, emphasis within the University has shifted away from what was clearly the most urgent task, namely teacher training, to a somewhat wider role.

This has taken the shape of the establishment in 1994 of a Hispanic Studies Programme within the University's Mediterranean Institute. The primary function of this programme at present is the provision of a range of credits/courses in Spanish language and Hispanic culture in general, to both day and evening students. Numbers participating increased from 141 in the first year to over 200 in 1995/96. This latter figure includes 49 students who participated in a Spanish Studies Certificate organized by the Hispanic Studies Programme in conjunction with the University Radio. This course was the very first Distance Learning experiment by the University.

This continual diversification and growth in activity surrounding Spanish and Hispanic Culture in general reflects the interest of the Maltese in a culture which together with English dominates the world stage.

Spanish in Maltese secondary schools

Setting aside the presence of Spanish in the recently created Junior College which in any case falls within the jurisdiction of the University of Malta, we now propose to concentrate on the primary focus of this contribution, namely the teaching of Spanish in Forms III, IV and V of State secondary schools.

First of all, it is important to keep in mind that the primary objective of the teaching of Spanish is to prepare students for the Secondary Education Certificate, in two years as far as secondary schools are concerned and in three years in the case of Junior Lyceums. It is not our purpose here to analyse the appropriateness of this exam in contrast to more internationally recognised examination boards, but it is important to note that this final objective has a determining effect on the curriculum and the materials used in the teaching of Spanish, and there is no doubt that the ever-increasing numbers choosing Spanish – 277 in the current year – will require us to study these methods in greater detail.

On the other hand, and not unrelated to what we have just said, it is important to keep in mind that if the Ministry of Education in Malta decides to place Spanish on the same level as other foreign languages, then it will be necessary to determine the appropriateness of the existing structure for lower-aged pupils.

We now propose to attempt an initial analysis of certain aspects of the teaching of Spanish in Forms III, IV and V starting with a look at *Español en directo*, the text book currently in use.

Español en directo

The 1991 report entitled *La situación del español en Malta*[8] declared that "to the problem of teachers one must also add the problem of the structuralist text book used in the schools which is unattractive to students and difficult for a teacher to develop lessons from. At this time it does not seem possible for this book to be replaced owing to the government having acquired a ten year supply of it". The lack of teachers in the short and medium term has now been resolved, but the problems inherent in the use of old fashioned text books out of line with present-day communicative methodologies may be more difficult to resolve owing to the fact that the decision to retain or withdraw the book is an administrative one. Maltese teachers of Spanish are fully aware of the drawbacks of this text book.

According to Aquilino Sánchez Pérez, the situational structuralist model prevailing in Britain in the seventies constituted the basis for *Español en directo*, the first complete course along these lines for the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language. According to Sánchez Pérez, *Español en directo* consists of three levels, with levels one and two being further subdivided into another two levels. This means that there are in fact five text books. He nevertheless points out that "a detailed analysis of the book shows the presence of elements of

the direct method such as the frequent recourse to diagrams to assist the association of word with object, as well as echoes of the grammatical approach in the presentation of certain grammatical points".[9]

Book 1A, written by A. Sánchez, M. Ríos and J. Domínguez was published in 1974, while Book 1B, by the same authors, was published in 1975. Books 2A and 2B by A. Sánchez, M.T. Cabré and J.A. Matilla were published in 1975, while Book 3 was published in 1982. In Maltese secondary schools, Books 1A, 1B and 2A are used in Forms III, IV and V respectively.

Each unit in Books 1A and 1B consists of the following:

- The first page contains a dialogue which simulates a situation in daily life. Comprehension of the text is assisted with the inclusion of a number of pictures which, though not particularly atttractive, can be of use to the teacher, especially if associated with the communicative approach.[10]

- A table setting out the grammatical structures of the unit, without any accompanying explanation, followed by structuralist-type exercises to permit the assimilation of the elements or structures being presented. These exercises tend to be fairly monotonous and lacking in creativity and as a consequence are low in motivation.

- Two pages with diagrams to assist the acquisition, via oral practice, of the structures and vocabulary.

- Two pages with transformation, substitution or repetition exercises to consolidate the structures introduced in the lessons.

- A final page in which a situation similar to the one introducing the unit is used to apply the structures and vocabulary learnt.

In addition to the students' text book, there is also a Practice Book for homework, cassettes and slides. In Malta, only the first is used.

Book 2A follows the same format plus a new section entitled *Lo que usted debe saber*, in which printed materials from real life are utilized to introduce the students to Spanish culture. Maltese pupils are therefore not exposed to real life texts and elements of Spanish culture until they are in Form V.

It is clear that since the seventies there have been many different types of courses for the teaching of

Spanish coming onto the market. This phenomemon reflects the developments in methodology effecting the teaching of foreign languages, particularly the Council of Europe's Threshold levels. An up-to-date review of these methods is undertaken by Aquilino Sánchez[11] in the above-mentioned book, and is complemented by the recent contribution by Mª José Rueda, which analyses recent developments.[12]

In an effort to compensate for the deficiences of *Español en directo*, the University of Malta's Faculty of Education offers a series of credits to equip students with the capacity to develop their own teaching materials based on the communicative or task approach.[13] The very first B.Ed. Spanish dissertation in fact dealt with the preparation of complementary material for use in Forms III, IV and V.[14] This seeks to bridge the gap until such time as the current text book is replaced.

In search of an alternative: *Viaje al español*

The search for the best method for specific levels of teaching such as Forms III, IV and V is not an easy task for several reasons. Even the specialist finds him or herself overwhelmed by the vast range of alternative courses available. There is also an increasing amount of books and support materials which, if properly used, can enable the user to overcome the deficiences of any particular aspect. But even this requires a guide.[15] It is also worth pointing out that much of this material is increasingly open and eclectic and gives the user greater discretionary power over the course. Much will of course depend on the purpose for which one is learning Spanish but it is probably still advisable for both pupils and teachers in secondary schools to continue adopting a set text book particularly in view of the fact that the former are coming into contact with the language for the very first time.

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned factors, we would like to propose *Viaje al español* as a possible replacement for use in Maltese secondary schools. The international edition of this text book for classroom use is an adaptation of the bilingual teach-yourself publication of the same name.

The text book is the result of the collaboration of several institutions: the Spanish Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture, Radio Televisión Española, and the University of Salamanca. The novelty of this course, when compared to others, is the importance given to the use of video in the class as an integral part of the course. In addition to using a medium with which
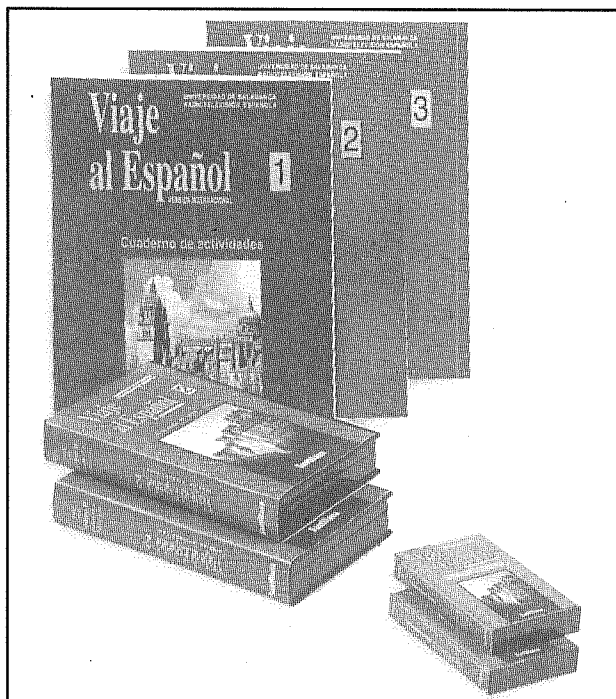
students are already familiar, the video narrates a story which is presented in a "soap opera" format. In order to maximize motivation[16] the video weaves the didactic elements within a voyage of discovery of the geography and culture of Spain. It is nevertheless true that the construction of the course around the video leads to the creation of a measure of dependence as access to video-viewing facilities is a *sine qua non.*

As the introduction clearly sets out, the aim of the course is not merely to satisfy general communication needs, but also to develop other skills required for day to day survival such as reading, writing and the decoding of images. It is divided into three levels each of which consists of a student's book and an activities book which systematically exploit the contents of the video; two audio cassettes; a video for level one, and two for each of the subsequent levels; and a teacher's book.

Levels one, two and three are based on the functional, notional-functional and notional approaches respectively.[17] *Viaje al español* is therefore very different from *Español en directo* in that it builds not on a structural or grammatical base but on the situational perspective which enables the students to attend to language needs in a specific situation. There are nevertheless instructions concerning the proper use of the grammatical structures and lexical items introduced, as well as references to a grammar section at the end of the book entitled *Rincón de la gramática* or the Grammar Corner. These notes on grammar are brief and to the point and may require the teacher's help.

Despite this initial drawback it is felt that the students should be exposed to the richness of authentic language from the very beginning and that he or she would soon be able to understand the grammar.

Yet another of the positive aspect of *Viaje al español* is the presence of a glossary or vocabulary at the end of the student's book. This follows the order established by the units and shows those words which appear in a particular unit for the first time in addition to revision sections which consolidate previously-acquired vocabulary.

Once familiar with the material, particularly the video elements of it, teachers should have no problem in making whole or partial use of it.[18] A very useful extra are the suggestions on how to derive the maximum possible benefit from the material, to be encountered at the beginning of the book.[19] This constitutes a useful complement to the exposure which B.Ed. students already have concerning the proper use of material.

In theory all secondary schools are now equipped with video although it is difficult to determine the level of access to this equipment in a particular school at any one time. It is nevertheless important to keep in mind that although video is a very useful and handy tool, it can be abused. The introduction to the book, fully aware of this danger, cautions against the excessive exposure of students to the video material and text.

Video is an extremely useful instrument but it is not a panacea and neither can it fully replace the teacher. It is simply a medium which, if carefully handled, can produce excellent results. The viewing of a video must only take place within the context of a properly laid out lesson plan with specific objectives. A couple of sessions devoted to the training of future or present teachers as to the proper handling of the course material is a must.

Conclusions

To sum up, the following are the most pressing changes required, in order of priority, based on the communicative approach as it is concibed by Richards and Rodgers,[20] Sheils[21] or currently Álvaro García Santa-Cecilia.[22]

1. That teachers complement the text book currently in use, namely *Español en directo* with material which introduces the communicative approach

and which helps retain if not actually increase students' motivation.

2. The next stage would ideally be the replacement of the current text book with a more up to date one. In this paper we have suggested *Viaje al español* as one such possibility although Spanish as a Foreign Language specialists should be consulted prior to a final decision.

3. A reform of the current system which requires the less gifted to cover in two years the same curriculum which others normally do in three.[23]

4. That the SEC curriculum and examination gradually evolve to better reflect internationally recognised qualifications such as the *Diploma Básico de Español*.

5. The adoption of Spanish as one of the options available to students in Form I. This would give it equality of treatment on the same basis as French and Italian.

The gradual adoption of the above would contribute to an improvement in the quality of the teaching in Maltese schools of a universal language, Spanish, spoken by more than 350 million people world-wide.

Notes

1 Cfr. *El peso de la lengua española en el mundo*, VVAA, Universidad de Valladolid, Fundación Duques de Soria, Incipe, 1995; and *El currículo de español como lengua extranjera*, Álvaro García Santa-Cecilia, Edelsa, Colección Investigación Didáctica, Madrid 1995, pages 76-77.

2 More on this subject in Elisabeth Subercaseaux's article "El mundo de la prensa hispana en Estados Unidos", in *Cuadernos Cervantes de la lengua española*, nº 5 (nov 1995), pp. 7-14.

3 Cfr. *Cuadernos Cervantes de la lengua española*, nº 2 (May 1995), articles by Isabel Campo ("Hispanic, latino, speaker of Spanish: nos queda la palabra") and Alberto Moncada ("El tratado de Libre Comercio. La proposición californiana 187 y su influencia sobre el idioma").

4 *Carabela* review nº 36, October 1995.

5 Ref. Plan curricular del Instituto Cervantes (1994).

6 Similar organizations are AEPE (Asociación Europea de Profesores de Español) in Europe, or AASTP (American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese) in USA.

7 *Ven* (Edelsa/Edi 6, Madrid 1990-93) is the method currently used, although *Viaje al español* is used at times.

8 By Lourdes Jerez Amador de los Ríos, Linguistic attachée, Embassy of Spain, Malta, October 1991.

9 Aquilino Sánchez Pérez, *Historia de la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera*, SGEL, Madrid, 1992, pp. 394-5.

10 The book can also be modified as Encina Alonso suggests in her chapter about programming in *¿Cómo ser profesor/a y querer seguir siéndolo?*, Edelsa/Edi 6, Madrid, 1995.

11 He analyses *Entre nosotros* (Sánchez, Ríos, Matilla, SFEL, Madrid, 1982), notional-functional method; *Para empezar* (Equipo Pragma, Edelsa/Edi 6, Madrid, 1984), communicative method, "more a notional-functional and structural method than a communicative one"; and *Antena* (Equipo Anavce, SGEL, Madrid, 1986), which he believes is the first communicative method in Spain.

12 In *Carabela* review nº 35 and 36, she describes the following communicative methods: *Intercambio* (L. Miquel y N. Sans, Difusión, Madrid 1989-90); *Ven* (F. Castro, F. Marín, R. Morales; Edelsa/Edi 6, Madrid 1990-93); *Curso intensivo de español para extranjeros* (L. Busquet, L. Bonzi, ed. Verbum, Madrid 1993); and *¿Qué tal amigos? Curso introductorio completo de español* (1989); *Entre amigos* (1990-92); *Orbita* (1991-92), and *Cumbre. Curso de español para extranjeros* (1995), all of them from the same publisher of the review, SGEL (Madrid).

13 TSP 20, Design of didactical units working with tasks; TSP 21, The Theoretical basis of the communicative approach; TSP 22, Applications of the communicative appraoch, respectively.

14 "Propuesta de material complementario para los Form IV-V siguiendo el enfoque comunicativo", by Ruth Sabino (1994). An unpublished B/Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

15 For example, the book before mentioned of Álvaro García (op. cit. footnote 1), specifically chapters 1 (apdo. 3), 7 and 8, following a communicative approach.

16 Motivation as it is said by Álvaro García (op. cit. page 149): "el factor operativo en el proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua, si bien se trata de un factor complejo que engloba aspectos distintos como el deseo de alcanzar unos objetivos y el esfuerzo que se dedica a lograrlo".

17 This method is not a specifically communicative one, so the lack of information gap exercises can be remedied by recourse to books such as *De dos en dos*, Ed. Difusión, Madrid, 1992. Related to the relationship between the nocional-funcional and the communicative approach are these words of Álvaro García (op. cit. page 41): "se puede ser nocional-functional sin ser comunicativo, y comunicativo sin ser nocional-funcional".

18 For the next academic year (1996/97) a new unit will be available in the Spanish B.Educ Programme about the use of the video in the Spanish lesson (TSP 25: The use of video material in the class of Spanish and preparation of tasks for oral production).

[19] Vid. also: *Video y enseñanza*, Santiago Mallas Casas, Universidad de Barcelona, 1985; Aplicación didáctica del vídeo, Salvador Bauzá, Alta Fulla, 1991.

[20] *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, Oxford University Press, 1986.

[21] *Communication in the modern languages classroom*, Project nº 12: Learning and teaching modern languages for communication, Council of Europe, Estrasburgo 1988.

[22] Op. cit. page 222: "conjunto de ideas y principios que constituye un modo particular de entender la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera a partir de los siguientes rasgos generales: importancia del uso de la lengua con fines comunicativos; consideración del alumno como eje del currículo; énfasis en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa; consideración de las necesidades y expectativas del alumno con respecto al aprendizaje; énfasis en la negociación de significados en el uso de la lengua; importancia del desarrollo de la autonomía del alumno; importancia de la dimensión sociocultural relacionada con la lengua; desarrollo de la enseñanza y del aprendizaje mediante la potenciación de la capacidades de los alumnos". Vid. also *El enfoque comunicativo de la enseñanza de la lengua*, VVAA, Paidós, 1993.

[23] To develop this point and the next one, we must follow the above-mentioned *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* and *El currículo de español como lengua extranjera.*

Studies on the teaching of German as a foreign language in Maltese schools: a survey

Herbert CONRAD

The scope of this article is to present a short *Forschungsbericht* or research report on some of the contributions towards the improvement of the teaching of German in Maltese schools made by students in their dissertations as part of their B.Educ. (Hons.) course. Due to the prevailing conditions, little or no research in this field was published in other form. The available studies can however reflect to some extent the work which is being done and might help to identify areas which require further investigation, especially in view of ongoing changes and the challenges accompanying them.

German was first introduced as a subject in Maltese secondary schools on a trial basis at Maria Regina (Blata 1-Bajda) and the Lyceum (Hamrun) in 1970 after it had been on offer for some time to adult learners in evening classes. The number of students opting for German increased quickly every year and in 1974 the government of the Federal Republic of Germany began to support the promotion of the language by donating teaching material and technical equipment and by making available teacher training seminars and scholarships. An offer for the setting-up of a German department at University was not taken up in 1976, and it was only in 1981 that German, somewhat accidentally, was included in the list of subjects for the B.Ed. course. Ten years ago, Maria Stella Dalmas, the first B.Ed. student who could choose German as a main study area for her course presented a first overview of the role of German in Maltese schools in her dissertation entitled "German in Maltese Education. A Survey of Developments and Current Trends" (1985).[1] By that time, German had firmly been established as an alternative modern language option besides Italian, French and Arabic. Statistics for scholastic year 1982/83 give the number of students taking German at secondary schools in Malta as 655 or 3.0% of all students.[2]

The most recent statistics[3] show that this year, i.e. scholastic year 1995/96, German is taught in 22 Junior Lyceums/Secondary Schools and in six private schools. There are 31 teachers of German in state

schools, and some 2,300 students are learning German there. This would indicate a healthy interest in the German language in Malta, but the number of students opting for German has actually gone down over the last years and this trend is likely to continue, partly as a consequence of recent changes in the local examination system where German is not offered at MATSEC intermediate level. This seems to confirm a remark by Prof. Dietrich[4] ten years ago about Malta's "anticyclical" behaviour with regard to German. When the demand for German was on the decline world-wide in the late seventies and early eighties, more and more students in Malta chose German. And whilst there has a been a dramatic increase in the demand for learning German in many European countries, especially in Eastern Europe, in the wake of German reunification and its political and economic implications, the number of students opting for German in Malta appears to be dropping.

This is not the place to discuss the importance of the German language today in Malta, in Europe or world-wide nor to examine the motives which determine a student's choice of a second or third foreign language. There can however be no doubt that with the unavoidable enlargement of the EU, the teaching of foreign languages in our schools will become even more important and that a country like Malta, if it wants to remain competitive, needs people in all walks of life who are competent in the languages of its neighbouring countries and trading partners. The inclusion of Spanish and Russian amongst the modern language options offered in our schools shows that the authorities felt this need and realized the importance of reaching students at an early age instead of relying on private or commercial institutions for adult learners to meet the demand.

The history of the teaching of *Deutsch als Fremdsprache/DaF* (German as a Foreign Language) in Malta and of research into the specific aspects and requirements of teaching the subject in Maltese secondary schools is linked to the development of the subject and its methodology and didactics in the

German-speaking countries and its establishment as an academic discipline. One must keep in mind that *DaF* is a relatively young subject and has been taught for only about three decades in a limited number of German Universities where representatives of the traditional *Germanistik* with its main branches of *Deutsche Philologie* and *Neuere deutsche Literaturwissenschaft* tended to look down on the new discipline as an upstart without proper academic credentials.[5] It is symptomatic in many ways for the situation prevailing in the seventies and the eighties that *Vorwärts*, the course book for the teaching of German in Maltese schools, although it was made available by the German government, had been developed in the early 1970s in Great Britain by the Nuffield Foundation and the Schools Council as part of a large-scale modern language teaching project.

One of the major problems faced by teachers and students of German in Malta for a very long time was in fact the dependence on a course book and audio-visual teaching concept which was already becoming outdated when it first reached these shores. It should certainly not have been in use any longer after 1980, gift horse or not. Naturally our B.Ed. students, who had themselves learnt the language via this course – or in spite of it, thanks to their teachers' dedication and resourcefulness – were keen on investigating the weaknesses of the teaching methods and of the course book and coming up and experimenting with remedies which were usually put to the test during their teaching practice periods. So the rationale behind most of the dissertations presented by the students of German is a critical analysis, either in the form of a comprehensive *Lehrwerkskritik* or concentrating on specific aspects, of the didactic principles and teaching materials and methods used in our schools, always with a view of offering constructive criticism and investigating alternatives for better, more effective teaching based on an evaluation of the theoretical and practical research results of modern language teaching in general, and of *DaF* in particular, as far as these were available.

Ruth Mifsud, in her dissertation[6] presented a *Lehrwerksanalyse* of two beginners' course books, *Vorwärts K 1* and *Deutsch konkret 1*[7] and examined the differences in their didactic approach, methodological principles and thematic contents. She came to the conclusion that the former book, based on an audio-visual approach developed in the sixties, no longer qualified as a suitable text-book, whilst in the latter, which appeared some nine years later, the development of the communicative competence is the guiding principle followed throughout the book.

In their dissertation on reading texts in German[8], Marlene Bonnici and Jennifer Camilleri investigated the problems of reading in a foreign language and *Textarbeit* in class as well as the needs of learners in Maltese schools in terms of reading material (not) available to them. They also compiled their own *Lesebuch*, a colourful and extensive mosaique of 94 carefully selected and adapted inspiring reading texts grouped under 14 different headings and ready annotated for the use of teachers. It is a pity that this anthology was never published separately and edited in a professional manner since it would certainly have proved a great help and a source of motivation to learners of German in our schools.

Carmen Magri dealt with an often forgotten or neglected aspect of teaching modern languages in her dissertation on language games.[9] She examined the psychological and pedagogical implications of the concept of play and the important role which language games can play in an enjoyable and motivating teaching/learning process and included a series of language games she devised as well as songs to complement the *K1* and *K2* coursebooks in order to make them more appealing to pupils. The effectiveness of games as an (inter)active form of language work which encourages creativity and spontaneous communication can hardly be underestimated.

In her dissertation on the *Landeskunde* aspect in the teaching of German[10], Maria Stella Mallia examined the importance and role of what had already been an obligatory element of the syllabus for Italian (*cultura*) at a time when the introduction of an extra lesson per week dedicated to information about the country, its people and culture, was being considered for all modern languages. This has to be an essential element of every phase of language teaching, since it does not only stimulate a keener interest in the foreign language, but creates a greater awareness and better understanding of both the target culture and the student's own cultural background, leading to more tolerant and unprejudiced view of others which must be a goal of all education. A critical assessment of the coursebook showed that it was not topical, not multi-perspective, lacking a motivating presentation and giving a one-sided picture of Germany. Teachers were referred to more recent textbooks such as *Deutsch konkret* and *Zickzack* for more meaningful exercises within a *Landeskunde* context.

Angela Grima ventured into uncharted territory with her very original dissertation[11] which at first glance might look an odd man out when seen against the rationale mentioned above. Her main concern is

however identical with that of her fellow students: to investigate ways and means of making language learning (here for more advanced students and through literature) a more appealing and satisfying experience. She studies the concepts of critical education and critical pedagogy inspired by the critical theory of society of the *Frankfurter Schule* and proposes a critical pedagogical framework for teaching German literature at Junior College level through a combination of critical content and pedagogy. She then applies this approach to two late nineteenth century social novels of German realism by Theodor Fontane, highlighting their critical potential value as both an aesthetic experience and as a social referent and involving students in critical social reflection.

Audrey Penza's dissertation[12] contains a detailed study and analysis of 150 Form 4 (4th year German) annual examination scripts. The author discusses the extent of grammatical correctness needed to produce acceptable utterances within the framework of communicative language teaching and examines the significance of errors as a part of the learners' interlanguage in the process of foreign language acquisition and the consequences for the classroom situation.

Daniela Abela in her dissertation[13] tackled one of the major problems teachers of German still have to face up to this day: how to coax spoken German from pupils, i.e. how to induce them to actively use the language as a means of communication during their German lessons. Only a drastic change from the old fashioned grammar-translation method (and the examinations based on it) to an interactive and communicative approach using pictures, stories and drama (with an oral test as an integral part of examinations) will give our students the communicative competence in foreign languages required in the greater Europe of tomorrow.

The development of writing skills in German, especially free and creative writing, is the subject of Alice Micallef's dissertation[14]. She shows that writing should not always be a teacher-directed activity, but – if the teacher can facilitate creativity through motivation – initiated by the learners themselves who will then experience how the words come alive and meaningful for them and how their grasp on the language widens and deepens.

Susan Sciberras in her dissertation[15] examined the difficulties of objectively assessing oral performance in German. With the introduction of the new Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) for German

Ordinary Level as from May 1994, the need was felt to begin an investigation of the principles on which oral performance, which had at last become a (yet minor) component of this new examination, might be tested and assessed in a reliable manner. The students would have to be well prepared through continuous monitoring of the speaking ability through carefully graded exercises and tests in the classroom before presenting themselves for a summative assessment. Here is a great need for a thorough discussion of the contents and format of oral tests for all stages of teaching and of examination and for the development of valid and reliable scoring systems.

Nadine Vella's dissertation[16] considers the importance of intercultural communication in language teaching and provides additional material about Maltese culture to supplement/substitute the predominantly British background of the new coursebook for German used in Forms 1 and 2 of our schools. She also examines a number of extra-curricular activities for promoting intercultural communication.

When one looks at the listening comprehension performance of students in recent SEC examinations, one cannot help wondering how, in spite of the extensive material supplied with the new course book for training this particular skill, candidates fare so poorly. Nathalie Bugeja and Graziella Cortis in their dissertation[17] therefore set out to analyse the multiplicity of skills involved in this most elementary language skill and went on to a critical evaluation of the listening activities in the new German coursebook *Zickzack 1* and 2, also producing a very useful compilation of supplementary listening material (texts and cassettes) for use together with the new coursebook.

A short reference to work in progress regarding dissertations, which might perhaps lead to some interdisciplinary contacts, shall round off this necessarily sketchy picture. At present students are working on a model for an interactive approach to the teaching of German grammar in schools and on a re-evaluation of the role and function of German literature as part of the sixth form curriculum.

Nearly all the dissertations presented above are obviously practice oriented. This is first of all in the nature of the subject, but can also be explained by the need to help our teachers cope with their work and with changing conditions which determine the priority of a pragmatic approach over theoretical pretensions. The fact that the "unit for the teaching of German" at University, which has consisted until very recently

of part-time lecturers only, might of course have something to do with this, as might the lack of resources and adequate working and research facilities for the subject.

There is surely a wide field of research waiting to be ploughed as a consequence of the particular situation in which foreign language learners and teachers find themselves in Malta. Students here have to cope first of all with the two official languages of the country, Maltese and English, which have little in common. Their co-existence at a certain level of education should not blind us to the fact that Malta's second language is taught and learned here as a foreign language. At secondary school level at least one (other) foreign language is added, sometimes two, and the learning conditions can vary considerably, in particular the intensity of exposure to the different languages. Naturally there will be a wide range of interferences which one would expect to become stronger the later a foreign language is added to the repertoire. Since German is often the second or third foreign language tackled, there is a lot of interesting work to be done by way of research into second or third foreign language acquisition/learning and L1 influence. It is hoped, amongst other things, that the studies undertaken so far under rather adverse circumstances might eventually serve as prolegomena to the development of a course for the teaching of German "made in Malta" and "made for Malta", which is perhaps the greatest desideratum at present. None of the many monolingual courses developed in Germany for teaching *DaF* through every-day situations in German-speaking countries, nor similar books specially written for vaguely-defined international learners outside German-speaking areas,[18] nor the German language course books for speakers with English as their mother tongue, are optimal for our students, especially when one considers the particular demands which the teaching of mixed ability groups, which are the rule rather than the exception, makes on the teachers. Ever since the publication of the trailblazer *Yao lernt Deutsch*[19] the discussion about "regionalized" German language courses has never stopped and has lately led to a new interdisciplinary *Hermeneutik der Fremde* (hermeneutics of foreign cultures)[20] and has rekindled the discussion of the conditions for contrastive and intercultural language learning[21]. Locally produced SEC and MATSEC examinations in German have already begun (in 1994 and in 1996 respectively) to replace the former Ordinary and Advanced Level examinations set by British examining boards, and one of the reasons for this, though not the decisive one, was that they were considered unsuitable for our students. Catering for the particular requirements of local

learners on the basis of thorough analyses, at all levels of teaching and examining, of the specific conditions and problems of learning German as second or third foreign language in Malta will therefore continue to be one of the main tasks for the next years. Some of the spadework has already been done, and no small amount of it in the dissertations reviewed above.

Notes

1 It was unfortunately not possible to find a copy of this dissertation in any of the libraries at University or to obtain one from the author herself.

2 The figures for other southern European countries are: Greece 0.2%, Italy 5.19%, Portugal 1.3%, Spain 0.01%, Turkey 11.0% and Cyprus 4.0%. Cf. Dietrich Sturm (ed.): *Deutsch als Fremdsprache weltweit. Situation und Tendenzen.* München 1987, p. 240.

3 Statistics drawn up by the German Resource Centre of the Education Department at Msida. This figure does not include students of German at the Junior College and at the University of Malta.

4 Prof. Dietrich from the University of Heidelberg was in Malta in 1985 as a visiting professor for two weeks.

5 Cf. Dietrich Eggers and Alois Palzer: *Von 'Deutsch für Ausländer' zu 'Deutsch als Fremdsprache'. Daten zur Geschichte eines Faches*, in: Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache 1/1975. Heidelberg 1975, pp. 103-118. Dietrich Eggers: *Zur Geschichte des Faches Deutsch als Fremdsprache an den Universitäten und Hochschulen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, in: Einführung in das Studium des Deutschen als Fremdsprache (Werkstattreihe Deutsch als Fremdsprache 1). Frankfurt 1982, pp. 12-28.

6 Ruth Mifsud: Analysis of two beginners' course-books (*Vorwärts K 1/ Deutsch konkret 1*) for the teaching of German as a foreign language in schools in Malta (1988), An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

7 Vorwärts International, Lehrbuch K 1 (=*Kompaktfassung* or compact version), a more condensed version of the earlier *Kurzfassung* or short version of the original extensive *Langfassung* or full-length version; E.J. Arnold & Son, Leeds/ Gilde Buchhandlung Carl Kayser, Bonn 1974, 1980; G. Neuner et. al.: Deutsch konkret, Lehrbuch 1, Arbeitsbuch (Langenscheidt) (1983).

8 Marlene Bonnici and Jennifer Camilleri: A Compilation of Reading Texts in German (1988). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

9 Carmen Magri: Learning through Play. Language Games and their Role in the Teaching of German for Beginners (1989). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

10 Maria Stella Mallia: *Landeskunde* in the Teaching of German as a Foreign Language (1989). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

11 Angela Grima: German Literature and Education for Conscientization (1991). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

12 Audrey Penza: An Analysis of Orthographical, Morphosyntactical and Lexical Errors Committed by 150 Maltese Students of German as a Foreign Language (1991). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

13 Daniela Abela: Approaches towards the Developing of the Speaking Skills in the Teaching of German. An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

14 Alice Micallef: Developing Skills towards more Creative Writing Skills in the Teaching of German as a Foreign Language (1993). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

15 Susan Sciberras: Assessing Oral Performance in German

(1994). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

16 Nadine Vella: Intercultural Communication in the Teaching of German in Malta (1994). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

17 Nathalie Bugeja and Graziella Cortis: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Approach to Listening Comprehension in the new German Coursebook Zickzack 1 and 2 (1995). An unpublished B.Ed. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

18 Mebus, Pauldrach, Rall, Rösler: *Sprachbrücke* (Klett, Stuttgart). Cf. especially: M. Rall: *Sprachbrücke 1. Handbuch für den Unterricht* (1990).

19 *Yao lernt Deutsch*. Méthode réalisée par M. Schroeder at R.-D. Reissner. Abidjan, Dakar (Nouvelles Editions Africaines) (1974).

20 D. Krusche, A. Wierlacher et al.

21 cf. for example: K. Vogel, S. Cormerate, Du Rôle de l'Autonomie et de l'Interculturalité dans l'Étude des Langues Étrangères, IRAL XXXIV/1 (1996), pp. 37-48.

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Herbert Conrad lectures in German at the Junior College and at the University of Malta. He studied German, English and Philosophy in Saarbrucken and Munich (Germany), specializing in the teaching of German as a Foreign Language (DaF). He worked in Germany and the UK before coming to Malta in the late 60s where he taught and eventually co-ordinated the teaching of German in state schools, and with a Lehrauftrag of the Goethe Institute, at the German Maltese Circle. Between 1977-1985 he was Vice Principal and Director of Studies at Carl Duisberg Centrum in Saarbrucken. Since 1985 he has been lecturing at G.F. Abela New Lyceum/Junior College.

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