Workshop 8 - 10 October 1986

Place: Anderlecht *Belgium* (handwritten)

Workshop leader: Mario Rinvolucri, Pilgrims, Canterbury

Aims: 1. To enrich the methodology used by colleagues in the
                             language lab.

                          2. To generally deepen their feeling for person
                             centred M.L. methodology.

Day 1

- We told stories about our personal experiences with language labs.

- We worked on a number of language lab dictation techniques:

A: Students leave the lab and read short texts stuck up on the corridor wall.
     They choose three they like. They go back to their machines and record
     these three passages.   They may move back and forth between wall and
     machine as often as they like. No writing allowed.

     Once they have recorded the three passages they take dictation from the
     tape. Finally they compare their dictation with the texts on the wall.

     This exercise illustrates the principle of offering students text choice.

B: Own Voice Dictation

     Students hear the first sentence of the dictation - they each repeat the
     sentence and record it onto their own machines. The teacher's voice is
     not recorded.

     The students record the whole passage in their own voices and then take
     down the passage from the recording.

     This is a very powerful pronunciation exercise.

C: Voice Choice Dictation

     The students listen to the same passage read by three different people in
     three different ways. They each take down the passage from the voice they
     prefer.

The morning session closed with a series of mirroring exercises which had the
following aims:

     (a) to warm the group up.

     (b) to have people meet each other in new ways.

     (c) to propose mirroring as a useful professional tool for any
         communications.

The actual effects of this work varied a lot from person to person - this kind
of report cannot usefully be written by the group leader, since s/he is not the
principal experiencer in a workshop like the one being described.

In the afternoon session the members of the group formulated their own generative questions about lab work. These included:

- Which students should use the lab?
- How long for?
- When in the day?
- Why use the lab at all?
- How often should a student use the lab?
- The role of the teacher in the lab?
- What are students allowed to do in the lab?
- How does one react to technical disasters in the lab?
- How can we make the lab attractive to the students?
- How many students per teacher in the lab?
- How can we use drills and what drills?
- Can students make changes in the programmes?

They worked on answering some of the questions.

One sub-group decided to work contentful drills for the lab. The drill they produced was tried out in the lab and problems were discussed. The language area involved was offering one's own opinion on a subject.

The day closed with a translation exercise in the lab: ambiguous sentences were read onto the students' machines and each person had to produce a fast translation into Dutch. Naturally there were different translations produced for these sentences:

- She made her dress.
- They swam for Ireland.
- They have a practice lunch every Wednesday.
- There will be a meeting on bicycles in Room 342.
- It's a dangerous medicine cupboard.   etc....

Day 2

The morning started with a lecturette on the books published by Maley and Duff with C.U.P:

Drama Techniques
Mind Matters
The Mind's Eye
Sounds Intriguing

We looked at some of the techniques from the books, including the Hotel receptionist exercise from Drama Techniques.

Other useful idea sources mentioned were the Forum Sprache series bei Hueber and Jeux et Creativité by F. Debyser and J.M. Carré, Hachette, 78.

The first three lab exercises of the day aimed to get students producing descriptive language.

A: Mario described two houses he knew well. One he liked, the other he disliked. The description he gave of both aimed to be neutral. The group had to decide which house he liked and which he didn't.

In the lab each person recorded descriptions of pairs of things, one liked and one disliked. They swapped booths and listened to each other's recordings to try and suss out which was which.

An important point with this exercise is that the teacher should be willing to be seen as <u>a person</u> if she expects students to show themselves as human beings.

B: Students are each given a picture - they describe their picture on their tape. Their pictures are collected in and mixed with many more.

Students change booths and listen to the description of someone else's picture. They then try and find this picture from among the mass of other pictures.

C: The following picture dictation was given. Colleagues drew the picture and solved the problem.

<u>The Quickest Way</u>

- Draw a line across your page from left to right - draw the line across the middle of the page.

- Above the line there are waves.

- In the left hand corner there is a sailing boat.

- Draw a man lying on the sand in the bottom left hand corner.

- Top right hand corner - there is a swimmer in the water.

- The swimmer is shouting "HELP! HELP!"

- Make a dotted line from the swimmer to the nearest point on the shore.

- Draw a dotted line from the man on the sand to the swimmer.

WHAT'S THE QUICKEST WAY FOR THE MAN ON THE BEACH TO REACH THE SWIMMER?

In the afternoon (H)█████ led a very lively reduction exercise in German around the Iceland meeting of Gorbachov and Reagan.

For a description of the exercise type taken from <u>Once Upon a Time</u>, CUP, see Appendix I.

The group then went to the lab having been asked to work on expanding

    Ich bin ein Hotel
    Sono un albergo
    Je suis un hotel
    I'm a hotel

by one word or two several times over.

People then swapped machines and listened to each other's expansions.

Here are some of the sentences produced

> I'm not a hotel
> I'm sorry, not a hotel
> I'm a hotel porter
> I'm a hotel, am I?
> I'm staying in a hotel
> I'm given a hotel   etc......

The reduction exercise and the one above are grammar "drills" that involve:

> (a) thought

> (b) play

> (c) creativity

The group went to work inventing new exercises.

M████ gave us this sentence:

<u>We go to work by car</u>

He told us to make new sentences including these words

> go   to   by

People produced the sentences:

- We go to hell by chance.
- "go to" is by now familiar to computer people .
- Let's go - to stay by choice is impossible.
- Go to his house by the river.

J███ then took us back to the lab and asked us to record ten sentences between:

"my car refused to start"

> and

"at last the motor sprang to life."

Some of the resultant stories had more to do with us and our states of mind than with the things that happen under bonnets/hoods.

The day was rounded off with Ph██████ playing us a series of sound effects. Working separately in our booths we each recorded the story the sound effects sequence evoked. Some of us were tired and found the sounds too much for us, while others found them stimulating and produced firm stories of various sorts.

Day 3

People started by choosing one exercise learnt in the workshop that could be used with an actual group next week and one they would not use. This gave rise to paired and group discussion.

Revision is as much part of teacher-training as of language teaching.

Problem solving drills

In class people completed this sentence meaning fully in writing 10 to 15 times:

The man drove through the red light because..........

They used these tenses in their completions:

Past simple and continuous
Past perfect
Future in the past: "was going to"

This was followed by group sharing of the sentences.

In the lab we completed this sentence 10 - 15 times:

"If people had eyes in the backs of their heads........"

People listened to the tapes in the booths of others (the booths had names in them) and wrote down the two or three most interesting sentences from each booth. People then told others which of their sentences they had chosen and why.

Back in the classroom we wrote letters to each other. Each letter was addressed and signed and then delivered to its addressee. The exercise lasted 20 - 30 minutes - a lot of concentration - I managed to be rude to R███ and she was **rude** back! There is something very special about doing a one-to-one silent activity and yet within the group.

(H)E███ transformed this exercise into a role play. He asked us each to write a commercial letter that required an answer. He took in the letters and gave them out again to other people who had to answer them.

Other people were then given the answers and had to write what they imagined the original letters to have been! Good fun!

In the first exercise and in (H)E███'s people wrote to an addressee. To do anything else in a language class is absurd. Why should I, the student, write things if nobody is going to read them for their content?

We rounded off the morning's work with a story exercise in the lab.

The voice from the console said:

"John met his history teacher in the corridor: the teacher spoke to him angrily - you speak the dialogue between them to your own machines."

Space to do this

"John went home for lunch. 'Hi Mum', he shouted. She was in the kitchen. Describe John's mother."

Space to do this

"The family sat down to eat - John's father and mother started quarrelling: you speak the dialogue between them to your tape-recorders."

Space to do this

"John could stand it no longer. He stomped up to his room and shut the door behind him. He put on some music. Describe the music or hum it."

After the recording people were "string-paired" and went off to different parts of the lab to tell their partner about their vision of John and his family.

In this exercise we went on beyond the work we did in telling the story.

In the afternoon Ivan showed us the Word Poker game he had invented overnight. The classroom looked and felt like a gambling den! See Appendix II for Ivan's outline of the game.

We ended the methodology work by playing Translation Othello.

Equipment: - ordinary 64 square board
           - little cards with the words of language A one side and language B the other.

No. of players: 2 against 2

Aim of game:

Language A team try to have all the cards on the board in their language up. Language B team try to do the same for their language.

Procedure/rules

Team A lay down a card with the language A version of the card up. Team B lay down a card next to it; the language B version of the card is up.

Team A lays an A card the other side of B's card. In this way A now have a card either side of B's card - If they can correctly translate the B language word into language A they can turn it over. If they are wrong they can have a look at the A side of the card, but it must then be put back with its B face up.

The workshop ended with a 15 minute group evaluation session.

Useful background reading:

Earl Stevick: Memory, Meaning and Method   Newbury House 1978
               A Way and Ways   Newbury House 1981

I get the impression that many colleagues are not in the habit of consulting teacher's handbooks. This, if true, is a pity. I would strongly recommend that the centres get hold of some of the Cambridge University Press teacher's handbooks and that they watch the new handbook series that Oxford are bringing out.

Books that I drew on this seminar included:

Once Upon a Time	Morgan	CUP	1984
Grammar in Action	Frank	Pergamon	1983
Bring the Lab Back to Life	Ely	Pergamon	
Dictation Many Ways	Davis	CUP (forthcoming)	1987
Grammar Games	Rinvolucri	CUP	

This report is radically incomplete. The workshop actually starts as people leave the room at the end. I have described a small part of my view of the mechanics of the fermentation. I do not know how the beer will turn out. What's more, this report gives a glimpse of the three day workshop I attended on October 8th, 9th and 10th in Anderlecht. I know for a fact that L███, R███, E███ J█, the two D███████ all attended quite different workshops over that same three day period in those same two rooms.

Mario Rinvolucri
(Pilgrims)

*Sorry about the name. (H)E███ was the person from Ostend.