RALPH FLETCHER

5 Primary French Project

Basic information

There were three projects, separately financed and organised but working in close liaison:

(i) *The Primary French Pilot Scheme*, set up in 1963 by the Ministry of Education under the aegis of its Curriculum Study Group. In 1964 it became the responsibility of the Schools Council which administered the scheme in collaboration with the LEAs involved and the HM Inspectorate until its termination in 1974–75;

(ii) *The Primary French Materials Project*, an integral part of the Foreign Languages Teaching Materials Project established in 1963 by the Nuffield Foundation. Its purpose was the production of French teaching materials for pupils aged from 8 to 13 for use in the Pilot Scheme. Ultimately it engaged in the production of teaching materials in German, Russian and Spanish for the same age range. Progressively taken over by the Schools Council with an extension of responsibilities to cover the age range 13–16 in all languages. It was wound up in 1974 and replaced by the Language Materials Development Unit of the Languages Teaching Centre at the University of York.

(iii) *The Primary French Evaluation Project*, undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research whose longitudinal study of the pupils involved in the Pilot Scheme ran from 1964 to 1974.

Sponsors Sponsored jointly by the Nuffield Foundation and the Schools Council from 1962–75. Nuffield participation ceased in 1967.

Grant	Nuffield Foundation	£360,000	
	Schools Council	£892,000	In the main this was for the production of teaching materials. The Schools Council contribution also covered the production of materials in the other three languages.
	Schools Council	£87,250	For the evaluation project
	DES	£110,000	
	Schools Council	£21,000	For the dissemination project
	Total	£1,470,250	

N.B. These monies did not cover the very large sums spent on teacher training, purchase of teaching materials and hardware by the LEAs.

Location 1963–67 mainly in accommodation provided by the University of Leeds. 1967–74 in University of York accommodation at Micklegate House. The Language Materials Development Unit has now succeeded it at the same site.
Address: University of York, Micklegate House, Micklegate York. Tel: York 27844

Designated pupils Age range initially 8–13 and finally 8–16.

Project Team

Directors:	Professor A. Spicer	to December 1969
	Mr. D. Rowlands	to December 1972
	Mr. D. Rix	to December 1973
	Mrs. S. Honor	to December 1974

French section organisers:

Mr. D. Grant	to September 1966	Primary
Mr. M. Buckby	1966–68	Primary–Secondary
Mr. N. Patrick	1966–69	Secondary
Mr. M. Buckby	1966–73	Secondary
Mrs. S. Honor	1973–74	Secondary

Organisers of other language sections:

German	Mr. A. Peck
Russian	Mr. D. Rix
Spanish	Mr. D. Rowlands
	Mr. R. Clark from 1970

Trials The earliest French materials were tried out in 50 volunteer primary schools in England, Scotland and the Channel Islands between January and July 1964. Subsequently craft materials were mainly pre-tested in the pilot scheme and associated area schools and then revised for publication.

Materials There are three main categories:

(i) occasional papers on matters connected with linguistic research, published by the Nuffield Foundation;

(ii) language courses for use in schools:

French	*En Avant* (8–13)
	A Votre Avis (13–16)
German	*Vorwärts* (11–16, or with abridged initial stages 13–16)
Spanish	*Adelante* (11–16, or with abridged initial stages 13–16)
Russian	*Vperyod!* (11–16)

Published by E. J. Arnold and Macmillan Education

(iii) ancillary publications concerned with teaching method, published variously by the Nuffield, Foundation, E. J. Arnold and the Language Materials Development Unit.

For further details of all of these, see the Bibliography.

Background

It is widely considered that Wilder Penfield, the Canadian neurologist, laid the foundations for an early start for language learning through his work on the effects of brain damage. He and his colleague concluded that the years before the age of ten are the time when the brain can most readily acquire new speech. Possibly as a consequence there followed various education experiments: in

1961 Sweden introduced the teaching of English from the age of 10; from 1962 certain cities in Italy taught English to primary children after school hours; there was a Berlin project in 1964 when English was taught to a restricted number of primary children and in the same year Austria experimented with English for nine year-olds (Stern 1969, chapter 10). Prior to 1962 the British official attitude was not enthusiastic, as is evidenced by Ministry of Education pamphlet 29 on *Modern Languages*, which made only passing comment on the possibility of the primary teaching of French. This is in contrast with feeling in the USA where as early as 1953 the Office of Education had organised a conference entitled: 'Should languages be tackled at elementary school level?' The answer was a positive one and Foreign Languages in the Elementary School (FLES) was set up (Durette 1972).

Nevertheless by 1964 a British experiment was to be launched which rivalled any in its scope and thoroughness. The mainspring was the Nuffield Foundation, whose director at this time was Leslie Farrer-Brown. In a personal statement, as yet unpublished, he gives the following background. On 7 December 1959 he held a meeting with eight language teaching experts. They were concerned at the fact that 'very few children who studied French for five years could at the age of 16 converse in French, read a French book or write a letter which a French person might understand.' It was generally agreed at the meeting that what was lacking was motivation in the pupil. Farrer-Brown then conceived the idea that, as 'the younger a child is when it starts to learn a second language, the better', it might be feasible for primary children 'to devote almost all of their time to French in the sense that they would not only have lessons in the French language, but would do the bulk of their other lessons in French'. The aim would be that they would then be able to speak the language when they arrived at secondary stage. This concept was accorded only limited support by the rest of the group.

Little more was done about the idea until two or three months later when Farrer-Brown was introduced to Professor Jeffares of the English Department of Leeds University. He told Jeffares of his suggestion and the latter arranged a meeting with George Taylor (Director of Education for Leeds) and Alec Clegg (Director of Education for the West Riding). Farrer-Brown spoke to them of the possibility of an early start for second language learning and told them that his trustees had agreed to finance such a venture. Within a few days Taylor had found a suitable school and teacher (Mrs. Kellerman) and a visit had been organised to St. Cloud to gain an insight into the latest pedagogical advances in language teaching. (At St. Cloud was located the *Centre de Recherche et d'Etude pour la Diffusion du Français* CREDIF). The resulting educational experiment was so successful that in 1962 it was extended to another six schools. At this stage one of the languages being taught was in fact Italian (Kellerman 1964).

It should be noted in passing that the Nuffield Foundation was concurrently involved in another experiment with three primary schools in East Ham, where French was being taught under normal class conditions using the normal

teacher. In East Ham the project was under the direction of S. R. Ingram. It is of interest and consequence that Mr. Ingram was perhaps the country's leading exponent of the TAVOR system of French language teaching. TAVOR, originally devised as a way of teaching the language to American occupational forces attached to SHAPE, was one of the first courses to use film strip and synchronised tape. It was possibly because of the shifting of the burden of teaching from teacher to machine that it was deemed possible to allow non-specialists to cope with this highly specialist subject at primary level.

The dichotomy between the Leeds and East Ham approaches is very significant and this '*querelle des spécialistes et des non-spécialistes*' has yet to be resolved. Both of these systems were financially supported by the Nuffield Foundation: at Leeds it was to the tune of £1,500.

As a consequence of the success of these intial projects the Foundation decided to disseminate its experiences and in May 1962 in association with the Leeds Education Committee it organised a conference of interested Directors of Education, HM Inspectors of schools and some others to study the work being done in schools in Leeds and to consider possible developments. As a result the Foundation set aside £100,000 (ultimately increased to £360,000) for such developments. It was envisaged that action would be needed in four main fields: 'production of teaching resources; development of teacher training; revision of examinations and fundamental linguistic research' (Farrer-Brown, unpublished personal account).

The Ministry of Education's acceptance of the Foundation's proposals had a larger background than the success of the Leeds and East Ham experiments. In the Annan Report on *The Teaching of Russian* (1962) for example, the authors suggested that a sensible way of making room in the time-table for Russian would be to start the teaching of French at the age of nine and then at secondary level to diminish the time allocated to French in favour of Russian. Again, in 1962, the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg had convened a meeting of international experts to consider the primary school teaching of language (UNESCO 1962). Yet another crucial matter in the eyes of the Ministry was the alleged 'opening of the floodgates' which occurred as a result of the success of the Leeds experiment (Rowlands 1972). Facts are here difficult to establish. There is for example a wide variation between the 5,000 schools suggested by Stern in his *Languages and the Young School Child* (1969, 18) and the more modest figure arrived at by Lazaro of 280 schools. (Lazaro 1963). Yet in 1964 a further survey by the newly established Schools Council speaks of 2,500 schools involved in the teaching of primary French. Nevertheless, whatever the actual figures were, it is very probable that Ministerial support for an extension of the Leeds experiment was largely occasioned by the need to control the inflationary situation which that experiment had inspired. The Lazaro Report itself had shown the urgency of such a move by stating that of the 144 teachers of French involved in the survey one third only had acceptable teaching techniques, one third had formal language qualifications and half of the classes were being badly taught and showed poor achievement.

Launching of primary French

On 13 March 1963 the Minister of Education announced the launching of the Primary French Pilot Scheme by means of which all pupils in certain schools were to be taught French from the age of eight in order to discover 'whether it would be feasible and educationally desirable to extend the teaching of a foreign language to pupils who represented a wider range of age and ability than those to whom foreign languages had been traditionally taught.' (Burstall 1974).

The tasks which had to be undertaken were now fairly clear. They were:

1. The selection of appropriate schools and their organisation into areas.
2. The training of semi-specialist teachers.
3. The dissemination of information on progress.
4. The preparation of a body of French teaching materials to cover the 8–13 age groups.
5. The carrying out of research which would help in the production of these materials and which might guide the way to new teaching techniques.
6. The investigation of new ways of continuous assessment leading to changes at O-level.
7. The setting up of an impartial and disinterested evaluation of the project.
8. The provision of teaching materials in the so-called minority languages (German, Spanish and Russian) for the age group 11–16, aimed at a broad ability band.

This last task would seem to indicate that one of the fundamental aims of the pilot scheme was indeed to facilitate the growth of these subjects in accordance with the suggestion made in the Annan Report.

Because two major and usually independent bodies were concerned, the Ministry of Education and the Nuffield Foundation, the execution of these tasks was entrusted to a somewhat complex structure of committees or working parties. As A. Spicer, the first organiser of the newly formed Nuffield Foreign Language Teaching Materials Project, said in his address to the Second (1966) Hamburg Conference, 'the whole scheme marked the beginning of a new form of enterprise between the Ministry and an independent organisation.' Additionally, of course, there was need for representation of, and constant consultation with, the large number of bodies who had dealings with primary and secondary schools such as LEAs, training colleges, universities, heads and teachers, professional associations, HMIs and Nuffield itself. The interrelating structure and individual responsibilities of the committees will probably not be generally known until the thirty years moratorium on the publication of the minutes of such meetings has elapsed.

The committees were as follows:

1. The Ministry's Curriculum Study Group (forerunner of the Schools Council).

2. A sub-committee of the latter, known as Sub-Committee A, composed of four HMIs, three co-opted teachers and chaired by George Taylor, Chief Education Officer of Leeds. This would have been the principal policy-making group.
3. The Consultative Committee set up by Nuffield. This was again chaired by George Taylor, but was more broadly based than Sub-committee A, having representatives from the HMI, the universities, training colleges, the teacher, language associations and Nuffield. At least three people, including Dr. Riddy, the then Staff Inspector for Languages, were members both of this committee and of Sub-committee A. This was in all probability one of the most vital of the committees since it served as a link between the Ministry and Nuffield.
4. An Advisory Committee for Primary French set up by Nuffield, chaired by George Taylor and with a similar kind of representation to that of the Consultative Committee; there was, however, a more pronounced emphasis on language teaching expertise. Its function, which was mainly related to the Nuffield Foreign Languages Teaching Materials (NFLTM) team was, as the title implies, advisory and in no way executive. Its area of concern would have been the broad lines of linguistic and didactic policy of this materials producing group.
5. The NFLTM team (French section) – a salaried group of various specialists (artists, practising teachers and native speakers) headed by an organiser. During the ten years of its existence there were five such organisers, sometimes overlapping, sometimes succeeding one another, as the materials moved from the primary and through the secondary range. The section also had its own advisory panel, mainly consisting of teachers whose role was presumably to advise on the appropriateness and detail of the proposed materials. This twin system of a materials producing unit with its own advisory panel of teacher specialists was duplicated with regard to secondary French, Spanish, Russian, German and the testing materials.

As far as the tasks set out above were concerned, a relatively clear division of labour was possible and even advisable. The first three (the organisation of the schools, teacher training and, to a certain extent, dissemination) required the official status of the Ministry and its representatives. The other items were in the main capable of being tackled by the team set up by Nuffield.

Selection of schools

The first point to be considered was the selection of areas and accordingly the Ministry invited LEAs to propose pilot areas which would meet the following conditions:

1. a given group of primary schools should exclusively feed a restricted number of secondary schools;

2. each pilot area to have an annual age group of about 480 pupils;
3. the schools to provide a cross-section of national educational conditions;
4. local education authorities to be prepared to release teachers for training and themselves to promote internal training.

The response was enthusiastic. Of the 146 LEAs approached, 80 expressed interest and in the event thirteen pilot areas were set up, four in excess of the original number planned. The reasons for this initial extension were to involve the training colleges on a national scale and to cover all possible varieties of educational conditions. At this stage 125 primary schools and 6,000 children were involved.

At the same time authority was given for certain LEAs not included in the pilot scheme to select parallel areas which should be known as associate areas. The number of these was initially modest but when a Ministry-sponsored survey of existing Primary French in 1964 showed that some 2,500 schools were already teaching the subject anyway the number of associate areas was increased to 84 by the autumn of 1967. The associate areas were to be treated exactly like the pilot areas with two qualifications: they bought their own materials; and they would not be subject to the planned evaluation programme. Nevertheless, this meant that the original 6,000 strong age group would rise to 40,000 with a maximum requirement of 1,000 teachers, both figures to grow as more year groups became involved.

Teacher training

The second involvement on the Ministry side was in the training of teachers. The LEAs were asked to provide intensive part-time language courses. These varied in extent but some ran as high as 180 hours, comprising three two-hour sessions per week for 30 weeks. Many were sited in further education establishments and used such audio-visual courses as CREDIFs *Voix et Images* in conjunction with a language laboratory. Attendance at such courses was to be a necessary prelude to a range of secondment courses arranged by the Ministry. These were three in number: a three-month course in Besançon or Paris; a three-month course at an English centre, the main one being Holborn School of Languages; and a three-week course at Vichy.

The last two were to be linked and aimed at giving teachers who had done their secondment in England some taste of life abroad. The Paris course, too, which was an annual affair, was mainly aimed at secondary teachers who would eventually have to deal with the pilot scheme children. It must be noted here that all of these secondment courses were to be extremely successful. In particular, the Besançon course was to send its teachers back with a high degree of fluency and armed with a battery of French songs, games and readers all of which stood them in good stead later.

Before going on the courses the teachers were subjected to mainly oral tests, which aimed at establishing their acuteness of hearing and sound discrimination. All expenses were met and there was little financial burden on the teachers involved, although it is true to say that some LEAs were more generous than others. Difficulties were of course occasioned in the schools themselves since temporary teachers had to be taken on to cover classes and heads were not always ready to cause such upsets to help train teachers who would probably leave them within a year or so. In the long run secondments paid lavish dividends in the case of the mature teacher who was settled in the school, though such teachers were given the opportunity all too rarely. On return from these secondment courses, whose aims were frankly linguistic, the teachers initially also had to attend seminars run by HMIs where the main emphasis was on teaching techniques. It was hoped that at the local level LEAs would do the same kind of thing. To summarise: by means of a closely knit phased programme of training the Ministry, with the support of the local education authorities aimed at building up a competent force of French teachers in the pilot areas. In doing this, and in the way in which they did it, they were saying quite clearly that French teaching was a specialism and that primary French teaching was a specialism within a specialism.

Production of materials

Meanwhile, the Nuffield team was faced with the daunting task of writing and producing a new four-year French course which would cover three years of the primary course and the first year of secondary. They were working very much against the clock, since the team was not in a position to start until the autumn of 1963, and the first materials would have to be tested prior to their introduction into the pilot schools before September 1964. The question must be asked: why was it necessary to produce materials at all since well established courses covering the same age range already existed? There were, for example, the highly successful *Bon Voyage* by Mary Glasgow and CREDIF's impeccable *Bonjour Line*. Indeed, in the initial stages of the project these courses were used both in the pilot areas and in the associate areas.

There was, of course, a question of practicality, for it would have been foolhardy to rely on private publishing firms to maintain a reasonable supply of software which would meet the extraordinary demands about to materialise. Secondly, there was perhaps a feeling, as expressed somewhat guardedly by Spicer in his report to the 1966 Hamburg Conference, that present methods (and one understands by that also materials) were not in keeping with what he felt to be the new approach to language teaching, namely that language comes first and then the formalities of the grammatical rules. It was with this in mind that very early on, together with CREDIF, Nuffield commissioned a Child Language Survey which was to delineate children's actual interests and their style of speech (see Stern 1969 chapter 14, and Nuffield Foreign Language Teaching Materials 1967). The usefulness of this research is exemplified by one of its findings: that 34 centres of interest can be detected in this age group, a

most valuable piece of informaton for the writer of a language course. On the linguistic side CREDIF dealt with the French, and Nuffield with the English child's mode of expression. Here, a great deal of useful information emerged in the matter of semantics but when it came to syntax the waters became too deep and the relevance not all that clear.

Although it was a mammoth task, little requires to be said here about the actual production of materials. In general the procedure that was followed was to devise draft materials, to test them out in schools, to redraft them and eventually to have them published by independent publishing organisations. Each set of draft materials usually contained a report form calling for comment and suggestions. In the case of, for example, Stage 1 of the materials which were called *En Avant* the first draft went into 50 schools in January 1964, before the actual project was started. The second draft went into the pilot schools in September 1964 and a third draft went into the associate areas the following year. This particular section was to have a strange history since, although the published version appeared on the market in 1966, almost ten years later a final and very different 'revised Stage 1' was published. The reason was that the final stages of what was to be an eight-stage course were proving to have a whip-lash effect on the earlier stages and even now at the date of writing the publishers are meditating a further compression of the first three stages for the same reason.

Briefly, the Nuffield team had the commitment to produce a four year (four stage) course. This they had done by September 1967. The nomenclature they used was Stages 1A, 1B, 2, 3, 4A and 4B under the general title *En Avant*. At this point the Nuffield commitment was terminated, but the newly formed Schools Council decided to finance the production of another three years teaching materials. This side of the project was ultimately to cost them £892,000. These were to be in two flights – one for the more able pupils and known as *Avant Garde*, while the other, entitled *Dans le Vent*, was designed for potential CSE candidates. When it came, however, to the question of final publication, it was decided to revert to a common core to be known as *A Votre Avis* with ancillary material which could be adjusted to the ability of the pupils.

The involvement of E. J. Arnold as publisher is an interesting one. According to the Nuffield Foundation there was no question of a public tender. Talks were held with various publishers and Arnold was selected as being most capable of doing what was asked. Royalties were retained by the Foundation and the Foundation paid the publication costs and allocated a certain percentage of the profits to the publishers.

It would take more space than we have available to give a fair estimate of the originality of the contribution to language teaching made by the Nuffield/Schools Council materials. They do, however, have the following characteristics:

1. There is a constant stress on the audio-visual element of language teaching, that is to say everything is amply illustrated both by picture and by film strip, and taped material is always present. They do not, however, constitute an audio-visual course in the sense that every phrase is ineluctably and unambiguously depicted by a picture as was the case with TAVOR. Basically we are always dealing with an illustrated text. The difference is fine, but crucial to the teacher.
2. Conceived as they were for the non-specialist teacher, there is a constant emphasis on teacher direction. In the first three stages such instructions are built in to the course book; thereafter with each stage there is a separate teacher's handbook. Nevertheless, in the later stages there are interesting possibilities for individual work.
3. Throughout there is a conscious effort to deal with the centres of interest of the pupils which is a factor of their age and the stage of the course. This is sometimes at the expense of adjustment of the language to the pupil's existing knowledge thereof. The message often becomes the medium.
4. Greater stress is laid on aural and textual comprehension than on the accuracy and grammatical knowledge required for productive skills. The latter are certainly not neglected but tend to be relegated to the later part of the course.
5. The final stages seem to generate a multiplicity of ancillary material, e.g. integrated readers, situational conversation books and an excellent series of DIY grammar books amusingly contrived to promote individual study of this area.
6. There were also occasional publications of a general nature covering such topics as songs, games and group work with mixed ability classes.

There is little doubt that these materials were monumental and complete. They have always aroused great enthusiasm, particularly among experienced secondary-school language teachers. It is, however, fairly clear that the initial deferment of reading and writing skills and, in the same area, the refusal to insist on even a simplistic acquisition of grammatical knowledge seems to promote confusion and frustration.

Dissemination

Once the scheme was under way, there were two major tasks, namely dissemination and evaluation. The first of these was a joint undertaking of Nuffield and the Ministry.

Both took their job most seriously: there was the periodic publication of a news-sheet, *The Micklegate News* (Micklegate House being the location of the team in York); national free-access courses were organised at the nearby York University, where news was given of developments, chiefly on the examination front; and members of the team gave willingly of their time for lectures in various parts of the country. This contribution was solid and good, in particular in the way in which language experts from all over the country had the frequent chance of meeting each other with consequent attendant benefits.

The Ministry, chiefly through its Inspectorate, undertook a series of national conferences. The first one, held in February 1965 at Harrogate, had as its theme the preparation of in-service courses in teaching methods within the pilot areas. There was a kind of 'crest of the wave' feeling about most contributions, a feeling that this was the way to do things and that what had gone before had been deficient in many ways. Consequential upon this was a failure to invite any contribution which could have been made by the secondary teachers. Their greater involvement could have been crucial but, as it was, primary French was to become a preserve of primary teachers, HMIs and local advisers. It is true that the second conference, held this time at Torquay, was called 'The Implications for the Secondary Schools', but here again the main trend of contributions was to justify the project by pointing out the rather mediocre performance of language teaching and indeed the declining popularity of language compared with other subjects. This was accompanied by a panegyric of what was happening at primary level. Miss N. R. Mulcahy, HMI, for example, said boldly and unequivocally 'the primary schools are succeeding' to which she added emphatically: 'The vast majority of the children love learning French ... their enjoyment is manifest.' (Schools Council 1966, 33–37.) The conference then asked the secondary teachers what they proposed doing when these eleven-year-old linguists arrived on their doorstep. With the questions couched in such a way the answers were perforce somewhat fanciful. Some felt that course work would have to be abandoned and that an amalgam of readers and high level conversation work would take its place. Others felt that at secondary level French would become a tool language thereby expanding the number of information resources available in, say, history or geography. In retrospect the conference was something of a fairy story, completely failing to foresee the traumatic situation which would emerge at transfer to secondary level when pupils who had been excellently taught were side by side with those who had not and, worse still, when a goodly percentage of children were already disillusioned with French at the age of eleven.

Evaluation

Evaluation of national projects had been urged at the 1962 Hamburg Conference and was duly requested by the Consultative Committee in early 1964. The National Foundation for Educational Research was commissioned to carry it out. There were four areas of investigation:

1. the effect of the introduction of French on the level of general achievement;
2. the assessment of the level of achievement in French with special reference to the low ability child;
3. the influence of additional factors on the learning of French;
4. organisational problems in the learning of French.

These were remoulded during the first months of the investigation into five specific questions:

1. Do other aspects of primary education suffer because of the introduction of French?
2. Are there levels of ability below which French should not be taught?
3. Is there any substantial gain in mastery achieved through learning from the age of eight?
4. What methods, attitudes and incentives are most effective in promoting the learning of French?
5. What organisational and teaching problems are posed by the introduction of the subject at primary level?

The investigation was limited to the pupils of 121 primary schools from the thirteen pilot areas and these fed into a largish number of secondary schools (60–80) where the investigation continued. Three year-streams of pupils were concerned. These were the First Cohort (aged 8+ by September 1964 with wider age range in small rural schools); the Second Cohort (aged 8+ by September 1965); and the Third Cohort (aged 8+ September 1968).

In all about 17,000 pupils were involved (5,700, 5,500 and 6,000). Basically the First and Third Cohorts became a kind of control group, the first in particular being used for a certain amount of pre-testing. Only the Second Cohort was subjected to the full enquiry. In this sense one of the limiting factors of the evaluation was the fact that in the final secondary year this vital Second Cohort had dwindled from its orginal number of 5,500 to 1,300 of whom 600 were at grammar school, 360 at comprehensive and the rest at secondary modern schools.

As this was the first known enquiry of its kind, all instruments for evaluation had to be devised and pre-tested. There is an excellent account of these in the final National Foundation for Educational Research Report, *Primary French in the Balance* (Burstall 1974). They were concerned with three aspects: pupils' attitudes to learning; primary teachers' attitudes and pupils' achievements. The actual instruments used in each area were:

1. *Pupils' attitudes.* Three versions to be administered at the end of the second, fifth and eighth year of learning French. These contained questions in English requiring a YES/NO answer and a few open ended ones. Example of the former: 'I'm afraid to speak French in class'; of the latter: 'What do you like most about learning French?' Very rigorous steps were taken to ensure that the questions were right, complementary and suitably couched.

2. *Teachers' attitudes.* One version applied once only after five years of the project, having the same format as that above except that the answers were on a five-point scale: strongly agree/agree/no opinion/disagree/strongly disagree in response to such statements as: 'Teaching French to less able children is a criminal waste of time'.

3. *Pupils' achievement.* Four versions for the end of the first, second, fifth and eighth year of learning French.

(a) LCA listening comprehension after one year;
(b) Battery 1 to test speaking, listening and writing after two years;
(c) Battery 2 as above, plus reading, after five years;
(d) Battery 3 as above after eight years.

The instruments here devised are something of a milestone in language testing since they aimed at isolating the various skills. Their main features were the use of taped material, visuals and objective testing. They led the way to the style of examining which characterised the so-called 'Nuffield O-level French' first set in 1972 and administered by the Oxford Local Examinations Board; though the Joint Matriculation Board had used some similar methods since 1967. The tests (and attitudes soundings) were also administered at appropriate times to five Control Groups (CG 1–5). For example, the Second Cohort, when it reached the second year of secondary school, was compared with CG1 and CG2 who were both in the same year but had done at least two years less French. There was a further comparison with CG3, who were fourth year grammar school pupils who had done an equivalent amount of French to the pupils in the Second Cohort. The results were not encouraging: for example, CG2 could read and write better and, although in listening and speaking Cohort number 2 by and large always had the edge, yet CG3 pupils were better all round than the grammar school pupils of the Second Cohort. When it came to analysing the results of Battery 3 tests given to the Second Cohort, CG4 and CG5, all of whom were fifth year secondary pupils, there was still no cause for rejoicing.

Table 5.1 compares the average achievement of Cohort 2 with Control Groups 4 and 5, indicating against each skill which group performed better on the Battery 3 test.

Table 5.1 Table of superiority.

	Cohort 2 compared control group 4	*Cohort 2 compared with group 5*
Listening comprehension	Cohort 2 performed better	Cohort 2 performed better
Reading comprehension	Control group 4 performed better	Cohort 2 performed better
Speaking	Both groups equal	Both groups equal
Writing	Control group 4 performed better	Both groups equal

On the basis of this kind of evidence the NFER answered its original five questions somewhat negatively. As far as the rest of the curriculum was concerned, French had caused no harm but neither had it helped. Indeed, at secondary level it had failed to foster interest in the minority languages and this could be construed as a harmful result. The very style of teaching, where the medium is the message, meant that the disadvantaged became even more so. For many children French was a profitless experience. The answer to the question as to whether the project meant an ultimate gain in mastery was 'unequivocally in the negative'. On the questions of method, attitude and incentive there was a feeling that these three were linked, that different levels of ability needed different approaches and that in the final analysis nothing succeeded like success. On the organisational side, the report emphasised the difficulties at primary level which were caused by specialist time-tabling, and at secondary level the impossibility of coping in the same class with pupils of differing ability and varying French experience. The report concluded that a further extension of primary French was not advisable.

The report was a nationwide bombshell. Newspaper headlines made full use of the phrase 'profitless experience'. HMIs were strangely quiet, LEA. language advisers not so. Heads reacted according to the extent to which their own experience tied in with the report's findings. The main vocal opposition came indeed from the advisers, or from certain advisers who pointed out that there was still great enthusiasm for French in many of their primary schools and that, where effective secondary liaison existed, beneficial results were continued to that level. By implication they were arguing that ideal conditions had not existed at that level in the pilot areas. It was pointed out that the 123 primary schools fed into some 60 secondary schools and this gave little prospect of correlation. They refused to accept the idea that five years of French is as good as eight years and, given good teaching and good conditions right along the line, the system must work. To put it bluntly, there was a fairly general refusal to accept the NFER verdict.

Another factor has changed the original picture. This was school re-organisation. Consequent upon the Plowden Report many LEAs had decided to restructure their primary education either on an 8–12 or a 9–13 age basis. The implications for a secondary language department became serious. A three and a half year course from scratch to O-level is unthinkable and very soon this fact alone has led to an intensification of the demand for the new middle schools (ex-primaries) to 'do' French, and ironically enough the demand is in many cases being made from the secondary schools. An example of this process is East Sussex where in 1975 93 per cent of the primary schools had French and where quite recently the education committee passed a resolution in which they said they would like as many primary schools as possible to include it on the timetable. Authorities which have never taken an effective part in the scheme are moving in certain areas on the same lines, and Surrey has similar figures to those of East Sussex. These departures and trends are being currently investigated by a committee under the leadership of P. H. Hoy, a former HMI, together with certain language advisers (Hoy 1977).

In 1973 the Schools Council made a grant of a further £21,500 to finance a two year dissemination project. It was undertaken by the Language Materials Development Unit at York University. The principal area of activity was to

disseminate information on the materials and to publicise existing expertise in the handling of them. Courses and conferences were organised, mainly at York, though the team placed themselves at the disposal of LEAs for their own conferences. Lists of teachers with expertise were also drawn up with the help of participating LEAs but in the event they were not widely used. Additionally the team continued work with the publishers in the adaptation of the materials for overseas use and most valuably maintained liaison with the Examining Boards in the matter of constructing alternative O-level syllabuses.

Conclusions

To summarise adequately ten years of such nationwide linguistic effort would call for a volume rather than a paragraph. No one can dispute that because of poor conditions and/or inferior teaching no benefit accrued to a fair number of pupils, but on the other hand there have been many, many instances of continuous and brilliant teaching which proved the job could be done effectively. That this was so had never seriously been in doubt. The issue was rather what would be the effects in the final stages of secondary education, and it was here that some of the major consequences of the pilot scheme are to be found. Some of these may be summarised as follows:

1. Pupils arrived from the primary stage with attitudes to French and France already formed. The better ones had very high expectations precisely because they had been well taught. They constituted a challenge which was not always met.
2. Despite certain deficiencies in primary French outside the pilot scheme most secondary schools extended the study of the language to all abilities.
3. There was increased staff commitment because of this, which in turn made the early introduction of the minority languages difficult.
4. Although O-level figures were to stay constant and A-level figures were to fall, there was massive increase in CSE entries by 1975.
5. A fair degree of co-operation was made necessary between primary and secondary schools.
6. Most importantly, the years 1968–72 saw a great deal of educational ferment in the language departments of secondary schools as they looked at the new approaches and tried to find answers to the problems which had been evoked.

ROB WALKER

6 Nuffield Secondary Science[1]

Basic information

Sponsor Nuffield Foundation.

Grant £164,000.

Location Mary Ward House (London); from 1968 at the Centre for Science Education, Chelesa College of Science and Technology.

Period of development 1965 to 1970.

Designated pupils Originally '13–16 average and below average ability', but before the project began this was expanded to '13–16 boys and girls unlikely to take O-level science'. (In effect 70 per cent of the age group).

Organiser Mrs. Hilda Misselbrook, previously head of science and deputy head of Mayfield School in London.

Project team Sixteen people, most of them working part-time for the project while continuing their normal work as LEA advisers or college of education lecturers.

Trials 1966 January–March. Feasibility trial of two short sections of material in 16 schools.
1967–68 Development trials in 53 schools.
1968–69 Large scale trials in 212 schools.
1969–70 Large scale trials in 258 schools.
(Fresh texts were prepared for each trial).
By the end of the trial period the project has been tried in virtually every (pre-Redcliffe – Maud) local authority in England and Wales, as well as in N. Ireland and in service schools in Germany. In 1971 Longmans, the publishers, claimed that the project 'had been successfully tried with 10,000 pupils in over 250 schools.'

Materials In May 1971 Longmans/Penguin published eleven Handbooks for teachers on the basis of the trial material. These are listed in the bibliography.
In addition the project published 34 film loops, 8 film strips/slides and two boxes of illustrations. There are no course books for pupils, but a number of background booklets on particular topics have been published.

The nature of the materials The materials consist of a wide range of resources through which the project provides a number of alternative routes. In a pre-