

ENGLISH, LANGUAGE, AND EDUCATION

# *Language Awareness for Teachers*

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**BILL MITTINS**

# *LANGUAGE AWARENESS FOR TEACHERS*

**Bill Mittins**



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# General editor's introduction

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My first meeting with Dr W. H. ('Bill') Mittins was at the very first annual conference of the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) in 1964 when he chaired the discussion group to which I was allocated. We have been firm friends ever since. He has also remained a valued and influential member of NATE, serving as Chairman, Secretary and Advisory Officer, probably the longest serving member of its Council and Executive.

For many years Bill was a lecturer in English education at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. He was unusual in that his main interest in the field of English teaching was that of language, having written a grammar of modern English, done research into attitudes to English usage, and developed a particular expertise in semantics. In 1964 there were few people involved in educating young teachers of English who shared these interests and many of us were inclined to regard Bill as an amiable eccentric.

Now the wheel has turned full circle and language is very much in the consciousness of all of us. Sadly, it remains the case that it is only a minority of English studies at universities which involve any serious and systematic study of language but, subsequent to the Report of the Kingman Inquiry and that of the English Working Group on the National Curriculum, chaired by Professor Cox (both fully documented in this book), language is unmistakably on the agenda in the subject-English classroom.

Of course this was always the case elsewhere. It was significant that, at the first Anglo-American seminar on the teaching of English at Dartmouth, New Jersey, in 1966, most of the American participants took language very seriously. It was part of the 'trivium': language, literature and composition. Although there were a number of distinguished British linguists present, notably Professors Abercrombie and Sinclair (both, significantly, hailing from Edinburgh, not from an English university), most of the British contingent, including myself, had little interest in, and no knowledge of, the role of language in the classroom. Much later still, scholars like David Crystal were writing books with titles such as *What Is Linguistics?* It remained an arcane area of study.

So unfortunately it remains for many English teachers today. In spite of the demands of the National Curriculum, most university courses of English are unreconstructed, contrasting interestingly with those in polytechnics – literature still rules. There is, of course, no reason why we should object to the role of literature within the English curriculum; all one is arguing for is a little more balance so that more teachers of English go into their classrooms equipped with an understanding of modern approaches to language and with their minds cleared of the many myths about language – what has been called ‘folklore linguistics’ – that pass for knowledge in most cases.

Hence this book. When I invited Bill to write it I knew that what was needed was a clear introduction to language for the classroom teacher who had been through a conventional college or university English course, or, even more, for those many teaching English with, to quote the Bullock Report, ‘no discernible qualification in the subject’. The Bullock Report, entitled *A Language For Life*, was perhaps the first official report to put language firmly in the forefront of the English curriculum. Since then there have been many others, including the now somewhat discredited HMI document, *English 5–16* (Curriculum Matters 1), which first introduced the idea of ‘knowledge about language’ into the curriculum. English teachers reacted against this with immediate vigour, often without having read the document at all carefully. For most any talk of ‘language’ was equated with a return to the formal teaching of traditional grammar which, for very good reasons, had been discounted in the immediate post-war period.

This was, in itself, an indication of the insecurity of many English teachers about the whole area of language study. Bullock had recommended whole-school policies for ‘language across the curriculum’; mostly these failed because of the lack of both knowledge and will on the part of the teachers concerned. Gradually this term gave way to that of ‘language awareness’, a growing movement which sought to bring English teachers and teachers of other languages together in a common concern. Kingman and Cox have joined together in seeking to introduce ‘knowledge about language’ as a strand in the National Curriculum, though interestingly enough it still does not appear (at least as yet) as a separate attainment target. We have preferred here the terminology ‘language awareness’, both as being less threatening to those not already interested in this field and in its emphasis upon the unity of language concerns across subject boundaries.

Yet, for many teachers in Britain, language awareness remains something of which they are themselves largely unaware. What is needed is a clear, scholarly and readable introduction which will meet their felt need of a sound understanding of those areas of modern linguistic science which are relevant to the classroom and which have been absent from their own education. Indeed, with the decline of traditional grammar teaching since the 1950s, there is a whole generation of teachers of English to whom the whole field of language, even at the most elementary level, is a closed book.

Bill Mittins’s book sets out to fill this gap. It has immense scholarship and a lifetime of work behind it, but it wears its scholarly mantle lightly. Not only is it

eminently readable but it stands upon the assumption that language, as a primary human artefact, is uniquely fascinating as an object of study. Bill's own sense of excitement and fascination with his subject – and, as those who know him will readily recognize, of fun – is apparent on every page. It is, above all, 'a good read' as well as necessary reading for those struggling to equip themselves for the teaching of the new demands of the National Curriculum. To do this effectively will require knowledge; already there are language 'textbooks' being prepared that are old grammar books and gap-filling exercises writ anew. The present volume is as up to date as any book can be, given the inevitable time-lag between writing and production; it is a clear guide to the knowledge that is needed but, even more importantly, it leads its readers to understanding.

As an editor I am much indebted to Bill's painstaking and fascinating work.

Anthony Adams

# Preface

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John Trim, for many years Chairman of the Centre for Information on Language Learning and Research (CILT), once deplored (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 28 March 1975, p. 18) the fact that 'the man in the street is better informed about nuclear physics, cosmology and genetics than about the language he [presumably also *she*] uses and hears all day and every day'. He observed that 'teachers, for whom language is the primary professional tool, and who consequently stand to gain most from a conscious awareness of its nature and use, too rarely have any opportunity for the systematic study of language in their academic education and professional training'. Consequently, he welcomed the work of Professor Sinclair and his collaborators on language in the classroom.

I have found John Sinclair's brief article on *Language Awareness in Six Easy Lessons* invaluable in providing a framework that imposes a measure of orderliness on what he calls the 'creative untidiness' of explorations into the many aspects of language. My sizeable bibliography in effect acknowledges debts to many other writers on language and languages. In particular, I am indebted to the work, on discourse analysis done by Malcolm Coulthard (colleague of and collaborator with Sinclair) and to Geoffrey Leech's *Principles of Pragmatics*.

In the course of reading and quoting widely, I have been saddened to learn of the deaths of Peter Strevens and Paul Jennings. Both, in their very different ways, have attacked the notorious insularity of the English language. The end of the 1980s has also reminded us, through the televised reports of extraordinary events in Eastern Europe, how easy it is to recruit foreign speakers of English, and how difficult it is to find comparable British speakers of foreign languages.

W.H.M.

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# 1 Language in the National Curriculum

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'Sic biscuitus disintegrat' – That's the way the cookie crumbles.

(Iris Murdoch)

At the time of writing, the present government is poised between enacting a National Curriculum and implementing it. Only time can tell whether the legislation presided over by one Secretary of State for Education (Kenneth Baker) will be translated into effective action by his successor (John MacGregor). The new elaborate scheme is intended to set clear objectives, to check on performance at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16, to make schools – at least maintained schools in England and Wales – more accountable for the education they offer, and therefore to raise educational standards. The extent to which these intentions are realized must depend on how 'the cookie crumbles', that is, on how workable the scheme proves to be in actual teaching and testing practice. A recent article – 'Advisory body left out in the cold' (*Times Educational Supplement (TES)*, 3 November 1989) – suggests that the scheme is crumbling, if not collapsing. The School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC), it says, accuses government ministers of ignoring their advice by restricting both GCSE's coverage of the ability range and the use of records of achievement, and by reducing the role and status of teachers in assessing pupils at 7, 11 and 14 (see p. 18 below).

## **The Education Reform Act and school subjects**

The 1988 Education Reform Act requires maintained schools to provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum comprising religious education and the National Curriculum. For law-making purposes a curriculum is regarded as a set of school 'subjects'. These subjects were once compared (by J. F. Kerr) with eggs in a crate, each fitting snugly into a pre-designed space, isolated from the rest. Some timetabled activities – in classrooms, laboratories, workshops, gymnasiums, on playing fields – accept the 'subject' designation fairly comfortably; others resist it. Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) has admitted: 'When the curriculum is defined only in subjects, it is difficult to accommodate those aspects which tend to fall between the subject boundaries; for example, environmental education, economic awareness, and social education and new needs such as

computer education' (Department of Education and Science (DES) 1985a, p. 10).

There are areas of language – specific foreign languages, formal grammar teaching, English literature – which fit more or less satisfactorily into the conventional scheme, but 'the linguistic talents a pupil possesses or can develop do not fall simply into the slots provided by school subject disciplines and are thus not the exclusive property of this or that department' (Robertson, 1980, p. 20). 'English' is the medium for all our teaching and operates across the curriculum. Moreover, English language is acquired before school age and its use is modified outside school. Again, the creative arts subjects might risk being squeezed out by the increased emphasis on traditional subjects. This possibility has elicited from the Minister of the Arts, Richard Luce, an inelegantly expressed – and not really convincing – assurance that the curriculum team for English would 'not only [consider] drama in the context of the great dramatic works of literature, but also as a medium for the development of a range of oral skills, which are relevant to all subjects'. He added that media studies would be considered (Lawlor, 1989).

Peter Strevens (1965, p. 74) gives English the most extensive coverage by suggesting that we 'agree to accept as "English" any piece of human behaviour that is clearly meaningful language, whether spoken or written, and which is not any language other than English'.

### English in the National Curriculum

DES and Welsh Office (1987, p. 7) names 'English' as one of a score of subjects listed as 'foundation' or 'additional' components of the National Curriculum (NC). Elsewhere, stating that the legislation will not require particular subjects to be given specific *names* on school timetables, it accepts that labelling varies. The content and scope of most subjects – whether called, for instance, 'Home Economics' or 'Domestic Science', 'Business Studies' or 'Commercial Studies', 'Physical Training' or 'Physical Education' – are well enough understood to avoid serious differences. But because of the lack of consensus among teachers, 'English' notoriously presents problems of interpretation. Professor Cox, chairman of the English Working Group (EWG), believes that there has been a 'growing consensus' about what makes good English practice (TES, 25 November 1988), but Professor Rosen, addressing a conference at Nottingham University, is reported to have 'questioned whether the [Kingman] report's [DES, 1988] underlying assumption of a new consensus in English teaching was "possible" or desirable' (TES, 6 June 1988).

Ian Michael's (1987) detailed account of *The Teaching of English from the Sixteenth Century to 1870* ends with a chapter on 'English: the development of a subject'. In a section considering the term 'English', he refutes the common allegation that 'there was little or no teaching of English before the final decades of the nineteenth century.' Demonstrating that English was treated 'sometimes

as a unity, sometimes as a blend of components', he compiles a tentative outline development of the subject in terms of its principal components:

<i>From early times</i>	Reading, spelling and pronunciation; some oral expression; perhaps some drama . . .
<i>By 1525</i>	Some written expression
<i>By 1550</i>	Some snatches of literature
<i>By 1585</i>	Grammar
<i>By 1650</i>	More substantial literature; more sustained written expression
<i>By 1720</i>	Some explicit teaching of literature; linguistic exercises in, or derived from, grammar and rhetoric
<i>By 1730</i>	Elocution
<i>By 1750</i>	More substantial dramatic work
<i>By 1820</i>	History of the language
<i>By 1850</i>	History of literature

(Michael, 1987, p. 381)

Later components would include elements of communication and media studies, of information technology, of unscripted 'creative' or 'educational' drama. Moreover, many teachers of native English (ENL) now need to deal with English as a second language (E2L) or as a foreign language (EFL) in order to meet the needs of 'immigrant' children. (We shall discuss multilingual and multicultural issues later in this chapter.) The broadest version of what may, *faute de mieux*, be referred to as an English-cum-Language course would include language-awareness matters spanning English and foreign languages. In contrast, the narrowest 'English' courses have focused more or less exclusively on particular segments of the subject. Over a long period, some teachers have chosen to treat either grammar or literature as sufficient for the teaching of English. Of language pedagogy before the nineteenth century it has been asserted, perhaps with some simplification, that 'grammar teaching was considered not only necessary but also sufficient. Until that time . . . language teaching and the study of grammar were virtually synonymous' (Rutherford and Smith, 1988, p. 9). On the other hand, a committee of teachers of English has argued – also with exaggeration – that 'Literature, the storehouse of recorded experiences, provides models for all the variety of uses to which we put language' (Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters, 1952). Both emphases have proved unsatisfactory. Grammar study can neglect the actual use of language. Others find literature insufficient, because of its concentration on work characteristically both written and commonly of an 'elitist' quality; moreover, they are not persuaded by more recent post-structuralist notions of 'textuality' that seem to extend 'literature' to include all stretches of language, irrespective of length and quality. Advocates of drama – both recorded text drama and improvised creative drama – with some justice make their specialism the focal point of English teaching. Increasingly, however, it seems implausible to regard English as a totally unitary subject; it must be accepted, in Michael's phrase, as a 'blend of components'.

## Bullock

The Bullock Report broadened the notion of English teaching by choosing the title *A Language for Life* and by supporting the cause of 'language across the curriculum' (DES, 1975, Ch. 12). However, it restricted the latter cross-curricular concern to *English* language, justifying the exclusion of foreign languages from the committee's terms of reference. These terms asked for inquiry into 'all aspects of teaching the use of English'. Chapter 20 of the Report – on 'Children from Families of Overseas Origin' – briefly recognized the language problems of 'immigrant' children but, understandably, ruled it to be 'outside the scope of this Report to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of provision made for teaching English as a second language'. It confined itself to admitting that systems offering specialist teaching (for example, in special centres), while often more practicable, suffered by isolating immigrant children and cutting them off 'from the social and educational life of a normal school' (para. 20.10).

Two examples of a Basic Language Course for teacher trainees are offered (para. 23.25). The first one begins by basing the study of 'the nature and function of language' on potential teachers' own language and on the language of school children. But, in the absence of indications to the contrary and given the monoglot character of the Report, the latter reference presumably means the language of native English-speaking children. Similarly, the 'Linguistic awareness and reading', mentioned in the same specification, doubtless means *English*-language awareness.

The Bullock Report broadened its brief from the intended initial focus on standards of reading English (specified by Secretary of State Margaret Thatcher), but felt bound to exclude English as a second language, thereby 'marginalizing' the needs of 'immigrant' children. Ten years later the Swann Report (DES 1985b) recognized these needs as central to 'Education for All'. It strengthened and amplified Bullock's doubts about 'isolating' systems using specialist centres. In a powerful paragraph on 'Language Awareness and Linguistic Diversity', it attacked excessive 'Anglicity':

Within the concept of 'Education for All' there is also a need to broaden pupils' concept of language so that they no longer see it solely in terms of 'English', and come to appreciate the positive aspects of living in a linguistically diverse society. In a society in which the tradition of monolingualism is deeply entrenched and belief in the 'superiority' of the English language has been fostered by its historical relationship with the British Empire and its continuing role as a major international language, the concept of any other languages, even those of our European neighbours, as 'strange' and 'foreign' is perhaps understandable but hardly defensible. We should see the countering of such attitudes as an important component of 'education for all' and the heightening of all pupils' awareness of the range and richness of language as contributing to a better education for all. (DES, 1985b, p. 419)

### After Bullock

The Bullock Report has been strongly criticized for its 'failure to allot any role in "language for life" to the study of foreign languages' and for perpetuating 'linguistic parochialism' by interpreting 'Across the curriculum' as not meaning 'across the *language* curriculum' and giving foreign-language teachers 'no role in it' (Hawkins, 1987, p. 27). If this was 'a great opportunity lost', the time has come to bring much closer together all the languages learned and used in Great Britain. During the past two decades or so, teachers of languages have combined to devise syllabuses which clarify what the nebulous phrase 'language awareness' can and should mean. The initiative has been taken in this by teachers of foreign languages and, in some cases, even by non-language teachers. Parallel to this work, the Kingman Inquiry and the English Working Group (EWG) have sought to establish a framework for the teaching of English as a core subject in the NC.

To what extent have relevant NC documents and the recommendations of 'English' committees been influenced by theoretical and practical work on the awareness of language? Have the two hitherto parallel routes converged? The languages and language-related subjects named in *The National Curriculum 5-16* (DES and Welsh Office, 1987) are:

English – a core foundation subject to be studied throughout schooling.

A modern foreign language – a foundation subject to be studied during the secondary phase.

Drama – one of four components making up a combined foundation subject for fourth- and fifth-year students.

A second modern foreign language, classics, drama – additional subjects.

Welsh – (i) a foundation subject in schools where Welsh is the teaching medium.

– (ii) an available subject in English-speaking schools.

Technology – as far as it is relevant to language study, a foundation subject.

The DES has admitted that, while 'valuable progress has been made towards securing agreement about the objectives and content of particular subjects', such progress has been 'variable, uncertain and often slow'. To meet the government's wish 'to move ahead at a faster pace', it was assumed that 'a national curriculum backed by clear assessment arrangements will help to raise standards of attainment' (DES and Welsh Office, 1987, pp. 5, 6 and 8, emphasis added).

### Task Group on Assessment and Testing

The terms of reference of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT), set up in February 1987 and chaired by Professor Black, asked for advice, as stated in its report, on 'the practical considerations which should govern all assessment including testing of attainment at the ages of 7 (approximately), 11, 14 and 16, within a national curriculum' (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a, App. A).

Assessment and testing were obviously to be an essential part of educational reform.

Before considering TGAT's impact on languages in general, it is necessary to note the awkwardness – presumably serving 'faster pace' – which established, also 'at the beginning of 1987', the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language. The two committees doubtless recognized the need to collaborate, but it was not until 30 October 1987 that Professor Black officially received advice from Elizabeth House that his Group 'will need to liaise closely . . . with the Committee on English chaired by Sir John Kingman'. Partly because the TGAT Report was published as early as December 1987, some months before (in March 1988) the Kingman Report (DES, 1988a) appeared, there is reason to doubt whether the liaison was either close or frequent. It is not surprising that, compared with its treatment of mathematics and science – the other core subjects – TGAT has rather less to say about English or indeed about language in general.

Teachers of 'subject-English' may be less impressed than colleagues teaching foreign languages that 'when assessment and testing are carefully aligned to the curriculum, as in *Graded Assessment Schemes*, one of the outstanding benefits that teachers report is the enhanced motivation of pupils' (DES and Welsh Office 1988a, para. 14, emphasis added). The notion of 'graded assessment' seems to reinforce an assumption that a mother-tongue language can be taught and assessed with as much linear progressiveness or staging as has proved successful with foreign languages. Underlying this notion is the questionable assumption of 'successivity' which dominates the secondary school curriculum and indeed 'runs right through British academic life. Successful study of most subjects at a given level, it is assumed, rests on successful study of that subject (or a different but relevant one) at the previous one' (Pearce, 1972, pp. 89–90). It smacks further of the broader and dubious theory that everything that exists must exist in some degree and therefore be measurable. These assumptions are explicitly challenged by the insistence in the Cox EWG Reports (DES and Welsh Office, 1988b; 1989) on the 'recursive', 'iterative' and 'non-linear' character of native language learning.

Appendix C of the TGAT Report records Meetings with Invited Groups. The 'teams' of the Assessment of Performance Unit submitted materials used in schemes both for well-defined subjects (including Foreign Languages) and for relatively undefined 'Language'. A previous paragraph (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a, App. C, para. 1) dealing with graded assessment, records meetings, among others, with representatives of the Joint Matriculation Board's Staged Assessment in Literacy. TGAT accepts that literacy 'has applications well beyond what might be contained within English' (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a, para. 143). An 'announcement on assessment' made by the Secretary of State, at that time Kenneth Baker, is printed as Appendix 4 to the second Cox Report on *English for ages 5 to 16* (DES and Welsh Office, 1989). There, 'English' – specifically so named – is aligned with the other major subjects. The expressed

expectation is that the principles established by TGAT would 'inform the consultations which will take place later this year [1989] on the recommendations of the National Curriculum Mathematics and Science Working Groups, and likewise [to] inform the thinking of the Working Groups on English and Design and Technology which we announced last month'.) Appendix C of the TGAT report (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a) adds that 'Developing practice in graded assessment in modern [foreign] languages was also considered.' Earlier, discussing profile components, it associates schemes in English that 'attend separately to writing, oracy, reading comprehension, and listening' with, 'similarly', the three components that contribute to graded assessments in science developed with the London Group (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a, para. 33). The first Cox Report, recognizing the four aspects mentioned by TGAT, was to emphasize that 'development in the four language modes is complex and *non-linear*' (DES and Welsh Office, 1988b, para. 1.8, emphasis added). Pam Czerniewska points out that the non-linear character of first-language learning had been demonstrated earlier – in the Inspectorate's *English from 5 to 16* – by the repetitiveness of age-related objectives specified as

for 7-year-olds: Set down directions and instructions when there is a clear purpose for doing so

for 11-year-olds: Frame instructions and directions clearly

for 16-year-olds: Frame instructions and directions clearly and succinctly

(Czerniewska, 1988, p. 125)

(The implications seem to be: at age 7, the purpose but not necessarily the writing needs to be clear; at age 11, be clear, but not necessarily succinct; at age 16, be both!)

The possible difficulty of reconciling non-linearity of the subject with graded assessment of achievement in it was not examined by TGAT, presumably because incompatibility between the two might have threatened the assumptions about assessment underlying the whole National Curriculum.

A similar difficulty, also to be tackled when the assessment system comes into operation, is presented by the 'shift from norm-referencing to criterion-referencing' (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a, para. 7). Though criterion-referencing is allegedly interpreted with 'a broader and less exacting definition than that used by some authors', it still seeks – as norm-referencing does not – to make judgments of what in the Glossary is defined as 'the absolute quality of the performance'. (This appeal to *absolute quality* seems diametrically opposed, at least in language teaching, to Sapir's (1924, p. 157) more persuasive view that 'It is the appreciation of the relativity of the form of thought which results from linguistic study that is perhaps the most liberalizing thing about it. What fetters the mind and benumbs the spirit is ever the dogged acceptance of absolutes'.) Subject-English has notoriously been afflicted by problems of achieving both high reliability and high validity. Many years ago (1924), William Boyd's investigation of measurement in composition and spelling (as well as arithmetic)

demonstrated how inflated weighting of 'objective' qualities (such as spelling, 'absence-of-mistakes', frequency of unique or unusual words) could achieve very high reliability in marking at the expense of validity, that is, of measuring what purports to be measured. Obviously, English composition is more than a matter of readily countable features. 'Absence of mistakes' is a meanly negative criterion for assessing quality. TGAT's Appendix G concludes dauntingly that 'Users cannot be expected to be familiar with the translation of reliability or validity indices into confidence limits' and suggests (unrealistically because expensively?) that the necessary analysis 'will have to be undertaken by expert agencies'.

Both gender and ethnic bias affect assessment of language performance. They are briefly considered together as forms of invalidity in two paragraphs (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a, paras 51-2). The recommendation is that 'assessment tasks be reviewed regularly for evidence of bias, particularly in respect of gender and race'. Having collected the evidence, 'as far as possible the sources of such bias should be eliminated'. This somewhat vague expression of hope is presumably given some substance in a submission by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) reproduced as Appendix F to TGAT. The EOC accepts that complete elimination of gender bias in test construction is as yet unlikely to be achieved, and therefore 'a complicated statistical adjustment would be necessary' - presumably also to be conducted by 'expert agencies'.

For the language handicaps of those whose first language is not English, TGAT - again briefly and without going into practical implications - recognizes that a pupil's low level of performance merely indicates that he or she needs 'special help in English language skills' and suggests that 'assessment in other skills and understanding, particularly at age 7, should, wherever practicable and necessary, be conducted in the pupil's first language' (DES and Welsh Office, 1988a, para. 53). The remarkable rapidity with which TGAT produced a novel assessment procedure probably made it inevitable that some important but not central matters of concern are treated rather cursorily, relying sometimes on appendices to tackle details. According to a *TES* report (10 March 1989), Professor Nuttall expressed pessimistic views about the future of TGAT, mainly but not solely because of its failure to deal satisfactorily with bilingualism. He thought that it is 'completely impractical' to apply the tests through the very many languages - 170 alone in the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) area. He doubted whether 'tests can be translated into other languages'. The 'vision' of Professor Black had become 'distorted' because teacher assessment and moderation were being 'pushed further down the agenda' and because tests would fail to eliminate bias or to achieve validity and comparability. Consequently, 'the SAT [Standard Assessment Task] programme might ring its own death knell' and the government should therefore scrap what Nuttall says has become a 'monster of an external system'.

Examples of the variety of forms of assessment available are given in DES (1988b, App. E). In all the 21 examples used, the stated 'task mode', 'response



mode' or 'presentation mode' (or two or three of these) is partly or wholly linguistic, oral or written. Two examples (nos 15 and 18) test modern foreign languages, respectively German and French. The five native-language tests (nos 10-14) focus on the skills of literacy and oracy rather than more generally on English language and literature as usually understood.

### Kingman

In Britain, or at least in British schools, language awareness means awareness of the many languages used in our schools. The list includes first languages, second languages and foreign languages. Of the thousands of possible tongues, the Kingman Report refers primarily, of course, to English as a first language. It also briefly mentions:

- 1 English as a second or foreign language
- 2 Welsh and Gaelic as first languages
- 3 French, Latin and Punjabi as foreign languages taught in British schools
- 4 Polish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Gujarati, Cantonese, Turkish, and
- 5 Afro-Caribbean Creole, Japanese, Brazilian and Russian accents in speaking English.

These references are in the main incidental and auxiliary to mother-tongue English. The convenient, perhaps necessary, notion of separate school subjects supports the concept of 'mother tongues' which are clearly separable from 'foreign' languages. A less convenient, less manageable notion is that based on Bakhtin's (1981) distinction between two opposing forces operating in all language. In the interpretation of his argument offered by Hopkins (1989, pp. 200-1), 'heteroglossia' (the coexistence of dialects in language) contrasts with 'polyglossia' (the coexistence of fragments of several 'foreign' languages within every 'mother tongue'). Consequently, 'the concept of a "pure" language is a delusion'. The circumstances in which the Kingman Inquiry was set up virtually induced it to adopt a strategy assuming that the English language could be treated, if not as 'pure', then as separable enough for it to be given priority over 'foreign' languages. The subsequent governmental regulation (see p. 17) produced the invidious 'league table' division into two foreign language groups - on the one hand, modern European foreign languages specified in the National Curriculum, on the other (by implication less important) hand, non-European Community languages.

Less peripheral are proposals of closer collaboration between teachers of English and teachers of modern European foreign languages. The chapter on teacher training finds 'merit in the suggestion that students of English and of modern languages [English does not count as a *modern* language for this purpose!] should, wherever possible, work together in planning and delivering a "language-focussed" project to a shared class of pupils' (DES, 1988, para. 6.6).