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Differentiation in the Ordinary Classroom situation as regards the Teaching of English as a second language, with special reference to the use of the Tape Recorder

by
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I have chosen to talk to you to-day on differentiation in the *ordinary classroom situation* because I wish to speak to you as a fellow teacher and should therefore like to be practical rather than theoretical. Consequently I shall try to point out one or two possibilities and make some suggestions which could, to my mind, be tried out under normal circumstances by any teacher, given a minimum of equipment. This does not imply, of course, that differentiation is not possible without the type of electronic equipment to which I shall be referring. Indeed, a good deal can be done without machines, as I shall point out quite frequently. My ideal is to show that differentiation is indeed possible and that, with the advent of the tape recorder and similar equipment, it has become possible on a somewhat different and larger scale, offering more scope to the ingenious teacher and also possibly bringing about some economy in available teaching manpower.

1. The problem

I am addressing myself here particularly to those of you who teach in the smaller to medium-sized country schools with one matriculation class of anything up to about 35 pupils. In other words, I am thinking in the first place of schools where no homogeneous grouping of any nature is possible, especially in the senior classes, because there is only one single class so that the range of ability as far as English (second language) is concerned, is indeed very wide. This does not mean to say, however, that the problem does not arise in the larger urban or semi-urban schools because, as we know, even when you have homogeneous grouping into sections or streams based on I.Q. or general scholastic achievement, the range in each section as far as particular subjects are concerned, still remains relatively wide. This is probably particularly true of the second language where home and other environmental factors such as the general linguistic milieu play a conspicuously important part. I *do* think, therefore, that, with the possible exception of a few select schools, I am able to-day to address myself to the large majority of teachers of English as a second language in the Cape Province.

The problem, then, is one of the wide range of ability in any classroom as far as the second language is concerned.

In the typical country school I would suggest that for the sake of convenience we could divide our pupils into four broad categories or groups.

1. There is firstly that group of pupils, admittedly a relatively small minority in the senior classes but not always so small in the junior classes, who are almost inarticulate, especially when it comes to oral work. They will get up when asked to do so, mumble a few words if any, and for the rest stand silently shifting from one foot to the other, while the teacher desperately tries to extract something from them, usually only succeeding in getting a few single-word replies, or otherwise an Afrikaans answer in English vocabulary. With the extension of secondary education to the broader masses, this group has become larger in later years. Their written work is also extremely poor.

2. In the second group we have those pupils who are not afraid to speak and do so with reasonable ease but whose language, both in oral and in written form, is far from correct and leaves a good deal to be desired, both as regards grammar and idiom and to some extent also vocabulary. They are perhaps numerically strongest in any class.

3. Our third group consists of those pupils who either hear a good deal of English out of school or who are clever and pick up easily what they hear in class and who benefit from reading a great deal of English. Their ability to speak and write the language is quite good with one or two who may even be excellent. They make relatively few mistakes and it is mainly a matter of giving them the opportunity of reading, speaking and writing the language in order to bring further refinement. They get good C's, a few B's and even some A's in

This is the text of a paper given at a conference on The Teaching of English as a Second Language held at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, September, 1965.

the final examination and some of them are really capable of more intensive study of both language and literature than is normally offered in such a class. This group is, I would suggest, again relatively small and there would be between five and eight of them in a class of 30 pupils.

4. A fourth group would probably not be present every year but we do get them occasionally and, if the school really tries to cater for them, they may be a frequent and even regular feature of the classroom situation. I am speaking of pupils whose mother tongue is English and who therefore naturally desire to take English on the higher grade. With them I would include the few exceptional Afrikaans-speaking pupils who are desirous of taking the second language on the higher grade as well, and who are able to benefit from such a course.

These, then, are the groups constituting our problem. I must of course concede immediately that even within these groups there is considerable difference in ability yet, lest we make our organization too complex for the everyday classroom situation, I suggest we stick to these four groups as representing pupils of reasonably similar abilities and needs as regards the second language.

The problem is how to do justice to each of these groups without neglecting the others. I must admit that it is a very tricky problem and one that hardly allows of a simple and clear-cut solution.

2. A limited solution to the problem*

As headmaster of a medium-sized country school with matriculation classes varying from about 24–33, I was, until three years ago, also responsible for the senior English of the school. In my last year there were in the Std. X class two pupils taking English higher for whom I had to make provision in the same classroom as the lower candidates. The only additional facilities we could offer, were two extra periods per week during school hours. Classes after school hours were impracticable as one of the pupils came to school by bus from a farm every day.

The problem that was particularly acute here, was that of the additional prescribed work. I felt that it was not fair to the rest of the class, particularly the poorer pupils, to select all *four* of their setbooks from the higher grade list. Three were the same, anyway, but the ourth was selected from the list intended exclusively for the lower grade candidates. This meant that the higher grade group had to study three books separately from the second language group, in addition to grammar which required not only *additional* material, but also a different approach. Consequently I devoted *one* of the extra periods per week to the study of new grammar and to the correction and discussion of work done by the pupils themselves in the classroom while I was busy with the English lower pupils. The other period was devoted to the additional setbooks, in this case "Pygmalion", "King Lear" and Nuttall's anthology: "More English Verse." I found "Pygmalion" well within the reach of the two pupils as far as *content* was concerned so that we spent our special period mainly recapitulating and testing on the work read *by themselves* during the past week, as well as discussing points of style, characterization, the Shavian approach etc. etc. Occasionally it was found necessary to read parts of the text with them. This took a little longer, however, than I expected, and during the final year of their course I realized that I would not finish the other books in the same way. Meanwhile they had almost completed the three books shared with the lower group so that they would have more time to work by themselves. Moreover, I found "King Lear" and at least some of the poems in the anthology a little difficult for them to master by themselves so that *we required more time for actually reading the text together and explaining the more difficult parts*. Yet we did not have more than the one additional period per week in which to do this. A method had therefore to be devised to get around this problem.

(*a*) *The Method.* This was when I took recourse to the tape recorder. Having tried it out successfully once with a whole class when I was on sick leave for a week without being able to find a substitute, I felt that a large part of the *reading* and explanation of more difficult points could be done by tape recorder so that the one setwork period left per week in which I met *only* these two pupils could be devoted to a brief testing (to see whether they were really keeping abreast) and to general discussion of what had been read during the week. The pupils could also point out problems and difficulties. In practice it meant that after every two to three periods of recorded lessons there was a "live" session for discussion and criticism.

The book first read through in this way was "King Lear". The method during the recorded lessons mainly consisted of reading the text with discussion and thorough explanation by myself of the more difficult parts. In the long run I found that it would be best first to read a particular scene or part of a scene *in its entirety* to try and capture the necessary atmosphere and "feeling". After this the more difficult parts were referred to again and certain points analysed and explained. All the while I also commented on interesting points regarding plot structure, dramatic effects etc., etc.

Preparation had, of course, to be very thorough as in a "live" situation one can always judge from

*For a more detailed discussion of the method described below, see my article "Oplossing of Hersenskim?" in "Die Unie" of November, 1964.

the pupils' reactions whether they are following and if necessary, one can change one's approach from time to time. When pupils listen to a recorded reading and explanation, however, the matter must be stated so clearly from the outset, that there can be no misunderstanding.

Every lesson as far as possible formed a self-contained unit and several lessons were usually recorded at one sitting in a quiet room. The number of the tape and track and also the numbers on the revolution counter were carefully recorded at the beginning and end of each lesson so that it was quite a simple matter to set the tape before the pupils started listening.

In school the procedure was to set up the tape recorder in a separate room before each setwork period. When the lower candidates came to my own classroom, the two higher candidates went to the other room, switched on the machine and commenced with the lesson. (If well-padded earphones had been available, this could even have been done in the same classroom, as the earphone connections would have cut out the internal loudspeaker so that the rest of the class would not have been disturbed.) As in the case of an ordinary "live" reading, the pupils made notes during the course of the lesson and wrote down the meanings of difficult words and expressions, all the time following the text in their own books. They were taught how to stop the machine to give them more time to take down some point, and even to wind back the tape and replay anything that was not clear or that had slipped them at the first reading. The weekly extra period was then used for discussion and questions as indicated above. Both "King Lear" and "More English Verse" were read in this way, although with the latter I still found myself rather pressed for time and could not do the work quite as thoroughly as I would have liked.

(*b*) *Results*. As this was not a carefully controlled experiment, it was not possible to make any "measurements". It must also be remembered that work done in this way only comprised a part of the whole English course. Nevertheless there were a few *tentative* conclusions which I felt could be drawn.

Firstly, I felt (and admittedly this was a subjective criterion) that particularly as far as "King Lear" was concerned, the two pupils did not experience greater difficulty than would have been the case had we read the books together in a "live" situation. As there were only two pupils, I could check fairly accurately and regularly on this. I also had the impression that they found the work just as interesting (possibly because of the novel situation) and I can recollect at least one occasion on which they asked me whether they might replay a particular lesson a second time — presumably because they wanted to make quite sure of it.

In the external final examination the question on the poetry was not compulsory and both of the pupils (one boy and one girl) preferred not to answer a question on it. Thus of the five books on which questions were answered, only one was studied by tape.

Both candidates obtained a C symbol in their total aggregate and both also scored a C for English Higher. Distribution of symbols for each candidate was as follows:

Candidate 1	*Candidate* 2
B 1	B 1
C 3	C 1
E 2	D 4

Both therefore obtained *relatively* high marks in English as compared with their other subjects. Unfortunately I did not at the time think of enquiring from the Department what their marks for each separate question in the setwork paper had been as this would have given clearer, although by no means decisive evidence in favour or against the procedure. The Department were, however, at a later date still able to supply the marks for the three separate papers which they willingly did and for which I am greatly indebted to them. Again no decisive conclusion can be made on such slim evidence; nevertheless the marks were interesting and I am giving them here to fill out the picture somewhat more.

	Candidate 1	*Candidate* 2
Essay and Letter . .	76 %	80%
Prescribed work . .	52½%	64%
Language and Compr.	64 %	48%

Candidate no. 1 scored a disappointingly low mark in set work as compared with the marks for the other two papers. On the other hand Candidate no. 2 was quite average in his setwork and even good compared with his work in language and comprehension. All in all it seems reasonably safe to say that the pupils at least did not necessarily suffer any harm from the fact that they had studied part of their work with the help of the tape recorder.

This was clearly an example of differentiation in the classroom situation even though on a very limited scale. But the fact that it worked smoothly and provided additional opportunities for children who were capable of benefiting from them, convinced me that it is a practical proposition to differentiate between pupils in the same classroom and that more experimentation should be carried on on these lines with a larger number of groups. If there is one regret I have, it is that I did not remain an active school teacher long enough to try out myself some of the ideas that have meanwhile occurred to me. I am, however, going to

suggest some of these to you in the hope that you may improve on them and put them into practice yourselves.

3. Further Suggestions

It would of course be ideal to have a language laboratory of about 32 booths in every school, as we have in the laboratory a multiplication of tape recorders making differentiation possible even to the point of complete individualization. Thus one could envisage work being carried on during an oral period in a language laboratory with the poorer group doing structural drill. Carried to its utmost in refinement, this might even mean that each child in this group would be busy with a tape containing drill patterns tailored specifically for him as a result of analysis of both his written and oral work, with the selection of those particular structures in which he reveals himself as being weak or completely lacking in ability. In practice this would however be too time consuming as regards the teacher's preparation and one would probably have the whole group working at those structures that have been found during the years to cause most trouble to Afrikaans-speaking pupils. This group would be carefully monitored by the teacher. The second group might be paired off with their respective booths linked up so that they can carry on conversations in pairs. Here the teacher might listen in occasionally to make sure that pupils are actually following instructions instead of playing the fool. As an added precaution he might have the conversations recorded for checking up later on. This should act as a strong deterrent to those who are prone to tomfoolery. I may state at this juncture that this idea is by no means novel or unique to the language laboratory. It is being used regularly and successfully by a very capable senior English master in one of Pretoria's large English boys' schools. He pairs off the boys and spreads them over a large room, moving about amongst them to "monitor". The third group might not even be in the booths at all but gathered in a small circle discussing a certain topic under the leadership of one of them, with the instruction that a brief written report on their findings or decisions must be handed in at the end of the period. This is the so-called conference technique tried out successfully by some teachers. Again, if the teacher feels that it is necessary to check up on this group, the discussion could be recorded through a suitably placed microphone and he could take a few quick samples of the proceedings of this group at the end of the period. The fourth group (higher candidates) might again be in the booths working at a literature programme of the kind described above.

These suggestions may sound rather idealistic and the problem of discipline may be raised. Remember, however, that the teacher is in the class all the time and is at the disposal of each group while he can supervise all the pupils. Also, pupils will first have to grow accustomed to this procedure and be deliberately *taught* to use it. While the situation is still a new one there will probably be a few who may try their hand at disturbing the peace but as they settle down and the first novelty wears off, the whole question of discipline should become easier. Of course, a great deal depends on the relationship between the teacher and his class and also on the general atmosphere and attitude to order and discipline in the school as a whole.

It is, however, unlikely that language laboratories will be introduced into our schools on a large scale in the near future, so that for the time being we must consider ways and means of differentiating with more modest equipment, say two or three adapted tape recorders providing for a few earphones to each. This does not represent quite as substantial an outlay of money as the language laboratory. I have been assured by more than one firm dealing in electronics equipment that a modestly priced tape recorder (more or less the R160 line) can be adapted to accommodate as many as five to six pairs of earphones. This means that for about R450 to R500 *retail* price the teacher could have three tape recorders with earphones for about 18 pupils at his disposal. This would cater for rather more than half the class. How can we differentiate here?

(*a*) *Literature*

I think I am not far wrong in saying that at present most second language teachers read through all setbooks in their entirety with the whole class. Here and there a book may be simple enough for even the weaker pupils to understand and we expect the class to read certain parts by themselves. In other cases the work is more difficult and we plod through the book, sometimes almost giving a word for word paraphrase (to say nothing of translation!) for the sake of the weaker brethren, irrespective of whether there are brighter pupils in the class who would benefit from reading the books by themselves without losing anything in the way of a thorough mastery of content. I would suggest that we could explore the possibility of approaching the matter differently with each of our three groups. The brightest ones could for instance read the text on their own and be given written assignments to work out (a kind of Dalton approach). If the group is not too big, these pupils can work on their own in a separate room if one is available (e.g. the library). If not, they could be grouped in one corner of the room, although this may not be quite the ideal situation. The second group could work with the tape recorder (with padded earphones) along the lines suggested by the experiment described above. The teacher must make provision for enough "live" discussion and constant testing

of both groups to make sure that pupils don't lose contact. The third group (i.e. the weakest pupils) can receive intensive help in the form of detailed explanation and a word for word reading of the text where necessary. I admit that it will require a completely new way of thinking on the part of the teacher as regards classroom organization and teaching procedure, yet it seems to me that it can be done if we are willing to be more flexible in our approach to these matters.

(*b*) *Grammar*

Differentiation as regards written work, should not present insuperable difficulties. One could have two or even three different textbooks (provided of course the necessary permission can be obtained from the relevant authorities). These textbooks should not only differ as regards the *quantity* of work expected of the pupils but also as regards the *type* and *quality* of work. I see no reason why the abler group should not do work which may at times even approach the standard expected of pupils taking English higher. Provided the teacher makes sure through his selection of the group that he has not included pupils who will be overtaxed, I feel that only good can come from such a procedure. If one's teaching has been sound in the primary school, there will be quite a number of pupils who will not need to be *taught* Active and Passive Voice, Direct and Indirect Speech, Negative and Affirmative forms, tenses, concord etc. in higher classes. They will know these things and will only require *practice* in the form of speech and some written exercises. Why hold them back by making them listen to explanation and rudimentary practice for the weaker pupils every year? If they are allowed to practise these things in more advanced form, they can only benefit, even as far as the written external examination is concerned. Programmed textbooks seem to me to offer an interesting avenue for investigation here.

On the other hand the weakest pupils, even in the senior classes, may require more than written exercises and incidental correction during an oral period. They may require systematic *oral drill* in certain structures. Here the tape recorder with earphones can be used again. Tapes are prepared for this type of drill exactly as when they are used in the language laboratory. The only difference is that pupils cannot record their responses because several of them will be grouped round one recorder. If, however, the pattern of Stimulus→Attempted Response→Correct Response→Repetition, is followed the pupils will hear when they make mistakes and will be able to correct themselves. The problem here is, of course, again one of sound. Pupils doing written work at the time, will be disturbed by the oral responses of the drill group. In the olden days this did not seem to hinder pupils because this type of thing was being done regularly in one-man farm schools. If it should prove to be a difficulty, I would suggest that the group be kept fairly small and be accommodated in another room which need not contain more than the requisite number of chairs and a small table. (An off-stage dressingroom or even a foyer of the school hall would in some cases be quite suitable if a vacant classroom is not available.) Monitoring would present some difficulty here, as the teacher cannot be present in two places at the same time. The solution to this problem will again depend on the general discipline in the school, the attitude of the pupils towards working by themselves, their sense of responsibility etc.

(*c*) *Oral work*

Oral work has already been touched upon under some of the previous headings. One can of course differentiate by merely giving the different groups different types of topic to talk about. One could expect fairly abstract discussions and expositions from the better group, while the poorer pupils can be given more narrative and simple descriptions. But we go further. In the case of the weaker pupils, talks and conversations could be recorded and played back later to the pupil alone, or to the whole weaker group that is involved. Again the better pupils are relieved of listening over and over again to mistakes which they in any case never make. In such a case I would suggest that half the period be spent with oral work being done by all pupils. All the talks can be recorded if one is afraid of open discrimination. After the oral session the better pupils are given other work to do (reading, written exercises or even listening to a literature programme with earphones through a second tape recorder.) For the weaker pupils the speeches, talks or conversations recorded by themselves are replayed. The machine is stopped by pressing the pause button every time a mistake is made. The pupils are asked what the mistake is, why it is wrong and what the correct form would have been. In this way they begin thinking about their mistakes and I found, in using an adaptation of this method, that afterwards it became quite common for even the weaker pupils to sense a mistake immediately they had made it and even to correct themselves. Under all circumstances it seems a salutory thing for pupils to hear themselves speaking.

The tape recorder seems to offer possibilities in connection with spelling, pronunciation and several other aspects of second language teaching. Time, however, is limited and so I have really only tried to give a few indications of what can be done in the hope of stimulating you to think further along these lines and to discover possibilities which may be still more practical and effective.

4. Possible Objections

There are many people who will probably raise objections to the various procedures I have just

advocated. Some may object to the very fact of differentiation. They see it as a form of discrimination and a source of embarrassment to the weaker child. If approached in the wrong spirit, I suppose this might be the case but I think that children sense the difference in any case and that if the situation is at all handled with the necessary tact and common sense, they will realize that actually differentiation is not a reflection against their personal worth and dignity but an attempt to help each child and to give him what he requires most. I have often invited weaker pupils to come to me for individual aid after school hours and have found that many were only too glad of the opportunity. They did not seem to be embarrassed by the fact that they experienced difficulty.

A second objection to some of the procedures outlined above, would be that they are too mechanical and that in some cases, e.g. when listening to a literature programme, pupils are too passive. I grant that in the case of some of my suggestions the teacher does most of the talking but the pupils are not quite passive. At *worst* they follow in their books and make notes where necessary. At other times, however, they have to respond actively. Besides, it is not as though they are confronted by a machine the whole time. The need for "live" lessons and for the presence of the teacher has been stressed all through. The machine is merely an aid which is used at appropriate times.

A third objection is that preparation of tapes entails a vast amount of work. So it does. In the experiment I described, I took more than twice the time to *prepare* each lesson and, what with setting the tape, regulating the machine, occasionally checking on the quality of the recording, the *delivery* of each lesson into the microphone took longer than such a lesson would have taken in the classroom situation. But once the material has been taped, it is there for future use and the larger one's stock of tapes becomes, the less time is spent on tape preparation. I shall have more to say on this point in my concluding remarks.

There is the fourth objection that some of my suggestions will lead to slack discipline. It all depends on what you mean by discipline. If you think of it in terms of rigid militarism, I suppose it will, because you will not always have pupils sitting neatly in well-ordered rows. But if you think of discipline as *orderly* activity, I do not see that it should necessarily be slack because of a less rigid situation. As long as pupils are busy *really* working and not playing the fool or frittering away their time, I, for one, am satisfied that there is sound discipline — the same kind that you would for instance have in the Science laboratory where pupils are actively busy conducting experiments. As I have pointed out more than once, a great deal depends on the teacher, his relations with the class, the general atmosphere of the school, etc.

Another objection may be made against my advocating the use of earphones in some cases (and this applies in any case to the language laboratory.) In this case the objection is made on the grounds of hygiene. These things must be fitted against the heads and ears of pupils. It is almost like using someone else's toothbrush! Manufacturers have been giving their attention to this matter. You will remember that I spoke of *padded* earphones in order to exclude sound from outside. I believe that removable pads are being made which are also easily washable. They need not be very expensive to be quite effective so that each pupil can have his own which he slips on to the earphones when he has to use them. I also believe that instead of attaching earphones to headpieces, which implies contact with the hair, it should be possible to have attachments which fit round the neck. It is, however, a problem which should not be neglected. In his book "The Language Laboratory in School", J. B. Hilton makes the following statement: "Earpieces and microphones should be gently wiped with disinfectant after each pupil has used them. Equipment must be provided which can stand up to this treatment. Teachers must demand it."* It would in any case be wise to consult your dealer on this question.

5. Some practical considerations

(*a*) *Steps in introducing this new procedure.*

(i) My first and foremost advice to you is to sit down and do some careful planning. This will require a detailed analysis of *what* you want to do (i.e. in what ways you want to differentiate as regards the subject matter) and also of *how* you want to do it (i.e. how you want to organise your groups). The nearer you can get to working out a blueprint which can be executed step by step, the greater will your chance of success be. This does not mean that you may not sometimes have to deviate from your original scheme, but it does mean that you have a carefully worked out plan to guide you. We hear a good deal of task analysis and such like these days, in which a task is broken down into its component parts to discover the exact nature of its working. I think that in the case of differentiation we have a good example of a procedure that requires such a "breaking down" in order to determine exactly how it will work best. I realize that this takes time but in the long run it should return handsome rewards.

(ii) When you have worked out your strategy, start putting it into practice *on a small scale*. Do not try to introduce a complete system of differentiation at once. Commence with a small group of two or three pupils whom you have carefully selected, and also start with only one form of differentiation (say

1. Hilton, J. B. The Language Laboratory in School, p.104 (Methuen and Co., London, 1964).

in literature or oral work). This will mean fewer problems in preparation when you are still new to the technique. I would also suggest that you start with gifted pupils rather than the other way round because I think that on the whole they are more likely to take to this kind of work and to understand what it is about. The two pupils with whom I worked, were clearly a little above the average.

(iii) Be sure that the atmosphere in your class is favourable. Try to motivate your pupils to *want* to learn. One of the reasons why my own little experiment worked smoothly was that these two pupils *wanted* to pass English on the higher grade and that they *know* they would be expected to work rather harder than the rest. They had, what is called in some circles, a high degree of learning intention. The more this kind of attitude permeates your classes, the less difficulty you will have in isolating small groups and even putting them to work in separate rooms.

(iv) If you start on a small scale and if your pupils are well motivated, you will find that you can gradually introduce this kind of procedure without disruption. Therefore start from the bottom, in the lower classes, and work up from there so that by the time they reach the senior school, the pupils will be accustomed to this kind of thing and will therefore take it in their stride. I think many a new approach has foundered because it has been started on too grand a scale without the teacher's really being able to handle it.

(v) Make sure that all recorded work is of a high standard, clear, well-pronounced and pleasing. Therefore use good equipment and make sure that it remains in good condition.

(vi) Teach as many as possible of the pupils to handle the machines and to work the controls smoothly so that you have a minimum of fumbling and fiddling about. Appoint a few pupils to be responsible for setting up and removing and storing all machines and other equipment you may wish to use. They should have a time table for this or be advised well ahead of time when you intend using certain equipment.

(*b*) *Production of Materials*

So far it has been supposed in this talk that the teacher will prepare his own tape and other audio-visual materials. As I pointed out earlier, this entails a tremendous amount of work during the first years. Gradually a basic stock of tapes is built up and the preparation load is eased. But there will to my mind always be too much work if you do everything yourself.

I would therefore suggest as a second step that a few teachers who have confidence in one another's work, come together and plan and "programme" certain materials as a team. This will give scope for a certain amount of specialization so that individual teachers in the group can work on aspects at which they are particularly good. There is something in this of the idea of team teaching which is arousing considerable interest these days. It should be clear that such a procedure will relieve the individual teacher of a considerable degree of preparation work.

Eventually, however, I think that work of this kind should be tackled by a more specialized body with larger financial and other resources behind it. I would suggest that the Cape Education Department in conjunction with other Departments of Education is the body to do this. Literature programmes of the type I described could be worked out by a few outstanding teachers in conjunction with Departments of Speech and Drama in some of our universities. For structural drill, tapes can be programmed for different types of pupil by a team of authorities. Master tapes will in all cases be held in a central library and copies made for schools as they require them.

(*c*) *Equipment and Accommodation*

My next remarks are not addressed to you alone but through you to the authorities. As they concern equipment and accommodation, you may feel that you have little say in the matter and that my suggestions are not of much practical value. Yet we as teachers are the people who must indicate what we require in our schools and unless we make our requirements known very definitely and even vociferously, we cannot expect very much to happen. I would therefore like to make the following two suggestions:

(i) That more liberal grants and allowances be given on equipment like tape recorders. If the tape recorder becomes something more than a rather expensive toy in our schools; if it becomes established as an indispensable part of our classroom procedure, the authorities should make provision for a number of machines to be allocated to each school as *part of their normal requisition.* This should be done on a per capita basis, so that the school will receive a certain number of machines according to its enrolment, without first having to raise an initial sum itself. This will prevent poorer schools, many of them in country districts, who perhaps need this equipment most, from being deprived of the minimum through lack of funds. Additional machines can be made available with allowances given on a sliding scale according to the number of machines already possessed by the school in relation to the number of pupils enrolled.

(ii) My second suggestion is that language classrooms should be planned and equipped differently. The present policy seems to be that Physical Science, Biology, Domestic Science, Woodwork and many other subjects should have rooms specially designed, storage space for equipment and chemicals and a properly furnished and arranged laboratory, workship, kitchen or what you will. I have the impression, however, that the general feeling is that for the languages and one or two

other subjects a rectangular box with large windows on one side, small windows on the other, a blackboard along the front and one side wall perhaps, if you are lucky, a display board behind, suffices. Perhaps it is our own fault as language teachers that we have been satisfied with this kind of arrangement and have adapted our teaching methods to it. That is why we find it difficult to treat pupils differently in the same classroom.

But should it always remain like this? Apart from language laboratories, should we not envisage a completely different kind of language *classroom?* I agree that I have been at pains to try to prove that the type of work I envisage *can* be done in the ordinary classroom as we know it to-day but you may have noticed that my ordinary classroom was stretched to include a neighbouring room, the library and even off-stage dressing rooms and foyers! I am not going to attempt to tantalize you with visions of a gleaming, streamlined, space age classroom but cannot the language classroom be made a little longer (not quite as big even as the Science laboratory with its lecture room) with the back fifteen feet or so slightly raised to form a stage for class dramatic productions? This stage will not only have curtains but an acoustically tiled folding partition so that it can form a separate little room when the need for such arises. At the other end we could have a door on either side of the blackboard (just as we do in many Science lecture rooms). One door would lead to a store-room where we could lock up valuable equipment; the other would lead to a little conference room cum class library where another small group can work together should the need arise. The main classroom will be furnished with light tables and chairs rather than desks. In such a classroom it will indeed literally be possible to speak of differentiation in the *ordinary* classroom situation.

We are justly concerned about the low standard of English amongst our pupils. We try to remedy the matter by concentrating on the average and weaker pupil and we do not always succeed. I submit that if we study the needs of different groups in our class and try to remedy the specific *weakness(es)* OF EACH GROUP, we may be able to achieve more. I am not only concerned about the more talented ones who pass unnoticed because they are always compared favourably with their weaker comrades instead of being matched against their own potential. Will not differentiation also help these and will we not raise the standard of English as a second language more by also raising the standard of those who speak and write passably well, but who could do it ever so much better if if they were given the opportunity?

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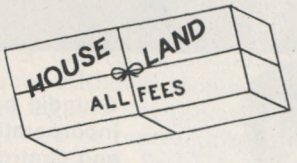

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