

MAY 4 1943

200 R

Area and lang. Studies
Conference

INTERVIEWS: WB

DHS	MAR 26 43	AK
JM	MAR 26 43	9m
FILES		

New Haven, Conn
March 17-19, 1943Language in Foreign Area Studies - Yale University

"Purpose: To give Americans entering upon active service abroad practical command of the languages and a sound knowledge of the people, customs, economic and social conditions and political systems of the foreign countries in which they may be assigned to duty. The program is designed to suit the needs of members of the armed forces detailed to liaison or administrative work, of overseas representatives of Government agencies and relief organizations, and of private individuals whose business or professional duties may take them abroad during or after the war. The aim is not to train candidates in their respective duties but to provide them with the tools necessary to the effective performance of those duties in foreign countries.

"Intensive language and analytical courses in the following countries and areas: Germany, France and Belgium, England and the British Commonwealth, Latin America (Spanish and Portuguese languages, Russia, the Southwest Pacific (Malay language,), China and Japan. Students will normally be expected to specialize in one country or area, and will divide their time evenly between a language course and analytical courses dealing with the country, its historical background, its political institutions, geography, customs, economic and social conditions."-*

The language and analytical courses each occupy approximately ten hours of classroom instruction, lectures and seminar discussions, per week (though for Spanish only six hours a week are at present offered). Longer time than the three months allowed for the integrated intensive course (one term) established as the norm for Western European regions, in the period allowed for China and Japan. Chinese is studied during three three-month terms--nine hours a week during the first term and six hours a week during the second and third terms.

Area programs are administered in two curricula, one for the Army (military government training program), a curriculum for general administration officers; the other a curriculum in relief and reconstruction, which places more stress in studies dealing with nutrition and sanitation.

The concentration of work into a single term of from twelve to fourteen weeks represents a special case of short duration, given to persons preparing for official war or post-war assignments. It is conceived that in ordinary times a course for the study of one area should fill one regular academic year. As a sample of an emergency three months' course, the proposed curriculum for army specialists on Germany and Western Europe is attached to this diary.

*-"Foreign Area Studies in Yale University - General Information"

INTERVIEWS: WB

DHS		
WB		

New Haven Conn.
March 17-19, 1943

Language in Foreign Area Studies - Yale University (Cont'd)

Language courses are given within the area program in eight languages (representing six areas). Spanish is in charge of Dr. José Arron, a Cuban in his latter twenties, who did his undergraduate and graduate work at Yale and who is a regular member of the Department of Romance Languages. Portuguese is given by C. Malcolm Batchelor, likewise a member of the Department of Romance Languages who, WB understands, is relatively new to Portuguese. (WB did not have an opportunity to see Batchelor since the latter was ill with the measles.) French is given by Associate Professor Jean Boorsch of the Graduate School faculty, a specialist in French literature of the XVI and XVII centuries.

German is given by Dr. William G. Moulton, whose graduate work was in Germanic philology; he is in his latter twenties. He has had experience in teaching at Yale and elsewhere, both courses in languages in the lower divisions and courses on Germanic dialects and philological problems in the Graduate School; his rank is that of instructor. Russian is given by Assistant Professor George L. Trager. Malayan is given by Isidore Dyen; Chinese by Associate Professor George A. Kennedy, and Japanese by Dr. Bernard Bloch.

WB called on Professor E. H. Sturtevant, director of linguistics in the Graduate School, to learn of the general organization of language work in the foreign area program and to secure information on a new course leading to an MA in linguistics for teachers of modern languages to be inaugurated at Yale University in the fall semester of 1943. This program is described in a leaflet now being circulated by the Registrar of the Yale Graduate School. The purpose of the plan is to improve elementary instruction in modern languages. Work in linguistic science and a course in general phonetics will be given under the new plan for an MA in linguistics and each student will devote approximately one-half of his time to intensive study of a language previously unknown to him, with the aid of a native speaker and under the guidance of a trained linguist. A number of good practical points are to be developed in the new program for the training of teachers of modern languages, especially the stressing of the ability to speak the language studied.

WB feels, however, that the linguists at Yale have not thought through the program, especially as it applies to the teaching and learning of modern European languages. Provision is not yet made, and there is little sign that the problem is being thought about, for integrating the study of the language of a country with a thorough introduction to the culture of that country. Sturtevant told WB that the linguists at Yale are optimistic about the development of a successful program and that the area studies will give them valuable experience. Sturtevant seemed especially certain

INTERVIEWS: WB

DHS		
JM		

New Haven, Conn.
March 17-19, 1943

Languages in Foreign Area Studies - Yale University (Cont'd)

that successful reports might be expected from Moulton, Trager and Bloch, since these men had been trained by men specializing in linguistic science. S. told WB very confidentially that it was the hope of men in linguistics that all instruction in elementary language courses at Yale could soon be turned over to the linguists, who could then release elementary students to continue the study of literature or anything they might be interested in, in the different language departments of the University.

Professor Leonard Bloomfield. WB called on Professor Bloomfield, since he is recognized as a leader among linguists and has had experience in the teaching of German. B. confessed that the techniques for use of informants in regular or intensive courses in literate languages had not been perfected. He admitted that this would take careful study to define the type of informant who might be useful and the techniques for using his time to advantage. B. felt that WB's suggestion that Europeans and South Americans coming to this country on scholarships might be used part time as informants was a good one. He likewise agreed that in the new course for the MA in linguistics at Yale, it would be profitable to have students visit occasionally the new-type courses given in the languages in which they had specialized in college and intended ultimately to teach or had already taught.

The language courses now taught in the area program (with the exception of Spanish and possibly Portuguese) are taught in the understanding that it is essential to learn to speak a language before any attention is devoted to the traditional system of writing. This means that students of French, Russian and German, for example, begin to study the language through exclusive use of phonetic symbols and continue this routine for approximately one-half of the elementary course. To WB's question whether B. did not feel that such a period of time without reference to the language as traditionally written would vary, B. stated that he felt this to be the case: students in a relatively phonetic language, such as Spanish or German could come into contact with the written language at an earlier period than could those studying French or Russian.

B. impressed WB as a person who did not expect the men in linguistic science to do the entire job in revision of techniques of language teaching. Doubtless his experience in teaching a modern foreign language has made him, apparently at least, more flexible and useful in discussions than those scientific linguists whose linguistic experience has been almost entirely with ancient or non-literate languages. B. is now completing an introductory text in Dutch.

INTERVIEWS: WB

DHS		
JM		

New Haven Conn.
March 17-19, 1943

Languages in Foreign Area Studies - Yale University (Cont'd)

Professor Jean Boorsch made a favorable impression on WB. JB is a man who is recognized as a scholar in literature and has long been attached to a Department in which French was taught along traditional lines for language instruction in American colleges. He does, however, possess an agile and felxible mind, and is completely willing to experiment in teaching the students to learn to speak before any attention is given to the traditional system of writing. He is now at work almost full time on language in the area program, and is busy on problems of implementation for French. There are no beginners in French in the area studies, but a trial class is given in the college five hours a week. JB is at work preparing complete materials for a ten-hour course throughout a term of from twelve to fourteen weeks. All materials are given from the outset in complete sentences, entirely in phonetic script. The student's duty as preparation is to memorize thirty sentences a day and to be able to pronounce them intelligibly. Much vocabulary is given at the outset, but the rhythm of addition of new words is diminished as the course goes on. Five students are taking French now in this method and B. feels the work to be a success. He figures on a 2,400 word vocabulary for the first year course.

He agreed heartily with WB that it was as important to train a student to listen intelligibly to the foreign language as it was to train him to speak a foreign language. For his more advanced courses in connection with the area program B has prepared special vocabularies and topics for discussion in French. The students are required to know and discuss in French the institutional implications of the words used.

JB is unpretentious and not dogmatic; he very frankly states that his work is an experiment and that he does not know at this time what results it may yield, although he is convinced that it is essential to learn to speak a language first, since that is the way one learns his own language. JB impressed WB as a valuable person to keep in mind for discussions or work towards the reorientation of contents of language courses for re-definition of aims. He is both realistic and flexible. It seems to WB important that JB should be involved in this type of work at present, since he is a scholar who is recognized as a bona fide member of the graduate faculty of a traditional language department and has spent most of his time in the field of classical literature. It seemed both ironical and significant to WB that Sturtevant should have doubted JB's ability to do this type of work simply because he has not heretofore specialized in linguistics nor has he had direct from the linguists the training they now offer. It is WB's opinion that a great many good language teachers are not unaware of the type of work done by Sapir, Bloomfield, and other younger men any more than they are unaware of the work of Jespersen, Sweet, and others who worked for many years on problems of meaning and descriptive grammar.

INTERVIEWS: WB

DHS		
JM		

New Haven, Conn.
March 17-19, 1943

Languages in Foreign Area Studies - Yale University (Cont'd)

William G. Moulton: WB spoke briefly with M and visited one of his classes. The students have been studying German since February 1, ten hours a week, and are now able to give simple answers to questions posed by the instructor, in German. Here, as in the case of Boorsch's work, all work is given in complete sentences from the outset, which the students are required to memorize. M's lessons are given in phonetic script, but the equivalent in traditional writing is available in the lessons, in case the student is interested in looking at it, though the students are instructed not to learn their lessons through the sentences written in traditional script. M. impressed WB as an excellent teacher. He is resourceful in making questions at the level of the lesson in question and in drawing out students in speech. It is interesting to note that in his course at Yale M is his own informant, although German is not his native language. M. has prepared the course through some twelve lessons and is still at work on implementation for the remainder of the course. He states that he is not sure that he should have kept his students away from conventional script as long as six weeks, in a ten-hour course, and that he has given little attention to the type of reading materials to be used after the oral introduction has been completed. He feels that in the courses for war work there will be little opportunity for reading and discussions in the introductory courses, but states that he is not at all convinced that the pattern now being tried out at Yale would give ideal results in a standard curriculum during ordinary times.

He does feel that his students (five in number) pronounce better after six weeks than students in a second year course given under ordinary circumstances. He feels that the transition to reading will not be difficult and that perhaps reading will be easier and come much more readily after the oral introduction, although on this last point he should not wish to have his opinion considered decisive. M. stated that he felt the scientific linguists were inclined to believe that good teaching could not have been done under the set-up at present existing in colleges and universities. This he resents, since he quite properly feels that a good and resourceful teacher is the important element, under any prescribed routine. Like Boorsch, M. does not feel that the present experiments should be regarded as settling any discussions, but merely as indicating possibilities for consideration and subsequent adoption. M. stated that he was quite sure that he could not achieve similar results with a class of ordinary size (20 - 30) and that the fact that his German students were studying the language with a concrete purpose in mind was in itself responsible for a good part of their success.

INTERVIEWS: WB

DHS		
JM		

New Haven, Conn.
March 17-19, 1943

Languages in Foreign Area Studies - Yale University (Cont'd)

M. impressed WB as a valuable man to keep in mind, since he has had the training prescribed by the scientific linguists, but also has the breadth and experience in teaching a living language, to give balance to his work and opinions on method.

José Arron: The work in Spanish at Yale is not given in a different manner than before, because the Spanish Department has for many years used the Luquiens method, introduced by the late Professor F. B. Luquiens some twenty years ago. This constitutes memorization of an irreducible minimum of grammar, with much work in reading and conversation, with newspaper and other non-fiction materials. Effort is made to teach the student to speak from the outset and no literary texts whatsoever are used in the first two years of undergraduate study of Spanish. The Department of Spanish at Yale has always felt that it does an outstanding job of teaching undergraduates to speak.

WB questions the general cultural level of a course of two years in which Spanish newspapers published in New York and non-fiction reading materials prepared by Professor Luquiens and his colleagues represent the limit of quality and materials presented to the students. It is WB's feeling that the same results could be accomplished in Spanish at Yale through use of a better quality of materials.

It is also evident that the memorization of grammatical rules as such verbatim represents a questionable attitude towards language as a phenomenon. Arron is a bright and energetic Cuban, not unfortunately without pedantry and an overdose of self-satisfaction which characterizes the entire Spanish Department of Yale University. Arron assured WB that the other language courses in the area program and especially the work of the linguists "is doing the same thing exactly which we have done in Spanish here for twenty-five years. They are simply copying our methods". It did not seem to occur to Arron that the work the linguists are doing is something quite different from what is done in the Spanish Department at Yale and that a number of their discoveries represent approaches and techniques which have been practiced elsewhere before, but not in the Spanish Department at Yale University.

WB discussed the general area program with Assistant Professor A. W. Griswold (Director of the Program) and Professor Arnold Wolfers (Chairman of the committee for organization and development of the Program). Griswold is in government; Wolfers, in international relations. Both are optimistic over the possibilities which the program represents and Wolfers feels that the regional approach offered by area studies is something which may continue in the curriculum of the University after the present emergency period.

INTERVIEWS: WB

DHS		
JM		

New Haven, Conn.
March 17-19, 1943

Languages in Foreign Area Studies - Yale University (Cont'd)

Both G. and W. mentioned the problems presented by possibilities of having to run area programs both for men in the armed forces and for civilians. This would represent a duplication of program and there is hope that the representatives of the army and navy will permit simultaneous training for both men in the armed forces assigned to Yale University and civilian students undertaking the area program, at least for language work and general lecture courses, in the understanding that there may be separate seminars for dealing with material of confidential nature.

W inquired of WB whether or not he felt that it would be a good idea to have the scientific linguists take over all elementary training in language. WB answered that this was a question which would require considerable study and would largely depend upon whether the linguists could evolve a program for elementary instruction in languages which would both stress the points they felt to be of value and fulfill the requirements for training which the universities' curricula as a whole would impose.

WB
per JWS

WB:JWS