

## Paris in London, or the major research journals in foreign languages

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*The author discusses possible criteria for assessing foreign-language journals and comments on the difficulties which arise. He dedicates the article to John Trim, former Director of the Centre for Information on Language and Research (CILT), and pays tribute to their quarterly abstracting journal, LANGUAGE TEACHING, which over the past 18 years has been assessing international foreign-language journals. He makes a critical assessment of the method used by CILT and by means of a number of tables he elucidates the criteria used in ranking the journals, their authors, and their countries of origin.*

*Die skrywer bespreek moontlike kriteria wat gebruik kan word vir die evaluering van vreemde taal-joernale en lewer kommentaar op probleme wat opduik. Hy dra die artikel op aan John Trim, voormalige Direkteur van die Centre for Information on Language and Research (CILT) en bring hulde aan hulle kwartaallikse abstrakte-joernaal, LANGUAGE TEACHING, wat die afgelope 18 jaar reeds internasionale vreemde taal-joernale evalueer. Hy bespreek metodes wat CILT gebruik krities en met behulp van 'n aantal tabelle verklaar hy die kriteria wat gebruik word om joernale, hulle outeurs en die lande van oorsprong te rangskik.*

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What is an important journal? What are the important journals in foreign languages? Assessing the quality of foreign-language journals is no easy matter. Much depends on perspective: the practising language teacher needs help to carry him through the day; the school administrator prefers journals with a touch of officialdom to ensure the smooth running of the machinery called education; the researcher needs a much broader perspective. He stands in the centre of intersecting lines of scientific endeavour: data as well as methods from linguistics and psychology, from anthropology and pedagogy, from literary scholarship and the social sciences must be taken in and adapted. No single journal can cater for all these needs simultaneously, although there are countries with only one of official foreign-language journal to their names. In the Western world, however, a multiplicity of journals vie for the teacher's attention. But "there seems to be no clearly marked hierarchy of prestige" (Matthey 1967:1) among them. Yet this is what is needed. McGlone and associates (1985) point out that humanities professors must compete for funds with researchers from other disciplines. They must, one might add, judiciously dispose of their time. Only journals of immediate relevance to their special field can lay claim to their attention. To communicate with researchers around the world, they must publish in the "right" journals. Otherwise their paper will fall among the thorns. Publishers and editors also keep an eye on the journals market to see whether their territories are being invaded by rivals in the field. What is the formula that spells success in an expanding EFL market?

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In 1985 McGlone et al. attempted to establish the journal hierarchy, which they had found to be missing, by sending questionnaires to 399 heads or chairs of doctora degree granting programmes. Although their feedback rate eventually rose to an impressive 47 percent, they came to the conclusion that "more research is needed if an answer is to be found to the question" (McGlone 1985:5).

Researchers prospecting in uncharted territories usually turn their heads to see whether their predecessors may have left any traces. In our case, we hit upon only a few unconnected descriptions of journals. These are a useful feature of information dissemination in countries with limited amounts of foreign currency. The year's crop is assessed by a knowledgeable scholar and passed on in condensed form to his less fortunate colleagues. Or a guru may size up a journal's production over a period of time for the benefit of his disciples. Beneke (1965) is an example of the first instance. Of more interest to our present concern are journal evaluations based on more than one volume. It might not be impossible to establish an evaluative grid, the cells of which are filled with bits of information culled from these reports. This is not our line of enquiry, but for the benefit of other researchers in the field, Table 1 (p.61) gives a number of references to books and journal articles describing and evaluating FL journals.

A more ambitious plan was followed by Lohmann (1976). The author compared a number of German foreign language journals over a long period of time. Strangely enough, the results were never published in any of the journals analysed, although - it is believed - quite a few of them were invited to do so. Reasons for declining to print the results of research such as Lohmann's could be methodological in nature. The comparability of journals can be called into question. Authors are accused of comparing apples with pears. Or their impartiality may be doubted. We shall, therefore, not follow Lohmann's example. Nor do we think that the methodology employed by McGlone (1985) should be copied.

## METHOD

Instead of using a multiplicity of sources, a single judge, or a similar body, will be asked to hand "the apple" to whomever he thinks deserves the greatest praise. There is such a collective "Paris" in the British capital who has monitored foreign language journals for more than 18 years and published the results at regular intervals. I am referring to the *Centre for Information on Language and Research* (CILT), whose long-time director, John Trim, retired in 1987 and to whom this article is dedicated. CILT publishes a quarterly abstracting journal whose coverage is international and includes the major languages of the world: *Language Teaching* (formerly *Language Teaching & Linguistics: Abstracts*). The journal differs from other bibliographic services in that it does not report on publications irrespective of their worth. Since the journal prints only between 294 (in 1975) and 679 (in 1984) abstracts per annum, a choice has to be made. Not more than a fraction of the articles published in the roughly 400 international journals that CILT has access to can be reported on in *Language Teaching*. CILT offers information on how the selection process is accomplished on the inside front cover of *Language Teaching* "The editor, members of the editorial board and CILT staff examine some 400 journals ... and *select* (my italics) the most significant articles which

- \* break new ground
- \* clarify a problem area
- \* give a useful review of earlier work

- \* report important research findings
- \* present new and useful classroom methods and materials."

**Table 1**

<b>Journal Name</b>	<b>Bibliographical Reference</b>
American Speech	Eble (1985)
Anglo-Irish Studies	Otto (1978)
Die berufsbildende Schule	Strecker (1978)
English Language Teaching Journal	Matthey (1967)
Etudes Irlandaises	Otto (1978)
Special Language/Fachsprache	Spiegel (1988)
Le Français dans le Monde	Birkenfeld (1988)
Glottodidactica	Moirand (1988)
Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics	Schröder (1985)
Irish University Review	Bhatia (1978)
Journalism Quarterly	Otto (1978)
Language Learning	Gerlach (1988)
Language and Style	Henning (1986)
Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht	Diller (1977)
Neusprachliche Mitteilungen	Otto & Stratman (1977)
Partisan Review	Freudenstein (1987)
Reflot	Borchers (1986)
Slavic and East European Journal	Kahn & Sapin-Lignieres (1982)
TESOL Quarterly	Perkins & Chvany (1987)
Zeitschrift f. Anlistik u. Amerikansistik	Henning (1986)
	Swales (1988)
	Diller & Stratman (1978)

It could be argued that not all elements of subjectivity have been eliminated from this method of research. This is certainly true. At the same time the advantages outweigh possible shortcomings:

It is *not* an *ad hoc* method. On the contrary, the journals are seen in a historical perspective. Journal-watching for 18 years must have sharpened and consolidated the judgement of CILT staff considerably. Their article selection practices do mirror trends in the methodological discussion, as do, incidentally, journal names (take e.g. the *Audiovisual Language Journal* which was renamed the *British Journal of Language Teaching* in the early eighties. This is, of course, a reflection on the decline of audiovisual methods in the seventies). To capture changing attitudes, one can choose regular intervals or break points and ask what changes have occurred during the observation periods. This will be done in our case (cf. Table 2). Starting in 1968, our first break point will be after three years at the end of 1970. From then on we shall turn round, as it were,

every five years and look back at our data to establish what kind of changes have occurred.

**Table 2**

Volume/Year	Number of Entries	Period
Vol. 1 (1968) Vol. 2 (1969) Vol. 3 (1970)	330 359 370	I
Vol. 4 (1971) Vol. 5 (1972) Vol. 6 (1973) Vol. 7 (1974) Vol. 8 (1975)	368 368 293 285 294	II
Vol. 9 (1976) Vol. 10 (1977) Vol. 11 (1978) Vol. 12 (1979) Vol. 13 (1980)	310 365 387 401 379	III
Vol. 14 (1981) Vol. 15 (1982) Vol. 16 (1983) Vol. 17 (1984) Vol. 18 (1985)	409 509 527 679 628	IV

Once this has been accomplished, corroborative or counter evidence can be sought. Data from citation indices can be correlated with our findings and the name indices of data bases will prove to be invaluable sources of information. In some cases, however, negative correlations are predicted for the comparisons between the status of journals as measured by CILT and, the number of copies sold. There is only a limited amount of wisdom in numbers, but you can't fool all the people all the time, as Lincoln remarked more than one hundred years ago.

## RESULTS

Of an estimated 115 000 articles published by the 488 journals surveyed by CILT between 1968 and 1985, CILT staff selected a total of 7 261 in 18 years or an average of 403 per annum for inclusion and annotation in *Language Teaching*. The journals are unevenly distributed in CILT's bibliographic service. Exactly 50 per cent of them do not occur more than 4 times in 18 years; 25 per cent only once; 19 per cent turn up between 5 and 10 times; 8,4 per cent of the journals appear between 11 and 18 times. A total of 69 per cent of all journals are thus represented between 1 and 18 times, i.e. once or less per

annum. The top 20 journals, on the other hand, account for a total of 2 595 entries; this is 35 per cent. But even among the top 20 we note a wide divergence; the success rate of the leading journal being 4 times that of the lowest ranking. This is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Total number of entries in <i>Language Teaching</i>	Journal Name	Year of foundation	Numbers per volume	Circulation	Acceptance rate
318	1 ELT Journal	1946	4	8 500	
247	2 TESOL Quarterly	1967	4	8 000	
188	3 Language Learning	1948	4	3 000	
169	4 Le Français dans le Monde	1961	8	15 000	
165	5 IRAL	1963	4	2 000	
143	6 Linguistics	1963	6	1 200	
133	7 Modern Language Journal	1916	4	7 200	10-13%
125	8 Audiovisual Language Journal*	1962	3/4	2 000	
122	9 Die Neuern Sprachen	1952	6	5 000	
117	10 Canadian Mod. Lang. Rev.	1944	4	3 000	
116	11 Lingua	1954	12	1 100	
115	12 Deutsch als Fremdsprache	1964	6	-	
89	13 System	1973	3	1 000	
81	14 Language	1925	4	7 000	
79	15 Russkij Jazyk	1967	6	-	
78	16 ITL Review	1968	4	600	
78	16 Modern Languages	1905	4	3 500	
78	16 Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée	1962	4	-	
77	19 Linguistische Berichte	1968	6	-	
77	19 Journal of Pragmatics	1977	6	-	

\* now *British Journal of Language Teaching*

Table 3 presents additional information - if known - of the journals in question. The year a journal was founded can be an important item, if, as is the case with *System* e.g., the journal was founded after 1968. The journal is disadvantaged in comparison with others which were in existence during the whole period our survey covers.

A similar case could be made out for journals with only 3 issues per year. They are disadvantaged in comparison with those which publish double this number. It could be argued that a journal's frequency of occurrence in *Language Teaching* should be divided by the number of issues of that journal in order to counterbalance deficiencies and/or advantages. Knowledge of the number of articles per volume can also be useful to put the other item values in perspective. Circulation, too, is an important indicator of how much a journal is appreciated by its potential readership, whereas the acceptance rate tells us something about how much a journal is coveted by writers as an outlet for their research.

*Gains and Losses.* Intuitively, and at first glance, the information displayed in Table 3 would seem satisfactory. On second thoughts, however, certain doubts crop up, the greatest being the apparent lack of dynamism in the booming market of foreign-language journals. In fighting their way to the top, some of the journals must have changed position in those 18 years. One can assume dogfights must have occurred. How can they be documented? By subdividing the 18 years between 1968 and 1985 into four smaller periods of nearly equal duration, it should be possible to highlight any changes that may have occurred. In tables 4 to 7 the resulting status changes can be observed.

**Table 4**

**1st Period (1968 - 1970)**

1	ELT Journal	96
2	Modern Language Journal	46
3	Language Learning	32
3	IRAL	32
5	Audiovisual Language Journal	28
6	Russkij Jazyk za Rubezom	27
7	Deutsch als Fremdsprache	25
7	TESOL Quarterly	25
9	Le Français dans le Monde	22
10	Lingua	16
11	Modern Languages	12
12	The Canadian Modern Language Review	10
12	Neuere Sprachen	10
12	Linguistics	10
15	Language	5

From the fact that only 15 of the 20 journals contained in Table 3 return in Table 4, it can be deduced that movement has occurred:

System was not in existence before 1973; *Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée*, although founded in 1962, did not come to the attention of CILT staff before 1974; ITL: *A Review of Applied Linguistics* as well as *Linguistische Berichte* was started in the same year as the abstracting journal; the *Journal of Pragmatics* was not available before 1977.

With the exception of the *Journal of Pragmatics*, the top 20 banded together at the end of the second period, as can be seen from Table 5 (p.65).

The two most notable changes are those of *TESOL Quarterly* and *Linguistics* which leap into 2nd and 5th position. The two journals continue to improve their rank during the next period of observation to the point of ousting the *ELT Journal* from its leading position.

**Table 5**

**2nd Period (1971 - 1975)**

1	ELT Journal	133
2	TESOL Quarterly	50
3	Le Fra Français dans le Monde	49
4	Audiovisual Language Journal	37
5	Linguistics	35
5	The Modern Language Journal	35
7	IRAL	34
8	Deutsch als Fremdsprache	33
9	Language Learning	32
10	Modern Languages	28
11	Die Neueren Sprachen	24
12	Russkij Jazyk za Rubezom	19
13	Lingua	18
14	Language	15
15	The Canadian Modern Language Review	13
16	ITL Review	10
17	Linguistische Berichte	9
18	System	5
18	Études de Linguistique Appliquée	5

**Table 6**

**3rd Period (1976-1980)**

1	TESOL Quarterly	67
2	Linguistics	54
3	ELT Journal	46
3	Le Français dans le Monde	46
5	The Canadian Modern Language Review	44
6	IRAL	42
7	Lingua	39
8	Language Learning	38
9	ITL Review	36
10	System	35
11	Audiovisual Language Journal	33
12	Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée	32
12	Linguistische Berichte	32
14	Deutsch als Fremdsprache	30
15	Die Neueren Sprachen	26
15	Language	26
17	Modern Language Journal	25
18	Russkij Jazyk za Rubezom	20
19	Modern Language	18
20	Journal of Pragmatics	16

The *ELT Journal* continues to lose ground during the last period of observation as does *Russkij Jayk za Rubezom* which drops to 20th rank from its leading position in the late sixties and early seventies. Table 7 shows what the situation looks like in the mid-eighties.

**Table 7**  
**4th Period (1981-1985)**

1	TESOL Quarterly	105
2	Language Learning	86
3	Die Neueren Sprachen	62
4	Journal of Pragmatics	61
5	IRAL	57
6	Le Français dans le Monde	52
7	The Canadian Modern Language Review	50
8	System	49
9	Linguistics	44
10	ELT Journal	43
10	Lingua	43
12	Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée	41
13	Linguistische Berichte	36
14	Language	35
15	ITL Review	32
16	Audiovisual Language Journal	27
16	Deutsch als Fremdsprache	27
16	Modern Language Journal	27
19	Modern Language	20
20	Russkij Jazyk za Rubezom	13

*Deutsch als Fremdsprache* is also among the journals which showed a downward trend. It ought to be possible to catch upward and downward movement, gains and losses, in a single figure. This can be done by averaging the positions a journal obtains during the four observation periods. The procedure yields a *weighted* rank scale. The new rank scale is a more reliable measure of a journal's contribution to the collective wisdom of language teachers if one is willing to trust the judgement of CILT staff.



**Table 8**

**Weighted Rank Scale of the Top Twenty Journals Across  
the Whole Period of Observation (1968-1985)**

			Rank Losses(-) Gains(+) during 1976-1986	
1	TESOL Quarterly	2.50	+	+
2	ELT Journal	3.75	-	-
3	Language Learning	5.25	+	+
3	Le Francais dans le Monde	5.25	-	+
5	IRAL	5.75	+	+
6	Linguistics	7.00	-	-
7	Audiovisual Language Journal	9.00	-	-
8	The Canadian Modern Language Review	9.75	+	-
9	Lingua	10.00	+	-
9	Modern Language Journal	10.00	-	+
11	Die Neueren Sprachen	10.25	-	+
12	Deutsch als Fremdsprache	11.00	-	-
13	Journal of Pragmatics	12.00		
13	System	12.00	+	+
15	ITL Review	13.30	+	-
16	Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée	14.00	+	+
16	Linguistische Berichte	14.00	+	+
16	Russkij Jazyk za Rubezom	14.00	-	-
19	Modern Languages	14.25	-	+
20	Language	14.50	-	+

Column 4 of Table 8 indicates whether the journal in question was able to defend (+) or improve on (+) a position once obtained; minuses indicate losses. We can thus define losers and winners.

Losing journals are:

*ELT Journal*

*Audio-Visual Language Journal*

*Deutsch als Fremdsprache*

*Russkij Jazyk za Rubezom*

The six winning journals are:

*TESOL Quarterly*

*Language Learning*

*IRAL*

*System*

*Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée*

*Linguistische Berichte*

*TESOL Quarterly*, in the last-mentioned group, has recently been described by John Swales (1988) as a self-sufficing journal exclusively serving the needs of American TESOLers and TELFlers. Swales used the *Social Sciences Citation Index* to shed light on the question of how splendid the isolation of this journal from the rest of the world is. And indeed, for in-depth analyses of scientific journal, citation indices are an indispensable tool. It would be interesting to see how the top twenty interrelate with one another. But such an enormous task is beyond the scope of the present paper. How much is involved can be seen by the booklength account given by Moirand (1988) of *Le Français dans le Monde* or Heuer's comparison of German foreign-language journals.

To judge from the distribution of losers and winners, the centre of gravity in FLT has reverted to the United States.

*Nomenclature.* To see whether this is also the case in terms of authors' past and present position the name indices of *Language Teaching* have been exploited. Table 9 is a simple enumeration of authors as they occur in *Language Teaching* between 1968-1985, the cut-off point being arbitrarily set at more than five entries.

**Table 9**  
**Frequency List of Authors in *Language Teaching***

Name	Country	Frequency
Swain, M.	(CDN)	15
Richards, J.C.	(USA)	14
Helbig, G.	(GDR)	13
Littlewood, W.T.	(GB)	12
Cohen, A.D.	(IL)	11
Coste, D.	(F)	11
Widdowson, H.G.	(GB)	11
Brumfit, C.J.	(GB)	10
Genesee, F.	(CDN)	10
Stern, H.H.	(CDN)	10
Cook, V.J.	(GB)	9
Krashen, S.D.	(USA)	9
Taylor, B.P.	(USA)	9
Zydati, W.	(FRG)	9
Besse, H.	(F)	8
Butzkamm, W.	(FRG)	8
Cruttenden, A.	(GB)	8
Dickerson, W.B.	(USA)	8
Larsen-Freeman, D.	(USA)	8
MacKay, R.	(CDN)	8
Maley, A.	(GB)	8
Oller, J.W. jr.	(USA)	8
Riley, P.	(F)	8
Sampson, G.	(CDN)	8
Seliger, H.W.	(USA)	8
Valman, A.	(USA)	8
Wode, H.	(FRG)	8
Giles, H.	(GB)	7
Holec, H.	(F)	7
Hudson, R. A.	(GB)	7
Moirand, S.	(F)	7
Palmer, A.S.	(GB)	7
Tarone, E.	(USA)	7
Beardsmore, H. Baetens	(B)	6
Beattie, G.W.	(GB)	6
Clark, E.V.	(USA)	6
Comrie, B.	(USA)	6
Cummins, J.	(CDN)	6
Davies, N.F.	(S)	6
Fishman, J.A.	(USA)	6
Gaies, S.J.	(USA)	6
Porquier, R.	(F)	6
Schachter, J.	(USA)	6
Snow, C.E.	(USA)	6
Strevens, P.	(GB)	6
Titone, R.	(I)	6
Tucker, R.G.	(USA)	6

Although it is notoriously difficult to attribute a nationality to certain writers who were born and raised in one country but later moved to another (the late David Stern is a classic example: born in Kassel (Germany) he was expatriated by the Nazis and moved to England where he taught for some time before he became the founder-director of the Modern Language Centre at OISE in Canada), there can be no question that the Anglo-Saxon countries, led by the US, are in the forefront of the methodology discussion. France and Germany who were on an equal footing with the United Kingdom at the time of Passy and Viëtor have been dwarfed in comparison - if one is willing to trust the judgement of the London "Paris".

**Table**  
**Frequency List of Authors' Countries in Language Teaching**

Country	Frequency
USA	121
GB	91
CDN	57
F	47
FRG	25
GDR	13

If not, reasons must be adduced why and how the intuitively satisfactory lists produced by CILT should be altered to reflect better the situation of foreign language teaching in the world.

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