

ELT-53

English Teaching Abroad and the British Universities

Milestones in ELT

Milestones in ELT

The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we re-launched a selection of these publications online, and more have now been added in connection with our 80th anniversary. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

English Teaching Abroad and the British Universities

This 1961 publication consists of papers from a high-level conference on University Training and Research in the Teaching of English as a Second/Foreign Language organised by the British Council in London, 15–17 December 1960. The conference brought together heads of departments of English and experts in linguistics and phonetics, with experts in education being relatively under-represented. Papers cover topics including Contemporary English language and general linguistics and Training in the teaching of English, but relatively little attention was given to English literature. Of particular interest, perhaps, are the papers by the linguist JR Frith, who died on the eve of the conference, and Arthur King of the British Council. Both of these papers provide overviews of the nature of the demand for English in the contemporary world, which was perceived to be rapidly increasing. The task of the conference was partly – perhaps mainly – to establish recommendations for areas that would require government funding in order to meet perceived demands, and these are set out at the end of the book. They cover training of British teachers and teacher-trainers for work overseas, preparing teachers in Britain for the teaching of English language, linguistics and literature, and support for research into all aspects of English teaching.

ELIZABETH ULDALL

**English Teaching
Abroad
and the British
Universities**

METHUEN



THE DAKIN COLLECTION
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
14 BUCCLEUCH PLACE
EDINBURGH EH8 9LN

File No.

Shelf No.

Presented by

English Teaching Abroad and the British Universities

*Extracts from the proceedings
of the conference on University Training and Research in
the Teaching of English as a Second/Foreign Language
held at Nutford House, London, W1
under the auspices of the British Council
on December 15, 16 and 17, 1960*

EDITED BY
H. G. WAYMENT
Secretary of the Conference

With a foreword by
Professor G. BULLOUGH
Chairman of the Conference

1961
LONDON
METHUEN & CO LTD
36 ESSEX STREET, WC2

First published 1961
© 1961 *The British Council*
Printed in Great Britain
by the Shenval Press
London, Hertford and Harlow
Cat No. 2/2502/10

CONTENTS

Foreword	PROFESSOR G. BULLOUGH	page 5
I	Introduction to the Conference SIR PAUL SINKER	7
II	The Study and Teaching of English at Home and Abroad. J. R. FIRTH	11
<i>Session 1</i>	<i>The Nature of the Demand for English in the world to-day as it affects British Universities</i>	
III	DR A. H. KING	22
<i>Session 2</i>	<i>Contemporary English Language and General Linguistics</i>	
IV	PROFESSOR ANGUS MCINTOSH	26
V	PROFESSOR F. R. PALMER	30
<i>Session 3</i>	<i>Training in the Teaching of English</i>	
VI	J. C. CATFORD	33
VII	PROFESSOR J. PILLEY	37
VIII	E. E. R. CHURCH	38
IX	PROFESSOR L. J. LEWIS	40
<i>Session 4</i>	<i>English Language and Literature</i>	
X	H. SYKES DAVIES	42
XI	DR JOHN HOLLOWAY	45
<i>Session 5</i>	<i>Research Problems</i>	
XII	W. HAAS	48
XIII	PROFESSOR R. QUIRK	51
XIV	PROFESSOR T. J. B. SPENCER	57
Recommendations		58

FOREWORD

This booklet contains extracts from the proceedings of the conference on University Training and Research in the Teaching of English as a Second/Foreign Language which was held at Nutford House, London, from December 15 to 17, 1960. Sir Paul Sinker's introductory statement describes the genesis of the conference, which was suggested by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of United Kingdom universities.

The conference was also desired by members of the Association of Professors of English, who have become very conscious of changes in the scope and emphasis of English studies caused by the great growth in the use of English overseas and in the demand for English teaching all over the world. This development is matched by new needs at home, where dissatisfaction with the poor knowledge of their own language shown by many school-leavers and students in universities or technological colleges is leading to reappraisal of courses and examinations in the subject.

It was hoped to bring together at Nutford House heads of departments of English and of Education and experts in linguistics and phonetics. In the event the dates of the conference clashed with an important gathering of Professors of Education elsewhere, and only nine educationists were able to attend. Although several of these contributed valuably to the discussions they were heavily outnumbered, and as Professor Pilley remarked at the time (p. 37), the educational dimension of the subject received less attention than some members could have wished. But so much little-known ground was covered, particularly in matters concerning the relationship of linguistics (pure and applied) to the academic training needed by all teachers of the English language, and especially by teacher-trainers, that the partial nature of the survey may perhaps be excused. Doubtless (as Mr Haas pointed out [p. 48]) there is need for other discussions about *how* to teach as well as about *what* to teach; and another conference might well consider the problems of teaching English literature adumbrated by Mr H. Sykes Davies and Dr J. Holloway.

Verbatim records of conferences are often almost unreadable; we hope that what follows does not fall into this sin. Moreover a conference develops its own allusiveness, its private jokes, and some excellent contributions are so straight from the shoulder, so dependent on the momentary give-and-take of debate, even on intonation and gesture, as to lose much of their force on the printed page. Accordingly one or two most valuable contributions, for instance those by Professor A. N. Jeffares (in the first session) and Professor B. Pattison (in the second), have been omitted from this record. With these exceptions, the two introductory speeches to each session of the conference are represented here, together with a few shorter contributions, though these have had to be severely limited owing to lack of space.

We include a contribution from one whose influence pervaded the conference although he died on its eve after drafting the paper reproduced on pp. 11-21. As a teacher at the School of Oriental and African Studies from 1932 and Professor of General Linguistics in the University of London from 1944 until his retirement in 1956, John Rupert Firth was a pioneer in his subject and not only a great teacher but the inspirer of a school of linguistic experts which has had worldwide influence. His mind worked by flashes of intuition and he loved to start an argument. Like Bacon he was against the premature consolidation of observations into a written system, but the range of his acquaintance with problems of west and east and the farsightedness of his ideas were apparent in his conversation as well as in his writings. His encouragement helped greatly in preparing the ground for the conference, and he was sorely missed at the conference itself.

In conclusion I wish to thank all those who made the gathering a success: the officers of the British Council who did most of the organizing, and in particular Dr A. H. King and Mr H. G. Wayment and those who acted as scribes; those colleagues who spent a long evening working against time to prepare the Recommendations; and the Warden of Nutford House and her staff who, by ministering to our comfort, did much to ensure that our discussions were good-tempered.

GEOFFREY BULLOUGH

Introduction to the Conference

SIR PAUL SINKER

Director-General of the British Council

I doubt whether the British Council has ever taken upon itself the task of calling together such a distinguished body of academic people as the present one and we owe you some explanation of why we have done so now. It is not normally the Council's business to set itself up as an expert in anything. We are merely the middlemen, and it is our job to bring together the experts of this country in a wide variety of fields and the experts of the other countries of the world. But in this one field, the teaching of English, we do have a special task. Our Royal Charter lays down our general work in the widest possible terms, but adds a clause to the effect that we have a special responsibility for the promotion of the knowledge of the English language throughout the world. In the teaching of English we can, I think, claim to have some degree of professional standing. We have on our staff probably more practitioners of the art of teaching English as a second language than any other organization in the world, because there is nothing that quite corresponds to the British Council in the United States. Some of our English-teaching staff are not only practitioners but have made and are making valuable contributions to theory. Nevertheless, we must of course leave to the universities the provision of the main academic base for our operations in the front line. We must base ourselves firmly on the universities if we are to take the long view and recognize the long-term importance of academic research as well as the short-term urgency of trying to meet the immense demands for our services in the teaching of English all over the world. We are indeed grateful to you all, and to the universities, for the excellent support and guidance that we receive from you; and what we want is more of both.

There is another more immediate reason why we have called this

conference. The British Council's Linguistics Panel prepared about a year ago a memorandum on *University Training and Research in the Teaching of English as a Second Language*. We sent it to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals who amongst other things asked the British Council to organize a conference, and this is the result. The Council's main immediate interest is in the production of more people suitably qualified to do the jobs that we want them to do in the English teaching field overseas; and the opportunities and the demand for our services are now immense and are opening out before us in new countries and old ones all over the world.

There is no lack of support from the Government, who fully recognize the importance of trying to meet this demand; what we now need above all are the people to go and carry out the work. So that is the Council's main interest in this conference: the production of more people to help us do our work. But we are well aware that you, as university people, will have other interests, amongst them the teaching of English as a first language, and I know you won't hesitate to include that amongst the subjects you discuss; apart from its intrinsic importance it obviously has a bearing on the teaching of English as a second language, and any young person who becomes interested in the structure of his own language is likely to become interested in possible ideas of teaching it abroad.

I should like if I may to trespass for one moment on an academic theme. I recently read in the *Universities Quarterly* an article by Mr W. Haas on general linguistics in university studies, and I was especially struck by the importance he attached to the development of linguistic analysis of the various languages of the world, both for its own sake and because it is such an important aid in developing the best method of teaching English in each separate country. A few days ago I heard an extreme example of the disadvantages of a complete absence of linguistic analysis. I received a visit from the Minister of Education of Somalia, which became independent only a few months ago. He knew Italian, but he chose to speak to me in Somali through an interpreter. What he said was in terms to which we are well accustomed in Western countries — about the problems of education, the needs of his country, and so on. The language, which I have never heard before, seemed to me a flowing and pleasant one

INTRODUCTION

to listen to, indeed a highly civilized language. After a time I was consumed by curiosity; I told him through the interpreter that I was most impressed by what he had been saying, and asked if it would be possible for him to have it written down in Somali. His reply was, 'No, unfortunately we have no written language'. That, I suppose, is one of the most outstanding examples of a language which must have developed a very great way and is usable for modern purposes, but has still not had the degree of analysis that results even in a script. Now the descriptive analysis of languages, I should have thought, would be a field of enquiry which would appeal to quite a number of undergraduates. Casting my mind back to my Cambridge days, I can't help wondering whether general linguistics would not be a very attractive Part II of the Modern Languages Tripos or the Classical Tripos; and even perhaps – though not so closely connected in spite of appearances – of the English Tripos. At any rate I am very glad to learn that some universities are interested in this, and that at, I believe, two universities it is a subject which undergraduates can take as an option.

Now returning to my proper field, the work of this conference, what we hope for is that you may be able to agree at the final session on recommendations to be sent to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in answer to their request that we should hold this conference, with the suggestion that they should forward them with their blessing to the University Grants Committee. I don't need to tell this audience that the present moment is a very critical one from our point of view; the University Grants Committee is considering the expenditure for the quinquennium beginning in 1962. So that we regard this as perhaps the main purpose of this conference, apart from the discussions themselves which we hope will be intrinsically valuable, both from the point of view of research and from the point of view of training.

This conference will also be a very valuable lead-in to two further conferences that are going to be held in the near future: the conference at Makerere next month, at which members of the Commonwealth will meet together to discuss the teaching of English throughout the Commonwealth. I am glad to know that there are one or two representatives of other Commonwealth countries present here,

ENGLISH ABROAD AND THE UNIVERSITIES

because we do our best to co-operate with the other Commonwealth countries in the teaching of English, especially with Australia and New Zealand in South-East Asia. The second conference is one that the British Council has arranged for the summer, a conference between ourselves and the Americans on the subject of the teaching of English overseas. The field is so wide that there is no need for us to compete with or seek to rival the Americans or *vice versa*; there is ample room for both of us, and we try to keep in step and let each other know what we are doing, both geographically, so to speak, and also from the point of view of the technical questions arising from the teaching of English. So we shall, I have no doubt, gain a great deal of useful information and ideas from the present conference which will help us to participate in those two later conferences.

The study and teaching of English at home and abroad

II. CONFERENCE PAPER BY J. R. FIRTH

PART I

The British Council is a cultural organization with world-wide responsibilities, and though, like the universities of the United Kingdom, it is supported by Government for such purposes, it is in no sense an academic body. Nevertheless it has a good deal to do with Commonwealth universities, including our own, and is especially concerned with the principal Commonwealth language, English, in all its reach and variety.

In his Introduction to the Council's Annual Report for 1958-9, the Director-General has summarized in two concise and forceful pages the main tasks of the Council. In the 'passionate and insatiable demand for education' overseas the Council recognizes a persistent force making for 'personal and for national advancement', and also that, because of some of the present limitations of some of the national languages, the key to higher education is English. The demand is not merely for English in itself, but help in the teaching of key subjects in English, and especially perhaps in science and technology.¹

The Director-General repeats his emphasis on the importance of English in establishing contact and collaboration with the educated classes, in education itself, and 'in the scientific, professional, and cultural fields'.² In other words 'the linguistic problems of Asia and Africa are largely concerned with making the leadership of the educated effective — both in English and in such rising national languages as prove adequate'.³

¹ p. 7.

² pp. 8 and 9.

³ Working paper by J. R. Firth for the Makerere Conference, 1960, on the Teaching of English as a Second Language, para. 29.

ENGLISH ABROAD AND THE UNIVERSITIES

The British Council has given invaluable help to the Commonwealth universities and governments in this field, and presumably will continue to do so. The Advisory Committee on English Studies with its two panels is the only body in which problems common to the Council and the universities in such subjects are discussed with a view to some action being taken.

The enquiries and reports made possible by the setting up of the Linguistics Panel of the English Studies Advisory Committee during recent years, on the problems connected with the uses and teaching of English overseas, continue to be highly relevant both for high educational authorities overseas and for all the universities of the Commonwealth, including our own.

This relevance is high-lighted and re-emphasized by some of the observations and recommendations of two recent reports:

- (a) *The Report of the Commission on National Education*, January–August 1959, issued by the Government of Pakistan, 1960.¹
- (b) *Investment in Education*, being the Report of the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria, published by the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria, 1960.²

There is also the Proceedings of the Conference on English Teaching Abroad, sponsored by the Center for Applied Linguistics and the United States Information Agency in co-operation with the British Council, 1959.

The Pakistan report happens also to use the word 'investment'³ in connection with education and it is full of meaning for all interested in our work for English in the Commonwealth. This Report,⁴ which exhibits a thoroughly contemporary approach to its problems, states that while English should be a compulsory subject it should be taught as a functional language rather than as literature. They add that 'some experiments along these lines have already been started by the British Council'. The proceedings of the Washington Conference on

¹ Referred to henceforward as P.

² Referred to henceforward as N; usually known as the Ashby Report.

³ P. pp. 9 and 11.

⁴ P. pp. 22 and 289.

THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF ENGLISH

English Teaching Abroad contain extensive and relevant contributions¹ by officers of the British Council, on recent problems they have had to deal with overseas, including Pakistan.

Both the Pakistan² and Nigerian reports³ are keyed to the central problem of education for high-level manpower, and for those who serve at sub-professional levels as overseers and technicians or in management and commerce. Both reports agreed that in such countries as India, Pakistan and Nigeria there may still be 'a tendency to over-invest in education in the law and arts and to under-invest in engineering, agriculture and science'.⁴

The Pakistan report, referring to English courses, states that they are 'still overwhelmingly literary in their approach. Their bias has to be changed from the literary to the functional, except for those who wish to specialize in English language and literature'.⁵ The curriculum of secondary schools 'was over-loaded with literary subjects', and 'the main weakness' is 'absence of full opportunities for training in technical and other vocational subjects'.⁶ This emphasis on science and technology for nation-building and development runs through the whole of the Pakistan report⁷ and the views and general recommendations might be quite similar in all countries described below as 'less advanced'. The Nigerian report points out⁸ the unfortunate effect of the prestige attached to literary education, and points to the reason that 'the first Western schooling brought to Nigeria was a literary education, and once civil rule was established the expatriate administrators were graduates, most of them graduates in arts. And so the literary tradition and the university degree have become indelible symbols of prestige in Nigeria; by contrast technology, agriculture and other practical subjects, particularly at the

¹ *The Proceedings*, pp. 105-45 especially pp. 120-2, 138-40. See also pp. 148-52.

² P. Chapter 4, pp. 149-63, *Technical and Vocational Education*.

³ N. See the Special Report of Professor Frederick Harbison of the Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, pp. 50-72.

⁴ N. p. 64.

⁵ P. p. 22.

⁶ P. p. 111.

⁷ P. pp. 11, 22, 111, 122, 149.

⁸ N. pp. 5 and 18.

sub-professional level, have not won esteem. It is small wonder, then, that training for qualifications other than degrees, especially in technology, is not popular.' This is later referred to as 'a major defect'.

There are three further topics raised by both reports which, by their striking agreement, point to the need for careful consideration in Great Britain. The first¹ is the importance of on-the-job training, the teaching being provided either by the State or by large-scale industry. And that leads to part-time courses at evening schools and institutes. The provision of suitable examinations in technical and commercial education is raised in the Nigerian report,² and the standard suggested is that of Ordinary and Higher National Certificates of the United Kingdom. The City and Guilds Institute has introduced certificate examinations to which it is suggested Nigeria should harness her technician training.

This proposal raises the question of the language of examination both from the point of view of the examinee and the examiners, and prompts the question of the languages of instruction in the class room. The facile use of the loose expression 'medium of instruction is English' is seen to be inappropriate in such situations.

The second prevailing topic is the emphasis on intermediate, Sixth Form, and higher education for high-level manpower, on quality rather than quantity, and a postponement of universal functional literacy as a first priority at the present time.

The third main theme pursued with equal thoroughness is the radical reform of the training of teachers in the new pattern for English. The Nigerian report endorses the views of Mr V. L. Griffiths of Oxford who emphasizes³ the need for more general education for the teachers. 'Professional training . . . is not the most serious of the problems confronting Nigeria in its teaching profession. . . . Professional training without grasp of subject is more than merely a waste of time. It is a positive danger, for the result can only be the more effective spread of ignorance.'

There are three further observations to be made on the Pakistan and Nigerian reports which are of general interest in connection with

¹ P. p. 156, N. p. 43.

² N. p. 18.

³ N. pp. 81 and 82.

THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF ENGLISH

the uses of English in relation to the national languages overseas. Both reports insist on the importance of the villager, and the Nigerian report points out in the section on Agricultural Education¹ that 'three out of every four Nigerians work on the land. Seventeen shillings out of every pound earned from Nigerian exports come from agricultural products.' This emphasis in the Nigerian report is unfortunately linked with the absence from its pages of the three words – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. In the Pakistan report, however, there are the fullest references to the relationship between the uses of English and the development of the national languages Urdu and Bengali in the years ahead. The striking of balances between English and the national languages at the various points in the educational structure is of fundamental importance, and a good deal of linguistic research in this direction lies ahead of scholars overseas and linguists in Great Britain.

The third point could be summed up in the word urgency. Nigeria, we are told, cannot wait; Pakistan mentions a period of fifteen years for reconsideration of mutual replacement between English and the national languages. The most general conclusion to be drawn from these features of the two reports which would apply widely in Asia and Africa is the pressing need in the teaching of English for multifarious uses overseas. This in turn means intensive preparation in the way of research before the relevant men and materials will be readily available. The key to all this preparatory linguistic research can be summed up in two words: restriction and concentration. It is therefore obvious that there must be considerable development in general and applied linguistics in relation to studies in contemporary English.

PART II

To focus attention on the main subjects of any agenda dealing with the uses of English overseas and with the teaching of English for those uses, a tentative framework of nomenclature and phraseology is suggested, owing to the vastness and complexities of the problems to be faced.

¹ N. p. 21.

Fields of Work

1. *Advanced Countries*

- (a) *Western*. Sharing common classical sources, religions and other traditions. Common script and techniques of printing and reproduction.

Languages either cognate or mutually assimilated by common type of civilization and international science and technology; the latter carried in highly developed national languages.

- (b) *Non-Western*. With exotic high classical sources and rich in indigenous literature (e.g. Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Arabic). Literatures in Bengali, Tamil, Urdu, Hindi, Chinese, Japanese, etc.

Exotic religious and social traditions and scripts, most of which are syllabic in structure, not alphabetic, and present special problems in education and in reproduction.

Science and technology not yet carried in many of such national languages.

2. *Less Advanced Countries*

With some classical sources and with indigenous literature and strong local culture.

- (a) Associated with Britain, America or France.

- (b) With strong European associations.

In all these countries English may be regarded as a classical source.

3. *Developing Countries*

With limited classical sources (e.g. Arabic) and Western European literatures regarded as 'classical' (e.g. West Africa).

Education largely in English. All high-level manpower and much at the sub-professional level trains and works in English.

4. *Backward Communities or Groups*

These are to be found in all the above groups even including our own country. It would seem that in these communities paramount importance must be given to the teaching of reading, including

THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF ENGLISH

reading aloud, and the writing of practically useful contemporary English at a series of levels.

Note. The higher the group (say 1 or 2) the more scope there is for the theory and practice of education and especially for the methodics of teaching English :

- (a) as a foreign language ;
- (b) as a second language.

This is obvious when it is remembered that in groups 1 or 2 translation and adaptation are strongly featured, and these relations with the national languages are clearly determined by our knowledge of them, of their written forms especially, and the availability of books and other resources.

The lower down the scale, the less we seem to know, and therefore the more the reason to promote linguistic research in connection with these problems. Unfortunately too little attention is given to fundamental research in general and applied linguistics, which is most relevant to the organization of materials for publication. Most of this work would probably benefit by collaboration with scholars in the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries.

PART III

1. *Teaching of English*

Perhaps the following classification of fields of work in accordance with the divisions in Part II might provide a useful basis of reference :

- (a) at home and in English-speaking countries ;
- (b) in bi-lingual countries – Wales, Canada, South Africa and Malta ;
- (c) abroad in Western Europe ;
- (d) overseas, especially in the Middle East, South East Asia and Japan ;
- (e) overseas in India, Pakistan and Ceylon ;
- (f) in African countries with British connections ;
- (g) in backward communities as above described.

2. *The Training of Teachers of English*

- (a) as a mother tongue in 1(a);
- (b) as one of two languages in bi-lingual countries as in 1(b);
- (c) as a foreign language as in 1(c);
- (d) as a foreign language as in 1(d);
- (e) as a second language as in 1(e);
- (f) as a second language and sometimes as the main language as in 1(f);
- (g) as the basis for literacy as in 1(g).

3. *Teacher-Training*

- (a) in English language and literature, especially the linguistic analysis of texts, commonly referred to as textual analysis;
- (b) in applied linguistics;
- (c) in the theory and practice of education;
- (d) in special methodics.

PART IV

The Study generally called English

1. As a first or second foreign language, compulsory or optional, in Western Europe—mainly English life, culture and literature. The advanced countries carry their science and technology in their own languages.
2. (a) As a second language in less advanced countries. The uses of English linked with high-level manpower and even with the sub-professional levels. Official uses in law, government and the services. Science and technology carried in English. The aspirations for the rising national language involve the problems of mutual replacement with English and the striking of a balance in the system of education.
(b) In developing countries. Education mainly in English. All higher education and most development projects in and through uses of English.
3. Backward communities in all countries. Literacy and inter-communication and collaboration with other more advanced communities through English.

THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The observations and recommendations of the two reports quoted and the suggested nomenclature and phraseology are put forward for comment and reference; they appear to be of general application and also seem to be linked with similar matters to be found in recent papers of the British Council, at any rate since 1957. They would also seem to have a bearing on projected developments in English studies in the universities of the United Kingdom. They would also appear to indicate the large field of work for a proposed Language Centre in or near London. Such a Language Centre would seem to be a high priority if Her Majesty's Government is to take due note of such recommendations as are cited from these reports.

PART V

The responsibilities for higher English studies in language and literature in this country are twofold: first to our own people and secondly to all those engaged in higher English studies abroad.

Again, our responsibilities abroad seem to be further divisible in two main directions:

- (i) collaboration with highly developed English studies in the more advanced foreign countries, especially perhaps in language. An important sub-division is to be made here: (a) Western European countries; (b) Asian and a very small number of African countries with their own high classical sources and rich indigenous literature, most of which from the language and culture point of view can be described as exotic, e.g. India, China, Egypt, Japan, Pakistan;
- (ii) the less advanced countries moving towards the achievement of higher studies in English. Some of these communities have established university colleges or universities, and these are also interested in training their students for professions and vocations in which the uses of the English language are to be developed for their special purposes. At the moment this may be the more urgent need, and certainly a more immediate requirement than what may be termed 'cultural transfusions'.

In the less advanced countries academic work of such a high inter-

national standard is at present out of reach, but certainly attainable in course of time.

There has been a tendency in recent years to give a good deal of attention to English in what have been described as 'undeveloped' or 'under-developed' countries. In a language context the phrase is perhaps unsuitable, however appropriate it may be in economics. In any case this is not the place to extend the discussion of the uses of English in such a connection.

Now that university development is a national preoccupation, the time has come to link our own English studies with other modern studies in demand, and build up the necessary strength to enable us to carry our obvious responsibilities.

Promising young scholars should be attracted to English language studies and to general linguistics for all the work that must be done in the United Kingdom, and closely grouped and associated with the major purposes of serving all those overseas who are endeavouring to improve their uses of English in their own countries. To concentrate them here, especially in those centres which already have well-known working units, is obviously going to exert more force overseas than if they were scattered over the face of the globe. Something at least can be done in higher studies at home, and at that level the task is automatically limited. At lower levels and spread over the globe, the job gets more and more unmanageable. Again the operative words are *restriction* and *concentration*.

Only if the home forces are strong can we reinforce language workers both from our own country and from the overseas communities themselves. Moreover, there would be good reason for scholars from abroad to come to the United Kingdom centres.

The value of the association of general linguistics with studies of the English language has been amply proved; but it is perhaps not going too far to emphasize that studies of contemporary English as used both at home and abroad today would lack either a conceptual framework or direction without general linguistics.

It is to be hoped that Her Majesty's Government will see its way to strengthening the home resources in the coming quinquennium, to enable immediate development, in suitable centres, of English language studies and general and applied linguistics, and some speciali-

THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF ENGLISH

zation in education with a view both to research and teaching in the uses of English overseas.

It would therefore seem to be a wise academic policy to capitalize on the work already begun in some universities in which English language studies are associated both with general and applied linguistics and with the methodics of teaching English as a foreign language, and as a second language especially in countries overseas long associated with Great Britain.

SESSION 1

The nature of the demand for English in the world to-day, as it affects British Universities

III. DR A. H. KING

Controller of the Education Division of the British Council

I have spent the last two days conferring with our French and American colleagues on the World Language Survey. What emerged from these discussions was that our American colleagues intend a great offensive in this subject. I was told by their senior ICA representatives there that they plan an English language campaign on a global basis, on a different scale entirely to the scale on which they have hitherto operated. We spent most of the second day discussing what ought to be done. The situation is this: the Ashby report¹ puts Nigeria's needs alone, during the next decade, at 7,000 teacher-years. My ICA colleagues are convinced that every undeveloped, underdeveloped or developing country, whatever you may like to call it, is going to demand an Ashby; so that the sort of figure which we are faced with globally is not 7,000 but at least 700,000 teacher-years between now and ten years' time.

We all too often forget that the teaching of languages is a very old subject indeed and that it must in its various forms have had to be dealt with by the mediaeval latinists, for example, and their successors right up until the eighteenth century; but I would like to start with Candlemas Day, 1835. On that day Macaulay, writing with his customary rapidity a very few months after arriving in India, completed his famous Minute.² That Minute did not decide *how* English

¹ See p. 12 above, note (2).

² *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*, selected by G. M. Young, London, 1952, pp. 719-30.

THE DEMAND FOR ENGLISH

was to be taught anywhere, but it did lead the Governor-General to decide, in his turn, *where* English was to be used. Macaulay is not responsible for the way in which we have taught English ever since in these countries, or for that matter in our own; but he is responsible for having determined the *use* of English throughout the British Empire, because what he did on Candlemas Day, sitting in the mild winter Calcutta sun, determined what we should do, quite literally, from Hong Kong to the Gambia. If you want the evidence of that you may find it in the Proceedings of the Imperial Conference of 1913 and the Imperial Conference of 1923, both of which were precursors to the Conference that took place at Oxford last year.

Macaulay determined the use of English from Hong Kong to the Gambia but did not determine the way of teaching; and, as we all know, in the nineteenth century the question of teaching the mother tongue hardly came up. This question seems to my mind to come up as education is democratized in a country; because what it is assumed that the upper classes know – though they don't always – becomes something that the other classes have to be taught; so that from the social point of view the problem that we face in this country is the same as the problem that we face overseas. In the nineteenth century *ad hoc* measures were taken. English had to be taught somehow; how then did you teach it? You had to teach it presumably as you taught Latin, just as we did largely in this country. Not until the end of the nineteenth century, from about 1890 onwards, do we get the development of theory in Holland and in Scandinavia. By this time the smaller democracies of Europe had developed to the point at which they badly needed good English, good French and good German. This theory then spreads to a certain extent. There were people in India working on the question in 1893 and 1894. They were not listened to. They even published text books; for that matter, Macaulay made a contribution, in that one could regard his *Lays of Ancient Rome* as a kind of simplified text. Then there came Palmer in Japan, and then, as needs asserted themselves, a whole series of new techniques developed.

The main generalization I have to make is this: that what comes first is the use of English in a community, that it is the members of that community who determine what that use is, and that it is their

demands which we have to face in the first place; and although we have not taught them well, they have learnt very much better, because need produces learning—and very often good learning—even if it doesn't produce good teaching. What is astonishing is how much English is known by how many people all over the world. What has happened in places like India and Pakistan during the last few years since partition is what was always happening there. If you look at the examination papers and the answers published in the annual and quinquennial reports of the Indian Government from 1859 onwards, you find the same kind of phenomena, the same type of mistake, the same low standard of English. It was always there. But of course school learning was supplemented by people like Anna of Siam and Dr E. M. Forster and their thousands and tens of thousands of co-governors and governesses. It was not until this century, however, that the problem arose of teaching English to a larger number of persons than could supplement their teaching with other ways of learning. By now it is no longer a question of the sons of Maharajahs, but of the sons of the cultivators. People want English because English is the badge of the middle class, the language of good jobs. It is all to their credit that this should be as much a mark of the genteel in Asia and Africa as the television mast in the West.

I should like finally to make two points about the situation at the moment. First of all the importance of distinguishing between use, need and demand. We must start from use; it is the use of English in these communities overseas which is important. And the difficulty is that under our influence, or by themselves, they have not necessarily keyed their teaching methods to the use in their country. We are familiar with the many different uses that they have made of English. They have had to use it, many of them in Asia, but even more in Africa, as a vehicle of humanism, as a substitute for a mother tongue which could not serve in that way; but this fact is of course reflected much more in their political and social than in their moral and aesthetic development. I think we must all agree that a mother tongue is the normal vehicle of moral and aesthetic development, and that although a second language can contribute very greatly to social and political development, it cannot contribute to personal development in the same way. I think a great many of our teachers overseas in the

THE DEMAND FOR ENGLISH

past have not clearly realized that a genuine political and social effect can be concomitant with a synthetic personal effect; this we have seen all over the Empire and the Commonwealth in the past.

That was one among many uses of English. Now I should like to make the distinction between need and demand. The use produces an analysis of needs, and that analysis of needs then produces a demand; the demand may not coincide with the need, though the need of course must coincide with what is required in the use. One of the difficulties about this whole matter is to distinguish between what they *say* they want, and what *we think* they want, and what they *really* want; this is what our American and French colleagues and ourselves were talking about during the last two days and I fear that although we listed twenty-six criteria for this purpose in characteristic jargon I don't think we reached any general conclusions. All I dare say now is that we must at all costs keep in mind the difference between use and need and demand in this field.

My last point is that we are under the shadow of the poorly-paid teacher. The fact that the profession is poorly paid means that the best men go elsewhere, and if there are good men teaching they promote themselves to become cabinet ministers. This being so, I am certain that we shall not see the end of aid in our time, and that so far from declining it is going to increase during the next generation. I should be surprised if we were sending less than ten times as many men into the educational systems of other countries in twenty or thirty years' time as we are sending now, and I think that we can therefore deliberate in the confidence that however much we may suggest ought to be done in this country, it will not be able to measure up with the requirements overseas.

SESSION 2

Contemporary English language and general linguistics

IV. PROFESSOR ANGUS McINTOSH

*Head of the Department of English Language and General
Linguistics, University of Edinburgh*

In a brief introductory talk such as this, I want to do no more than offer a few suggestions; you will find, I think, that much of what I have passed lightly over or ignored altogether is taken up afterwards by Professor Palmer.

From one point of view, I see modern English as a very important proving ground for hypotheses in general linguistics, but from another, more relevant to what we are assembled here today to discuss, I see the matter the other way round. I see general linguistic theory, or at least certain branches thereof, as making possible the presentation of what we may call the facts about modern English in ways which can be of great, and perhaps unique, practical value in teaching the language.

As things are, we still suffer, among other things, from grammars and indeed from a grammatical tradition wherein terms and categories and schemes of analysis and so forth are used in a curiously unrealistic manner; and—because these will often serve in a rough and ready sort of way, like pulling out a tooth with a pair of pliers, or using a pipe-cleaner to serve as a collar stud—it tends to be concealed from us that they do not account for by any means all the facts of the language. Worse still, it is precisely when we come to some interesting and subtle problem or situation—as it would be with our pliers and an impacted molar, or our pipe-cleaner and the prospect of giving an after-dinner speech at a Lord Mayor's banquet—it is precisely in such cases that this equipment is most likely to fail us. Clinging tenaciously as we have been to our grammatical pliers and pipe-cleaners, we seem never to have got very much further, and

many of the really exciting things that remain to be done remain untackled decade after decade. What these exciting things are you may wish to discuss later.

It seems to me that there is no remedy for this except through the possession and exploitation of an adequate theory of linguistic description. Adequate theoretical equipment, of course, will not in itself solve our problems, because we simply do not know enough at present about the details of the structure or patterning of the language to be in a position at all points to deck out our framework of description in the raiment of specific statements about contemporary English. Contrary perhaps to general opinion, I should say myself that at present we are more deficient in our knowledge of the details of the language than we are in the possession of an adequate theoretical framework within which to order such knowledge; and we should not overlook here a fact that is often forgotten: that, without some such framework, one is scarcely in a position even to explore that detail, still less to exploit it for teaching or other purposes.

We are now, I suggest, in a position both to explore and to exploit, but this is no short or easy task. It calls for a long and well co-ordinated programme of what we might call back-room work. Part of this must be of a routine fact-finding kind involving very extensive and often at the same time very delicate analysis. Much will have to be done in the future with the aid of electronic computers. Part, on the other hand, must be of a theoretical kind—both to direct the fact-finding work in worthwhile directions from the start, and to marshal and utilize the results afterwards. All this has merely to do with research; but both to carry this out adequately and, more important, to disseminate what we know and learn far beyond our so-called 'Malvolio-like' circle,¹ there is an immediate necessity for

¹ One of the conference papers quoted from a contribution by Mr V. E. Mearles to the discussion aroused in the *Times Educational Supplement* by an article on 'English for Foreigners' printed in the number for July 31, 1959, by Mr (now Professor) P. D. Strevens. Mr Mearles in a letter of August 21, 1959, stressed the effectiveness of many teachers not perhaps highly qualified, and suspected that there was 'a desire to breed a new race of experts in linguistics who will seal themselves off, Malvolio-like, from the merely normally qualified herd which has been doing the bulk of the field-work for so long—and who doubtless will continue to do it'.

a great extension of basic and of advanced training in the same general field. Without this teaching programme in addition to the research, it would be quite impossible for us at any time in the future to come anywhere near meeting the tasks which lie immediately ahead. Needless to say, the two activities, research and teaching, go intimately together.

I speak here, of course, only of *one* underlying discipline and its relevance to those other more directly practical studies which are, as it were, constructed on top of it. I would just add here that we are not in fact gilding the head of a statue whose feet are of clay; we are trying to do something about the feet.¹ If we do not take this underlying discipline with sufficient seriousness, then all the other more practical studies we are assembled here to discuss are going to be in danger. I hope I do not, in saying this, seem to underrate the importance of these. I do, however, see both their importance and their success as depending in part on what is made available to them to apply. Their future, to that extent, depends on the vitality and on the productivity of all the underlying disciplines, and not only of course on that of general linguistics.

I should like here to add a word about this problem of vitality and productivity in general linguistic studies. Even those branches of the subject which may be thought of as more specially serving applied linguistics are extremely diverse, and we must remember that departments responsible for them will have to be responsible, as I have said, for both research and teaching programmes on a considerable scale. There will be a need both for phoneticians and general linguists. Nor can one do without a considerable array of equipment, and therefore of technical assistance to maintain and run it. So the days are long past when, in the comfortable routine setting of a UGC quinquennial estimate, anyone could usefully, or even (I would say) meaningfully, in the context of our present problems, say: 'I recommend the appointment of *a* phonetician and of *a* general linguist.'

¹ A conference paper had quoted from Dr Michael West's article in the *Times Educational Supplement* for July 1, 1960: 'Recent donations to encourage English learning abroad have rather tended to be gilding (with phonetics and linguistics) the head of a statue whose feet are of clay; and in the training colleges teachers are being instructed in methods which have little application to those feet.'

Nothing could be more unrealistic or unfair than to expect a couple of people in a small new department to take such a burden of cosmic cares on their shoulders as the present context of events is likely to impose. What, one need only ask, could two or three people in a new biochemistry laboratory be expected to achieve in some comparable situation where the urgency and magnitude of the tasks were both in comparable fashion staring one in the face?

So I would make just three pleas, arising from what I have said. First of all, I urge that the fundamental importance of general linguistic research and teaching be fully recognized in the context of our present deliberations. I am entirely prepared to concede that this general linguistic work for the practical ends that confront us should be given a certain bias towards the study of contemporary English. Secondly, I urge that this recognition should imply the further recognition that such work cannot be done adequately except by a considerable body of scholars and technicians working in close association. In view of the shortage of persons available, we must above all therefore avoid atomization of effort and — I speak with some feeling here — the bleeding of already reasonably well-established departments for the unrealistic purpose of establishing small outposts in many places. We can at present in my field at most afford four or five centres in Britain because there are simply not people to man any more than that. And I cannot overstress my conviction that four or five well-staffed centres would be worth twenty-five, or for that matter two hundred and twenty-five, which were below minimal useful operating size. Thirdly, this being the case, I urge that if many more than four or five universities turn out to be interested in one way or another in the problem of English language teaching, a plan should be worked out in which these various universities assume responsibility for different tasks.

Though I have said nothing about them, there are of course several adjacent fields of study all in urgent need of development. These, it seems to me (bearing in mind this requirement of an adequate minimum size) should as soon as possible be tackled in places other than the four or five where it may be decided that the bulk of the underlying general linguistic work should be handled. There is, after all, plenty of work to do everywhere, but its precise distribution

and allocation must be a matter for careful joint deliberation.

What I am presenting here is really a sort of sketch of a line of action for the present, and by the present I mean these coming weeks. Anything like a long period of months without at least the initiation of practical suggestions for a course of action would, it seems to me, be very serious indeed. And I feel sure that if something on the lines I have suggested is carried out with imagination and energy, then a second and more ambitious phase of development could be envisaged in four or five years. But our real problem is that of getting on our feet, because unless we solve this there can be no question of moving on to a second phase at all.

Within the usual pattern of procedure of departmental expansion in a university, there is – and I think we should all agree on this and state it explicitly – there is with the best will in the world no possibility whatever of our fulfilling even our immediate needs. And I also feel that it should not even be expected of heads of departments that they ‘earn their ulcer’ by attempting without high-level support that long, lonely, invidious and often humiliating fight for an end of this sort. Those of us who are heads of departments can, it seems to me, make two sufficient contributions without that. One is to offer the fruits of our experience in attempting to make clear what, academically speaking, needs to be done at our end to meet a crisis which has arisen far beyond university circles altogether. The other is to undertake – given, but only if given, adequate facilities and the appropriate mandate – to see that what needs to be done is then carried out. But my own view is that that provision of the facilities and the mandate itself is a task for those whose business it is to assess and to meet such crises as we face at present, and who can command the financial resources to do so.

V. PROFESSOR F. R. PALMER

Professor of General Linguistics at the University College of North Wales

Professor McIntosh has said that the linguist should now bias his study towards English. I would say this is becoming, if it has not

already become, an established fact. Those of us who have been interested in linguistics know full well that our non-linguistic colleagues are very suspicious of linguistic analyses based, as in America, on Amerindian languages or, in this country, very largely on African and Asian languages, and for that reason a number of us have turned our attention already to the study of English. This is, of course, a much more difficult task than the study of an unknown African language, for two reasons: first of all, because we know too much about the language, and secondly because our reader or our audience knows too much about it. There are three epithets which are applied to linguistics: general linguistics, structural linguistics and descriptive linguistics. All of these indicate to some degree the way in which the term is understood. The linguist is a general linguist because he is not concerned normally with the characteristics of one particular language so much as with problems of language in so far as they apply to more than one. He is a structural linguist, although I do not myself like this term very much, in that he believes that language is, to use a term coined by Professor Firth, systemic, that is to say that we shall succeed in finding patterns in our language material, patterns of a kind that make analysis possible. Thirdly, he may be called a descriptive linguist, and it is this term that I myself prefer.

I like to think that my task is to describe what I find. Although this may seem almost too simple to require a statement, the linguist finds that he gets very little assistance from any traditional work. There are still very few, if any, grammars that are guided by the simple principle that we should merely describe what is describable in the language itself. May I take one simple example in a field in which I myself am interested, though I am not the only one even in present company who is interested in this field, the pattern of the verb in English? We still find in quite modern grammars a fairly complicated system of tenses, which is not indeed a complete adaptation of the Latin system but still bears traces of it. My own view is that the English verbal system is very much simpler than would normally appear. Once we have investigated the function of the auxiliary verbs, this will lead to a neat, symmetrical statement of the verbal phrase in English, and similar statements, I believe, can be made for the

nominal phrase, especially with regard to the determinatives. We have facing us not merely the problem of describing English, because we realize that some of our difficulties will arise not from English but from the language of the people who are going to be taught. This again leads us to a problem of description. I am not myself in favour, as many people are, of making a comparison of English with some African or Asian language, because it seems that the two are not comparable. But it is important that we should be able to describe the sort of English that results from the African or the Asian learning English. We should be able and willing to describe the West African or the Siamese English. There is indeed a great deal of benefit in knowing something about the language of the speaker; this will probably help us a great deal to see his problems; but I do not myself recommend a full systematic comparison of the two languages. The linguist, of course, will not be concerned only with the description of language. He must also provide the tools for this description. For many of the problems which will arise are problems of kinds that he perhaps cannot foresee. The student must have enough knowledge of linguistic techniques to be able to face the problems himself, and in the sort of course that some of us are thinking of putting on there will be a place for general linguistics on the one hand and for the teaching of English or the problems of English on the other. I might add here that there are many linguistic works which do not seem to have much bearing on the teaching problem at all. But I would state quite dogmatically that, in so far as the linguistic description of English fails to provide a suitable basis for the teaching of English, to that degree it has failed as a linguistic description.

We cannot afford any longer to continue to teach English in either a hit-and-miss fashion or by sheer brute force of repetition — the way in which most of us learnt French and Latin and, I suppose, all of us learnt our native language. In the present conditions we must look for some short cut, and this I hope and trust can be provided by linguistics.

SESSION 3

Training in the teaching of English

VI. J. C. CATFORD

*Head of the Department of Applied Linguistics, University of
Edinburgh*

A distinction has been made, in the field of work we are examining, between the back-room boys and the people in the front shop. They would correspond, roughly speaking, to what I would call 'theoreticians' on the one hand and 'practitioners' on the other. In order to discuss the kinds of people who require training or education which is relevant to the teaching of English I think we must make a more delicate analysis. If we wish to pursue a commercial or industrial analogy, we must not only consider the back room and the front shop but four categories of people.

- (i) The true commercial or industrial back-room boys, the workers who think up ideas and carry out research which may have no obvious, immediate practical application.
- (ii) The technologists or manufacturers who translate the back-room research into saleable consumer goods.
(These two are theorists or semi-theorists.)
- (iii) The wholesalers who supply the saleable goods to retailers.
- (iv) The retailers who pass on the general goods to the public, to the customers.

Translating these four categories into terms relevant to our interests, we have perhaps something like this: category (i) is the cadre of specialists in general linguistics, including descriptive linguistics of English and other languages, in physiological and acoustic phonetics, in the scholarly study of literature, in educational theory, in the psychology of learning, and perhaps in other more marginal disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, information theory, ergonomics and so on; (ii) the people who are perhaps mainly

responsible for translating back-room research into saleable goods, persons who are specialists in language teaching as an application of linguistics and other relevant disciplines; (iii) the wholesalers, of course, are teacher-trainers, and (iv) the retailers are teachers—the customers are their students.

Any classification of this kind is, of course, bound to be somewhat unsatisfactory; we cannot really make such hard and fast divisions; but for purposes of discussion they may be useful. Now the training requirements of these various cadres are rather different. First of all group (i), the extreme back-room boys, the basic research workers; they of course require training in their special disciplines. This is, I suppose, reasonably well catered for in the well-established disciplines like education, educational psychology, literature and so on. But considerable development is needed in the training of people for basic work in the linguistic disciplines, because we need much greater manpower than we have at present both in basic linguistic research and for the training of some of the other cadres in these fields. Group (ii), specialists in what I might call applied linguistics, in the task of bringing linguistic theory and to some extent other underlying disciplines to bear on language teaching problems, have a special task that I shall discuss in more detail in a moment. The groups (iii) and (iv) are in a sense the most obvious groups. I would agree entirely about the extreme importance of people who are going to train teachers being themselves highly experienced teachers. In fact this requirement extends back to my cadre (ii)—that people who are concerned with either the rather more basic problem of applying theory to language teaching or with the rather more practical problem of training teachers must themselves be teachers; they must have had experience in the classroom. The practical trainer of language teachers (group iv) can of course profit from all the linguistic, educational and theoretical background that he can get; but he can as a matter of practical policy be given a much more narrowly specialized, one might almost say vocational training in the special problems of teaching English in a relatively restricted range of circumstances. Group (iv), the actual teachers, must above all know the language they are teaching very well; and undoubtedly one of the matters that has to be given attention in dealing with overseas

people who have been trained as teachers must be their training simply in English. They must also be given practical experience in the use of textbooks and classroom procedures and so on, but again for them as for all the other groups some minimum of theoretical background, to enable them to understand better what they are doing, is extremely valuable.

Now I want to say something in rather more detail about what I call group (ii): those people whom I have called applied linguists or specialists in the application of linguistic and educational theory to language teaching, the mediators between basic research and the actual practice of teaching teacher-trainers; as I have said, this category of people, too, require practical experience. This is a category of persons that we have something to do with in Edinburgh at the School of Applied Linguistics, though there is some overlap into the other fields. The task of the members of this cadre is essentially to classify and analyse the problems involved in language teaching, particularly the teaching of English as a second or secondary language, and to see how the underlying disciplines can be brought to bear on these problems. They are concerned with such things as writing textbooks, drawing up syllabuses, deciding English teaching policies related to whatever special needs there may be in a particular country. They are in fact specialists in a sort of science of language teaching, the need for which was pointed out by H. E. Palmer forty years ago. The kind of general theory which these people have to be trained in, the kinds of problems that they have to be able to analyse, are perhaps worth outlining briefly.

First of all they have to know something about the theory of bilingualism, of languages in contact and of the problems that arise in language contact situations: e.g. the problem of devising criteria for determining the relative status of the languages used by bi- or multi-lingual persons. From this theoretical background there emerge definitions, for example of primary and secondary languages, which are useful in connection with language teaching. They have to pay attention to the different assumptions underlying the teaching of primary languages, which correspond roughly to what are often called mother tongues, and of secondary languages, and the different teaching techniques that these call for. They have to be able to cope

with the analysis and evaluation of the wider setting of language teaching operations; of geographical, political, educational and linguistic conditions in the country where the teaching is going on, and the relation of these factors to the design of syllabuses and so on. They have to consider the more immediate factors in language teaching, the pupil, the teacher, the languages involved. Educational psychology has a great deal to contribute here. Questions relating to the age of pupils, their motivation, their ability, their assiduity, their educational background and so on — these are largely questions for psychology. Similarly, there are factors relating to the teacher which have to be taken into consideration: his knowledge of the pupils' mother tongue, his training, his status in the country. All these should be related to the actual design of teaching materials, teaching techniques and so on. Then the languages involved, that is to say the language being taught, in our case English, and the language of the pupils; the specialists in this field must have a descriptive knowledge of English so that they know what language material should be included in any given course, and they ought to have a sufficient understanding of general linguistics to be able to understand the problems that arise from interference of the primary language, in other words to be able to appreciate the differences between English and the students' language. They ought to know something about the linguistic and psychological differences between various so-called linguistic skills — speaking, hearing, writing, reading — how these relate to each other, what sequences of these occur in real-life linguistic situations and in various types of teaching, how they relate to teaching for particular purposes, to the design of tests, and so on. They ought to have some knowledge of the theory of meaning and translation. To a very large extent the problem of language teaching is one of teaching meaning at various levels, and some kind of theory of meaning ought to be part of their background knowledge, so that they can be aware of what levels of meaning are being taught at a particular stage in a language course. They ought to know something about translation theory, because questions will arise as to whether to use or not to use translation at this or that moment in language teaching. You can't say 'you must use translation, you mustn't use translation' until you have considered the extremely complex problem

TRAINING

of what translation is and what different kinds of translation are. Then they must have some kind of general knowledge of the methods of language teaching, the general principles derived in part from practical experience, in part from linguistic and educational theory, which underlie the selection, grading and presentation of language material for teaching purposes.

Linguistic theory comes into all the kinds of problem that I have been referring to. It plays at least some part in almost every aspect of the work. For instance, I have mentioned such things as taking note of the linguistic and other conditions in the country where teaching is going on ; this is partly a matter dealt with by what is sometimes called social linguistics or institutional linguistics. Teachers have to know about the relationships between languages in bi- or multi-lingual speakers, and this is application of a language contact theory. Linguistics has a very important bearing on the work not only of this particular group but indeed throughout. We are not concerned only with two categories of back-room theorists and front shop practitioners. The applied linguists and the teacher-trainers are an important link between the basic theorists and the more practical people, and there is in fact an unbroken chain of relationship between these two extremes, between the basic theorists and the practitioners, and support and development is required all along the line at every part of that chain.

VII. PROFESSOR J. PILLEY

*Professor of Education, University of Edinburgh*¹

As students we think *about* ideas; as adults we come to think *with* them. The teacher's job is to assist students in making that transition, and so to help them augment their perception. This transition is one that all students of all subjects have to make. It is most observable in medical students. In reading his text-books the medical student

¹ This contribution was actually made in Session 4, but is printed here in the context for which it was intended.

puzzles over ideas expressed in the words of others, and his teacher's job – and some of the clinical doctors do it magnificently – is to help him develop a fuller perception so that he sees with a diagnostic eye and develops a therapeutic nature and impulse. Education is a transition from a state of theory, which is learnt from others who have developed it, to an augmented competence. It seems to me that in all our discussions we have been talking of training students by 'applying' this theory or the other, without sufficient recognition of the actual classroom situation. The teacher's job is to awaken and strengthen interest in the pupils whether children or adults: to use a psychological term, their motivation. All teaching and learning is something that goes on between people, whether it be formal learning in class, or informal learning that takes place during tutorials. We need to think much more about the educational dimensions of our conference.

VIII. E. E. R. CHURCH

Controller of the Establishments Division of the British Council

The British Council itself is a considerable user of English language teaching experts. We have been concerned within the Council to see that British Council staff who specialize in this particular field have a proper career hierarchy: this is something that we keep under continuous review. If that is necessary within our own service, obviously the problem is very substantially bigger when we include posts not within the Council's service such as the posts for which we recruit on an agency basis for a great number of different authorities.

The Council was concerned, this last year, with the recruitment of some two hundred teachers of various kinds to English language teaching posts, ranging from universities to schools, from the annual recruitment of up to twenty 'teacher-secretaries' for Finland, through secondary school teaching and teacher-training colleges to university chairs.

TRAINING

The proportion in this last year of the retailers to the wholesalers would be rather more than ten to one. I think that figure may be misleading. I feel sure the figure for the wholesalers, for the teacher-trainers, would be very much higher, if we could supply the demand. In fact for years to come, it appears to us, the supply is going to be inadequate to meet the demand. But because these are posts not within the Council's own service, we have so far felt it necessary to be very careful about the kind of undertaking, the kind of prospects, which we hold out to teachers.

We have felt it to be desirable that the graduates whom we encourage to go overseas should assume that they will be re-absorbed at the end of four or five years' service into the educational system of this country. Very many of them are. The teacher who contemplates a career in this field and wants to make himself into a competent teacher-trainer has to make a serious career decision; and the question that the Council has to ask itself is whether it can properly encourage people to burn their boats as regards teaching in the United Kingdom, and contemplate a prolonged overseas teaching career in this field.

It is difficult, at present, it seems to me, to exert much pressure on such teachers, when their career depends, as it must obviously do at the moment, on their chances of progression with a large number of different overseas authorities. The obvious answer would appear to be that the Council should enlarge its teaching service, that it should take on very much larger numbers of English language teaching officers, and second them to overseas authorities. This is something to which we have given a good deal of thought.

It would be an expensive business. The posts to which we recruit are posts which depend for their existence on other authorities than ourselves, and it would require an act of faith that there would always be a sufficient number of demands of this kind to warrant an English language teaching service created and run by the Council itself. It is probably along these lines that progress must lie, however: that some body like the Council should be centrally responsible for maintaining a hierarchy of posts, subsidizing them if necessary, looking after the interests of the individuals who commit themselves to this career and of course looking after pension interests.

IX. PROFESSOR L. J. LEWIS

University of London Institute of Education

I am a biologist by training, but I had the good fortune before I went out to Africa twenty-six years ago to have an introduction to linguistics from the hands of Lloyd James and Malinowski. Now they did not pretend to be making us into linguistic specialists, but they did give us an introduction to what linguistics had to offer us, both in learning a language and in studying it in relationship to the circumstances in which we were going to have to work.

Both these men, in very different ways, made it clear that knowledge of language is something much more than a theoretical understanding of its structure and form. For them language was a living instrument used by people as an integral part of their social being. This is something that has been borne in upon me increasingly by my experience. And I would beseech you, that in planning the extension of linguistic and pedagogical studies with reference to the teaching of English as a second language, and in the building up of staff, specialist or otherwise, you should keep in mind continually that in the end you will be concerned with language as it is used by *people*, individual children, men and women, and used by them for quite specific social purposes.

These purposes will sometimes be crude, sometimes very sophisticated. In some cases people will want to learn English merely in order that they may respond to the orders and peremptory commands of the oilwell rigger or the contractor's foreman. At the other extreme, the learners will be persons wishing to have sufficient language competence to be able to enter into all the beauty and quality of the language as it is expressed in our poetry and drama.

The training of people to study and teach English as a second language is a very complicated problem, and the desire to equip people adequately for the work will tempt to specialization to a degree which might obscure the essential fact, that we are concerned with *people* — people who have very definite objectives of their own

TRAINING

in wishing to learn and use English. In the end they are the consumers, not the British Council, not the government officials, and they will want our teaching to satisfy their specific purposes, not purposes, ideal or otherwise, that we may think desirable to prescribe.

SESSION 4

English language and literature

X. H. SYKES DAVIES

Lecturer in English and Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge

We are liable, in the traditional English faculties and departments, to an occupational narrowing of our notions about the uses to which English can be put. Much of our time is spent on verse, and verse is (with the exception of a few things like 'thirty days hath September' and a few thousand limericks) essentially literary in its whole mode of composition and consumption. Prose is in a different case. Only a minute fraction of prose is written and consumed as literature. The vast remnant of it is merely a part of life, of practical affairs. Sometimes it rises to literary quality by accident, as in the ships' logs which may sum up so much of the captain's voyages. It more often falls a long way below literary quality and, not seldom, it must possess qualities which are quite foreign to those characteristic of literature.

This distinction between literary prose and practical prose ought not, I think, to be made in terms of subject matter. It is true that literature has some fields of its own – *par excellence* the emotions, human conduct, ethics and so on – but it can also describe things and processes and the most general aspects at any rate of a scientific method. For me the essential difference between literary and practical prose is not dependent on their subject matter at all. It is a difference between two ways of using language which for the moment I am going to call offensive and defensive.

By an offensive use of language I choose to mean one in which the situation of the interlocutors allows and encourages the rapid transmission of information. Above all there is a willing, friendly listener able and anxious to catch the general drift of what has been said or written. This is the literary reader. He is not a conscript, he is one who chooses to read for pleasure or for intellectual or spiritual profit. In practical prose on the other hand, the prose of life, we meet

with the conscript nearly all the time, with one who reads because he must, because it is part of another job which he has to do. He has no special goodwill towards the writer, quite often some ill will. Now in writing under these circumstances a defensive use of language is needed; its main aim is not to make itself so quickly and broadly understood; it is to ensure that it cannot possibly be misunderstood, not even by fools or by those with a professional interest in misunderstanding it. Empson's seven types of ambiguity are only a fraction of those daily deployed in the law courts for money. Now in writing for this defensive purpose, literature offers no models; for literature is written with the other kind of reader in view, with the other kind of use of language. The models, then, for this kind of writing must be found outside literature and many of them will certainly lack all literary quality. I mention just one case in point. I have had the very educative experience during the last three years of being a member of the International Commission on the Naming of Enzymes, and among the tasks of the Commission has been to define the unit in which the activity of enzymes may be measured, for two rather different purposes, for the standardization of research results, and for the World Health Organisation, which lays down standards of this kind partly for the sake of its own purchases; it wants to purchase enzymes which really are doing the job and not just dead ones; there may even be litigation about purchases which have not turned out too well, so this definition — the unit of enzyme activity — is one which has conceivably to stand the test of legal chicanery as well as the stupidity of many chemists. That we have produced a formula which will serve these purposes for a few years I am in some hopes; but it is totally lacking in any kind of literary quality. There is no beauty in its phrasing, no rhythm; the choice of words leaves much to be desired; and my own personal conviction is that the most eminent stylists in the world could not give it any literary quality at all without impairing its usefulness for the purposes for which it exists. That, then, is a kind of writing for which no models are to be found in literature; for that at least we must go outside it.

But I should like to defend, up to a point, the language of journalism and civics. I have been criticised for setting a question, in a paper

on the use of English, in which the candidates were invited to state the model they had chosen, a serious weekly, a local paper, a scientific journal or whatever it might be. Now, when I arrived in Cambridge to read for the Classical Tripos, I was expected, I found, to announce my models with an eye on the style of the English to be translated. Against the Latin of Sallust, shall we say, or against the Greek of Lysias there are some well-founded objections that may be urged; but upon some occasions I was allowed to announce Sallust and Lysias as my models without reprobation: they were appropriate for the purpose. I believe that by learning to imitate their faults I perceived those faults more clearly, and also the virtues of those who avoided them. I think that the same process is of help in learning English prose. It is always a great point — perhaps the greatest point — to make a boy or girl see that there is always a choice of word, of tone, of phrasing. Nothing perhaps, no one thing at any rate, can help more directly toward transforming their knowledge of English to a knowledge about English — two extremely different things; and yet for the purposes of foreign teaching, above all, it is knowledge about English that we require.

So in our material for teaching English both at home and abroad we should limit ourselves neither to literature, nor to journalism nor to technology; we must have all of them in their proper spheres of influence, for their own special necessary purposes, and each of them as good as it can be of its kind. There is no doubt at all what the demand is abroad nor, I think, what it is at home. Now if we fail to meet it urgently and honestly our subject runs very great perils in the not too distant future. The greatest of these perils is that when we have not merely been found wanting — we are found wanting already — but when it is thoroughly perceived everywhere that we are not able to do this job, it will be taken over from us, given over to others who will teach the language, more efficiently in their way, perhaps, but without that tincture of letters that only we, the traditional teachers of English, could give to it.

XI. DR JOHN HOLLOWAY

Lecturer in English and Fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge

Mr Davies distinguishes the offensive and the defensive uses of language. The literary use he describes as using the language when you are aiming at the rapid translation or transmission of ideas, and hoping that your listener will catch the general drift. By contrast with this literary use of language we have the defensive use, the purpose of which is to ensure that you cannot possibly be misinterpreted; and he says literature offers us no models of this exact and scrupulous use of language.

I see things in exactly the opposite way. As I understand it, the kind of writing that hopes we shall get the general drift is journalism and talk and, I think, very often memoranda and reports for conferences. It is the literary use of language which aims above all at scrupulousness and precision; the point about poetry very often is that it is much more elaborately guarding itself against misinterpretation than casual prose.

Now with regard to problems connected with English teaching overseas, I think we have to remember that the major reason for supporting and sustaining the study of our literature in African or Asian countries, the major reason which lies outside the usefulness of literary study as improving competence in language, is that our literature is itself the major product of a great civilization. It is this which our literature has to offer to Africans and Asians.

Many of the nationalities we are concerned with have no literature of their own. A language like Persian of course does have its own literature. But we should have in mind, I think, that even with, say, Asian nations which have a literature of their own, it is often the case that that literature is of a thoroughly different kind from our own or from any major European literature; and it does not offer many great things that those literatures do offer. An Asiatic literature which consists of devotional mystical prose and fifteenth century court poems using a specially allusive diction is obviously going to offer

something quite different from the languages in which there are great novels of the contemporary world. But with regard to the real inter-connection of language and literature, it seems to me that at a fairly early stage students who make some contact with our literature in plain prose (which for all that it is in plain prose, includes some of our literary masterpieces) have taken their bearings in a fundamental way; which they will never do if their impression of English as a written language is confined to textbooks, or to the ordinances and regulations, say, of their own university written in English. We all know the ghastly, clotted English which is used for such purposes. If this is the only contact they have with the language, they will never take their bearings in certain fundamental matters.

I would like to mention one quite different point. To my mind the study of literature, at all stages, ought to be able to draw on work done by language experts; but often this is not the case, because the problems where those concerned mainly with the teaching of literature would most like guidance have not been adequately dealt with. I was in this situation in my own lectures in Cambridge a year ago. I realized that few of my students had sufficient understanding of semantic change in quite a large vocabulary of words which recur in poetry, and which have archaic senses, sometimes well into the nineteenth century: words like 'gale', 'glory', and the rest. If you are to read poetry of the seventeenth, eighteenth or early nineteenth century you ought to have a certain elementary knowledge about semantic change affecting perhaps sixty or eighty words. This does not apply only in England, because MA Honours students in India and Pakistan, for example, are perfectly capable of studying, and to great advantage, a great deal of English poetry written between 1600 and 1800. I found that I had to do most of this elementary work about semantic change more or less from scratch: from my own reading and from the Oxford English Dictionary. I also had to start largely from scratch in a related matter, that of the difference between the spoken and the written idiom in various periods. In my view, these are among the problems which language experts ought to tackle; there ought to have been so big a literature on this subject, well organized at the level that I needed, that I should have been unable to read more than a fraction of it. That was not the situation.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

So that this is one point at which I believe language work has a great deal to offer to literature; and I wish that language experts would give attention to the problems which will be of most immediate interest to those primarily concerned with the study of literature.

SESSION 5

Research problems

XII. W. HAAS

Senior Lecturer in General Linguistics, University of Manchester

There seem to be broadly two lines of research relevant to the task of teaching a second language, and two types of question we may ask: (i) the question *what* to teach – primarily a linguistic question, and (ii) the question *how* to teach it – primarily an educational one. The linguist (phonetician, lexicographer, grammarian) provides the teacher with alphabet, dictionary, grammar – the bare bones of what has to be taught. The teacher, of course, does not teach this skeleton system; he does not teach the abstract code. He teaches habits of speech which comply with that code. What linguistic analysis has abstracted from the verbal behaviour of a people has to be revived again in examples, in models of such behaviour. The linguistic abstraction of the dead system has no other purpose, here, than to make possible its orderly reincarnation, its re-incorporation, step by step, in the living context of things and persons. There is no short cut, no teaching method without foundation in grammar. Even with the most direct of ‘direct methods’, we rely on linguistic abstraction to tell us *what* to put ‘directly’.

There is a great deal of *educational* research still to be done on language learning and language teaching, on the best way of putting flesh on the bare bones of linguistic abstractions, and the best sequence of steps in the acquisition of new habits of speech. The problems are especially intricate when the language has to be taught in difficult circumstances: when it introduces the learner to an unfamiliar social and cultural tradition. (See Professor Firth’s remarks on *Fields of Work*.¹) Here the clash between two habits of verbal behaviour is a clash between two traditions, two civilizations, or at any rate two ways of life; and to learn the second language is to seek

¹ pp. 16–19 above.

a compromise. I shall not say any more on this important field of study.

I want to concentrate on the *linguistic* question, the question what to teach. Is there anything, or rather is there anything more, that the linguist can do to help the teaching of English? The question can conveniently be taken in two parts :

- (i) Can we improve on the descriptions we have of contemporary English?
- (ii) Can we adapt such a description to the special task of teaching English as a second language?

Since we are fortunate in having Professor Quirk with us to deal with the first question, I shall confine my remarks to the second, the question of 'adaptation'.

It is, I think, generally admitted that the teaching of a second language will gain in efficiency if it is based on detailed comparison of the two languages, the learner's native tongue and the other which he wishes to acquire. The learner's established habits of speech interfere with the acquisition of the new. Comparison will tell us exactly at which points interference will occur. Such information has not only a theoretical interest, and does more than merely afford us the pleasure of predicting the difficulties we shall meet in the classroom. Comparison will not merely serve to explain facts which we should possess without it, but will enable us to discover the relevant facts. It is not true that the main difficulties of the learner would be spotted and corrected equally well without linguistic comparison. Certainly, we could correct some; and useful work has been done in this field, especially in phonetics. I also agree with Professor Palmer when he says that it is important to study the faulty English of the learner. But if we did no more than this, much that is important would escape us; it would merely strike us as an obstructive and irritating mass of more or less capricious faults, phonetic, grammatical or semantic, while detailed comparison could reduce that mass to, say, a dozen main interferences, each a regular deviation, precisely located and ready to be dealt with. Precise diagnosis is the basis of effective treatment.

Location of the troubles is only part of the linguistic task. The next is gradation — gradation in order of seriousness. Here, an improved description of English ought to help. Language is an organic

structure: some parts and functions are more vital than others. An adequate description will not only provide us with the 'elements' of English, but with a scale of their relative importance; hence with a scale from which to read off the relative seriousness of interferences and the right order for tackling them. I am told that there are still teachers who are prepared to spend time and effort on the distinction between 'clear' and 'dark' / in teaching a class, say, of Japanese students who have not yet learnt to distinguish any kind of / from *r*. And how much of that sort happens in the teaching of grammar? Until we are sure of our linguistic grading, how are we to know what order to use in teaching?

What is required seems to be a large number of specialized comparative studies in English/Bengali, English/Japanese, English/Hausa and so on, attacking each of these tasks with a series of monographs: on the phonemes, the prosodic features, syllabic structure, phonological markers, the structure of words, the principal types of phrase and sentence pattern, on idioms, semantic disparities and so on. In this way we should eventually overcome the handicap which results from dispensing a uniform English for foreigners. At present, we tend to treat our students rather like a physiotherapist who, having to treat one patient with a pain in his back, another with a pain in his legs, and a third with a pain in his neck, tries to put them all through the same set of exercises.

Clearly, the kind of comparative research here proposed cannot be done overnight; research projects are long-term projects. This is not to say, however, that in the meantime we shall simply be waiting for results. Mere awareness of these problems, and a knowledge of the general linguistic techniques which are used in tackling them, will do a great deal to improve our methods of teaching. We shall be able to avoid blind alleys. We shall not rely on pseudo-generalities, such as 'a noun is a word that stands for a person or thing', or (dare I suggest it?) 'the sound *f* is a voiceless labial fricative'. Modern linguistic techniques can help us to lay bare the differences between languages, which we are liable to obscure as long as we tend to describe every language in the image of our own, or of Latin, or of some imposed logical scheme. What is general about modern general linguistics is not a set of descriptions but a set of questions to be

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

asked about any language—questions which elicit different answers from each. What *sounds the same* in two languages is seen clearly not to be the same: an *f* which contrasts with *p* or *h* is not the same as one that does not so contrast. It is precisely his spurious auditory familiarity with a sound in some positions that induces the learner of English to mispronounce it in others. Similarly, in grammar, what we call a 'noun' in English, with its difference between 'singular' and 'plural', is not the same as what we might call a 'noun' in Japanese where there is no obligatory distinction of number. A training in general linguistics would help us not to be misled in such cases, but, on the contrary, to see how our pupils are misled by precisely those partial similarities. Again, in dealing with *semantic* interference of the learner's native tongue we shall cease to be fascinated by dictionary definitions, paraphrases or literal translations. Rather we shall rely on what, after all, is the lexicographer's original material: we shall examine the context, verbal and situational, from which he derived his definitions and paraphrases, and find here the field in which to trace the semantic clashes of two languages — the field which has been signposted in different ways by the speech habits of different communities.

Most of the techniques of structural comparison have a fruitful piecemeal application to the task of teaching a language, long before the systematic comparative work is finished. Wherever the work has actually been completed, it must of course greatly increase our efficiency. As to the question who is to take up this kind of research, I will merely end with a suggestion: could we have earmarked *research fellowships* for men and women with practical teaching experience overseas, in addition to the special fund which would give us more lectureships in applied linguistics?

XIII. PROFESSOR R. QUIRK

Professor of English Language, University College, London

This conference has been convened in response to an urgent and immediate need for extended teaching of English and, in consequence,

for extended teacher training. But urgent and immediate though the needs may be, the situation at all points is seen to demand extended *research* as a fundamental condition of our success in ultimately fulfilling all the needs satisfactorily. Each session of this conference has dealt with topics on which a vast amount of research is necessary, so much so that in a session which is devoted solely to research problems, the greatest problem is to know where to begin. The subject, for example, of our first session — the nature of the demand for English in the world today — itself resounds with problems which only research can answer. Research and exchange of information are needed on what English is actually used for in the world, and by whom and how it is used, what the standards are, and how they differ. As Professor Firth has said, it is time to stop arguing about the merits of British or American or Ghanaian English and to start studying them. We must learn more about the nature and the variety of the demand for English and let our research face the implications of distinguishing an English-speaking world from an English-listening world, and an English-writing world from an English-reading world. We shall then be in a better position to apply the valuable concept of ‘restricted language’ in fulfilling the relevant needs. For restricted languages are not ready-made commodities waiting to be supplied to pupils; they have to be constructed in the light of two complementary factors: the nature of the demand for a restricted language on the one hand, and on the other hand the requisite isolatable features in the reservoir of what one might call total English. Such features having been isolated by linguistic research have to be systematized by linguistic science. Furthermore, we should not forget that the ultimate fulfilment of the demand requires research into the methods of teaching the various kinds of English to the various kinds of pupil.

Another of our sessions tackled the subject of English language and English literature. Obviously there, too, we have a relationship in pedagogy which is another urgent problem. Selection of the relevant literature to teach presumably involves enquiring not only into *English* literature but into the literature of our students’ own cultures. We need to know the part that the literature in a given foreign language plays in the lives of that language’s speakers before

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

we can intelligently ask what kind of English literature can readily be appreciated in the cultural and social milieu of such speakers. We might also investigate how much and what kind of British and American literature is necessary to give foreign students the requisite grasp of our language's scope. Indeed, we must ask how one should teach literature and how one should edit a text for presentation to various age levels and cultural backgrounds.

But the session which raised most problems in the fields with which I am personally most concerned was that on contemporary English language and general linguistics. With this topic we reach the fundamentals, the very mechanics of our language, the features that have to be taught as a basic essential; and if we are to have the better teaching that is demanded on all sides, the better gradings of material that have been discussed by Mr Haas, the better structuring of the linguistic phenomena, then we must have vastly more research on the operation of our language itself, its natural operation by native speakers and writers, and its natural reception by native listeners and readers. Let me quote some recent words of Professor H. A. Gleason¹ on the need for assembling data on the actual occurrence of English forms and on how we use them. He says: 'We have recently passed out of the *elevator-operator* period into a new era of *Flying planes can be dangerous*. And through it all, many of us seem steadfastly to resist looking at the language in its richness and variety as it is actually used.' One should, perhaps, forbear to point out that Gleason's idea of the new era seems as preoccupied as the old with minimal distinctiveness, and perhaps equally resistant in fact to what he calls 'looking at the language in its richness and variety as it is actually used'. But it is his demand for scrutiny of actual usage that I am concerned with. He goes on: 'This is the kind of groundwork which is needed in much greater volume if we are to make real progress in the analysis of English. We have reached a point where the needed constant checking and rechecking against text has become incredibly laborious, and the temptation is strong to rely on the easier route of introspective elicitation. But without check against text, English grammatical analysis may rapidly degenerate into a rather empiric-looking type of pure speculation.'

¹ *Language*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Part I), April-June 1960, p. 250.

One would think that here was something of which one could say with Lear, 'Oh, reason not the need', but it has had to be reasoned repeatedly. Professor Firth called for the collection of data on English usage in 1935, and in 1937 Mr R. A. Close of the British Council did so again, in an article in *The Times* almost anticipating Gleason's very words in an indictment of existing text-books as giving 'a meticulous plan of the *hypothetical* structure of the English language'.¹ I have referred to Gleason because he is one of the most prominent and currently influential of the American scientific linguists, and what he writes is an indication that there is a change of direction in their thinking. It is a criticism of the main theoretical work since Bloomfield: Bloch, Trager, Smith, Hockett, Harris, even Pike, even his own *Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics*. It comes at a time when, as an American correspondent put it to me in a letter last week, we are witnessing 'the breaking-up of the old orthodoxy'; at a time too, when there are signs of a new orthodoxy taking hold on the imagination of American linguists—that of Chomsky, Lees and the transformation theorists, whose influence may well (in the opinion of many on both sides of the Atlantic) be to draw linguistics away from the description of languages. Gleason's criticism is equally applicable here.

I quote Gleason also, of course, because his words echo what it has been my lot to preach *ad nauseam* over the past five years, and because the Survey of English Usage which is now making progress in University College is a full-scale attempt to supply the information on English that is needed for writing completer and more objective grammars.

The problem briefly, as we see it, is that previous descriptions such as Jespersen's let us down because they are eclectic (using material mainly only as illustration and often describing an oddity or a rare construction with more detail and precision than a more normal and important feature); because they observe no regular separation of strata either dichronically or synchronically (that is to say, *Punch* and *The Times* are allowed to rub shoulders not only with each other but with Shakespeare and W. B. Yeats); and because fictional dialogue is often taken to be spoken English, while the real spoken

¹ *The Times*, February 3, 1937.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

English is scarcely examined at all. On the other hand, as Gleason points out, the attempts of more scientific linguists of recent years to improve the situation have too often ignored the descriptive side in favour of devising structural statements of an English which is grossly over-simplified, statements which often account for little more than simple examples either taken over from our grammological tradition or concocted on the spot. Our own approach, which we are using in the Survey, is to find the systems and structures which can best handle the data obtaining in corpus after corpus of actual English, as it is used throughout the wide range of situations, spoken and written, in which native English speakers communicate with each other.¹

But descriptive research must go hand in hand with the development of theory. As Professor McIntosh has said in this conference, linguistics provides the theory for organizing the real data of English, but there is no adequate theory without the 'brute facts', as he put it, and he went on to say that at the present time we are more deficient in data than we are on the theoretical side. The descriptivist needs the experimental categories of the theorist, and the theorist needs the precise data exposed by the descriptivist. One could speak ruefully and at length about the vicious circle of this research problem in relation to English intonation and modulation, where those engaged in description are gravely in need of criteria and descriptive categories in order to handle the amorphous raw material, while it is acutely difficult to formulate relevant criteria and categories without a good deal of descriptive data.

This brings me to what may well be regarded as the thorniest research problem of all: how most efficiently and speedily to accomplish all the necessary research. There are three points I should like to make.

First, it must be obvious that, while all the various areas of research can be readily segmented so that pieces of work can be dealt with by individuals and in individual centres, they are vitally inter-related and inter-dependent. We need to extend facilities for the

¹ An account of the background and principles of the Survey is given in my article, 'Towards a Description of English Usage', *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1960, pp. 40-61.

exchange of information between centres and between individuals, so that all can have the readiest possible access to basic research data. I should like to see explored the possibility of establishing an active information service for this purpose. This is something that I have felt strongly about for some time and I have been very pleased with the amount of support the idea obviously has at this conference.

Secondly, we need to extend facilities for practical collaboration. I am personally most grateful for offers of help in the Survey's work that have come from several scholars in this country and in the United States. We for our part at University College will readily put the materials that we are collecting at the disposal of any scholars who need such information in the course of their own researches, one of the purposes of the Survey being to provide a public archive.

Thirdly and finally, the accomplishment of all these researches will depend on funds being provided for the payment of assistants. However wisely we use the energies of research students themselves (including foreign diploma students who may usefully be assigned tasks like the scrutiny of common errors and trial editing of literary texts, as exercises or dissertations), the bulk of the most vital research must be done by properly trained assistants who are working full time. I should very much like to reinforce what Mr Haas has just said on this. The research work that many of us are doing up and down the country has been widely acknowledged as necessary. We have received encouraging murmurs of support from the Ministry of Education and other Government and public organizations; but if this work is wanted, those who want it must realize that it cannot be done on a shoestring. It must receive the proper financial backing that is readily accorded by sources like DSIR to research of national importance in the physical sciences. In reply to Professor Gordon's plea for more published research, Professor McIntosh reminded¹ us of the many demands on our time and energy from teaching, tuition, supervision, committee work, memorandum writing, administration, and so on. He did not mention the hundreds of hours that many of us have to spend literally begging from foundations and private firms for the money to *do* our research, let alone get it published.

¹ During the Second Session, on Contemporary English Language and General Linguistics. The speeches referred to are not represented in this collection.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Our work is being demanded of us in the interests, we are told, of international relations; yet virtually all of it could be financed with the money spent by the Ministry of Defence in a single hour.

XIV. PROFESSOR T. J. B. SPENCER

Head of the Department of English, University of Birmingham

The special problem of English for scientists is something that we have considered in Birmingham. There is a need to get a more detailed knowledge of what is actually going on in the teaching of science. We found that nobody really knew the reasons why the many foreign students failed to understand what was being said. With the co-operation of our scientific friends we have been taping some of their first year lectures.

This material is being collected, and such problems as the dialectal variations in the speech of lecturers have proved to be more important than anybody had suspected. Very simple demonstration to the students of the fact that a particular lecturer comes from the north of the border, or south of the Thames, has proved to have an important effect on the intelligibility of the teachers.

Now this work requires support. I would remind you that there are many small special studies of this kind going on in the universities, which are as important as the schemes for developing four or five linguistic centres. The large schemes are not necessarily based on the very real problems which a large number of foreign students are facing in this country at the present time, and which we can help our scientific colleagues to solve.

Recommendations

1. There exists an increasingly urgent demand for more English teaching overseas. It is believed that this overt *demand* is but the visible aspect of a still greater and as yet incompletely assessed *need* for wider and more specialized English teaching, and indeed for teaching *in* English, not only within the Commonwealth but throughout the world.

2. In the long run the requirements for English teaching can only, and perhaps should only, be satisfied by development in the countries where the need exists. At present much of the world looks to the English-speaking countries not only for interim aid, but for informed and responsible guidance in the increasingly complex problems of language in education. This conference believes that Britain and British teachers have special responsibilities for securing both more and better English teaching abroad. It is not only the sheer magnitude of the need for English teaching overseas which is sometimes not appreciated in Britain, but the fact that teaching English as a second or foreign language requires able men and women with specific training in highly specialized skills and disciplines. Being a native speaker of the language is not enough, nor is teaching English to English pupils necessarily the best preparation.

3. The conference believes that the immediate demands and estimated needs can be met in three ways:

First

(a) by providing financial support to overseas institutions such as universities and training colleges;

(b) by subsidizing the appointment of British staff either to work in them or to assist in special in-service training schemes overseas.

While it is not for this conference to make recommendations about subsidizing overseas institutions or the staff appointed to them (that

RECOMMENDATIONS

is for Her Majesty's Government to investigate and decide upon), it is believed that heavy subsidization of this kind is a *pre-condition* for the further development in the United Kingdom of properly planned and effective training in the teaching of English as a foreign or second language.

Second

A world-wide career service for key British experts in English teaching must be created not only to encourage a flow of able recruits, but to ensure that British universities can establish and correlate training within a proper academic framework of the necessary disciplines.

Third

United Kingdom universities must train British teachers and teacher-trainers for work overseas, as well as overseas staff coming to Britain. There is a serious disparity between the known and estimated demand and existing training facilities. At the University of London Institute of Education only eighteen, and at the School of Applied Linguistics, Edinburgh, only three British graduates are receiving specialized training.

The combined average annual output of fully-trained British graduates from these institutions is not more than twenty. Other places in the departments existing at London and Edinburgh are occupied by overseas teachers. Hundreds of British graduates who are not specially trained go overseas to teach every year, but they are by no means qualified for the responsibilities which may fall to their lot, nor does their undirected experience necessarily generate the expertise required.

Training of British Staff at Universities

4. Existing demands for British teachers overseas come from schools, training colleges and university departments. Fully trained and experienced British staff are so few that they should preferably be placed only in key positions overseas—that is, in universities and training colleges rather than in schools. The conference recognizes however that there will be a continuing demand for teachers in

schools and that such posts can provide essential experience for graduates who have had initial training but are not yet fitted to train others.

5. The conference believes that graduates, after receiving a year's initial training as teachers, together with special training for teaching English overseas, should spend two or three years abroad in posts in schools or institutes, or as *lektors* or *assistants*. Some of these may then wish to return to teach in schools in Britain, but others should be selected to receive further training to fit them to train teachers of English as a second language at home or overseas. A flexible system to permit interchange between home and overseas posts is required.

Teacher-Trainers

6. Teacher-trainers need to be trained in university centres, for only in such environments can the relevant disciplines be provided and focused. Pre-eminent among these is the contemporary English language, which must be studied in conjunction with general linguistics, phonetics, English literature and educational theory and practice.

7. At present, departments sufficiently highly developed to undertake this training exist only in the universities of London and Edinburgh. Once a sufficient supply of specialists in general linguistics, applied linguistics, and contemporary English is available, it is desirable that other universities should initiate or develop activity in this field. This conference recommends that in such other universities any existing activities should be maintained during the next three years and that provision should be made for their expansion during the quinquennium 1962/67 as more qualified staff become available. It should be possible for new departments to develop courses with special regional or functional interests, such as training teachers for work in specific areas of Africa, or training them to teach through the medium of English as a second language. Departments of psychology, sociology, regional language studies, etc., should be used to aid these courses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. In the meantime existing departments already equipped and fully engaged in English as a second language should be strengthened to provide the maximum output of teacher-trainers.

Staffing Relevant University Departments

9. To produce teachers either for schools or for teacher-training posts British universities must themselves acquire suitably qualified staff. But there is an acute shortage of specialists in contemporary English who have a thorough training in linguistics and phonetics, and until more are available it is clearly not possible to make real progress with other stages of teacher-training. Only combined studies in English and general linguistics can produce these specialists.

10. The conference therefore recommends as *a matter of urgency* that in universities where there is already provision for English language and linguistics, the staff of these departments should be strengthened so that students of modern languages, classics or English may obtain the necessary training in general linguistics and contemporary English.

11. Other university disciplines will benefit greatly from this increased activity—for example it has a bearing on the problem of communication with which our scientific colleagues are concerned. The growth of a body of original thought in the field of linguistics will also be valuable for university departments of modern languages and philosophy.

Training Overseas Personnel

12. Economic reasons must limit the supply of able native teachers and especially of teacher-trainers and university staff in the developing countries. For this reason British staff will be needed in these countries for some decades. However, it is desirable that the large numbers of overseas teachers coming here (e.g. as Commonwealth Bursars or British Council Scholars) should receive not merely general training as teachers but also specialized and appropriate training in the teaching or use of English, without which their value on return to their own countries may be limited. Suitable facilities

should also be provided for qualified overseas students to undertake advanced studies in English and linguistics.

Research

13. There is urgent need for research in all aspects of problems of teaching English. This will require travel at home and abroad and periods of study leave by those engaged. Special equipment, the appointment of assistants, research fellows, and of extra staff to replace permanent staff during periods of release from departmental duties, will be necessary.

14. This conference recommends that special funds should be provided for :

- (i) research fellowships (including some for experienced teachers from overseas, to reinforce their practical experience by appropriate linguistic studies) and related expenses;
- (ii) travel and study leave by staff;
- (iii) payment of staff replacing those on study leave;
- (iv) special equipment.

Information Centre

15. An information centre or service should be established both to co-ordinate what is known and to facilitate co-operation between individuals and centres of research and training. Research data and materials collected from many sources could then freely be made available among specialists. An important function of such a centre or service would be to foster contacts between British specialists and their colleagues in other countries, notably in the Commonwealth and USA. The collection of information and material from areas overseas where English teaching is required should also be one of its activities.

Recruitment to Career Service

16. A campaign is required to attract suitable British students to a career in this field at an early stage in their studies. But for this to be effective there must be an assurance that a worth-while career is

RECOMMENDATIONS

open to them (see above, paragraph 3). Adequate financial provision for training grants must also be made. Ministry of Education training grants are at present restricted to those training to teach at home; they should be extended to those training to teach English overseas.

Contribution to English Teaching in the UK

17. As already mentioned (paragraph 5) it is likely that some British graduates who go overseas may return after a limited period and wish to take up employment in British schools. Their professional service abroad should be given full recognition, especially since their linguistic experience overseas will be of benefit to English teaching in this country. The conference believes that English language teaching in schools in Britain should be extended in the upper forms beyond the customary 'O' level, and that it could well be related more closely to the study of contemporary English; the kind of training in general linguistics and contemporary English envisaged by this conference could make a valuable contribution to the teaching of English as a mother tongue, both in universities and in schools.

6s net

2/250

