Objectives
for foreign language
learning

Volume I: Scope

Modern languages

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Work in the field of **education and culture** is conducted under the aegis of the **Council for Cultural Co-operation** (CDCC), which brings together the forty-seven states which have acceded to the **European Cultural Convention**: the forty-one member states of the Council of Europe,* the Holy See, Belarus, Monaco, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The main purpose of its activities is to develop a type of education in Europe which meets the needs of present-day society, and to draw the peoples of Europe closer together by fostering their awareness of a sense of common European identity.

In the field of **modern language learning**, the CDCC aims to assist member states in taking effective measures which will enable all citizens to learn languages for the purposes of *mutual understanding, personal mobility and access to information in a multilingual and multicultural Europe*. Its objectives are to help implement reforms in progress and encourage innovation in language teaching and teacher training.

The CDCC pursues these aims by promoting language learning centred on the needs and motivations of learners and by preparing teachers and teacher trainers to play their role, taking into account, among other things, the rapid changes in our European society.

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Objectives
for foreign language
learning

by Jan A. van Ek

Volume I: Scope

French edition:
Objectifs de l'apprentissage des langues vivantes

Prefatory note

The present volume is a second reprint of a study on foreign language learning objectives which was first published in 1986 and first reprinted in 1993. It presents a self-contained treatment of one aspect of such objectives, i.e. their «scope», and may consequently be read as an independent publication. The second volume, also now on its second reprint, deals with «levels and types of objectives». This second volume will presuppose familiarity with the contents of the present volume.

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Introduction

The Threshold Level, originally published in 1975 for adult learners of English, and subsequently followed by versions for several other European languages and also for different target groups, has been, and still is, a major point of orientation of the activities of the Modern Language Projects of the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe. As the first concrete exemplification of the application of the principles of the Council's «Project No. 4», it has had a strong influence on developments in modern language teaching generally. It did not start the trend towards more behaviourally oriented language teaching but it strongly reinforced this by providing a basis for experimentation and course development that was not only more concrete but also more comprehensive and more consistent than what had previously been available. The model provided in it has come to be widely used as a basis for the specification of foreign language learning objectives and the content specifications are generally drawn upon as sources of inspiration, as checklists, as well as for direct borrowing.

It is gratifying to note that this has been possible in spite of the marks that the original Threshold Level still bears of a standardized objective in the long since abandoned design for a European unit/credit system. In fact, the role it has come to play since those early days of Project No. 4 is a much more significant one than could originally have been envisaged.

Its principal merit, in the author's view, is that it has sparked off so much original and creative thinking about the nature of communicative ability and implications of this for educational practice.

Very soon after its publication it became clear that though The Threshold Level might fairly represent the «hard core» of communicative ability, several other, no less essential, components of this ability still remained to be specified.

Consequently, in 1979 the Council of Europe Project Group set up a working-party to consider «an overall model for the specification of language learning objectives more complex than those set out in the threshold level documents». This resulted, in 1984, in the publication of a number of original studies and case studies dealing with a rich variety of aspects of communicative ability, together with «analytical summaries» by Holec, Coste and Porcher, and a «consolidated report» by Trim (1). The organisation of the various elements into an overall model for the specification of language learning objectives, however, was left to a later stage.

Volume I of the present study is an attempt to provide such a model together with a discussion of the nature and educational implications of each of its components.

To preclude any possible misunderstanding - *The Threshold Level* led to too many of them - we wish to state explicitly that the present study is not meant as a contribution to academic thinking about the subject. Instead, it is meant for those who are directly responsible for educational practice, as administrators, as curriculum designers, as designers of course materials, as teacher trainers or as teachers. One consequence of this is that we shall feel free to disregard certain subtleties of academic distinctions - however valid they may be - as long as they are not directly relevant to our practical purpose. It also means that we shall not hesitate to use terms that may have accumulated a heavy weight of academic tradition and

refinement in a non-academic everyday sense. This may be regrettable but we have no choice since practically all the words that may be used to refer to language or to language use have been appropriated by various schools and raised to the level of precise technical terms. Nor is our practice a reflection on the professional competence of our intended readers. We simply wish to communicate with a wide range of professionals whose competence does not necessarily include up-to-date knowledge of recent developments in all the branches of science and research that are relevant to our theme.

In Volume II of our study we shall be particularly concerned with problems and suggested solutions regarding the horizontal and vertical differentiation of language learning objectives, i.e. objectives for different target groups and objectives at different levels.

Administratively, the present study forms part of the output of «Project 12, Modern languages - learning and teaching modern languages for communication,» of the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Cooperation. In fact, it is one of the results of many years of intensive collaboration and genuine interaction with colleagues from several European countries brought together in the framework of successive modern language projects of the Council of Europe. That in these various projects it has been possible to consistently follow certain lines of development first set out as early as in 1971, is largely due to the great personal and professional gifts and skills of the person who, under various titles, has been the actual leader of the whole programme, John Trim. Our indebtedness to his dedication and support is such that it has to be expressed here even though no further individual acknowledgments can be made. The number of those who in some way or other, directly or indirectly, have contributed to our study is so large that we can only say to them, collectively, «Thank you all».

Finally, we wish to express our regrets that, owing to limitations of English pronominal reference, masculine pronouns will be used throughout this study to refer to nouns of common gender such as *learner, student* and *teacher*. In a study of this length the persistent use of available avoidance strategies would, in our view, simply become too awkward.

Chapter 1: Presentation

Two kinds of decisions are fundamental to the planning of learning-activities: decisions on *what* to learn and decisions on *how* to learn it. Without fairly clear views on both matters no learning-activities can be planned and no organised learning can take place.

This study is about *what* to learn and it will explore ways of finding answers to this with regard to foreign language learning (henceforward: FLL). As we shall see, the distinction between «what to learn» and «how to learn it» is not an absolute one: sometimes we can only meaning-fully describe «what to learn» in terms of actual learning-activities. Nevertheless, the focus - throughout the present study - will be on «what to learn». In other words, we shall deal with FLL objectives.

Objectives have long been a major preoccupation of those involved in the provision of language learning facilities. And this is hardly surprising because they play a determinant role in practically all aspects of the planning of these facilities. Without fairly clear views on objectives no responsible decisions can be made as to what learning-content to seek or to offer, as to what learning-activities to undertake, as to the learning-aids that may most effectively be utilized, as to the amount and quality of guidance/teaching required, as to the amount of time to be invested, as to the nature and roles of assessment procedures required, etc., etc. Of course, many other factors, often at least equally important, are to be taken into account in making these decisions, but invariably objectives will play a major role in each of them.

In fact, when in the early 'seventies a group of experts was set up by the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe to give new impetus to FLL in its member states, this group sought to be maximally effective through the provision of new objectives. The same policy was followed by the *Volkshochschul-Verband* of the Federal Republic of Germany in order to give their courses for adult learners a new «communicative» orientation. Similarly, when in the United Kingdom the results of foreign language teaching and learning in schools were proving to be unacceptable, a solution was sought in the introduction of new «Graded Objectives», with consequences that may be called highly encouraging. Similar developments have taken place - and are still taking place - in numerous other countries inside and outside the Council of Europe area.

Again, it should be emphasized that quite a lot more is involved in bringing about these changes than the provision of new objectives, but the fact remains that again and again this procedure has proved to be dramatically effective in bringing about quite comprehensive educational reforms.

The objectives developed in the Modern Languages Projects of the Council of Europe - *The Threshold Level* for English, *Un Niveau Seuil* for French, *Kontaktschwelle* for German, and comparable objectives for several other European languages - have exerted a strong influence on developments in FLL by providing a concrete basis for a «communicative» reorientation. They have served as extremely powerful catalysts for this much-needed reorientation, but the momentum of the change has been such that developments have progressed far beyond the introduction of «Threshold-like» objectives. As we shall see in this study, the communicative reorientation has brought about a profound and comprehensive reconsideration of FLL as an educational process, which in turn has led - or is leading - to the integration of FLL as a major component in overall educational programmes.

In an educational context, to quote John Trim, «we are not simply concerned with training certain kinds of skilled behaviour, but also [...] with the steady and purposive development of the learner as a communicator and as a learner, as well as with his personal and social development.» (2)

In other words, in planning the provision of FLL facilities we do not only seek to address the learners' cognitive powers but also their psychological, their emotional, their social condition. Thus the «communicative approach» of the 1970s has developed into the «holistic approach» of the 1980s. What is involved in this, particularly with regard to objectives, will be one of the main themes of the present study.

Next to the consideration of such «more comprehensive» objectives we shall pay attention to problems of distinguishing levels in objectives. FLL is an ongoing process, a continuum rather than a series of discrete steps. Yet, level-distinctions cannot be dispensed with in the planning of curricula, and they are equally essential in the structure of certification schemes. In fact, the willingness of educational authorities to consider the introduction of new objectives often - and rightly so - depends on the feasibility of distinguishing meaningful achievement levels.

It is not our aim in this study - and indeed the ambition would be foolhardy - to break new ground in the way we did with the publication of *The Threshold Level*. In the 1970s the Modern Languages Project Group of the Council of Europe could play a significant role in creating the tools needed for a thorough revision of the nature and content of FLL. These tools were made available to everyone interested enough to inspect them. Since then they have been adopted, adapted, refined and further elaborated in almost every member state of the Council for Cultural Cooperation as well as in other continents. The Project Group has provided - and is still providing - what guidance and coordination it could and can find the means for. By and large, however, the major developments are now taking place in numerous places all over the world, inspired - perhaps - by recent documents issued under the auspices of the Council of Europe, but, very often too, independently and autonomously. If there is a striking parallelism in these developments this is, no doubt, due to the fact that the language teaching profession has grown accustomed to taking note of what happens beyond regional and national boundaries. The potential benefits to be derived from this are now so widely recognised that individual efforts tend to be firmly linked to trends that are increasingly assuming global proportions. That the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Projects have contributed to this recognition is perhaps their principal achievement.

Meanwhile, even a modest survey reveals intensive activities in scores of different centres, each aiming to produce their own FLL objectives and guidelines for the achievement of these objectives. In some countries, it is true, these tasks are carried out centrally and their results are introduced for national implementation. In such cases the guidelines tend to be general enough to leave scope for a wide range of concretisations.

In several countries, however, a more decentralized policy is pursued. Each of the states of the Federal Republic of Germany, for instance, develops its own objectives, and its own guidelines for educational practice. In the United Kingdom several Local Education Authorities are individually carrying out similar tasks. When reading the multitude of documents resulting from all these efforts one cannot fail to be struck by the amount of duplication that they give evidence of. A large number of committees are all seriously wrestling with the same problems, they are all wondering how to interrelate situations, topics, functions, notions, language forms, how far to go in actually prescribing content, what to do about *Landeskunde* and about literature, what learning-activities to recommend, how to

differentiate achievement levels, etc., etc. Sceptics might easily characterize these efforts as futile attempts to re-invent the wheel over and over again. Yet, they would not only be unfair but totally wrong. There is no single ideal solution to problems of planning curricula, syllabuses, learning-activities. The «best» solution in each individual case will be partly determined by national, regional, local conditions. It will have to take into account prevailing social conditions, attitudes of learners, teachers and, if relevant, parents, it will have to take into account the prevailing educational system and the extent to which reforms are likely to be acceptable, it will have to consider such factors as the requirement, or absence of it, to select course materials from an «approved list», most importantly, perhaps, it will have to consider political attitudes and possibilities. It is only by regionally or locally constituted committees that these conditions can be fulfilled. Another argument against the reaction of our hypothetical sceptics is that the apparent duplication of effort ensures the active participation of many more people than would otherwise be involved, and, more importantly, that as a result of this the work is carried out much closer to the actual classroom than might be the case with national or - even more so - international committees. Of course, this in no way diminishes the need for guidance by so-called experts and particularly for the stimulation which - as has been abundantly demonstrated - may be provided by high-level international groups. Nor does it diminish the need for national and international experimentation and pilot-projects, whose results may benefit committees working in a narrower context and closer to «normal» practice.

There seems to be no good reason, then, - even if it would be feasible, which is illusory - to aim at a reduction of this duplication through national or international provisions. What is clearly needed at national and particularly at international level is the improvement of the provision of access to relevant know-how and information. Decentralized developments have, as we have argued, distinct advantages, but it is sad to note that in certain quarters highly valid ambitions are given up because no way is found toward their realization whereas elsewhere perfectly viable solutions are successfully being implemented.

The present study seeks to make a contribution in this context. It is based on a stock-taking of developments in the specification of FLL objectives since the appearance of *The Threshold Level* in 1975. We do not aim at giving a more or less complete survey of these developments. Not only would the viability of such an undertaking be highly doubtful, but its usefulness would be questionable. Instead, we shall deal systematically with the various aspects of the specification of FLL objectives that we think should be distinguished and we shall present those considerations, approaches, and solutions put forward by others that, in our view, are likely to be of most interest to those involved in this kind of work.

In other words, we shall try to present systematically those data which we feel to be most relevant to further developments. This procedure implies choices on our part. We shall try, however, to make the range of choices in each case wide enough to afford scope for the variety demanded by regional and local diversity. We shall also try to present it in such a way that it is potentially relevant to the widest variety of target groups. The majority of our references will almost inevitably be to documents and studies concerned with school education. This is simply because more resources are available to this branch of education than to any other, and consequently more work has been done on its behalf. Yet, our study should be generally applicable. In spite of enormous differences in learning-conditions, in needs and in aims, of such groups as school children and adolescents, adult learners, and migrants - the three overall groups traditionally distinguished in the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Projects - they all undergo, as foreign language learners, the experience of acquiring the ability to communicate in another language, they all undergo educational

experiences, and, as a result, they all undergo certain changes as persons. Our study will be more concerned with what they have in common than with what separates them. When we exemplify certain concepts and certain practices we shall draw upon documents from the whole range of education. Any reader should be able to select those elements that are particularly relevant to the specific target groups he is concerned with.

Volume I of our study, as we said in the Introduction, deals with the nature and educational implications of comprehensive FLL objectives. We start with a discussion of the relationship between general educational aims and subject-specific learning-objectives, thus situating the latter in the context we need for our subsequent treatment. Then we present an overall model for the description of comprehensive FLL objectives.

Finally, we discuss each of the components of the proposed model, providing - where this is possible - exemplificatory sample specifications and dealing with certain educational implications.

Chapter 2: Aims and objectives

The deliberate undertaking of a learning-effort is always motivated by an ulterior aim. Through the acquisition of certain skills, knowledge, insights, or whatever else the learning may be directed at, one hopes to derive greater satisfaction from life. This satisfaction may take the form of having more money to spend, of doing more interesting work, of achieving greater independence, of finding social acceptance, of making friends more easily, of deriving more pleasure out of one's leisure activities, or - less positively - of keeping out of trouble, of avoiding unemployment for a while, of conforming to custom, etc. The satisfaction often requires the obtaining of a certain diploma, in which case getting this qualification constitutes a more immediate aim.

In order to reach any of the aims referred to above, the large majority of learners have to, or wish to, avail themselves of learning-facilities provided by some authority, by the state, the church, by regional or local government, or by any other organisation that assumes educational responsibility. Those who provide these facilities - often at great expense - have their own aims in doing so. They may do it purely for their own benefit - as may be the case in certain staff courses - and/or for the benefit of society and/or the individual. It seems reasonable to assume that the aim is usually complex rather than simple and that, especially when the learning-facilities are provided by public bodies, serving the assumed interests of society and those of the individual constitutes the chief aim. This means that learning-facilities are provided in the perspective of what those providing them consider to be good for society and for the individual (and, probably, for themselves). By and large, then, educational aims are politically determined. The individual who wishes to pursue his or her own aims usually has no option but to do so at the cost of accepting the aims of those empowered to provide learning-facilities. And, in practice, this in itself rarely causes great hardship. Where problems often arise is not so much in the aims as in the learning-activities that may be imposed upon the learner and, not infrequently, in at least parts of the objectives that are set up in pursuance of the aims. Particularly, but by no means exclusively, in compulsory education learners may be required to carry out learning-activities of which they do not see the relevance to their own, or the institution's, aims, and similarly the set objectives may include elements of which the learners do not see the point.

In the above discussion we have made a distinction between aims and objectives without defining these terms. Broadly, we use the term aims for the ultimate reasons for which learning is undertaken or learning-facilities are offered. Objectives are descriptions of the condition of the learner which is supposed to be required in order to achieve the aims and which the learning-activities to be undertaken are designed to bring about. Aims may be - but are not always - overtly stated; objectives are always overtly stated, with huge variations in the degree of explicitness.

One factor which may cause these variations is the extent of the educational field for which objectives are meant. Objectives for school education set at national level are often formulated in very general terms allowing a variety of interpretations and concretisations. Those set at regional or local level, as well as those designed for religious or ethnic groups in the community, may then have a higher degree of specificity, while those developed for individual institutions or groups of cooperating institutions may be highly detailed.

Another factor may be the degree of centralization aimed at in a particular country. A national government may consider it necessary to exercise the fullest possible control over educational practice in schools, to the point of prescribing content and structure of each individual lesson. In such a case examinations, too, will be strictly state-controlled and there will be a tendency to specify educational objectives in the greatest possible detail.

A third factor influencing the degree of explicitness of an objective is the target population, the group of learners for which it is meant. If the target population is the overall group of school children in general education, objectives will often be formulated in a more general and open-ended way than in cases where, for instance, a group of adults or adolescents is prepared for a professional qualification which is specific enough to allow the required condition of the learner to be described in great detail.

A fourth factor is the status of a certificate, if any, awarded on successful completion of a course. If such a certificate is meant to guarantee a condition of the learner which carries certain professional, social or educational rights or advantages highly explicit objectives may be deemed to be necessary in order to ensure the validity of the assessment procedures which may lead to the award of such a certificate.

Facilities for foreign language learning may be offered for a variety of purposes in a variety of settings. At one end of the scale we find FLL as an element in general education, at the other end FLL for a specific purpose. A typical example of the first situation is primary/secondary school education, an example of the second a foreign language course for airline pilots. Between the two extremes we find, for instance, general foreign language courses for adults with the ability to survive as temporary visitors in a foreign-language country as their main object.

In all these cases the ability to use words and structures of the foreign language with a certain measure of correctness is, at least, a major part of the learning-objective. At the same time, however, we may find several more components in current objectives. The range tends to be widest in objectives for general education, especially for children and adolescents, but also for adults, and particularly for migrants learning the language of their host country. Some of these components may seem to be more concerned with general educational aims than with subject-specific ones, but, as we shall see, the distinction between these two types is a gradual rather than an absolute one. The range of components of FLL objectives may be considerably narrower in language learning for special purposes but here, too, a wider context is rarely lacking, even if it is implied rather than made explicit.

Since school education is explicitly concerned with a general educational effort the objectives for the teaching and learning of individual subjects are more likely to cover a wide range of components than in almost any other branch of education. This is another reason why we shall pay relatively much attention to them in our present study.

In fact, the presence of a particular subject in a school curriculum is justifiable only with reference to the general educational aims. Its inclusion must be based on the assumption that it plays an essential role in enabling the learners to reach these general educational aims.

This has the important consequence that in evaluating the objective formulated for a particular school subject the principal question is not to what extent the learner's condition described by it reflects the mastery of the subject, but it is to what extent this condition contributes to the achievement of the general educational aims.

The evaluation of objectives for school subjects is thus a very different matter from the evaluation of objectives for, say, staff courses, where the purely instrumental command of a foreign language for highly specific purposes may well be the one and only component.

Again, these were the two extremes. Objectives for courses provided for adult learners for more or less general purposes will be situated somewhere between these extremes, the distance from either pole depending on the views of the institution that provides the learning-facilities on its role. The objectives of an institution such as the *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*, which considers its role primarily to be an educational one, are much more similar - and therefore to be evaluated in similar ways - to those of secondary schools than, for instance, those of certain television courses which mainly aim at providing the learners with a particular body of knowledge.

When we have referred to «objectives» in the present chapter, we were concerned with objectives set by those providing learning-facilities rather than with whatever objectives learners might wish to set themselves. In fact, this faithfully reflects the current situation, where the planning of learning-activities, including the formulation of objectives, is exclusively, or at least largely, carried out by the providers of learning-facilities rather than by the intended beneficiaries. By and large, the present situation demands that learners pursue their own learning-aims through accepting the educational aims of those providing the learning-facilities and through working towards the objectives set for them. That this situation may lead to serious conflicts is a well-known fact. The dramatic drop-out rate from modern languages courses in secondary schools in the U.K., which caused so much concern in the 1970s, is an example of this. The negative attitudes towards the literature components of modern language syllabuses in the Netherlands constitute another. That there are alternatives to the prevalent situation will be argued later on in this study. We shall even conclude that the overall educational aims of those providing learning-facilities may be served better if the learners themselves are given a fair amount of scope in formulating their own objectives. Yet, it would be unrealistic to disregard the fact that at present objectives are set for learners rather than by them, and the objectives we shall deal with in this study are largely of that nature.

Chapter 3: General Educational Aims

If, as we argued in the preceding chapter, objectives - and particularly, though by no means exclusively, objectives in school education - are to be evaluated in the perspective of general educational aims, these aims must be the starting-point of our further discussion.

Educational aims are laid down in national laws as well as in all kinds of national and international statutes, resolutions and agreements. A typical example is to be found in Section 1 of the Swedish Education Act:

> The purpose of the instruction which society provides for children and young persons is to equip the pupils with knowledge, to develop their skills and in co-operation with their homes to promote their development into happy individuals and into competent and responsible members of the community. (3)

Such a formulation is clearly the product of a certain political view, reflecting the state of contemporary society. In spite of their (often) legal status, educational aims are not fixed for once and for all. As it is formulated in a publication of the Netherlands Foundation for Curriculum Development:

> Under the influence of developments in society, education is subject to continuous change. Thus, in the past few decades new views have been developed again and again on the aims and roles of education. From the protection of the weakest in society against exploitation, to improved and more appropriate training of required workers, the 'sixties and 'seventies saw the right to individual development and the need to prepare everyone for functioning adequately in society more strongly emphasized. All the time, then, the emancipatory role of education is being (re)considered. This applies to the emancipation of individuals as well as to that of groups, the emphasis variously being laid on one or the other aspect as time went on. (4)

In the Netherlands these varying emphases are reflected particularly in ministerial directives for successive educational reform projects. The weight and influence of these directives is such that their significance as statements of educational aims may well outweigh that of the actual clauses of an Education Act.

Current views on educational aims, then, are not only to be distilled from Education Acts or similar legal documents but also from governmental directives as well as from less official sources. On the whole, in those states which are often referred to as «western democracies» they show a high degree of correspondence, although emphases may differ. Both correspondences and different emphases are brought to light by a comparison of the above statements from Sweden and the Netherlands, respectively, with similar statements from a few other states:

Belgium (Ministère de l'Education et de la Culture française):

- the enrichment of the learner's personality
- the development of the learner's intelligence and of his social sense (5)

Norway (National Report «Development of Norwegian Education 1981-84»):

- transmittance of knowledge and culture
- equal opportunities in education and work

- emphasis on individual development
- acquisition of values
- increasing focus on the needs of groups
- further democratisation of education (6)

<u>Hessen</u> (Federal Republic of Germany, Hessischer Kultusminister):

- promoting the development of the learner's personality
- enabling the learner to carry political responsibility and to contribute to the shaping of society
- contributing to the learner's professional qualification (7)

In each of these statements two aspects are explicitly stated and distinguished:

a. the development of the learner as an individual
b. the development of the learner as a social being.

The two aspects are interrelated in the following statement made by the author on a previous occasion on behalf of the Modern Languages Projects of the Council of Europe:

Our educational aim is to give our pupils the fullest possible scope for fulfilling their potential as unique individuals in a society which is, ultimately, of their own making. (8)

The achievement of this general aim is essential to the survival of democratic societies, which depend for their functioning on the willingness and ability of each of their members to undertake responsibility for this functioning. This means that learners should develop the ability to move, with a certain degree of freedom, in society, to find or create their own place in it, and in order to do this they must have insight into the way it works, into its background, into its highly complex structure. They must also have insight into the interaction that constantly takes place among members of a society, which means that they must have self-awareness, awareness of others, and attitudes, knowledge and abilities required for interacting fruitfully.

General education, and particularly school education, aims to achieve all this. It does so by offering a variety of learning-activities, which, collectively, are supposed to bring about the learner's condition aimed at. These learning-activities are traditionally systematized under the headings of school subjects, each representing a specific area of knowledge and skill. This compartmentalisation is efficient in that it ensures the internalisation of a set of distinct reference structures to which new information may be systematically associated. At the same time, however, it easily leads to the autonomization of each discipline, to the pursuance of learning-objectives which are highly specific for that discipline and to the offering of only those learning-activities which will most economically contribute to achieving these specific objectives. The negative consequences - and they may be generally observed - were formulated thus in the Dutch Middle School Project:

- over accentuation of the acquisition of knowledge, with a view to further studies and professional activities
- isolation of the subject, hindrance to coordination and integration
- neglect of social relevance
- dissociation from «real life», high degree of abstraction
- lack of integration into the general cognitive framework, resulting in unavailability of relevant knowledge at critical moments
- promotion of undesirable autonomy of subject-teachers. (9)

Of course, educators have been aware of these consequences for a very long time. Yet, at the time when education was principally a matter of the transmission of knowledge and cultural values to a new generation it did not seem to matter all that much. Those who had acquired the knowledge and values concerned were supposed to be able to step into the roles they were destined for in a society where social mobility was the exception rather than the rule. The social skills and the attitudes needed for taking up the proper roles were acquired primarily from the learner's social environment.

Nowadays, with a more flexible and a more rapidly changing social structure and with a much stronger emphasis on the emancipatory role of education, it has become imperative to reduce the consequences of compartmentalization in discrete school-subjects as much as possible. The personal and social skills and attitudes required by the educational aims formulated above do not follow automatically from the acquisition of the specific knowledge and skills provided by each discipline separately, even if games and social sciences are duly represented in the time-table.

We have now reached the situation that we referred to before, in which the presence of subjects in a curriculum can only be justified by the ways in which the learning-activities they provide contribute to the achievement of the general educational aims. Their traditional academic status cannot justify their presence any more, now that the range of our knowledge and interests has expanded so much that numerous «new» subjects are competing for inclusion in the school curriculum. The range of potentially highly useful subjects has become so great that learners - and schools - have to make choices. The obvious criterion for such a choice is the estimated relevance of a subject to the learner's and/or the institution's ulterior educational aims. This does not in any way diminish the importance of subject-specific knowledge and skills. Once a particular subject has been chosen for inclusion in a curriculum it is, of course, essential that the learners should be enabled to master it to the extent where it becomes fully functional in the context of the general educational aim of the institution concerned.

When we speak of the general educational aim of an institution, as we did in the preceding sentence, we are moving one step closer to actual learning-objectives. The statements concerning general educational aims which we quoted earlier in this chapter present the overall aims of education as provided, controlled or supervised by national or regional authorities. In their concern for the optimal development of the learner as an individual and as a member of society, they apply to all types and levels of educational institutions. To enable learners of greatly varying capacities and ambitions to achieve these aims, systems of school types have been developed every-where, each type with its more specific aims and directed at particular levels. By enabling each individual learner to use those learning-facilities which correspond most directly to his or her individual capacities and ambitions, the system of school types is designed to give each of them the optimal opportunity to reach the general educational aims. The educational aim of each school type, and - as may be the case - of each institution belonging to this type, will be formulated in a statement describing the specific condition of the learners which that school type - or that institution - tries to bring about in fulfilment of the overall (general) educational aims. We may refer to this kind of aims as institution-related general educational aims.

A clear example of these two levels of general educational aims is to be found in the curriculum descriptions of the State of Baden-Württemberg in the Federal Republic of Germany. The general educational aim for the whole school system is expressed in the following statement (our translation):

The task of the school is determined by the regulations laid down in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany and in the Charter of the State of Baden-Württemberg, and particularly by those stipulating that, irrespective of origin or socio-economic background, every young person has a right to education and training suited to his or her capacities and that he/she should be prepared for the assumption of responsibility, rights and duties in the state and in society as well as in his or her own environment. (10)

After primary education - from the 5th school year onward - this general educational aim may, in principle, be achieved in three different school types called *Hauptschule, Realschule* and *Gymnasium*, respectively. The general educational aims of each school type are formulated thus:

Hauptschule: It is the aim of the Hauptschule to provide, in its own specific way, aids for personal development and to prepare the learners for family life and for life in society, for profession and leisure time [...] (11)

Realschule: The Realschule provides further general education as a basis for vocational training or higher education courses in the form of profounder basic knowledge, of practical skills, as well as of the ability to apply theoretical insights to real-life problems [...] (12)

Gymnasium: The Gymnasium provides a comprehensive and profound general education. Its task is especially to provide learners who have the appropriate capacities and ambitions with general study skills [...] (13)

For each of the three school types, distinguished by the above aims, it is further stipulated that

«Of equal importance with the acquisition of knowledge and skills are character-building, the development of emotional and creative capacities, as well as the development of social, ethical and religious values and attitudes…In this way, all educational and training-activities are aimed at the overall personality of the learner.» (14)

The educational aims of the State of Baden-Württemberg are typical of those of most countries we have examined. Also, the three secondary school types are fairly representative of what we find in several other countries.

However, educational aims are by no means always formulated as clearly and explicitly as in the case of Baden-Württemberg, and one reason why we quoted them is the strong emphasis on a holistic approach: «All educational and training-activities are aimed at the overall personality of the learner».

The present author formulated this as follows on an earlier occasion:

Why do we do whatever we do with our pupils, inside or outside the classroom? Surely the only answer to this can be that we do this in order to help the learners to achieve the aim or aims of education. Sometimes it may be hard not to lose sight of this, but actually all we do, all our planning, all our classroom activities, and a lot of learner-involving activities outside the classroom, are justifiable only in the perspective of reaching certain educational aims. (15)

In the next chapter we shall examine the relationship between general educational aims and FLL, particularly the significance of the contributions that FLL, may make towards reaching these aims and the consequences of this for the nature and content of FLL programmes.

Chapter 4: Foreign language learning: the educational context

As a first step towards examining the specific roles of FLL in achieving general educational aims we shall have to gain some insight into what is involved in these aims. The formulations discussed so far have not lacked in clarity and they have indicated the broad aspects of the educational effort. Yet, in order to assess the value of the contributions that particular learning-subjects may make towards the achievement of these aims we need a more detailed analysis of their implications.

Such an analysis, drawn up by John Trim, is to be found in the *Report of a Working Party on 16+ criteria for modern languages* prepared on behalf of the National Congress on Languages in Education (16). We shall have occasion to refer to this analysis repeatedly in the present study, indicating it as the «NCLE specification».

The analysis starts with a formulation of the general educational aim, which, again, contains the broad aspects we have found in most of the other formulations examined so far:

The overall aim of the education of the individual is to promote his cognitive and affective development and to enable him to play a full part in the life of the community at work and at play as well as in the exercising of the rights and duties of citizenship.

This general aim is subsequently analysed as follows:

Cognitive (intellectual) development includes:
- learning both by enquiry processes and from exposition
- storing and recognising factual knowledge (including recognising factual errors) and recalling factual knowledge in relevant situations
- relating facts together to establish generalisations, hypotheses and theories
- using data in illustrating or testing a statement, argument, assumption, hypothesis or conclusion
- applying facts, principles, knowledge and skills in new situations
- understanding and using the ways of thinking and modes of enquiry underlying a subject and the content to be learned
- identifying and distinguishing fact, opinion, supporting or contradicting evidence, bias, assumption, proof, propaganda, fallacy
- clarifying issues and exercising judgment on the basis of clear criteria
- developing adequate means of expression for intellectual attitudes and operations

Affective (emotional and moral) development includes:
- understanding and gaining control over one's own feelings and their expression
- understanding and accepting the feelings of other people; developing empathy
- accepting people with different social and ethnic backgrounds, avoiding rigidity and stereotyping
- developing positive attitudes towards experience

- developing self-awareness, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-direction
- developing a zest for living and the full attainment of human potential
- understanding and accepting the disciplines involved in acting as an effective member of a social group (the co-operative principle)
- managing disagreement and conflict without violence, hostility and hatred
- developing a stable system of ethical values
- making value judgements on the basis of ethical criteria and being willing and able to act upon them
- developing adequate means of expressing emotional and moral attitudes

It is pointed out in the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* (17) that

> «Social requirements and subject-specific learning-objectives are related in the following way: Subject-specific learning-objectives cannot be rigorously derived from the social requirements; however, these requirements constitute a basis for the evaluation of subject-specific learning-objectives.».

The same relationship exists between general educational aims (social requirements) and the choice of particular subjects for inclusion in a school curriculum. The analysis of the general aim quoted above does not in itself impose the need for FLL. However, it does provide a basis for the assessment of the specific value that FLL may have for achieving the general aims.

The items under «cognitive development» emphasize the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skills as well as the development of the capacity for intellectual interaction. Under «affective development» the emphasis lies on the development of the learner's personality, the development of a positive attitude to life, the preparation for leading the fullest life possible, and the development of the capacity for social interaction.

It is against the background of present day life and present day living-conditions that these items are to be interpreted and that they become significant with regard to FLL. In spite of more or less frequently occurring setbacks, ours is an age of increasing internationalisation, of an expanding view of «community». At home our television screens offer us surveys of events all over the world every day and provide us with entertainment, instruction, ideas, emanating from a large variety of countries and even from other continents. In working-life we are inevitably confronted with international economy, commerce, industry. In the holiday periods massive migrations all over the world bring people from different national backgrounds into contact with one another. As the world is contracting under the influence of modern means of communication and of steadily improving facilities for travel, our view of «community» is becoming a complex one. Next to the community of those we regularly associate with in our daily lives, and next to the recognition of our «national» community, we are developing a sense of belonging to, and functioning in, ever larger communities. What happens in countries round about us is very much our concern and also events in the most distant parts of the world may directly and deeply influence our lives, even to the extent that we ourselves may wish to join in controlling those events.

Against this background the ability to interact - intellectually and socially - with speakers of other languages is a precondition of «the full attainment of human potential», whether this is interpreted in an individualistic or in a community sense. It is therefore an essential task of education to enable learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for this.

Even with regard to native speakers of a language of international currency it is illusory to assume that this knowledge and these skills and attitudes can be acquired through the medium of the native language alone. It is only through the experience of approaching another culture, with different traditions, different values, different modes of thinking, different social institutions, through its own language that one may succeed in sufficiently detaching oneself from one's own habitual views of oneself and of the world to develop the empathy that is required for fruitful interaction with representatives of another culture. In this perspective the experience of learning at least one foreign language is an indispensable component of learning how to live as fully and as responsibly as possible in our modern world, no matter in what social class and in what capacity.

In several countries it is even felt that this experience should not be confined to one single foreign language. In the Netherlands, to give one example, proposals are now being considered for an orientation phase at the beginning of secondary education, in which all learners are to be confronted with three foreign languages - English, French and German -, not in order to become proficient in them but at least to remove the strangeness. More extreme but not less realistic examples are found, for instance, in the United Kingdom, where the confrontation with an «exotic» language - usually one of an ethnic minority - appeared to have a high educational value.

The above line of reasoning, which has led us to conclude that the provision of facilities for FLL is essential to the realisation of general educational aims, applies not only to school education but equally to adult education. A large proportion of our adult population has been overtaken by the ongoing acceleration of economical, technological and social developments, and the education provided in their adolescence is no longer sufficient for present day conditions. The provision of FLL facilities for this section of our population is, therefore, no less essential than it is for adolescents.

If, then, FLL is an essential component of programmes for general education, what more specific contributions can it make to the learners' development? Again, we quote the NCLE specification:

In addition to promoting in its daily practice the general educational aims outlined above, modern language study has the following more specific aims:

- to extend the learner's horizon of communication beyond that of his own linguistic community
- to enable him to communicate in face-to-face situations with speakers of another language
- to enable him to search for, discover and understand information relevant to his needs and interests through the medium of a foreign language
- to enable him to realise the validity of other ways of organising, categorising and expressing experience, and of other ways of managing personal interactions
- to raise his general level of language awareness i.e. the characteristic properties and make-up of his own language in relation to those of another language, and of the uses to which language is put in everyday life
- to develop his confidence, through a limited but successful experience of learning and using a foreign language, in his ability to meet the challenges imposed by living in a foreign environment

- to enable him to mediate between monolingual members of the two language communities concerned
- to enable him imaginatively to extend the repertory of roles he can construct and play within contexts in which the foreign language can be used, such that he:
  - a. engages purposively and appropriately in those contexts
  - b. reflects on the process of language and of the social interaction involved
  - c. develops his understanding of the complexities of personal interaction in social contexts
- to enable him to develop the study skills necessary to the effective, self-directed study of other languages (or the same language to a higher level or for specific purposes) in later life
- to give him (using language as a paradigm) insight into and experience of working within human institutions with their combination of partial systematicity and historically determined arbitrariness.

The above list, together with the breakdown of the general educational aims quoted earlier, is so rich that at first sight it may look impossibly unrealistic that all this should be expected of FLL. However, it should be recognised that, in some form or another, each of the items listed may be found in national and regional curriculum descriptions and syllabuses. In some of these descriptions certain items are given more prominence than others and several items are often implied rather than mentioned explicitly. Yet, the immense scope of FLL is reflected in all of them. This scope is admirably characterized in a recent report on a Council of Europe workshop for teacher trainers:

> «Dans le contexte scolaire on ne peut considérer l'enseignement de la langue étrangère comme un fait isolé, car la langue étrangère est non seulement un moyen de communication mais aussi un instrument de formation complète de la personne en tant qu'élève et en tant qu'individu, c'est-à-dire que la langue vivante est une matière en elle-même mais c'est également un outil d'apprentissage. En effet, les langues étant indispensables à l'acquisition des autres savoirs et les réalisations langagières mobilisant pratiquement la totalité des capacités intellectuelles, elles sont, en tant que matières scolaires, particulièrement privilégiées pour développer et parfaire ces capacités. » (18)

In our next chapter we shall examine ways in which the aims listed are reflected in directives or guidelines for educational practice.

Chapter 5: General education through foreign language learning

Most national or regional/local authorities, as well as other bodies responsible for the provision of learning-facilities, issue directives or guidelines for the planning of learning-activities designed to lead to the achievement of educational aims, both general and subject-specific. However, in the large majority of the documents available to the present author the more concrete guidance is virtually confined to the provision of subject-specific lists of recommended or prescribed learning-content, in terms of knowledge and skills, with, in several cases, considerably more space devoted to the specification of knowledge than to that of skills. These lists are often supplemented by samples of examination-tests to illustrate the operations the learners are ultimately expected to be able to perform.

This apparent lack of concern with the more general aims of education may be partly due to the traditional assumption that if only the learners accumulated enough knowledge and skills, in addition to increasing their experience of life in the normal course of «growing up», their personality would be sufficiently developed for them to function adequately as individuals and as members of their society. As our awareness of the potential roles of education increases, however, it must rather be attributed to the difficulty of providing concrete guidance beyond prescribing or suggesting the actual learning-content. It is not accidental that earlier attempts to provide concrete directives for FLL were mainly concerned with listing the words and structures that the learners were supposed to become familiar with. At that time frequency lists and their didacticized derivatives constituted the available sources. Since the appearance of lists itemizing categories of language use, such elements as «functions», «topics», etc. have found their way into the directives as well. Now, an increasing concern with further aims of FLL and with the more general educational aims is gradually manifesting itself in the kind of documents we are here concerned with. It appears to be increasingly possible to extend the guidance provided to more and more aspects of learning-experience. This is due to developments in educational science and in various branches of language study, but also - and perhaps mainly - to a vast amount of practical experimentation and development work undertaken practically all over the world in order to find solutions in the field of education for a large variety of problems characteristic of life in our modern society. It is one of the aims of the present study to offer relevant examples of ways in which the results of these activities are reflected in various recent documents.

Both the recognition of the wider educational context of subject-specific learning and teaching, and some of the problems of getting this implemented in actual practice are illustrated in the following extract from the description of the *Grundbaustein Englisch* (GBS), a basic learning-unit of the *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*:

GBS has been developed by an adult education institute especially for the education of adults. Adult education, if taken seriously, demands the incorporation of general educational aims also in foreign language teaching. These aims, it is true, are not specific for GBS, but in the development of GBS it has been possible to take them into account more fully than, a few years ago, in the development of the VHS-Certificates, so that their incorporation in foreign language teaching for adults has been deliberately effected in GBS.

Some of the general aims are the following. The learner should

- be ready, or be brought to a state of readiness, for cooperative social behaviour. This means participation in problem-solving and decision-making whilst showing tolerance also for minority views
- be ready, or be brought to a state of readiness, for involvement, for taking a stand, for discussion. This often means the reduction of anxiety and inhibition in general (not only foreign language specific) communication. It also requires the development of a critical attitude towards whatever is offered to them ready-made for their acceptance.

In recent years the realisation of this kind of aim has been increasingly sought and discussed. It should be admitted that many teachers, including full-time pedagogical staff, have tended to regard these general aims as something that would not readily fit into the overall subject-area of «languages». The learners, as well, hardly expected - and in practice did not always accept - an outspoken involvement in this direction. There was considerable apprehension that if the general aims of adult education were taken seriously language learning itself would come to be regarded as of secondary importance and no longer as something that ought to produce concrete results at the end of a learning-process.

We feel that the reconciliation of the aims of language learning and of those of responsibly undertaken adult education is not a matter of compromise but that they can mutually reinforce each other if this is persistently aimed at right from the start, in the development of learning-objectives, in teacher training, in the planning of learning-activities, in the design of learning-materials, etc. In any case this means that the general educational objectives are to be regarded as complementary rather than additional to subject-specific objectives. (19)

If the general educational framework of subject-specific teaching is increasingly felt to be of essential importance in an institution for adult education such as the *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*, this is bound to be even more strongly felt in school education.

The directives for the teaching of English in secondary schools issued in 1982 by the *Senator for Education* of the Free City of Bremen (20) are particularly explicit in this respect. Whereas in the guidelines of the *Volkshochschul-Verband* the relationship between general educational aims and subject-specific aims is indicated as a complementary one, the two types of aims are here represented as fully integrated. Since these directives do not confine themselves to an abstract statement of the need for integration of the two types of aims but also specify the way in which this is to be realised, we shall quote the relevant chapter here in full (our translation):

Comprehensive aims

Beyond its subject-specific aims foreign language teaching serves the general educational aims of the school:

The promotion of autonomy[1], the development of critical powers[2], and of the ability to communicate. In foreign language teaching, too, the learners' ability

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[1]The term «autonomy» is not actually used in the original, which speaks of «Erziehung zur Selbständigkeit». In our view it corresponds most closely to the German original, not in the sense of «being a law unto oneself» but in that of «being a free person, willing and able to make his own decisions and to take responsibility for them». In chapter 13 of this volume we shall deal more fully with the concept of autonomy.

should be promoted to form their own opinions, to make their own decisions, to cope with manipulative behaviour, while being aware of their individual limitations and recognizing the need for cooperation and meaningful achievement.

These aims are to be achieved through:

> a) selection of learning-content
> b) methodological and didactic procedures
> c) the corresponding learning-activities, and
> d) instrumental skills

a) <u>Learning-content</u>

In the selection of learning-content the following criteria are to be taken into account: learners' experiences, present and future communicative goals, and important socio-cultural information (*Landeskunde*).

Themes, communication situations and socio-cultural information should be selected on the basis of their relevance to the learners' own experiences, adding to their substance and scope. To the extent to which this is possible in foreign language teaching, they should promote the exercise of critical judgment in dealing with developments in the learners' environment. At the same time the limitations of the linguistic ability of the groups of learners concerned are to be taken into account.

A further criterion in the selection of learning-content is its potential for practice in the context of situations - both present and future ones - by way of preparation for likely future real life situations.

Because every language act is situated in a socio-cultural context, and is subject to conditions which in the foreign language are partly different from those in the native language, the learner should be made familiar with differences and similarities in the experiential background of foreign language communication processes. Otherwise disturbances might occur ranging from brief misunderstandings to lasting insecurity and even breakdown of communication.

b) <u>Methodological and didactic procedures</u>

Not only the learning-content itself but also the way it is dealt with affects the achievement of the general educational aims. It is important, in this respect, that there should be no conflict between methodological procedure and subject-specific aims on the one hand and the general aims on the other hand. The exclusive practice of pattern-drills or of the retrieval of factual information from texts will counteract the development of the learner's own personality and of his critical powers. The teacher should make it clear to his learners why particular teaching-strategies are used and, as much as possible, en list their participation in methodological decisions so that, at all times, they may understand the purpose of the learning-activities they are asked to engage in and carry them out successfully.

c) <u>Learning-activities</u>

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[2] Our translation of «Kritikfähigkeit», which covers both the capacity for critical assessment and the ability to give adequate expression to one's views.

Learning in a school context is always, at the same time, learning in a social context, i.e. the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge is linked to the creation of affective attitudes and the formation of behavioural patterns in interpersonal contacts. The acquisition of a foreign language is to be seen as an extension of social behaviour capacity and is consequently to be effected through activities which are appropriate to its nature as a social process.

Therefore learning/teaching procedures should be planned in such a way that the acquisition of cooperative modes of behaviour is promoted. Even though foreign language teaching/learning may offer certain problems in this respect, there are opportunities here as well - particularly in practice-activities - for acquiring and perfecting cooperative work-forms and modes of behaviour, for instance in pair-work and group-work. These opportunities should be exploited by the teacher and be appropriately considered in the choice of learning-materials.

d) Instrumental skills

Several techniques are particularly suitable for the promotion of autonomy, one of the general aims. In order to reduce dependence on the teacher as the sole source of information it is, for instance, essential that the learner should be able to use a dictionary. Other techniques, too, such as marking and underlining important passages, «note-taking», «note-making», as well as the use of technical aids are essential elements of a learning-procedure calculated to reduce teacher-domination and to promote the learner's capacity for independent work. (21)

In the Bremen directive (as we shall refer to this document) the above text is followed by a detailed specification of subject-specific objectives which is constantly related to the more general statement.

At first sight, the text we quoted may look modest in comparison with the aims as analysed in the NCLE-specification (see chapter 4). It appears to be based on a breakdown of the general educational aim into only three components:

- the promotion of autonomy,
- the development of critical powers,
- the development of communication ability.

Yet, it may be argued that all the components of the NCLE-specification are actually subsumed under these three headings.

The «promotion of autonomy» requires the development of the learner as an individual, i.e. the development of all aspects of the learner's personality. The «development of critical powers» might have been regarded as an element of the first component but it may deserve separate mention as constituting a link between the intrapersonal character of the first component and the fully interpersonal one of the third. Moreover, the development of a critical attitude and of the ability to maintain oneself as a free individual in our present highly complex technological society, which very few, if any, individuals have the capacity to understand in depth, may well be regarded as one of the most essential educational aims.

«Communicative ability», the third component, is now understood to cover almost the whole range of interpersonal contacts, including the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for fruitful interaction.

The choice of one or more foreign languages as obligatory school subjects easily finds its justification in these general aims against the background of our present society. The integration of foreign language teaching with the pursuit of the general aims is achieved in the areas of learning-content, method, learning-activities and instrumental skills. Basing ourselves on the text quoted, we may schematically represent this as follows:

Integration through:	by means of:	serving the general aims of:
Content	choosing themes, situations, socio-cultural information, on the basis of their relevance to the learner	expanding substance and scope of learner's experiences; development of critical powers, of socio-cultural awareness
Method	making teaching-strategies transparent to learner, promoting learner-participation in decision-making	development of the learner's own personality; development of critical powers, of study-skills
Learning-activities	learning in social context, pair-work, group-work	development of social behaviour patterns; development of affective attitudes
Instrumental skills	using dictionaries and other learning-aids, note-making, etc.	promoting autonomy, development of study-skills

What is clear from the table is that the choice of learning-content is only one of the means by which general educational aims may be pursued. Without diminishing the value of the actual content of what is learned we may safely say that the experience of the learning-process itself is, at least, no less important. Yet, until very recently, descriptions of learning-objectives have largely confined themselves to the specification of learning-content, leaving all the rest to the views, insights, skills and inclinations of the teachers. At the same time, there have always been general educational aims to which subject-specific teaching was supposed to contribute and to which it could only contribute through particular learning-activities.

It is not hard to find reasons - some of them very good ones - for this abstention on the part of designers of objectives. One very good reason is that most of them are convinced that there is no «best method», neither for teaching subject-specific knowledge and skills, nor for achieving the more general educational aims. The teachers should, therefore, be left free to follow their own ideas. The importance of aspects of the learning-process which, like many of those in the Bremen directive, are not strictly «methodological» was - and is - often not sufficiently realised.

Another reason is that designers of objectives, who often work for a very «general» public, may be reluctant to commit themselves to the use of terms which may, rightly or wrongly, be

construed as proclaiming a political bias. The term «autonomy», which we used above to translate the German *Selbständigkeit*, is one such term, and «critical powers» is another.

Now that it is more generally accepted - and we tend to forget how very recent this acceptance is - that educational practice is inseparable from political views, the reluctance is becoming less strong and may even be totally absent, particularly in regions with a predominant political colouring. At the same time the narrowing of margins between political groups in our democratic societies has led to such general agreement on various fundamental political issues that the inclusion of certain political ideals in general educational aims is no longer as controversial as it was a few decades ago.

Another reason for the reluctance of designers of objectives to go beyond specifications of learning-content was - and is - the close link between objectives and evaluation. An objective, as the description of the learner's condition after successfully completing the learning-process, is a yard-stick for measuring educational success. The more concrete and detailed the description of the objective is, the more fit it is to be used as a yard-stick. Content can be specified in great detail and in highly concrete terms, so «it is suitable for the description of objectives». Of course, this line of argument may lead only too easily to the practice of teaching only what can be tested, and - preferably - tested objectively. Moreover, objectives are supposed to be set at various levels, and how are more or less objectively verifiable level-distinctions to be made in such unmeasurable qualities as «autonomy» or «social responsibility»?

Yet, the demand for «more comprehensive objectives» is becoming ever stronger. On the one hand this is due to the increasing awareness of the role of learning-experiences in a person's overall development and of the responsibility this imposes on those providing these experiences. On the other hand - and this applies to language teaching - it is due to the recent emphasis on «communicative ability» as the major subject-specific concern. The appearance of the «threshold levels», the first descriptions of «communicative ability» that were concrete and detailed enough to serve as a basis for the introduction of communicative language teaching on a large scale, soon led to the realisation that to be a good «communicator» much more was needed than the linguistic ability specified in them. The authors of the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* were quick to add the *will* to communicate to the specified *ability* to communicate, and they themselves and others rapidly increased the range of «communicative ability» by including a variety of cognitive, affective and social elements.

The question is now how we are to bring such heterogeneous elements as «being able to refer to past time in English» and «having the capacity to establish social contacts with strangers» - to mention only two - into one system. How are we to reconcile the role of objectives as statements that give meaningful direction to educational activities with their role as yard-sticks for measuring the results of learning-efforts? How do we combine elements that enable us to make objectively verifiable level-distinctions with elements that obviously do not allow this?

The first step, it would seem, is to recognise from the start that all educational processes will lead to two kinds of changes in the learner. One kind of change is that as a result of the process the learner will know more and will be able to do more in a particular field, i.e. with regard to one or more particular subjects. The other kind is a change in the learner's personality. The first kind, the increase of knowledge and skill, is - to a large extent, at least - measurable by means of tests or examinations, and consequently lends itself to articulation, i.e. to level-distinctions. The second kind, the growth of the learner's personality, - we include under this heading a large number of heterogeneous elements, such as the capacity for

personal happiness, the capacity to contribute to the shaping of society, etc., etc. - defies objective and operational description, is not measurable and, therefore, does not lend itself to level-distinctions. We may, it is true, itemize a number of qualities that may contribute to, for instance, a successful social career, but such a list could never be exhaustive, nor could the relative weight of each of the qualities be objectively established. Moreover, the development of a learner's personality is not a continuously and overtly observable process. In fact, it is not uncommon for learners to make little observable progress during the whole period of compulsory schooling and to - apparently - take an enormous leap forward soon after this period.

If it is the major role of objectives to give meaningful direction to learning and teaching activities they must cover both kinds of changes, regardless of their measurability. The grading of learners, and the award of diplomas and certificates, will inevitably be based on the measurable components, particularly knowledge and skills. And one may even justify this: for these components grading of the learning-process itself is necessary, and diplomas and certificates are testimonials of knowledge and skills rather than of anything else. Moreover, there is no harm in this practice as long as it does not mean that the non-measurable components are given insufficient attention or even neglected during the educational process. Of course, this neglect is bound to occur if the quality of a teacher is assessed primarily or - as often happens - exclusively in terms of examination results, of pass rates.

Consequently, there is little point in introducing «comprehensive objectives» unless the educational process itself - the teaching and learning activities - is made an object of scrutiny in a similar way as this is done with such matters as examination results.

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case in the large majority of current directives and guidelines for the planning of educational activities. It is still the rule rather than the exception for such documents to consist of a few pages proclaiming lofty educational ideals followed by long and detailed lists of words, structures and facts that the learners are required to «master», together with indications as to the types of texts they are supposed to be able to «understand» as well as those they are supposed to be able to produce. The relation between the first few pages and all the rest is, in most cases, far from transparent. Needless to say that such directives sharply focus the attention of teachers and learners alike on the need to train for tests of knowledge and skills only and not to «waste» their time in the pursuit of ideals which are presented at such a high level of abstraction that their implementation is left entirely open.

In the chapter which we quoted from the Bremen directive we found a serious attempt to integrate subject-specific aims with general educational aims. The objectives to be derived from this attempt are composite objectives, juxtaposing components that may serve as the basis for examination syllabuses and components which provide guidance with regard to the nature of the teaching and learning activities that may equip the learner with the requisite knowledge and skills whilst simultaneously serving more comprehensive aims.

The document in which objectives of this kind are presented most consistently as well as in sufficient detail to provide adequate guidance for implementation is, in our view, the *Rahmenrichtlinien, Sekuodarstufe I, Neue Sprachen,* issued by the Minister of Education of the State of Hessen (Federal Republic of Germany) in 1980. This document, more generally known as the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien,* transparently relates the major aspects of the educational process, including the choice of content, teaching and learning strategies and activities, learning-materials, evaluation procedures, etc., to the pursuit of both general and

subject-specific aims. Moreover, it does so without in any way ignoring the need for explicit guidance on such highly concrete questions as what language forms to include in a syllabus for learners at a particular level, or - to take a very different example - what tasks are most appropriate for homework.

To sum up, a comprehensive FLL objective is a set of statements describing, as fully as possible, the condition of the learner after successfully completing a particular learning-process. The statements will vary in character, ranging from descriptions of learning-content that the learner will have mastered to those of personality changes that the learner will have undergone. They will vary considerably in explicitness from the specifications of items of factual knowledge to the indication of unobservable capacities. Some of them will lend themselves to objective evaluation procedures, others are beyond the scope of evaluation. In order to be effective such objectives must be accompanied by guidelines concerning the nature of the learning-processes that may contribute to their achievement.

In the following chapters of the present volume we shall examine ways in which various major components of comprehensive FLL objectives may be described and related to educational practice.

Chapter 6: A framework for comprehensive FLL objectives

In the preceding chapters we have emphasized the need for the justification of FLL - at least in a context of general education - in the perspective of general educational aims. We have argued that subject-specific teaching and learning finds its justification in the extent to which it contributes to achieving the general aims of education. We have also argued that FLL is particularly suitable for making such a contribution, an argument summed up in the quotation at the end of chapter 4.

Whereas the need for FLL is derived from general educational aims, the manner in which FLL may contribute to these aims is to be determined by analysing what FLL involves. After all, foreign language teaching and learning are subject-specific educational activities and it is through these subject-specific activities that the general aims are to be achieved. In other words, focussing on the teaching-aspect for a moment, we do not consider it a viable proposition to tell teachers that they should teach both their subject and also such things as social skills, self-fulfilment and how to be happy - to mention only a few educational desiderata. Subject-specific teachers are supposed to teach their subject and if they are to contribute to the achievement of more general aims, it has to be through their subject-specific teaching.

It is our contention, then, that the achievement of general educational aims in subject-specific teaching and learning demands integration of the general aims in the subject-specific objectives, integration rather than complementarity.

The overtly stated aim of foreign language teaching/learning is nowadays almost invariably the ability to communicate. This ability may be referred to by means of a variety of terms but it is always the ability to use the foreign language for purposes of communication that is considered to be the essential object of foreign language teaching and learning. The concept of communication is, of course, not restricted to oral face-to-face communication but covers the full range of interactional language activities, including text-interpretation.

Just what is involved in the ability to communicate has been the subject of numerous discussions and publications. In fact, as our understanding of this ability increases, the conditions for achieving it appear to become more and more complex. The development was recently described by William Littlewood as follows:

> One reason why foreign language teaching keeps so many people in employment (not only in classrooms, but also as methodologists and theorists in various fields) is that as we devise more and more techniques for dealing with the problems we encounter, we also discover that language learning is more complex than we had thought. This means that new problem areas emerge for us to try to understand and solve.

Thus, not long ago, it looked as if we could overcome the basic learning problem by devising techniques for forming habits. Dialogues and pattern drills seemed the ideal solution. Then it became clear again that we could not neglect the cognitive dimension of language learning: we must also ensure that the learner internalises the underlying system of rules. We then realised that even if we found a foolproof way of getting people to acquire and operate this system, this would still not be enough, because they also need to know the rules and conventions for using the system. To use two examples (Thomas 1982), they have to learn

that «We must get together sometime» can be used as a polite formula for taking leave from somebody, as well as a statement of firm intention; or that if they wish to ask for directions in the street, «<u>Tell me please the way to</u> ...» is not the most appropriate way of doing so in English. Nor does the problem end there. The learner is faced with other dimensions of communicative performance which go beyond a knowledge of structure, such as the conventions for managing conversations. Indeed, there seem to be so many facets of communicative ability that the task of teaching it can appear to take on monumental proportions. Small wonder that we derive such hope from those researchers who assure us that it will develop through natural processes, once we learn how to structure the classroom environment properly. (22)

Our increasing insight into the complexity of communicative ability is reflected in successive specifications of FLL objectives.

The most explicit objectives constructed before the 1970s are those produced on behalf of the *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*, starting with the one for the English Certificate in 1967. Their principal components are the lists of those language forms (structures, words, phrases) that were felt to be most useful for everyday communication situations. In other words, these objectives specify the «linguistic competence» needed for certain communicative purposes.

The Threshold Levels for various European languages, published by the Council of Europe, who started the series with the issue of the specification for English in 1975, take as their starting-point the *use* that members of the target group will make of the language forms, taking into account various requirements of the situations in which the foreign language will be used, such as the social and psychological roles the language users are likely to play. These objectives thus add a dimension of «socio-linguistic competence», even though this is still done to a large extent by implication rather than explicitly. Explicitness in this respect became more apparent in versions following the original *Threshold Level for English*, notably in *Un Niveau Seuil* (French) and *Kontaktschwelle* (German). These versions also add elements of «discourse competence», thus carrying the specifications beyond the boundaries of separate utterances.

It is only in the most recent descriptions of objectives, such as those of the City of Bremen and of the State of Hessen, which we referred to earlier, that we find evidence of a deliberate attempt to incorporate further dimensions in the actual specifications. As we said before, the widening of the scope of FLL is directly related to our increasing understanding of what constitutes communicative ability.

The basic component of communicative ability is, of course, «linguistic competence». Without knowledge of vocabulary items and the mastery of certain structural rules through which they are processed into meaningful utterances, no verbal communication is possible.

In addition to the ability to produce well-formed meaningful utterances and to determine the conventional meaning (see chapter 7) of similar utterances produced by others, successful communication requires the ability to use and interpret language forms with situational appropriateness. In other words, the communicator will have to be aware of ways in which the choice of language forms - the manner of expression -is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc., etc. We refer to this as «socio-linguistic competence».

The successful communicator will also need «discourse competence». We mean by this the ability to perceive and to achieve coherence of separate utterances in meaningful

communication patterns. A simple example of this is «knowing how to open a conversation and how to end it».

Even these three types of competence will not always ensure successful communication, particularly - but not exclusively - if one or more of the communicators use a language which is not their native language. Successful communication also requires a fourth type of competence, which Canale and Swain call «strategic competence» (23). It involves, they say:

> The use of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for gaps in the language user's knowledge of the code or for breakdown of communication for other reasons.

Then, as the Bremen directive reminds us, «every language act is situated in a socio-cultural context and is subject to conditions which in the foreign language are partly different from those in the native language». In other words, the use of a particular language implies the use of a reference frame which is at least partly determined by the socio-cultural context in which that language is used by native speakers. Competent use of that language, then, presupposes a certain degree of familiarity with that socio-cultural context. For want of a more adequate term the German word *Landeskunde* is often used for this. We shall refer to this aspect of communicative ability as «socio-cultural competence».

«Communication is a social activity requiring the coordinated efforts of two or more individuals» (Gumperz, 1982) (24). This means that there is even more to communication than the five types of competence distinguished above. If two or more individuals are to coordinate their efforts to engage in interaction they must, at least, have the will and the skill to do so. The will to interact involves motivation, attitude and self-confidence; the skill to interact involves such qualities as empathy and the ability to handle social situations. We indicate these qualities collectively *as* «social competence».

It is particularly this last type of competence which brings the general educational aims within the compass of the subject-specific aims of FLL. If it is the essence of FLL to enable the learner to become a successful communicator in the foreign language, social competence is an indispensable component of FLL objectives. At the same time social competence is a factor in the overall development of a learner's personality, as analysed in the NCLE specification under the headings of «cognitive (intellectual) development» and «affective (emotional and moral) development». Thus it also encompasses the general aims of the promotion of autonomy and the development of critical powers, as listed in the Bremen directive for FLL.

The above analysis of «communicative ability» provides the rationale for the pursuit of general educational aims through subject-specific FLL. In fact, it indicates that the pursuit of these general aims is essential to the success of FLL itself.

Our analysis of communicative ability allows us to draw up the following overall framework for the description of comprehensive FLL objectives:

```
FLL OBJECTIVE
  ↓
COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY:     - linguistic competence
                           - socio-linguistic competence
                           - discourse competence
                           - strategic competence
                           - socio-cultural competence
                           - social competence

                               (   )

                           optimal development of personality:
                           - cognitive development
                           - affective
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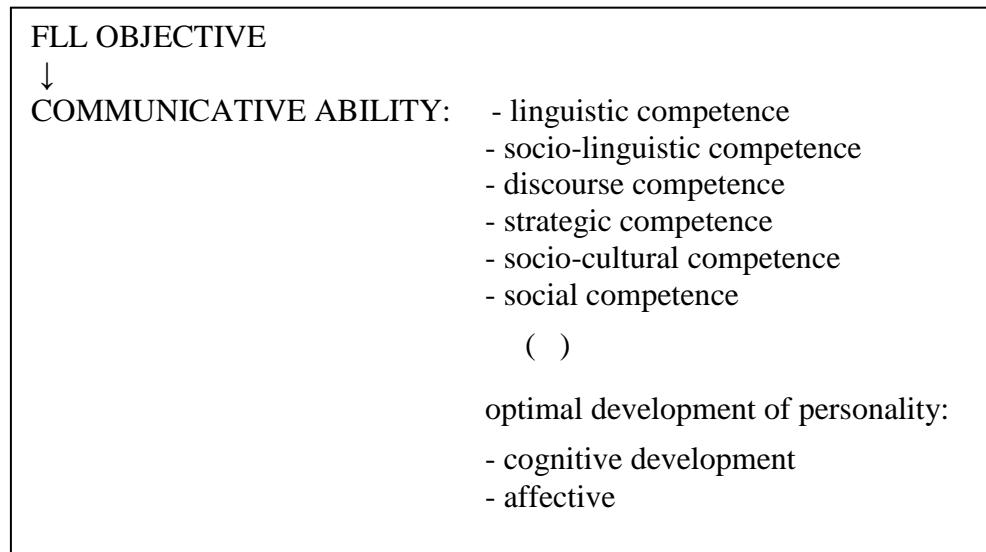
The components we have distinguished will be discussed separately in the following chapters. It should be understood, however, that they are not discrete elements. Rather, they are different aspects of one and the same concept, different aspects to focus on for the purpose of a systematic exploration of the concept. By exploring the concept in this way we hope to ensure that we do not miss features which are essential in the specification of FLL objectives, even though it will not allow us to unambiguously assign each feature to a particular component. There will be a considerable amount of overlap. In fact, many times we look at a particular aspect of communicative ability we shall at the same time see this ability as a whole, only the focus will be different each time.

Many features may be included under more than one component, depending on the focus of the discussion. Even from the brief characterizations of the components given in the present chapter it will be clear that there is no distinct borderline between, for instance, socio-linguistic competence and social competence. The ability to gauge the intent of an utterance, to give one example, depends on an understanding of the roles of the partners in a communicative event, which are listed under the socio-linguistic component, as well as on empathy, which was mentioned under the social component. If the focus is on the linguistic exponents of the roles of the partners, «gauging the intent of an utterance» may be conveniently dealt with in the socio-linguistic component, if it is on the understanding of the roles, the social component may be the appropriate category. Similarly, the components of linguistic competence and socio-cultural competence are closely interrelated. In a linguistic description meaning is included in linguistic competence, but at the same time the understanding of meaning will often depend on familiarity with the socio-cultural context in which the language concerned is used as a native language. Thus the - not infrequently heard - criticism of the «threshold levels» that they ignore the socio-cultural context of language use, is unfair, since the ability to deal with certain concepts in a foreign language - as itemized under the category of «notions» in the threshold levels - presupposes a good deal of socio-cultural knowledge. If the threshold levels are to be criticized on this score it could only be because they do not make this socio-cultural knowledge explicit.

Chapter 7: Linguistic competence

By «linguistic competence» we mean the ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning. By «conventional meaning» we mean that meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation. «It's raining», when used in isolation, would normally be interpreted as reporting a fact concerning the weather. In contexts, however, it might express a refusal (... so I'm not going out), a warning (... so you may get wet), or even an encouragement (to a farmer who is ready to give up because of drought). The meaningful contextual use of language we classify under «socio-linguistic competence».

In principle, we may describe linguistic competence from two angles. The first is the traditional one, in terms of language forms, i.e. the words and structures a learner will have to be able to use. The choice of words and structures is usually based on frequency lists, processed in accordance with various didactic criteria. The most consistent and well - considered application of this approach is to be found in the specifications of the objectives embodied in the original form of the so-called *Zertifikat* of the *Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband*. The appearance of *The Threshold Level* (English version) in 1975 led to the introduction of a different approach, i.e. from the angle of meaning. The lists of «functions» and «notions» itemize, under various categories, the meanings the learner will have to be able to deal with in the foreign language, together with recommended selections of the language forms conventionally expressing these meanings.

Current objective-descriptions do not infrequently combine the two approaches, which unnecessarily complicates the task of those who have to implement them and tends to lead to overemphasis on the practice of vocabulary and structure.

Linguistic competence has always been, and will remain, the very basis of communicative ability, no matter how much more may be involved in this ability. It is also the component of communicative ability that lends itself most obviously to differentiation, grading and level distinctions. That is the context in which we shall deal with it in detail in the second volume of our study.

Chapter 8: Socio-linguistic competence

Socio-linguistic competence was characterized in chapter 6 as the awareness «of ways in which the choice of language forms - the manner of expression - is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc., etc.». We refer to these conditions collectively as «features of the communication situation». Socio-linguistic competence differs from linguistic competence principally in concerning a different aspect of the relation between language forms - the linguistic signals - and meaning. Linguistic competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their conventional meaning (conventional in the sense of what they are normally, in isolation, supposed to mean), whereas socio-linguistic competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual - or situational - meaning. The difference may be clarified by means of the following example: It's five o'clock.

Taking this example in isolation, our linguistic competence allows us to interpret it as a statement made in order to pass on a piece of factual information. Now consider the meaning of the same sentence in the following contexts:

> (1) The prisoner had been told that one hour was all he would get to give the names of his contacts. If not, execution was imminent. Sweating profusely in the glare of the lamps directed at him, be knew that time was running out. Yet, it came unexpectedly when his interrogator said in a soft voice: «It's five o'clock».

> (2) When the examiner announced «It's five o'clock», the candidates knew that they had only fifteen minutes left to finish their compositions.

In both contexts It's five o'clock passes on a piece of factual information, but in (1) it is likely to be interpreted as a threat and in (2) as a warning. These interpretations are based on situational clues, and it is our socio-linguistic competence which enables us to make them.

In threshold level terminology It's five o'clock fulfils the language function of «reporting», whereas a warning would be given by means of Be careful!, Look out! etc. In other words, the language forms provided in the threshold levels as exponents of language functions carry their conventional meaning. The descriptive category of language functions is thus used as a category of linguistic competence. The socio-linguistic category corresponding to the linguistic one of functions in the threshold level we shall refer to by means of the term «intentions»[3].

We may now characterize It's five o'clock in our first example as fulfilling the «function» of «reporting» and the «intention» of «making a threat». Similarly, in example (2) it may be said to fulfil the function of «reporting» and the «intention» of «giving a warning». Often, of course, function and intention will be identical - otherwise we would hardly be able to speak of a conventional meaning. In the following example «but I'm not sure», an exponent of the function «expressing doubt», would not seem to have any other role than doing just that, in other words it verbalizes the intention «expressing doubt»:

- Do you know what time it is?

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[3]My attention was first drawn to the need for this category in a paper by A. Kaaks of the Foundation for Curriculum Development (Enschede, Netherlands).

- I think it's five o'clock, but I'm not sure.

The appropriate use of utterances to serve one's intentions, as well as the ability to interpret the intention of utterances produced by others, is an element of socio-linguistic competence. Other situational elements determining form and content of utterances are, according to the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien*:

- Personal characteristics of the communication partners (age, sex, occupation, nationality, etc.)
- Relations between the communication partners:
- Social (superior - subordinate, colleague - colleague, pupil - teacher, father - daughter, etc.)
- Affective (attitude towards communication partner: antipathy, sympathy, degree of familiarity, etc.)
- Communicative goal
- External conditions (country, locality, scene, environment, time, duration, frequency, number of participants, etc.)
- Topic
- Text-type (report, discussion, news-broadcast, etc.) (25)

To what extent may these parameters of «situation» be usefully specified in FLL objectives? Before we try to answer this question we wish to remind the reader that we are not primarily concerned with the role of objectives as providing a basis for examination syllabuses, but with objectives as «giving meaningful direction to learning-activities».

It is quite clear that socio-linguistic competence is absolutely essential in communication processes. Without correctly interpreting the *intention* of an utterance - the first parameter we have distinguished - no successful communication is possible. Another parameter, which is equally essential, is the one referred to in the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* as *Kommunikative Absicht*, a term we translated by «communicative goal». Whereas *intention* applies to the interpretation of individual utterances, communicative goal concerns the interpretation of a whole communicative act. A few examples given in the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* are:

- to inquire, as a tourist, about the expected weather conditions in the French Alps, in view of an intended ski excursion
- to wish to borrow something from a person
- to try to comfort a person

Communicative goals may be achieved by means of a single utterance expressing one single intention. In that case goal and intention are identical, for example, « You're much stronger than you now think».

> Intention: trying to comfort a person
> Goal: trying to comfort a person

On the other hand, the achievement of a communicative goal may require a much more complex communicative act. Thus the attempt to comfort a person may involve a sequence of expressions of intentions such as:

- presenting facts
- making comparisons
- drawing conclusions

The «topic» is an essential determinant of, particularly, the lexical content of a communicative act. In the threshold levels the large majority of the lexical items which are suggested for inclusion in a learning-syllabus or in an examination syllabus are presented as

exponents of so-called «specific notions», i.e. of notions which are likely to be involved in dealing with particular topics. Elsewhere in the present volume, as well as in volume II, we shall consider criteria for the selection of topics. Here we confine ourselves to signalling the contribution of topics towards determining the content, particularly the lexical content, of communicative acts.

«Text-type» is another factor determining the appropriateness of utterances. It affects both their form and their content. The structure exemplified in: <u>Mind the gap, please!</u> is fully appropriate in a public announcement (in this particular case in a London tube station), whereas it would be inappropriate in, for instance, a formal business letter. We shall deal with text-types in some detail in the chapter on «discourse competence». In the component of socio-linguistic competence they play a role in so far as they contribute to judgements on the appropriateness of form and content of utterances in relation to those text-types which are included in the specification of an FLL objective.

The other parameters are of varying, though none of them of negligible, importance. In a particular communication act each of them may assume an essential role, but they will rarely all of them be of essential importance simultaneously. Perhaps the one that most often assumes particular significance is that of «relations between the communication partners», especially the «affective» aspect. Gauging correctly the attitude of a communication partner as well as effectively conveying one's own attitude in the perspective of one's communicative goal, may well determine the success or failure of a communicative act. Yet, all the other parameters as well have communicative relevance. They all determine the appropriateness of utterances and in our native language we are well aware of them.

This means that in FLL a similar awareness should be aimed at. Consequently, objectives cannot ignore these parameters of socio-linguistic competence.

Topics and text-types are listed, by way of recommendation, or prescriptively, in current objectives. Such lists will be discussed later in this study (chapters 9 and 11).

About the other components available objectives are, on the whole, less explicit. At the very least, one may expect that an objective should contain a statement to the effect that learners are to become sensitive to, or aware of, the socio-linguistic features of a communication act, such features as the ones mentioned above. Such a statement would primarily apply to the learners' interpretive ability. It would lead to learning-activities as offered in many modern learning-materials where learners are asked to identify a speaker or writer's social role, affective attitude, the setting of a communicative act, its communicative goal, etc., etc. That the stimulation of this awareness need not be confined to higher levels is demonstrated in various kinds of beginners' materials, where learners are asked such questions as «Is the speaker friendly or unfriendly, sad or happy»? etc. The degree of this awareness does not lend itself to explicit description. It may be indicated, however, through exemplification. This means that a number of examples may be given of the kind of questions that learners are supposed to be able to answer with regard to particular texts. Such «description through exemplification» is particularly current in the United Kingdom, where «defined examination syllabuses» are usually accompanied by examples of examination papers.

For purposes of language production it may be thought necessary to offer more specific guidance in objectives. This may be more obviously the case with «communicative goals» than with what we called «intentions». In most cases intention can be adequately realised by means of the exponents of corresponding language functions, and the capacity for more indirect realisations is achieved as a by-product of a person's overall communicative

development rather than as a result of conscious learning/teaching efforts. The listing of major communicative goals, on the other hand, constitutes an essential contribution to effectual FLL objectives. One might even go as far as to say that it is the most indispensable component of such objectives. Communicative goals indicate the purposes for which the learner will be able to use the foreign language, what the learner will be able to do in that language. An objective which would state just that, would serve the purpose of giving meaningful direction to learning-activities. The main reason for demanding that objectives should describe much more than this, is that by being more specific about what is required in order that the communicative goals may be achieved they offer more effective guidance for the planning of teaching/learning activities.

In the threshold levels communicative goals are mainly specified under the heading of «topic-related behaviour». An example is the following statement concerning the sub-topic *medical services:*

inquire about medical facilities, surgery-hours, conditions of treatment; make an appointment with a doctor, a dentist, at a hospital; buy medicine at a chemist's; answer a doctor's questions; make clear to a doctor what is wrong. (26)

A specification for a higher level of proficiency is exemplified by the following extract from the *Handbook, Certificate of Achievement in French/German at an intermediate/supplementary level* of the Language Materials Development Unit of the University of York (27):

Coping with problems

Students should be able to cope with a number of problems or difficulties which may be encountered when travelling abroad. The problems dealt with will arise from such factors as:

- Minor driving offences
- Faulty hotel reservations
- Slight illnesses
- Ignorance of local laws
- Difficulties experienced while shopping
- The need for motor car repairs

Such problems will require an ability to understand officials and people in authority as well as those offering services. They will require, on the part of the student, an ability to:

- give proof of one's own identity
- demand an explanation
- apologise
- insist on one's rights
- request compensation
- describe symptoms of illness
- obtain help from medical services
- plead ignorance
- justify one's actions
- dispute an accusation
- request leniency
- express gratitude

We shall return to «communicative goals» in Volume II of this study.

Another parameter often dealt with in FLL objectives is the one indicated as «relations between the communication partners».

In *The Threshold Level* (English version) it is specified as follows:

Social roles

The principal social roles for which T-level learners have to be prepared are:

1.   stranger/stranger
2.   friend/friend

This selection is made from a study by Richterich (28), on the basis of the characteristics of the target group. Various other roles are subsumed under 1, e. g.:

-      private person/official
-      patient/doctor, nurse, dentist

A role such as

-      asker/giver

may be subsumed under both 1 and 2.

Psychological roles

On the basis of the characteristics of the target group we select from Richterich the following roles:

1.   neutrality
2.   equality
3.   sympathy
4.   antipathy

These roles are the more «neutral» roles and they are appropriate in a large variety of linguistic interaction.

The specification of roles is, again, important in giving direction to learning-activities. It will, particularly, contribute to the devising of simulated or genuine real-life situations for communicative practice in which the learner becomes familiar with the role(s) he is likely to play himself, both during and after the learning-process. It will also contribute to the effective choice of language forms which are appropriate to the roles envisaged. The mere indication that «the learner should be able to use two registers: formal and informal» would hardly seem to be sufficient for these purposes.

It is self-evident that roles listed in FLL objectives for special purposes can often be more specific than the ones in general FLL objectives. Examples:

-      waiter/guest
-      foreman/unskilled migrant worker
-      switchboard operator/caller
-      traffic controller/airline pilot

For obvious reasons, the «personal characteristics of the communication partners» are not normally specified in FLL objectives. Yet, a general statement to the effect that learners will be able to use the foreign language in their own individual capacity may be useful in reminding those responsible for planning learning-activities that this is what the language is learned for. It does not mean that boys should be taught to speak «like boys» and that girls are to be fitted for playing the traditional female roles. It does mean, however, that the learner should be given full scope to be himself in the learning-activities he is to engage in.

The parameter of «external conditions» plays a minor role in the specification of FLL objectives, in so far as it is not expressed in the «communicative goals». If these stipulate the ability to carry out certain communicative acts at a camp site, or in a board room, or at home, this implies the use of language appropriate to this setting. One of the items given under this heading by the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* is to be noted particularly, sc. «number of participants». Learning-activities which do not include group work will hardly prepare the learner for coping with the dynamics of communication with more than one partner. For the rest, the provision of lists of «external conditions», as it was done in *The Threshold Level* on the basis of Richterich (28), may serve the purpose of reminding those responsible for the planning of learning-activities of the need to diversify these activities also in view of the variety of conditions in which the learners are likely to use the language. Again, it will be obvious that objectives for individual learners or for highly restricted target groups may be much more specific in this respect than those for general target groups.

Chapter 9: Discourse competence

By «discourse competence» we mean the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts. A «text», according to Halliday and Hasan (29), is «any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that forms a unified whole». This definition applies to texts consisting of several sentences as well as to those containing only a single one. For the purpose of describing FLL objectives it is convenient to reserve a separate component, that of «discourse competence» for those strategies which are involved in dealing with texts formed by stringing sentences together.

The description of discourse competence in an objective, then, involves the specification of text-types and of strategies. It will have to distinguish between text-types which the learner will be able to produce and those which he will be able to interpret. For texts to be produced a further distinction has to be made between texts that the learner will have to be able to produce individually and those which require the «cooperative effort» of more than a single person for their production. The individually produced texts may be spoken texts or written texts, those produced by two or more people are usually spoken texts. For texts to be interpreted the most significant distinction for the purpose of describing FLL objectives would seem to be that between spoken texts and written texts. We thus arrive at five main categories of text-types to be distinguished in FLL objectives (to be referred to subsequently as categories (1) - (5)):
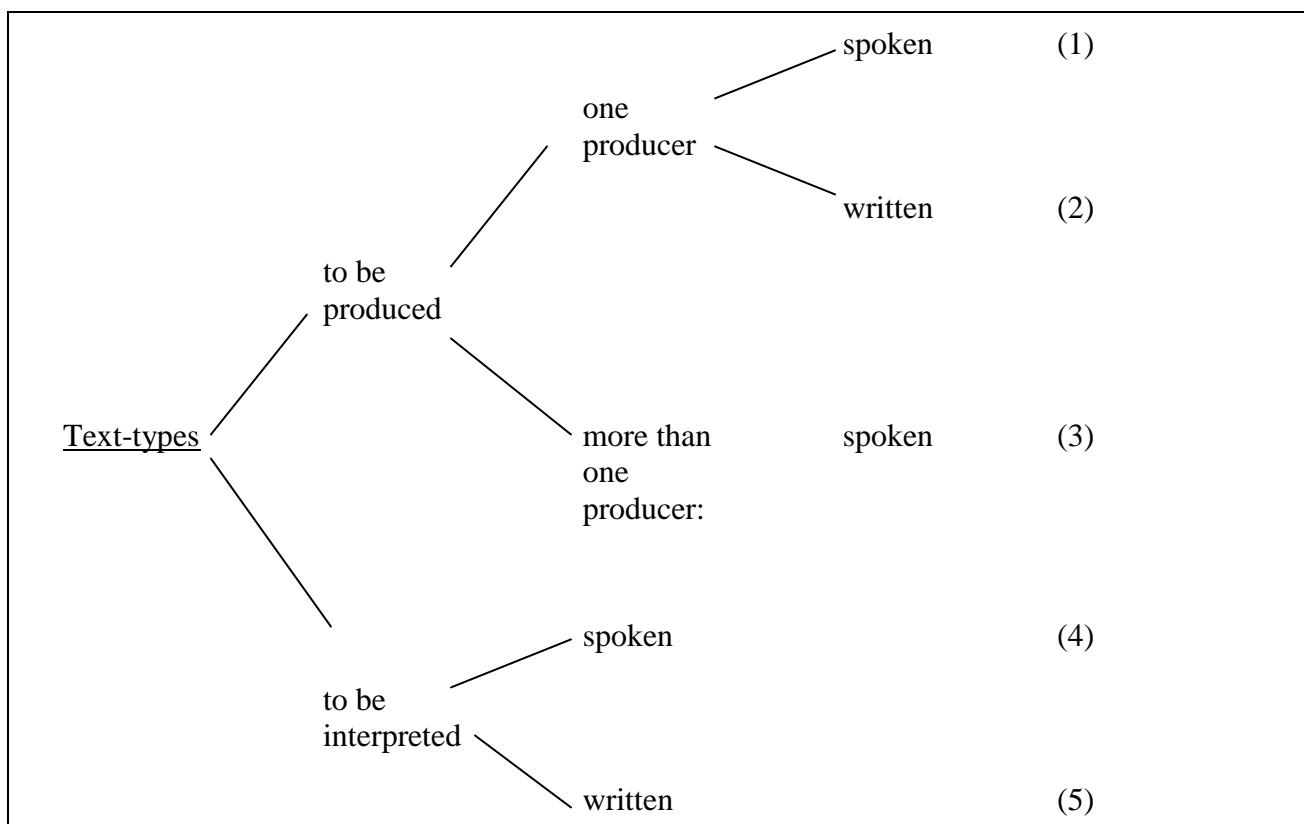
<u>Categories (1) and (2)</u>

Text-types learners may be required to produce in the form of monologues are, for instance, reports, summaries, narratives, speeches, lectures. In objectives for the earlier stages of FLL one usually finds one or more of the following text-types specified:

- reports (on events, experiences)
- descriptions (of pictures or other visual stimuli)
- comments (in connection with reports and descriptions)
- summaries
- presentations (e.g. of results of project work)

Written texts that may be specified in objectives may cover a very wide range, depending on the target group. In objectives for general school education we may find, at lower levels, informal personal letters and formal letters of inquiry (about availability of accommodation, prices, sights, employment, courses, etc., etc.), letters for the reservation of accommodation, for making arrangements, etc. In addition to this the filling in of forms is often included. As the general level of education becomes higher the range becomes increasingly wider and may include summaries, reports, narratives, compositions, essays, argumentative statements, minutes of a meeting, etc.

The *Level Performance Charts* for IBM staff courses (30) distinguish nine levels of ability in the production of written texts of the category «info-transfer writing» as follows:

0.5	- Can write name and address
1.0	- Can fill in limited personal information on forms
1.5	- Can fill in detailed personal information on forms
2.0	- Can write short letters of confirmation on work subjects
	- Short messages
	- Telexes for confirmation
2.5	- Can write simple messages
	- Telexes dealing with time and place
3.0	- Can write letters of thanks
	- Letters of arrangements and confirmation
	- Communicative report of activities
3.5	- Can write letters making arrangements for business appointments
4.0	- Can write memos on work subjects
	- Telexes for arrangements
4.5	- Can write business letters not needing extensive correction
	- Concise reports and memos

Strategies to be employed in the production of texts of categories (1) and (2) include:

- structuring (e.g. introduction - discussion - conclusion; development of an argument; provision of logical links; ensuring coherence; etc.)
- highlighting
- distinguishing between fact (objective) and comment (subjective)
- gearing presentation to intended reader(s) or listener(s)

For texts of category (1) prosodic features will have to be used in an appropriate manner, as well as - in the case of visual contact with the listener(s) - mime and gesture. Another requirement may be the adaptation of the delivery of the text to perceivable audience reactions.

For texts of category (2) graphic features will have to be used in an appropriate manner, such as sentence division, paragraphing, and - as may be required - the provision of tables, figures, illustrations.

In addition to this an objective may specify the mastery of formal conventions with reference to particular text-types. This is done, for instance, in curriculum descriptions for vocational schools in the State of Hessen (31):

Form of the business letters

-     Letterhead
-     Date
-     Reference initials
-     Inside address
-     Attention line
-     Subject line
-     Salutation
-     Body of the letter
-     Complimentary close
-     Signature
-     Enclosure(s)
-     Envelope

<u>Category (3)</u>

In the production of texts of category (3) the learner is not the sole producer but a participant. Moreover, as a participant, he is involved in production as well as in interpretation. Category (3) includes conversations, discussions, debates. Some requirements for successful participation in the production of such texts are summed up by Gumperz (32) as follows:

> Mere talk to produce sentences, no matter how well formed or elegant the outcome, does not by itself constitute communication. Only when a move has elicited a response can we say communication is taking place. To participate in such verbal exchanges, that is, to create and sustain conversational involvement, we require knowledge and abilities which go considerably beyond the grammatical competence we need to decode short isolated messages. We do not and cannot automatically respond to everything we hear. In the course of our daily activities we are exposed to a multitude of signals, many more than we could possibly have time to react to. Before even deciding to take part in an interaction, we need to be able to infer, if only in the most general terms, what the interaction is about and what is expected of us. For example, we must be able to agree on whether we are just chatting to pass the time, exchanging anecdotes and experiences, or whether the intent is to explore the details of particular issues. Once involved in a conversation, both speaker and hearer must actively respond to what transpires by signalling involvement, either directly through words or indirectly through gestures or similar nonverbal signals. The response, moreover, should relate to what we think the speaker intends, rather than to the literal meanings of the words used.

It will be obvious that the content of this passage alone may give rise to a host of different learning-activities aimed at sensitivizing the learner to the signals that determine the course of the interaction process. These activities will have to include the use of media allowing a communication event to be presented with the visual signals that may play such an important part in it. Riley emphasizes the importance of this aspect as follows (33):

The mechanisms by which participants mesh their contributions into a single and coherent discourse in face-to-face interaction are almost exclusively non-verbal. Taking, giving and leaving the floor, interrupting, choosing and changing interactive partners are all functions which it is possible to realise verbally («I now call on the Treasurer to give his report», etc.), but which are usually realised non-verbally.

The use of samples of authentic interactions of this kind would thus seem to be indispensable in a learning-process, particularly because relevant intercultural differences are by no means negligible.

Specifying the required sensitivity to signals involved in this kind of interaction is beyond our capacities. Yet, in the description of an objective we may give guidance by means of exemplification. This means providing samples of conversations together with questions concerning the speakers' strategic moves and their motivations for them.

Moreover, it is possible for an objective to give direction to learning-activities involving the learner's own participation in the structuring of this kind of text. An example of this is to be found in the *York Handbook* (34), which stipulates under «participation in discussion»:

Students should be able to take an active part in discussions with friends and acquaintances when abroad.

(a) General aspects of participation: students will be expected to demonstrate a:

- readiness and ability to put forward and sustain a point of view
- readiness and ability to respond (approvingly or critically) to points of view put by others
- readiness and ability to participate spontaneously in the ebb and flow of discussion

(b) Discourse strategies: students will be expected to make certain conversational «moves», e.g.

- express their disagreement with what another person has said, in a variety of ways, without giving offence
- explain a point of view
- put forward an opinion
- make an objection
- support the opinion of another person
- interrupt somebody
- seek the support of other people
- express one's doubt about what somebody else has said
- express one's agreement with somebody
- contradict someone

A number of these «moves» may be included in the category of «language functions», as is demonstrated in *Kontaktschwelle* (the threshold level version for German) (35):

Discourse structure and clarification

1   Verbal exchange

1.1   Asking for the floor
1.2   Interrupting someone
1.3   Signalling one wants to continue

1.4   Seeking the listener's attention
1.5   Passing the floor
1.6   Inviting somebody to speak
1.7   Taking note of something
1.8   Asking somebody to be silent

2   Clarification

2.1   Asking for repetition of detail
2.2   Asking for repetition of utterance
2.3   Asking somebody to spell something
2.4   Signalling non-comprehension
2.5   Asking for verbal explanation
2.6   Asking for explanation, comment
2.7   Spelling something
2.8   Signalling comprehension
2.9   Checking one can be heard
2.10   Checking one's meaning, intention is understood
2.11   Explaining, commenting on what one has said

3   Structuring discourse

3.1   Opening
3.2   Hesitating, looking for words
3.3   Asking for help in expressing oneself
3.4   Correcting oneself
3.5   Using circumlocution
3.6   Enumerating
3.7   Exemplifying
3.8   Changing the theme
3.9   Summing up
3.10   Emphasizing
3.11   Closing

The activities aimed at the acquisition of this aspect of discourse competence need not be confined to fairly advanced levels of FLL. This is demonstrated by the following exercise in only the second unit of an English course for primary schools (36):

A: Ask what something is called in English/Dutch
B: Signal non-comprehension
A: Repeat question
B: Answer question
A: Check you have understood correctly
B: Confirm
A: Acknowledge and thank for information

Further task: Construct similar dialogues

By way of contrast we add part of a specification of discourse strategies - relevant to category (3) as well as to category (1) - from a high-level objective (Trade Union Course for Asian mill representatives) (37). It concerns strategies required for «presenting a case or argument»:

selecting key information
ordering points

(a)   focussing on topic (introduction)

(b)   presenting argument logically
         - giving reasons
         - justifying demands
         - arguing from precedent
         - proposing changes
         - dealing with objections
         - anticipating counter-arguments
         - modifying a case

(c)   summarising argument
         - reiterate opening FOCUS
         - indicate logical conclusion
         - make a request

Categories (4) and (5)

The *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* distinguish three steps to be taken in dealing with texts produced by others (38):

(a)   understanding the factual information content,
(b)   interpreting the «intentions» of a text, i.e. what the text is meant to achieve with regard to the listener/reader,
(c)   relating the text to one's own knowledge and experiences.

Strategies required for dealing with orally produced texts as well as with written texts include:

-        segmentation (i.e. distinguishing, within the text, more or less closely coherent parts)
-        establishing links between segments
-        distinguishing between essential and non-essential information
-        distinguishing between fact (objective) and comment (subjective)
-        coping with unfamiliar linguistic elements (not being «thrown» by unknown words or phrases, being skilled at deriving the meaning from the context, or deriving it from one's «potential vocabulary»[4]
-        supplying lacking or deliberately omitted information
-        using various «study-skills», such as note-taking, use of dictionaries, underlining (in written texts), etc.

Strategies for dealing with oral texts further include:

-        noting non-linguistic signals such as mime and gesture (in case of visual contact)
-        noting prosodically relevant features

For written texts such strategies as noting the significance of layout, graphic presentation, illustrations, etc. may contribute to adequate processing.

The range of text-types that may be specified in an objective for categories (4) and (5) may vary from a highly restricted one for beginning learners to almost any possible text-type for

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[4]A concept developed by Fr. Denninghaus (39). It covers words that the learner has never seen or heard but whose meaning may be understood through association or analogy, e.g.
- international words (e.g. automatic, information, precise)
- word-formation rules (affixation, compounding, etc.)
- words resembling familiar words from the native language or another foreign language (e.g. leather - Leder, feather - Feder, employé - employee, remplacer - to replace).

near-native level. By way of exemplification we quote specifications proposed for French for Scottish pupils in general education at the age of sixteen (40):

Texts for reading

Examples of sources and content are:

> a) Personal
>
> From correspondence; letters from individuals; from a class (handwritten or typed); enclosures such as descriptions, opinions or explanatory accounts accompanying photos, etc. of people, places, events, etc.
>
> b) Public
>
> i. Information/instructions/advice/requests/warnings/rules/advertisements
> to be found in:
> brochures, leaflets, labels, signs (including street signs), notices, posters, publicity handouts issued by:
> restaurants, hotels, camp sites, leisure establishments, shops, stations, airports, tourist offices, local and national organisations and so on.
>
> ii.Interviews/reports/investigations/*faits divers /*local information/
> advertisements/reviews/discussions/readers' letters/features
> to be found in:
> magazines, including magazines for adolescents, books and other published material
> Graphics and illustrations which occur in the originals may be retained.
> Texts for listening

Examples of sources and content are:

> a)   Personal
>
> > Taped messages
> > Conversations between native speakers
> > Information, directions and so on given by a native speaker Anecdotes
>
> b)   Public
>
> > Announcements made in public places such as in airports, stations and supermarkets
> > TV and radio items such as local events and information/anecdotes/interviews/discussions/news items/weather-reports/phone-in programmes/publicity items/traffic reports

«Text-type catalogues» (*Textsortenkataloge*) such as the above are found more and more commonly in FLL objectives. They are highly suitable for the fulfilment of the double role of serving as a basis for examination syllabuses as well as suggesting pertinent learning-activities. Those for «reading» may, of course, include literary texts. In principle, the same strategies are required for dealing with these texts as for other written texts. On specific roles for literature in an FLL process, see chapter 11.

The actual choice of texts, with reference to any catalogue, will not only be determined by the learner's level of proficiency in using the foreign language, but also by the third component of «dealing with texts produced by others» distinguished in the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien*:

«relating the text to one's own knowledge and experiences». This means that texts chosen should be potentially relevant to the learner himself. They should be such that they have the potential of expanding or deepening the learner's experiences and understanding, of increasing his knowledge, of causing reflection on his attitudes and values, of providing motivation, of giving pleasure. They should be such, in short, that they contribute not only to the learner's linguistic ability, but also, at the same time, to the achievement of one or more of the general aims as listed in the NCLE specification.

The ability to produce and interpret texts is an ability that lends itself directly to valid level-distinctions, being to a large extent observable and presupposing several other components of communicative ability. We shall return to this aspect in Volume II of our study.

Discourse competence - it will be clear from the above - has close links with, and presupposes, other types of competence. Indeed, when looking at this aspect of communicative ability we often seem to look at the whole of this ability. If, nevertheless, we treat discourse competence as a separate component, it is because this allows us to focus, in part of the description of an objective, on such all-important aspects of communicative ability as the structuring and processing of texts.

Chapter 10: Strategic Competence

The linguistic code is our tool of communication *par excellence*, yet none of us has such a perfect command of it, not even in our native language, that we do not encounter communication problems. We may get stuck in sentence construction, we may use words that mean something else to our communication partner(s) than to ourselves, or we may simply not know what to call something or how to formulate something in such a way that the communication partner(s), with their different backgrounds of knowledge, experience, attitudes, values, will interpret it in the way meant by us. «I don't know how to put it into words» is a sentence we are perhaps even more accustomed to using in our native language than in a foreign language.

Yet, in our native language we usually succeed in «getting our meaning across» or in «finding out what somebody means». For this purpose we have a number of communication strategies at our command, which include:
- retracing (when getting stuck in a complex sentence structure: «Sorry, I'll start again»)
- rephrasing («Let me put it in a different way»)
- substitution
  - . by a general word (thing, person)
  - . by a pronoun (this, it, they, something)
  - . by a superordinate (<u>tree</u> for <u>oak-tree</u>, <u>meat</u> for <u>mutton</u>)
  - . by a synonym (<u>see</u> for <u>perceive</u>, <u>discussion</u> for <u>debate</u>)
  - - description by means of
  - . general physical properties (colour, size)
  - . specific feature (it has four legs)
  - . interactional/functional characteristics (you can dress a wound with it)
  - - demonstration (Here, look at this, this is what I mean)
  - - gesture, mime, sounds
- appeal for assistance (What do you call it again? What exactly do you mean by that? Pardon? Will you say that again, please? Sorry, I don't get you)

Some of us may use such strategies to better effect, or more readily - they may even overdo it - than others, depending on our personality and on our linguistic skill, but none of us does not have recourse to several of them from time to time.

If we need them in our native language we are all the more likely to have a need for them in a language we are less competent in. Yet, the use of a foreign language often inhibits people from employing the same strategies that they would use naturally in their native language. The foreign language - contrary to the native language - is something they are supposed to have «learned» or are supposed to be «learning». Not knowing something one is supposed to have learned is disgraceful and one may even be penalized for it. The result of this education-induced attitude is not infrequently that the foreign language user prefers to be silent rather than risk showing his ignorance or making mistakes. «Topic avoidance» and «message abandonment» - terms used by Tarone (41) - are characteristic of such foreign language users.

All this in spite of the fact that as a foreign language user the communicator may have recourse to even more strategies than the ones listed above, for instance:

- foreignizing (*candelle* for candle)
- transliteration (*place de feu* for fireplace)
- word-creation (through FL compounding and derivation processes)

- mutilation (omitting inflectional suffixes, neglecting gender distinctions, etc.)
- language-switch (using native language elements - it sometimes works!)

The transfer of native language communication strategies to foreign language use - and also the acquisition of strategies which are commonly used in the foreign language but not in one's native language or in one's idiolect - is indispensable if the learner is to achieve communicative ability in the foreign language.

The inclusion of the command of communication strategies in FLL objectives should encourage the planning of learning-activities aimed at learning «how to cope». It should also encourage acceptance of natural consequences of using a language which is not one's native language, both by teachers and by learners.

The adoption of the strategies listed as typically available to a «foreign language user» is less generally recommendable. They are, at best, emergency strategies which learners may use at their discretion rather than on the recommendation of any «authority». An exception might - and sometimes should - be made for learners who deliberately aim at a terminal low-level communicative ability, who wish to be able to use the foreign language just «to get by» in a restricted set of situations for a restricted number of purposes. These learners should be certain, then, that they will not wish to go on to higher levels, because once their «foreigner talk» has become fossilized their chances of ever going beyond that are slight. This is forcibly pointed out by Higgs and Clifford (42):

There appears to be a real danger of leading the students too rapidly into the «creative aspects of language use» in that if successful communication is encouraged and rewarded for its own sake, the effect seems to be one of rewarding at the same time the *incorrect* communication strategies seized upon in attempting to deal with the communication situations presented. When these reinforced communication strategies fossilize prematurely, their subsequent modification or ultimate correction is rendered difficult to the point of impossibility, irrespective of the native talent or high motivation that the individual may originally have brought to the task.

The authors conclude from this that whether or not certain communication strategies (the «incorrect» ones in the above quotation) are to be accepted or even rewarded depends on the ultimate level learners will want to reach. In school education the possibilities of moving beyond «survival level» are always to be left open. In adult education the situation is different. Many adults have no ambition whatsoever to learn a particular foreign language for any further purpose than «survival». If the educational system is to cater for this - by no means negligible - target group too, their FLL objectives should recognise the potential benefits of using even the «incorrect» strategies.

Chapter 11: Socio-cultural Competence

Socio-cultural competence is a component of FLL objectives which is particularly suitable for the achievement of general educational aims through the pursuit of subject-specific aims.

On the one hand it is essential to the correct and appropriate use of a language, and thus a condition for «extending the learner's horizon of communication beyond that of his own linguistic community». By doing so - to continue quoting from the NCLE specification of subject-specific aims - it will «enable him to realise the validity of other ways of organising, categorising and expressing experience, and of other ways of managing personal interactions».

On the other hand, and through the above, it will contribute to the achievement of the following general aims listed in the NCLE specification:

- understanding and accepting the feelings of other people, empathy
- accepting people with different social and ethnic backgrounds, avoiding rigidity and stereotyping
- developing positive attitudes towards experience

as well as we may hope for:

- developing a zest for living and the full attainment of human potential.

The subject-specific relevance of the socio-cultural component is described as follows in the Bremen directive:

> If a learner is unaware of the associations that certain manners of expression may carry for a speaker of the target language this may lead to disturbance or even breakdown of communication. Such cultural interferences range from a lexical element for which there is no semantic equivalent in the native language (toll road) or to which without knowledge of the socio-cultural context the native language meaning will be incorrectly transferred (coffee shop, drugstore, lunch, football, student, philosophy) to the level of non-verbal means of expression (hand-shaking, position of the hands during a meal) and that of the conventionalized language of everyday social rituals (thanking, acknowledging thanks, greeting, leave-taking, complimenting). For the treatment of texts dealing with facts or problems background knowledge will be required, according to the theme, in the areas of geography, history, economics, sociology, religion and culture. (43)

The general educational relevance, as subsequently described in the same document, may be summarized as follows:

- providing insight into other ways of thinking and other modes of behaviour
- creating awareness of the socio-cultural constraints on the learner's own behaviour patterns
- contributing to the reduction of prejudice and stereotyping.

The acquisition of socio-cultural competence, then, is a major condition for the achievement of both subject-specific and general educational aims. Undeniably, socio-cultural competence involves a considerable amount of factual knowledge. Yet, the possession of this knowledge

alone does not automatically lead to the competence required. Knowledge may prevent a learner from making mistakes in the use of particular words, from making the wrong gestures, from misinterpreting signals for turn-taking in a conversation, from misinterpreting historical, geographical or other references, etc., etc. It will not, however, automatically lead to the development of positive attitudes, of tolerance, of empathy, of the recognition of the potential validity of other ways of thinking and modes of behaviour, etc.

However, it is only the «knowledge» that may be specified with a certain degree of explicitness and which, consequently, lends itself to level-descriptions, grading and testing. As a result of this, as Crawford-Lange and Lange (44) observe that «there is a heavy concentration on the facts of culture: history, kinesics, religion, art, architecture, geography, the status of women, economic conditions, courtship, literature, and the like.»

With regard to this practice, the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* express the view that:

> *Landeskunde*, which consists in the more or less systematic transfer of so-called realia (political institutions, geography, history, etc.) is divorced from the learner's experiences and hardly contributes to the achievement of communicative objectives. (45)

The development of socio-cultural competence, then, is more effectively promoted by an objective which may serve as a basis for the planning of learning-activities than by one that is primarily meant as a basis for an examination syllabus.

In order to serve its purpose, teaching and learning for socio-cultural competence should go beyond the cognitive domain and address the learner's attitudes, opinions, value-systems and emotions as well. This can only be done if the learning-content is clearly related to the learner's own experiences and interests and if the learning-activities engage the learner not only as a learner but as a human being.

Socio-cultural competence may be acquired in a functional way by dealing with particular themes. As Crawford-Lange and Lange (46) point out:

> Cultural themes are provocative and perhaps emotionally charged concerns or issues which motivate the culture learner's conduct [...] For example, the topic of employment in and of itself may not be a theme, but the issue of the availability of employment for adolescents in a depressed area may well be. The stronger the relationship to the learner's situation, the more powerful for them will be for language/culture learners.

The necessity of relating culture learning to the learner's own experiences is also emphasized in several guidelines and directives for FLL in secondary education, as for instance in the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* (47):

> In any case such comparisons [sc. between the learner's own range of experience and other social and individual conventions, modes of behaviour, etc.] can only promote learning if they may be clearly related to the learner's own experiences and contribute to their expansion.

In the article we referred to earlier, Crawford-Lange and Lange propose a process for the integrated teaching/learning of «culture» and «language». This process is characterized as follows:

(1)   it identifies discussable themes, not just facts for absorption

       (2)   it personalizes discussion by relating to the native culture

       (3)   it requires reflection and discussion rather than leaving this interchange optional

       (4)   it asks for students' emotions, arguments and opinions, necessitating the teaching of such vocabulary. (48)

In secondary education the gradual expansion of the learner's horizon, an aspect of his overall development, may be reflected in the grading of themes to be exploited for socio-cultural relevance. We find this clearly illustrated in the curriculum description for French in the «Gymnasium» of Baden-Württemberg, where the following themes are among those recommended for successive years (49):

7th form:
      Home and family
      School
      Leisure and holidays
      Friendship
      Traffic
      Life in town and in the country

8th form:
      The world of young people
      Occupations
      Sports

9th form:
      Young people in society
      Vocational training and labour
      Technology and environment
      German-French relations:
      Exchange schemes for young people
      Twin-towns

10th form:
      Industry and economics
      Mass media
      Problems of the present day

In dealing with themes such as the above, it will be obvious, knowledge will have to play an important role. The *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien*, too, are careful to point out that their recommendations are not to be misinterpreted as excluding the historical dimension of the themes dealt with «Insights into developments and phenomena in the other society can only be acquired against the background of their historical motivation.» (50)

What is important here, again, is that the search for and acquisition of knowledge should be motivated by the learner's preoccupation with a particular theme. Learning-activities in project-form are likely to be particularly suitable for the acquisition of socio-cultural competence. That such activities may be fruitfully engaged in even by very young beginners is demonstrated by the success of such thematic learning-units as *Schule, so ein Mist?*, developed on behalf of the Foundation for Curriculum Development in the Netherlands for 12-13 year olds in the so-called «orientation phase». In this material the acquisition of socio-cultural competence is fully integrated with the acquisition of linguistic competence in the treatment of a theme that is directly relevant to the target group. The nature of the treatment is

such that it should lead to reflection on the learners' own experience of and attitudes towards «school» in confrontation with those of their German peers.

In fact, it is from the very first language lesson onward that the acquisition of socio-cultural competence is inseparable from the acquisition of linguistic competence. The themes likely to be dealt with in the earliest stages of FLL are those most intimately related to the learner's own experiences: home and family, school and/or work, leisure activities, food and drink, hobbies and interests, etc. It is particularly these themes - being very «personal» ones - which are socio-culturally «marked» and which will automatically exhibit socio-cultural characteristics of the foreign language community.

Newly arrived migrants are in a very special position with regard to the need for socio-cultural (*and* socio-linguistic *and* social) competence. In order to find their bearings in the host community - which may quite literally be a matter of survival - this need is likely to be far in excess of the possibilities of fulfilment offered in the course of the gradual acquisition of linguistic competence. In FLL-objectives for this target group socio-cultural competence will, consequently, have to occupy a very important place of its own and its specification may well have to be pitched at a level which might seem to be far above that specified for, for instance, linguistic competence.

Written texts will obviously constitute an important source of material for the acquisition of socio-cultural - together with linguistic - competence. Yet, the range of possible materials is much wider than that. As Crawford-Lange and Lange observe:

> Phenomena are presented to students by means of pictures, bulletin board displays, slides, overhead transparencies, films and filmstrips, videotape, videodisc, audiotape, and written text. (51)

Among the written texts that may successfully be used for the development of socio-cultural knowledge are those called «literary texts». Literature has, more often than not, as its subject life itself. Through his characters an author offers a view of life, of society, of the world, from different angles. He may deal with human relationships, with attitudes, with emotions, ethical and moral values, in short with the whole gamut of human experience. All this in an intimate, personal manner through the motivations and experiences, through the thoughts and feelings of his characters in the context of their society. As a consequence, literary texts, more than any other texts, may be eminently suitable for the direct intimate and personal confrontation with the world of the foreign language culture in its most meaningful aspects. Moreover, through a well-considered selection of literary texts a learner may become familiar with major aspects of the literary heritage of the country or countries of which he wishes to use the language. In other words, through the judicious choice of texts he will be enabled to share some of the formative experiences of native speakers of the foreign language, thus improving his quality as a communication partner. The purely aesthetic pleasure which the reading of literary texts may give we leave out of account here, apart from signalling its motivational potential.

It will be self-evident that literary texts can only perform the functions we have attributed to them for learners who have reached the level of communicative ability *and* the level of overall development required for their interpretation. In practice this means that they are particularly suitable for more advanced learners, even though some easy - especially short - texts and also «simplified» texts may conveniently be used at lower levels, too.

Whilst appreciating the particular significance of the use of literary texts in the pursuit of general educational aims, we wish to note that they constitute only one type of texts - however valuable - among many others that learners are much more likely to be confronted with in their daily life. It is a well-known fact - numerous enquiries confirm it - that even in a country such as the Netherlands, where confrontation with one or more foreign languages is part of most people's everyday life, the large majority of school leavers will never or very rarely read literary texts in a foreign language any more even if they have the capacity to do so. This does not diminish the potential formative effects of reading literature at school, but at the same time, in an educational process aiming at equipping the learners as effectively as possible for the fulfilment not only of their present but also of their future needs, the heavy emphasis on «literature» which characterizes much of our current foreign language teaching in higher secondary education, would not seem to be justified.

Socio-cultural competence, in our view, is an essential element of FLL objectives, for all target groups at all levels. The greatest need for it will be felt by those who have to spend their lives, wholly or partly, in a foreign language environment, the least need by those who use a foreign language primarily as a *lingua franca*, as an international means of communication with other non-native speakers. Yet, in the latter case, too, a code is used which reflects a particular culture. In order to establish full communication it is necessary for *lingua franca* speakers, too, to be aware of the socio-cultural implications of the language forms they are using.

Chapter 12: Social competence

In chapter 6 we characterized social competence as involving both the will and the skill to interact with others. If this characterization appears to include the whole range of what we refer to as «communicative ability» this is not surprising since communication *is* a social activity. Engaging freely and successfully in this activity requires all the qualities we have discussed under the other competence types. However, it also requires qualities which are beyond the scope of these other types, and it is for this reason that we need to deal with social competence as a separate component of FLL objectives. At the same time it is closely interrelated with other components, e.g. socio-linguistic competence and discourse competence, and it will be inevitable that certain qualities dealt with elsewhere will now be included again in our treatment of social competence. The difference between the component of social competence and other components is thus, again, a matter of focus rather than strict compartmentalisation. Another reason for dealing with social competence as a separate component is that it is less linguistically oriented than the other components and more directly concerned with the personality of the learner. It thus enables us to bring the pursuit of certain general educational aims directly within the scope of FLL objectives.

The will to interact», we said in chapter 6, «involves motivation, attitude and self-confidence, the skill to interact involves such qualities as empathy and the ability to handle social situations.

These qualities are, on the one hand, essential to successful verbal interaction, i.e. essential elements of communicative ability, and on the other hand they are essential to the achievement of various general educational aims.

The inclusion of social competence as a component of FLL objectives will ensure that the promotion of the development of the learner's personality is not regarded as *something additional to* «learning how to use a foreign language» but as an integral part of it.

Social competence involves techniques and personality features. The techniques can be learned, the personality features can only be acquired or developed. Let us start with the techniques. Some of them have already been mentioned in the chapters on socio-linguistic competence and on discourse competence. They include such «techniques» as knowing how to start a conversation with a stranger and how to end it. They also include knowing how to sustain a partner's interest in a social chat. These techniques may almost from the beginning of a FLL process form part of communicative practice activities. They may even lead to the situation that learners display social skills in the foreign language that they had never previously acquired in their native language.

Such techniques may be specified for all levels of language learning. At the lower levels they will often be directly associated with the ability to produce and to understand more or less formulaic utterances, at higher levels they may involve the full range of communicative ability. We quote as an example the specifications under «socialising» in the *Level Performance Charts* for IBM staff-courses (the levels range from 0.5 to 4.5 with intervals of 0.5):

level 0.5:   - Can give name and very basic greetings if prompted
level 1.0:   - Can introduce himself but won't be able to sustain conversation
                         - Can give basic greetings

level 1.5:	- Can ask a few basic questions at a party but will be uncomfortable without support
level 2.0:	- Can respond to introductions and offers at party level - Can offer cigarettes and drinks
level 2.5:	- Can sustain «cocktail party chatter» though slow to react to questions - Can order a meal and respond to suggestions
level 3.0:	- Can act as guide to a visitor - Can make contacts with invitations and suggestions
level 3.5:	- Can survive as a dinner guest managing even when not following everything - Tells jokes and gets point of 50% of jokes he hears
level 4.0:	- Can play host to business contacts and friends with relative ease -Can participate in informal discussions (professional & non-professional) exchanging views
level 4.5:	- Can interact in a foreign environment in social groups of his choice, with the ease of a native speaker

With the reservation that it seems to us more relevant to state what the learner can do rather than what he cannot (yet) do - «getting the point of 50% of jokes» is an extreme example of this - we regard this list as a fair representation of successive stages of social competence required in increasingly more demanding situations. The relative importance of techniques as compared with personality factors decreases as we go up the scale. At the level of «sustaining cocktail party chatter» they may still play a fairly important part (e.g. the technique of finding suitable themes and dealing with them in an appropriately casual manner). Even at level 4 they are still far from negligible (one can «learn» conventions for «acting as host»). At level 4.5, however, techniques will be far outweighed by the impact of the personality as a whole.

Techniques for social interaction can go a long way in making this interaction possible. They are of little use, however, in the establishment and maintenance of social interaction - however transitory - unless they are accompanied by personality factors that make these contacts «worthwhile» to communication partners. This particularly applies, of course, to communication situations beyond the purely transactional level of «ordering a beer» or «buying a ticket». Personality factors involved include the ones we mentioned earlier: motivation, attitude and self-confidence. One may easily add more from the «general educational aims» of the NCLE specification, such as acceptance of others, tolerance, empathy, openness, etc.

Factors which are often singled out for special prominence in statements of educational aims are «autonomy» (or *Selbständigkeit*) and «social responsibility», respectively concerning the individual as individual and as a member of society. In view of the special importance attached to these factors and the significant role that FLL may fulfil in their development we shall devote separate chapters to them.

There are, as yet, only few examples of specifications of objectives in which the component of social competence is developed in such a way that concrete steps are suggested that might lead to the achievement of this part of the objective. By way of illustration we quote one example here, contained in the *Handbook, Certificate of achievement in French/German at an intermediate/supplementary level,* issued by the Language Materials Development Unit of the University of York. It occurs under the heading of «oral problems» and is couched in the form of instructions to examiners:

Candidates will be required to take part in two rôle-plays. Each rôle-play will set the candidate in a situation with a certain objective. Candidates will attempt to gain this objective by speaking to, negotiating with or persuading etc. the examiner. The examiner will know the objective which the candidate desires to attain, but has certain difficulties which he is instructed to place in the way. The candidate has to try and achieve his or her objective by circumventing the difficulties which the examiner puts in his or her path...

Specimen question

Instructions to candidate

It is Saturday, shortly before noon. You have been on holiday in France, and you are driving towards Boulogne to catch a late afternoon ferry back to Dover. You have 250 F in cash and £ 20 in traveller's cheques but virtually no English money. Your long-suffering exhaust pipe drops off when you fail to notice a significant imperfection in the road surface. Seek help at the nearby garage bearing in mind your financial situation and the importance of not missing your ferry. Be polite but persistent and as inventive as you wish. The «garagiste» may not be as helpful as you hope, so be prepared to cope with him tactfully.

Possible attitude of examiner (garagiste)

(a) Refuse to help saying the garage is about to close.
Return on Monday.
(b) After hearing predicament agree to have a look at the car.
(c) Explain you do not stock spares for British cars. Unable to help.
(d) Agree to try to improvise and explain total cost of parts and labour will be 350 F.
(e) Agree to accept partial payment and allow balance to be forwarded to you later.

Assessment criteria

1. The tactical use of the foreign language, i.e., the ability to achieve one's desired ends:
        - the ability to negotiate difficulties and problems, and
        - the ability to make oneself understood, all without giving offence.
2. Fluency, i.e.
        - readiness to speak, and
        - the absence of pauses while thinking what to say.

As the example indicates, the aspect of social competence concerned is not only specified, it is even made the subject of an assessment procedure. Even though the validity of the procedure suggested might still have to be determined, inclusion in the examination ensures intensive practice of «social problem solving» during the teaching/learning process[5].

Role-playing activities would seem to be particularly suitable for the promotion of the development of social competence. Through participation in these activities the learner may be confronted with a variety of simulated communication situations demanding certain social skills. The most obviously useful - and probably also the most motivating - situations are

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[5]Suitable material for this practice (in French and in German) is available from The Publications Office, Language Materials Development Unit, King's Manor, Exhibition Square, York Y01 2EP, England.

likely to be those in which the learner can readily imagine himself as being involved at some time in the present or in the future, particularly if the learner is required to play a role he might ever have to play himself in such a situation. However, also the playing of roles that the learner is not likely ever to play himself in real life situations may contribute to the development of the learner's social competence by causing him to identify himself with other potential communication partners, which may increase his understanding of the roles others may be called upon to play.

Role-playing activities may be carried out at all levels of communicative ability. They vary from very simple exchanges of no more than a few minutes to, particularly at higher levels, simulations that may require several hours. Through the selection of roles and tasks they may be pitched at any level of social competence and geared towards any target group.

Besides role-plays a variety of learning-activities are suitable for promoting the development of social competence. They include the identification and interpretation of interactional phenomena such as roles, attitudes and social strategies occurring in written and spoken texts as well as in films and video-recordings.

They also include the participation in the social interaction going on in the educational institution and particularly in the classroom. In the words of D. Coste (52):

> Every learning situation is a socially marked situation in which learners are approached as social actors (with a definite status and specific roles), but also live during the period of learning as persons (more or less interested or tired, attentive, or thinking of something else, never learning right through the day, learning not only with their learner's «cap», but also with their body, their psyche and their «states of mind».

The classroom situation, as a real-life social situation, continually offers problems which call upon social competence for their solution. A teacher who knows how to exploit these opportunities can help the learners considerably in the development of this social competence, particularly if this exploitation includes reflection and evaluation.

In reports on lessons in experimental Dutch Middle Schools (53) examples such as the following occur:

- A pupil comes into the classroom fifteen minutes late while group work is in progress. The teacher sends him to his group with the task of finding out what is happening and how he can be fitted in at this late stage.

- A pupil reports to the teacher that she forgot to bring a book which is required for the task assigned to her group. The teacher sends her to her group telling her to arrange matters with them.

Both pupils find themselves in an awkward social situation and have to draw upon their social competence to cope with it. By letting them settle their own problem in their group rather than taking measures himself the teacher enables them - and their group - to acquire valid social experience. Whether or not this experience has to be made a subject for reflection subsequently may depend on the outcome of the negotiation processes.

The social problem solving in the above examples is likely to have been carried out in the learner's native language. However, the social experience and the potential gain in social competence are such that they may be transferred to situations where the foreign language is

used. In general, the transfer potential of social competence from one language to another will be quite high. At the same time foreign language learners should become aware of differences between social interaction conventions in the socio-cultural setting of their native language and those observed by speakers of the foreign language. The IBM staff-member who learns some simple techniques for «sustaining cocktail party chatter» (see above) will be well-advised to make himself familiar with cross-cultural differences in, for instance, subjects which are and which are not accepted as appropriate for cocktail party chatter, the depth of involvement in a subject which may be appropriately shown at a cocktail party, etc., etc. Social competence equally includes awareness of such matters as the amount of attention a newly arrived guest at a party is conventionally given by the host or the hostess, awareness of conventions for making compliments, of the careful avoidance of, or the readiness to engage in, discussion or debate. Differences in these matters may be considerable even between countries which are normally looked upon as sharing the same culture.

Objectives which specify awareness of such differences may be reached through observation and discussion of social interaction processes as represented in fictional texts and in films. Also at lower levels, however, where authentic materials of this kind may be beyond the learners' linguistic competence, this aspect of social competence need not be neglected. Significant features may, for instance, be incorporated in texts in the learners' course material.

Apart from techniques, strategies, awareness of conventions, etc., social competence is, as we suggested before, very strongly determined by the language user's personality. A well-developed personality with self-confidence, self-reliance, analytical powers, stable value-systems, empathy, acceptance of others, and a positive attitude towards experience - to mention only a few of the characteristics - will carry a person with only a modest knowledge of strategies and techniques through a lot of social situations which might baffle many others with greater knowledge but lacking the requisite personal qualities. That foreign language learning may - and should - substantially contribute to the development of these qualities is one of the main themes of the present study. In our next chapter we shall concentrate on a comprehensive aspect of the development of the learner's personality, namely the promotion of autonomy.

Chapter 13: The promotion of autonomy

It is essential to the functioning of a democratic society that its members should be willing and able to make their own decisions and to assume responsibility for them. This is expressed most directly in the electoral system of such a society which implies the right and the duty of each individual to make their own contribution to determining the policies to be adopted by it.

If we accept that «the willingness and ability of people to make their own decisions and to assume responsibility for them» is at the basis of the concept of democracy, the promotion of autonomy must be a major concern in the provision of educational facilities.

The choice of the word «autonomy» may be somewhat unfortunate in that, to many people, it carries «semi-anarchical» - to borrow Holec's term (54) - overtones. Yet, in educational statements it has - together with the French *autonomie* - gained currency as the equivalent of the less provocative-sounding German term *Selbständigkeit* and we feel justified in using it in that sense. At the risk of being unduly repetitive, let us say again that in the present study we mean by *autonomy*:

> The condition of being willing and able to make one's own decisions and assume responsibility for them.

This ability, Holec observes (55), «is not inborn but must be acquired by «natural» means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way».

Formal learning is provided by our educational systems, so it is the responsibility of these systems to «promote autonomy». In fact, this responsibility is very generally recognised in official statements concerning the aims of education.

Yet, very generally as well, that is where the matter is left. In spite of the occasional exception, it is still general practice to take young people - in their most crucial formative years - into an institution, to tell them, in minute detail, what to do, how to do it and when to do it, and to give them to understand - explicitly or by implication - that they will be alright if they do just as they are told. And this practice is by no means confined to compulsory primary and secondary education. Even in our universities misconceptions about the nature of efficiency often cause students to be submitted to a few years of initial «grinding» - with every detail of their study programme predetermined for them. The inevitable consequence - loudly deplored by the staff - is, of course, that in their later years «they cannot work on their own». Nor, we may add, do many of them wish to work on their own. As Schwarz observes (56):

> Many people feeling a need for education are frightened by the opportunities for participation offered to them. This is the result of their early directive schooling followed by conditioning and alienating occupational activities.

The conclusion from this, in the words of the same author, is that:

> participation in education in our present day societies must be learnt, does not occur automatically and is not a response to a spontaneous aspiration.

The shift, in our discussion, from the promotion of autonomy in general to «participation in education» is only an apparent one. «Being autonomous» is not something that can be taught, as another school subject. Autonomy can only be acquired, as a result of living-experiences. The experiences available in an educational institution are those created by the educational context. This context is determined by a social structure - the structure of functioning, together with others, in the institution - and by its purpose, i.e. education, learning. If, then, the educational institution is to promote autonomy it can only do so by promoting active participation in the achievement of its own purpose, i.e. in education.

Many educational institutions, particularly but not exclusively those providing general education, have as one of their aims that through the learning-experiences which their learners undergo «further learning should be facilitated». In other words: learners should learn how to learn. In general education the need for this is particularly evident since, by definition, it cannot cater for all the specific future needs of the learners. To take an example from our own sphere: it may well be that a learner who has become proficient in English and German at school will need Spanish or Japanese later on; it may also be that a learner who has acquired general communicative ability in a foreign language needs the command of a highly specific register in later life.

For this purpose, learning-objectives, and particularly FLL objectives, include more and more often specifications of «study-skills» which the learners are supposed to acquire.

A modest list is given for young beginners at Dutch Middle Schools (57):
- knowing how to use a dictionary
- identifying the main points in a text
- classifying data
- linking text to illustrations
- making notes
- memorizing

The *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* provide a more detailed specification of so-called «instrumental skills», particularly those relevant in FLL (58):

1.   Dealing with text-types (receptively)
1.1   Identifying
          - Marking
          - Underlining
1.2   Note-taking
1.3   Organizing
          - Classifying
          - Analysing
          - Segmenting
          - Interrelating verbal and visual elements: TV, film
1.4   Decoding generally accepted symbols
1.5   Reading graphics
          - Statistic tables and diagrams
          - Flow-charts
          - Time-tables

2. Dealing with text-types (productively)
2.1   Note-making
2.2   Organising (before production)
2.3   Using generally accepted symbols

2.4   Graphical representation of logical relationships

3.   Command of working-methods and practice-techniques
3.1   Schematizing
3.2   Command of working-methods: pairwork, groupwork (also with task-differentiation), as well as individual work
3.3   Checking and correcting the results of one's own work and of the work of others

4.   Utilising resources
4.1   Using technical aids
           - Tape recorder
           - Cassette-recorder
           - Language laboratory facilities
           - Overhead projector and transparencies
4.2   Obtaining and using reference works
           - Dictionaries
           - Lexicons
4.3   Command of techniques for collecting information from:
           - Media
           - Persons
           - Institutions

Note that the above specification was drawn up for secondary schools, junior grade (*Sekundarstufe 1*) and is, consequently, not meant to be exhaustive.

The acquisition of study-skills is, of course, essential if learners are to be prepared for more independent further learning after completing their course at an educational institution. It is also essential, we would add, to successful learning during the time learners spend at the institution itself. It is indispensable as well if the learner is to achieve any degree of autonomy as a learner.

The way in which an educational institution can most directly promote the learners' autonomy is by enabling them to increasingly take charge of their own learning. The achievement of autonomy as a learner means that the learner decides what he wants to learn and how he wants to learn it and takes responsibility for making these decisions as well as for carrying them out. Schwarz, as we saw, pointed out that learners are not capable of doing this «by nature», that they have to learn how to do this. And not only will they have to learn this, but the longer they have been in the educational system the more they may have to «unlearn».

With regard to adult learners Holec mentions and describes two processes that are required for the acquisition of autonomy (59):

-      a gradual «deconditioning proces» which will cause the learner to break away, if only by putting them into words, from a priori judgments and prejudices of all kinds that encumber his ideas about learning languages and the role he can play in it - to free himself from the notion that there is one ideal method, that teachers possess that method, that his knowledge of his mother tongue is of no use to him for learning a second language, that his experience as a learner of other subjects, other know-how, cannot be transferred even partially, that he is incapable of making any valid assessment of his performance, and so on;

-      a gradual «process of acquiring» the knowledge and know-how he needs in order to assume responsibility for his learning; to learn to use tools such as dictionaries and grammar books, to assemble and analyse a corpus, to describe his expectations in terms that will serve to define a learning process, all of which implies discovering descriptive categories which will not necessarily be those of a linguist or a professional teacher; to learn to analyse his performances, and so on.

«It is through the parallel operation of these two processes», Holec comments, «that the learner will gradually proceed from a position of dependence to one of independence, from a non-autonomous state to an autonomous one».

Study-skills, then, are essential, but they are by no means enough. An objective that states, in general terms, the need for promoting the learners' autonomy and subsequently confines itself to specifying a number of «study-skills» is inadequate in its provision of guidance for the planning of learning-activities.

Yet, this is, at present, the general situation. Richterich, in his *Besoins langagiers et objectifs d'apprentissage* (60), quotes two significant examples. The first is from the *«Bulletin officiel du ministère de l'Education, du ministère de la Jeunesse, des Sports et des Loisirs, du 14 mai 1981, à Paris»*, issued under the title of *Instruction pour l'enseignement des langues vivantes. Classe de seconde*. It stipulates as one of the objectives: «donner aux élèves les moyens d'un développement autonome ultérieur, ... »

The second example is quoted from the objective in a curriculum description of the Swiss canton of Bern, dating from 1961: *«préparer à un autodidactisme efficace*.» Richterich comments:

> La référence à l'autonomie est particulièrement frappante. Et s'il fallait une preuve que la formulation d'un objectif, même dans un texte officiel, ne signifie pas qu'on va automatiquement chercher à l'atteindre, cette référence nous la fournirait de façon irréfutable. Car à notre connaissance, ni en France ni dans le canton de Berne, le «développement autonome ultérieur» ou «l'autodidactisme efficace» ne sont à l'ordre du jour pédagogique, surtout pas dans l'enseignement officiel des langues vivantes.

An objective which, with regard to the promotion of autonomy, is to go beyond paying lip-service to an educational ideology, will, at the very least, have to give some indications as to what the promotion of autonomy involves. And if the «promotion of autonomy» is to be seriously undertaken by an educational institution, it involves quite a lot. For an autonomous learner does not accept ready-made decisions as to «what is good for him» but will at least wish to participate consciously and meaningfully in arriving at them.

For this participation in decision-making the term «negotiation» has become current. It is unfortunate that to many people this term implies the existence of conflicting interests, which makes it unnecessarily provocative. In the present study we use it in the more neutral sense of «discuss, confer, in order to come to an agreement». It is in this sense, too, that Richterich uses it in his proposal for *une pédagogie de la négociation*. He explains the concept as follows (61):

> Une pédagogie de la négociation est résolument systémique et dynamique. Elle traite l'enseignement/apprentissage d'une langue étrangère comme un projet que des individus réalisent ensemble dans le cadre d'une institution. Ce qui implique:
> - que les partenaires disposent d'instruments leur permettant de prendre conscience des données du projet, des ressources disponibles et des conditions de sa réalisation,

- que des procédures d'intervention soient intégrées au système d'enseignement/apprentissage de façon que les partenaires puissent, en tout temps, faire des propositions et prendre des décisions,
- que des pratiques d'observation et d'évaluation soient également intégrées au système pour que les partenaires puissent régler les interactions entre ses différents éléments constitutifs.

In principle, «negotiation» may be applied to five main issues. They are indicated by Holec (62) as follows:
- fixing the objectives
- defining the contents and progressions
- selecting the methods and techniques to be used
- monitoring the acquisition procedure[6]
- evaluating what has been acquired

Full autonomy would mean that the learner is capable of making his own decisions, in the light of relevant knowledge, on each of these points. Few learners, however, have degrees in applied linguistics and even those might not be fully confident that they would make the right decision in each case. Moreover, every learner - also the autonomous one - is restricted in his freedom by certain constraints, constraints of available time, of available resources and facilities, of individual capacities, etc. The large majority of learners, moreover, have to accept much more rigid constraints imposed by an educational system or institution, by an examination programme, by an employer, etc., etc.

What the implementation of a *pédagogie de la négociation* means in practice is:
- establishing what latitude the learner has with regard to each of the five points mentioned above,
- acquiring insight in the choices available with regard to each point within the learner's range of latitude,
- negotiating these choices,
- allowing scope for revision of choices during the learning-process.

Depending on the educational conditions, there will be enormous differences between the ranges of latitude, and consequently the numbers of choices, available to different learners.

In the setting of compulsory education, for instance, the range may be relatively narrow, with fixed objectives, a fixed timetable, a strictly limited choice of resources (which may even include «prescribed» course books), and even fixed contents and progressions. In such a case the scope for negotiation is very limited, but never non-existent. Objectives are rarely fixed in every detail, prescribed «contents and progressions» are usually confined to minimal requirements, leaving room for addition and expansion, methods and techniques do not normally determine the use of learning-time minute by minute, and evaluation procedures do not always have to be identical with prescribed examination procedures. Even in this case, then, there is room - however limited it may be - for involving the learners' active participation in making decisions, for making them responsible for at least part of their learning-process, for enabling them to make at least a little progress towards the achievement of autonomy. Fortunately, even in many compulsory education systems the scope for negotiation is much wider than this. In most countries and institutions in the Council of Europe area objectives are described partly in terms of minimal requirements that leave

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[6]i.e. deciding where to learn (in the institution, at home) and when to learn (at what times, how often, for how long, etc.).

considerable scope for complementary activities and partly in terms that allow a whole range of concretisations; contents and progressions as well as methods and techniques are often recommended rather than prescribed, and prescribed evaluation procedures are confined to final examinations. In these cases there is ample room for negotiation between teachers and learners and among the learners themselves. We shall return to the conditions for negotiation later in this chapter.

At the other end of the scale we find voluntary, mostly adult, individual learners and study-groups working within or even outside an institutional framework. By way of exemplification we quote Holee's description of an experiment at the Centre de *Recherches et d'Application Pédagogiques en Langues* (Nancy, France) (63):

> Since 1974 CRAPEL at the University of Nancy II has been using a self-directed learning structure with support designed to take learners who cannot or do not wish to follow a set course. Its twofold aim is to provide training in self-directed learning and training in a language (English) and it covers:
> - *animateurs* whose duties are to provide the support needed in order to become autonomous;
> - learning materials made available to the learners;
> - a collection of sound and video recordings;
> - native speakers.
>
> Acceptance of responsibility for the learning is individual and total: each learner defines his own objectives, contents, methods and techniques and the manner in which his learning is done and assesses his own attainments. In this he is helped by an *animateur* with whom he can make an appointment as often as he wants; the content of their interviews has reference to the learning process and is never a «course» either in methods or language: his meeting with the *animateur* gives the learner an opportunity to think about his learning (definition of needs and initial aims, then to consider the methods and techniques he is using now and intends to employ in the future and his self-assessment) in order to develop the abilities he needs in order to be able to take over responsibility for his learning.
>
> The materials made available to the learner include «courses» produced by CRAPEL or obtainable on the market, teaching «modules» constructed for learning on an autonomous basis and authentic materials of all kinds. They form the complete range of working materials from which the learner chooses his own contents at the start of his studies if he has none of his own to suggest.
>
> Later on he will add his own contributions to this range whenever possible.
>
> Selection of learning contents is generally made «by trial and error».
>
> The native speakers (English or American people who are not teachers) play their part by supplying information at the learner's request but also by conversing with him to help him learn communicative skills (oral expression) and by acting as «developers» for self-assessment.

One essential element in the promotion of autonomy - whether full or strictly limited autonomy - appears to be the acquisition of insight by the learners as to what they want to do and how they want to do it. Moreover, they should become sufficiently articulate on these matters to be able to engage in meaningful negotiation about them. This may sound very

ambitious, but - as experiences indicate - it can be done. And it is worth doing even if institutional conditions allow it to be done only partly.

The present author remembers a visit to a class of 10-year olds in a German school, who had had only a few months of English yet and who, from a list established in advance with the teacher (through negotiation!) happily checked off all the things they had already learned «how to do» in English and agreed what they would learn next. In this class the objectives had been made transparent to the learners and the learning-activities were transparently related to them. That this first modest step towards autonomy proved powerfully motivating to learners *and* teacher is hardly surprising.

It is undoubtedly an advantage of communicative objectives that they can be made transparent to learners, much more so than objectives formulated in formal linguistic terms. A learner can easily be helped to become aware of what he wants to be able to *do* in the foreign language, but only an expert could determine in advance what words and structures a learner might have to «know». Similarly, learners can be helped to become aware of what is involved in being able to do the things they want to do in the foreign language. As foreign language learners they have the benefit of already having considerable experience of and skill in verbal communication, in their native language. It is not a particularly difficult matter to exploit this experience so as to arrive at understanding of an analytical model of communicative ability as described in the present study. Each of the components we have examined can be discussed in very simple non-technical terms and related to the learners' own experience.

It may be more difficult to engage the learners' active participation in negotiating methods and techniques. Again, however, this is more feasible in a «communicative approach» than in more indirect approaches of the past of which, at best, only the teacher saw the rationale. To a naïve learner, the goal of language learning is to be able to communicate and this naïve learner, too, can be helped to become aware of the potential benefits of different types of communicative practice, of the uses of semi-communicative and pre-communicative exercises and, when the need arises, of grammar and vocabulary drill. As the learner acquires more and more learning-experience he is, of course, more and more likely to find out what, for him, are the best ways to learn. He is also more and more likely to wish to make his own decisions about this. «Why should we have to do this?» was a seditious question in the traditional classroom, it is a necessary one in a classroom where the promotion of autonomy is taken seriously.

The more learners are supposed to take charge of their own learning, the more importance is to be attached to evaluation procedures. The *pédagogie de la négociation* encourages learners either to adopt suggested solutions for learning-problems or to seek their own. In both cases it is essential that the measure of success of whatever solution is tried out should be established as validly as possible. Evaluation is thus an integrated element in the continuous decision-making process with regard to learning-activities which is to be undertaken. It will often take the form of self-assessment, but a learner may also wish to have his progress assessed by his peers or by an expert. Self-assessment may be carried out in a variety of ways, several of which are described by Oskarsson in his *Approaches to Self-Assessment in Foreign Language Learning* (64). They are all characterized by transparency, a clear relation to objectives, and facility of administration.

The promotion of learner-autonomy cannot be effected without giving scope to trial-and-error processes. This will even be necessary if the teacher «knows better» but does not find his views accepted in a negotiation procedure. Proceeding by trial-and-error takes time, more time - especially in the early stages - than using a well-tried method. Yet this need not be

wasted time. There is, as yet, little evidence available, but it seems likely that once learners really feel responsible for their own learning, once they feel that what they learn makes sense to them and that the way they learn it is the way that suits them, their learning-results may be such that they amply compensate for whatever time was initially spent in occasionally following tracks that led nowhere.

If autonomy is to be genuinely promoted, negotiation must be fully integrated into the learning-process. One way of contributing to this is to make provision for it in official regulations, as is done in *the Curriculum Regulations for the Danish Higher Preparatory Examination* (65):

Classes shall be co-ordinated by means of regular discussions, e.g. of an interdisciplinary nature, among teachers and between teachers and student representatives. The joint consultation committee or corresponding body shall ensure that such discussions take place. At the beginning of the first term and in the term in which a new subject is to commence, the teacher will either prepare in conjunction with the students a plan governing work during the term or shall inform students of the existence of such a plan. The teacher and the students shall hold regular discussions on instruction in each term. Where teachers and students agree, integrated instruction between related subjects can be conducted during the second half of the second term.

However, even authoritative statements of this kind will have little effect unless the educational system as a whole supports their implementation. «Autonomy in an individual in one sphere», Holec observes, «cannot be dissociated from his autonomy in other areas» (66). In the context of educational institutions this means that if a *pédagogie de la négociation* is to be realised this cannot be confined to the foreign language classroom but will affect the whole life of the community which constitutes that institution. Here, too, the range of latitude available to individual learners will have to be carefully determined.

The most important condition for the successful promotion of autonomy is the capacity of the teacher to fulfil his role properly. This role is definitely more difficult, more demanding, in a *pédagogie de la négociation* than in the security provided by traditional authoritarian relationships.

If negotiation is to be genuine, in other words if it is not to be a way of exercising authority more effectively by giving learners merely the illusion that they are participating in decision-making while withholding the power from them, the teacher has to be accepted by the learners as a fellow-negotiator. It then depends on the attitude of the teacher whether the superior knowledge he possesses is a hindrance or a help. This knowledge is a hindrance if it inhibits the learners from making serious efforts to develop, offer and stick to their own views. It is a help if it induces the learners to draw upon it for information and insights that they may wish to take into account in arriving at their own decisions. In a *pédagogie de la négociation* the teacher is a facilitator of learning rather than a transmitter of knowledge. His expertise is invaluable for determining the range of choices available and for organising the procedures that will enable the learners to make a well-considered selection from them. Once this selection made, his expertise is available for organising efficient and effective learning-activities, for developing or selecting relevant evaluation techniques, etc., etc. He is also available as an expert-communicator, for communication practice as well as for assessment purposes. In group-discussions he may play a stimulating role without dominating the discussion, he may structure the discussion, sensitise the learners to what is essential in the issues involved and provoke their reactions, both intellectual and affective.

At the same time, the teacher carries his own responsibility for the progress of his learners, he has - among other things - to see to it that each learner gets the fullest scope possible for self-development and self-fulfilment without, however, unduly limiting that of others. In situations of irresolvable conflict he may even be obliged to have recourse to the authority he is invested with by the educational system.

This ambiguity in the teacher's position makes his role an extremely delicate one demanding great skill, tactfulness, understanding, endurance, strength of character and... love of his job and love of people.

The promotion of autonomy, as a major educational aim, has not yet been specified in terms of sets of concrete recommendations in descriptions of subject-specific objectives. Yet, the present chapter should contain enough elements to enable such recommendations to be drawn up. FLL objectives would seem to be particularly suited to the inclusion of these recommendations because their object is communication and communication is the essence of negotiation.

Chapter 14: Development of social responsibility

Since the scope of an individual's freedom limits - and is limited by - that of others, the development of social responsibility is a necessary complement to the promotion of autonomy. In some form or other it is included as a major component in all official statements concerning general educational aims.

A number of conditions for social behaviour have already been discussed in previous chapters, all in relation to the overall subject-specific aim of FLL, i.e. communicative ability. Some of them are listed in the NCLE specification:

- understanding and accepting the feelings of other people; developing empathy
- accepting people with different social and ethnic backgrounds, avoiding rigidity and stereotyping
- realising the validity of other ways of organising, categorising and expressing experience, and of other ways of managing personal interactions

Social behaviour itself is referred to in the NCLE specification as follows:

- understanding and accepting the disciplines involved in acting as an effective member of a social group (the co-operative principle)

It is a curious thought that something like this must always have been a - written or unwritten - aim of general education and that nevertheless in the traditional classroom learners tended to be treated as isolated individuals who, during their stay there, were supposed to be in communion with the teacher alone and to have no contacts among each other. Such contacts were even forbidden to the extent of carrying severe penalties.

In the «communicative classroom» - to borrow Littlewood's term (67) - learning without inter-learner contact is almost unthinkable. The context of the classroom is the natural social setting for communicative practice, communication being based on coordinated efforts (Gumperz). Moreover, if the concept of «negotiation» is put into practice - which seems to be a necessary consequence of wishing to promote the learners' autonomy - inter-learner communication will have to play a dominant role.

That the «communicative practice» will, on the whole, be carried out in the foreign language, whereas «communication for negotiation» is more likely to take place in the native language, is irrelevant in the present context. In both cases the «coordinated efforts» will be required which are essential to communication.

Thus we arrive, again, at the conclusion that the achievement of the subject-specific aim of FLL, communicative ability, demands the pursuit of a general educational aim, in this case the ability to act as an effective member of a social group. This general aim may be pursued through teaching/learning activities for all educational subjects. For foreign language learning and teaching, however, it is a component of the subject-specific aim itself.

«Social responsibility» is not a condition that lends itself to operationalisation in examination syllabuses. Its inclusion in FLL objectives is therefore to be regarded as «giving meaningful direction» to learning-activities rather than as a basis for examinations. The objective may state the need to acquire the ability to act «as an effective member of a social group» and attempt to indicate what is involved in this. The implementation of such a statement will

inevitably lead to the planning of group activities as integral parts of the educational process. It is no coincidence that in communicative language learning the organisation of activities in projects often plays such an important role. Projects and project-like activities are particularly suitable for the development of social behaviour. They enable the participants to gain experience in such matters as:

- the planning and organisation of goal-directed group-work
- the negotiation of the distribution of tasks and roles
- the interplay between group-leaders/coordinators/*animateurs* and other participants
- the recognition, acceptance and utilisation of differences between individuals with regard to personality, capacities, attitudes, etc.
- the assumption of individual responsibility within a collective effort
- the recognition and fulfilment of needs for mutual assistance
- techniques for discussion, debate, negotiation, evaluation, presentation, etc.

Conclusion

Ongoing exploration of the concept of communicative ability, particularly with regard to foreign language learning, has revealed a range of dimensions which extends far beyond that of such specifications as the Council of Europe's threshold levels. It does not invalidate the threshold levels but it puts them in the perspective that is needed to bring out their full significance. The appearance of the threshold levels was a powerful factor in stimulating this exploration. In fact, the present study may partly be regarded as an attempt to make explicit what, in the threshold levels, is suggested only by implication. We owe the possibility of doing this to numerous scholars who, in the past dozen years or so, have stimulated our awareness of various aspects of communicative ability, but most of all we owe it to the many, often anonymous, workers nearer to the educational scene who developed their ideas on communicative language teaching and learning in new curriculum descriptions, in objectives, in guidelines, in learning-materials. Among them - the many references and quotations in the present volume bear witness to it - the work of the committee responsible for the *Hessische Rahmenrichtlinien* is truly outstanding. It is outstanding for its originality, for its scope, and for its depth of treatment. The present volume brings many of their ideas together with those of others. Practically all that is contained in it is in some part of Europe, in some form or another, put into practice. We hope that this will guarantee the feasibility of developing and introducing FLL objectives which are comprehensive enough to do justice to the richness of the experience of learning how to communicate, with all that it involves, in a foreign language.

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