

The SUFLRP Saga: Thirty years of teaching French in Scottish Universities 1970 - 2000

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Introduction and History

It is difficult now to remember just how undervalued language teaching was in French departments in UK universities in the 1960s and 70s. This article first looks at the background, the educational context in which the developments of the last thirty years took place. It then describes the preparation and publication of the four major language projects which are the principle achievements of a unique period of collaborative and creative research in French language departments in the Scottish universities. The final section looks back over the period and draws some conclusions for present-day teachers of French and other languages.

In 1970, the language departments in the universities were flourishing – certainly in comparison to the present situation after the destruction that has been wrought in the last decade. However, French Departments were places of traditional values and traditional attitudes. “French Studies” was still a suspect term, and the study of language ran a very poor second to the dominant pattern of literature plus “*thème et version*”. Lecturers, the vast majority of whom were male, were almost without exception specialists in a particular period of literature and many accepted only grudgingly the necessity of taking some language classes. The profession was totally dominated by literature specialists and staff research and student theses were limited almost entirely to literary topics. Vestiges of that situation can still be detected today. No career path existed for anyone weird enough to specialize in language, and linguistics was regarded as quaint and irrelevant.

In the Scottish universities in the late 1960s, however, anxiety began to be expressed by the literary establishment about the language attainments of students entering the first year. This anxiety was prompted less by a serious interest in language as a subject for study and research than by the worrying inability of many students to cope with the literature syllabus. Professional gatherings resounded with moans about what was or was not being taught in the schools, the assumption being that it was their job to prepare students for university study.

Finally a group of lecturers decided that, rather than complaining about the schools, they must themselves assume responsibility for the language levels of their students. This group eventually became the Scottish Universities French Language Research Project (with the delicious

acronym of SUFLRP), later the Scottish Universities French Language Research Association (SUFLRA). The new approach was proposed in 1972 by Sam Taylor (St Andrews) to whom most of the credit for the work of the next thirty years must go. Appendix 1 gives the chronology of the whole period from 1972 – 1999. After some preliminary meetings it was decided that the French Departments in each of the eight Scottish universities: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heriot-Watt, St Andrews, Stirling and Strathclyde would be asked to nominate a member of staff with a particular interest in language teaching to take part in a working party to address the problem of language levels in the first year. Appendix 2 lists the members of this group and the various teams set up for our publications.

The original members of the working party were young, idealistic, energetic and enthusiastic lecturers, some still completing their PhD. Because of the way the university study of French was structured, most of us had no training in linguistics and our research covered a wide range of periods of literature from mediaeval to twentieth century. For a majority, our interest in language had grown from our love of literature and we were convinced that our students deserved and needed a more serious study of the language. Many of the original group went on to achieve very considerable distinction and they have become household names in the profession. For most of us, the working party was a welcome breath of fresh air, a chance to escape from our isolation in literature-dominated departments. To our great excitement, the award of a grant of the huge sum of £5000 from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland allowed the official creation of SUFLRP in 1973.

The SUFLRP Working Party's brief was to produce a set of materials for teaching French language to first year university students with a pass in the Scottish Higher. The materials were explicitly intended to bridge the gap between the language programmes in secondary and higher education. It immediately became apparent that, although the members of the SUFLRP had been working in isolation, we shared many convictions about language teaching. There was general dissatisfaction with a language diet restricted to *thème* and *version* and a common perception that new methodologies were required. The small distances between the Scottish universities made it possible for all the team members to meet regularly, usually at weekends and in a central location like Stirling. Meetings rotated and, travelling to the other universities, we had a fascinating insight into Scottish Higher Education. In a pre-computer, pre-internet age, these face to face meetings were the backbone of SUFLRP's work, allowing us to share our experiences and discuss our work in depth – and in the process to form lasting friendships. We settled on a division of work according to areas of interest and

divided into a text team, a grammar team and a language laboratory team. This team arrangement continued to serve us well for all our publications.

Collaborative work, even where there is a well-defined shared purpose, is never entirely straightforward. Although Sam Taylor was the leader of the project, he insisted from the start that SUFLRP should function in a completely egalitarian way, the members all regarding one another as equals, sharing ideas and insights in an atmosphere of mutual respect. It took time, patience and forbearance in large quantities to create the trust which made it possible for us to be totally frank and to assess one another's work openly. On the other hand, the rewards of working collaboratively are many. This was a time when we all learnt an enormous amount about our subject, about the language we loved to teach, about our colleagues and about ourselves. It was a time of great professional enrichment and excitement.

Working in this way is slow, so it took us until 1976 to produce a first set of materials. These comprised a loose-leaf folder of materials (*Le français en faculté: Cours de base*) and a *Cours de laboratoire*. After limited pilot testing in our own universities in 1976-7 and 1977-8, with extensive collaborative revisions at each stage, the first version for wider dissemination was printed by the University of Aberdeen in 1978¹. Further collaboration with colleagues outside the Project again led to extensive revisions before the publication by Hodder and Stoughton of a first edition in 1980². This was ultimately followed by a second, revised edition in 1986³ and a third, again comprehensively revised, edition in 1999⁴. *Le français en faculté*, although the least innovative and research-based of our books, is the only one that continues to sell, revealing that conservatism in our profession is still very strong.

Following the considerable success of *Le français en faculté*, the members of SUFLRP, having by now become hooked on collaborative work, lost weekends and round-Scotland travel, decided to explore the possibility of creating materials for more advanced students. We invited all interested colleagues in Scotland to join us and in 1981 the Scottish Universities French Language Research Association (SUFLRA) was born. In the same year, news of our activities having crossed the border, the Association for French Language Studies (AFLS) was created in England. Appendix 2 shows how, although still firmly based in Scotland, our work spread further afield as colleagues moved to England, or as colleagues from English universities became involved in the Scottish projects.

The thirty or so members of SUFLRA decided to split into three working parties and to seek funding for the three projects they wanted to work on:

Project 1. Materials for second year students. These became *Lyon à la Une* (published – University of Edinburgh – in 1986⁵)

Project 2. A book of translation passages (*thème* and *version*)

Project 3. Materials for Honours students. These became *En fin de compte...* (published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1988⁶)

The fact that one of the projects was devoted to translation is a clear indication that there were wide differences of approach within SUFLRA and that conservative forces were still very much in evidence. In spite of growing research evidence that translation was not the best, and certainly not the only, way to teach language, not everyone was convinced!

During this second phase of our activities, the pragmatism which had characterized the production of the materials for *Le français en faculté* gave way to the more research-based approach which was by the 1980s *de rigueur* in British Higher Education. Both *Lyon à la Une* and *En fin de compte* bear the marks of this. The move to research, presentation of conference papers and publication of articles also resulted in successful applications for funding, notoriously difficult to obtain for language projects. The feasibility studies for *Lyon à la Une* and *En fin de compte* were both supported by a Nuffield “small grant” of £3000 and the *En fin de compte* team (Dundee and St Andrews, with Aberdeen joining in later) received an initial Erasmus grant in 1983, followed by others in subsequent years, to further research collaboration with the universities of Grenoble. The project was completed with the help of a grant of £50,000 from the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), the first time that funding had been awarded to a language project in Higher Education. *En fin de compte* was then rigorously assessed by the Godfrey Thomson Research Unit at the University of Edinburgh. The positive assessment of the course was the first for a language course, notoriously difficult to assess because of the vast array of variables. The strong research base of *En fin de compte* was also recognized in the receipt of one of the highly competitive Partnership Awards from the Council for Industry and Higher Education, (for innovation in teaching and learning in Higher Education): the Rowntree Mackintosh prize 1990 (European Language Degrees – French).

When some of the original *Le français en faculté* team, with the addition of several other colleagues, decided in 1993 to continue collaboration and produce subject-specific materials for French for science students, the Nuffield Foundation again provided support in the form of a generous grant of £100,000. *Nuffield French for Scientists* was published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1999⁷.

Over the thirty year period from 1970 to 2000, Higher Education in the UK and in Scotland had changed dramatically. By 2000 collaborative, inter-institutional work was being discouraged. The heavy emphasis on the results of the RAE, league tables and the strong competition for research funds led universities to concentrate their efforts in their own institutions. Unless huge research grants were involved (never the case in languages!), staff were discouraged from spending precious time and effort on collaboration. The invaluable small grants from Carnegie, so essential to our early work, had disappeared, the ESRC had turned into the more amorphous HSSRC, Nuffield was involved in national language policies. It was our good fortune to have been working at a time when a wider vision prevailed and there was more latitude and encouragement for disinterested scholarship.

(i) *Le français en faculté*

When we began work on what was to become *Le français en faculté* in 1973, it was virtually unknown for students in university French departments to have access to a textbook other than the famous Ritchie and Moore or an in-house set of passages for translation. There was no language syllabus since this was thought to be impossible for advanced levels of the language, and methodology was discussed only in Colleges of Education and schools. Language teaching in universities existed in isolation from other levels of language instruction, except for the influence it exerted *en amont* on the syllabus in schools. Secondary teachers found it very difficult to effect any change because of the assumption that the function of the Higher was to prepare pupils for university. Few members of university French departments bothered to become members of SALT, few went regularly to France for research purposes or for conferences. Collaboration with colleagues in France was virtually unknown. Practically no member of staff in a university language department had had any form of teacher training.

On to this barren landscape burst the enthusiasts of SUFLRP, convinced that change was both essential and possible. Our enthusiasm aroused mild amusement from many of our colleagues, confident in the proven supremacy of literature and unconvinced that the teaching of the language should be treated with the same seriousness. Our early discussions were often about methodology, since we knew that in the schools the once revolutionary direct method and the newer inductive – deductive methods were giving way to something more in tune with the pupils' needs and aspirations. The new thinking led eventually to the notional-functional approach (a direct precursor of communicative language teaching) which was to some extent exemplified in *Lyon à la Une*. The term “communicative language teaching” is used in the

preface to the 1986 revision of *Le français en faculté*, before it had become current elsewhere.

The approach eventually taken by the *Le français en faculté* team, headed by Sam Taylor, was essentially pragmatic, aimed at improving students' language performance. The involvement of students throughout the extensive piloting and through error analysis of their work was a dramatic departure from existing practice. Constant consultation with colleagues in both schools and universities was another essential and innovative aspect of our approach, as was the close collaboration with the *Institut français d'Édimbourg* and the inclusion of native speakers in the team.

Today, *Le français en faculté*, especially in early versions, appears in many ways quaintly old-fashioned:

- it is theme- rather than function-based;
- it makes considerable use of translation “from and into”;
- it directs students to a high level grammar book;
- it assumes that they will have mastered the basic grammar of French and will be comfortable with grammatical terminology;
- it presents a traditional rule-based sentence grammar, predominantly of the written language;
- its “exercises” are not always contextualised or communicative;
- its language is non-inclusive (the students it addresses are apparently all male).

Nevertheless, the innovative aspects of the book were many – indeed its very existence signaled a revolution in progress. The non-traditional features of *Le français en faculté* are pointers to the profound upheavals that were shaking the world of university language teaching. The grammar “syllabus” produced by the Grammar Team for *Le français en faculté* was devised to phase in with the recently produced syllabus for French in schools. It was also the product of a serious analysis of standard errors in first year French, and included the grammatical features which caused most difficulty for our students, rather than those arising haphazardly in texts for translation. There is no necessary progression: students and lecturers are invited to use the materials as they need them and this is facilitated by extensive cross-referencing. Students are encouraged to work alone and the provision of a Key to the exercises makes this possible. The texts were chosen to exemplify the grammar points – a process over which we argued long and hard and a matching exercise that took all our collective skill.

We were increasingly concerned with authenticity, another term which had not yet gained general currency. Thus the texts are all “modern” and come from a wide variety of sources – this at a time when journalism was dismissed by many of our colleagues as inadmissible in university language courses and when contemporary writing was considered demonstrably inferior to classical literary texts. We used French titles for the sections of each chapter, for the notes accompanying each text and for the instructions for the exercises. French / French work of this kind was very rare, indeed most French language classes in universities were conducted in English. In *Le français en faculté* oral exploitation preceded written demonstration and there was often a brief context given for the activities, some of which required collaboration among the students. *Dossiers* in French present aspects of French culture related to the texts and the activities. Illustrations and cartoons lighten the approach and send a message to students that language learning can be fun – not a point of view always embraced by our colleagues. The provision of a dedicated language laboratory course was, for the time, one of the outstanding innovations of *Le français en faculté*.

Successive editions reveal a continuing move towards student-centred, collaborative learning based on the need for authentic communicative competence in defined situations, although when we started work we would not have had the vocabulary to describe our approach in this way. The third (1999) edition was produced in response to pressure from colleagues in university French departments all over the UK and Ireland. It appeared post-*En fin de compte* and post-Nuffield. By that time the assumptions of *Le français en faculté* seemed to us to be very out-dated but our colleagues felt the need for reassuringly familiar materials and this reveals the tenacity of a traditional, sentence grammar-based approach to language teaching. The biggest changes in this third edition are in the Grammar Sections where earlier assumptions about students' prior exposure to grammar had to be dramatically revised, and in the student-friendly language used throughout. What would we have said in the heady days of the seventies if we had realized that the level of grammatical competence of first year students on entry to university would continue to decline? Today's students may have, thanks to changes in the schools, better communicative skills but their grasp of the grammatical under-pinning of the language – so vital for progress to really advanced levels of competence – continues to lag behind their communicative ability.

(ii) Lyon à la Une (SUFLRA Project 1)

The growing emphasis on research in British Higher Education is reflected in the increasing number of conference papers and other publications by

SUFLRA members at this time. In 1981, following the successful publication of *Le français en faculté*, the SUFLRP convened its first conference to decide on future directions. At the conference, a group of about 16 colleagues from the Scottish universities indicated that they would like to be actively involved in the next stage of our work. It was decided that, following the success of the first year "course", materials for second year students would be required and a team of eight was set up as Project 1 under Andrew Walker from Stirling to produce what eventually became *Lyon à la Une*. Project 2 was the book of translation passages. Project 3, undertaken by a team of six under Professor Taylor, was to work on language materials for final year Honours students. This would be published as *En fin de compte Cours communicatif de français Niveau licence*. Projects 1 and 2 were not commercially published, but the influence of *Lyon à la Une* was nevertheless profound.

In the various working papers for *Lyon à la Une* (1983-6)⁸, the ground-breaking vision for the course is described. It was to be a team effort, firmly based on notional-functional principles and to aim at what was becoming known as "communicative competence". Authenticity, both of input and output, was a prime requirement and, although the written language was included, the emphasis (through specially created audio-visual materials) was on the spoken language in precisely defined contexts. It is a measure of how much views had changed that the course was based on a newspaper (*Lyon Matin* hence the name *Lyon à la Une*), that it comprised both audio and video elements recorded on location and included a communicative, research-based approach to grammar. Students were to be exposed to authentic language presented in such a way that it would allow them to acquire competence in a wide range of appropriate language skills.

A lack of continuing funding hampered the final stages of the Project and the imaginative and resolutely non-traditional nature of the course aroused skepticism in some quarters. Nevertheless the seminal work done by the *Lyon à la Une* team, presented at conferences and in published articles, was part of a new vision of language teaching in Higher Education which is still being developed.

2 (iii) *En fin de compte ... (Project 3)*

Project 3, like *Lyon à la Une*, was originally funded by a Nuffield feasibility grant of £3000 but subsequently obtained a £50,000 grant from the ESRC, the first to be awarded in the area of language. This allowed the appointment of a native speaker Research Assistant whose connection with Nancy was extremely valuable for research and filming. *En fin de compte* also benefited from the Erasmus grant which, in addition to allowing the creation of a highly successful student exchange which

continues until the present time, facilitated research contacts with French colleagues and gave us access to additional authentic native-speaker input for the video component of the course. The Project made few concessions to tradition and was strongly backed by the research carried out by Professor Taylor and the team members. Publications and conference papers in the fields of communicative competence, curriculum content and development, in language teaching and language learning methodology and the positive evaluation by the Godfrey Thomson Unit are all evidence of the scope and the depth of the work which went into *En fin de compte*. All this preceded by some years the numerous courses in communicative skills which subsequently proliferated in Higher Education in both language and non-language disciplines. Years after the publication of *En fin de compte* the government, through funding initiatives, began pushing universities to respond to the need for graduates with appropriate communicative skills. We felt like the proverbial grandmother – our egg-sucking skills had been honed years before.

En fin de compte had to meet the challenge of providing structured materials for students of the language at a very advanced level. In spite of the remarkable advances, particularly in Scotland, in identifying Graded Objectives and the exciting Graded Levels of Achievement in Foreign Language Learning (GLAFL) and Lothian developments, identification of language learning objectives at final Honours level had not been addressed, largely because it was thought to be impossible. Students at this level were thought to be learning something defined loosely as “the whole language”.

The *En fin de compte* team started from an identification of student language needs after graduation, based on a questionnaire sent to graduates. This allowed us to narrow the focus to professional reading, writing and speaking skills and to produce a bank of multi-media materials for presentations, interpreting, interviews, meetings, job searches, debating and high level discussions of political and ethical topics. These basic requirements for professional use of French after graduation were to be acquired by exposure to contemporary exemplars of the language (both written and spoken) used by professionals in France, and adapted to the social and professional contexts in which the students, on graduation, might be expected to move. Extensive use of specially filmed video elements addressed the requirement for high level listening and speaking skills and a specially written book for tutors recognized the challenges the course presented for many of those who taught it. The list of institutions thanked in the introduction to *En fin de compte* (p. xv) reveals the complexity of obtaining the material, both spoken and written, and the range of research involved. The introductory sections on the

communicative method and the communicative curriculum remain models of description and the emphasis throughout on autonomous and appropriate language use marks a dramatic shift from previous language teaching models.

It was not only in curriculum design and methodology that *En fin de compte* set itself apart from other types of language teaching. The move to a communicative methodology with its focus on process and student output also required a re-thinking of the grammar input. *Le français en faculté* had assumed that students had been exposed to (and may have acquired) the basic sentence grammar of French, and had concentrated on strengthening competence in areas known to cause problems. *Lyon à la Une* made the same assumption and, using the corpus of materials recorded in France as a basis, the Grammar Team moved towards a less sentence-based and more communicative idea of grammar which included both semantic and syntactic elements and paid close attention to context and appropriateness. This was still an uncharted field in French, although Leech and Swartvik had published a communicative grammar of English which was taken as a starting point by the *Lyon à la Une* Grammar Team.

For the Honours students for whom *En fin de compte* was designed, a sentence grammar was not adequate and it became clear that a different type of grammar, extending beyond the sentence, was required. An earlier version of such a "grammar" had once been familiar as classical Rhetoric, but recent generations had totally neglected language use across the entire speech act or written message. What is said or written is structured by the speaker / writer, who develops appropriate strategies and allows personality to colour language. The *En fin de compte* team felt that language study at Honours level had to be moved beyond the straitjacket of the sentence to reflect real use in social and professional situations. Thus the study of a language at an advanced level demanded a re-appraisal of commonly-held views of grammar.

In this area there were no models. Discourse analysis of French was providing some pointers but no communicative analysis of French at this level, combining detailed description with authentic and appropriate exemplars, existed. Thus the research for the communicative grammar of *En fin de compte*, based on extended analysis of appropriate texts (written and spoken) and on a detailed questionnaire and interviews with native speakers was and remains unique. The *Ressources linguistiques* produced for *En fin de compte* were subsequently adapted in the 1990s by a team at Dundee for computer-based language learning in English, French, German and Spanish⁹ and have proved to be valuable learning

tools leading to an advanced level of communicative competence in all these languages.

Since the content, aims, methodology and grammar of *En fin de compte* were radically different from any advanced language course that had preceded it, it also required an innovative approach to assessment. This was an area in which universities were reluctant to embrace change. The sacrosanct “regulations” stipulated prose and translation and in many cases the new course had to be assessed by the old criteria. Students understandably failed to see the logic in this. Examiners (particularly externals) frequently objected that they were unable to assess discourse competence, communicative strategies, communicative grammar, appropriateness and repair strategies. In universities where new regulations were written, very detailed descriptions and guidelines for examiners had to be provided. However, few of the universities where *En fin de compte* was used were either able or willing to take the logical step of introducing appropriate assessment techniques.

The effect of *En fin de compte* was to cause temporary waves in French language teaching in Higher Education. It was perceived – and had been conceived – as a challenge to language tutors and to French departments to rethink the place, the seriousness and the purpose of language teaching in the Honours curriculum. The accompanying Teacher’s Guide makes this clear. Funded by Nuffield and the ESRC, supported by published peer-reviewed research, its effectiveness was validated by an independent academic educational research unit. Its importance was recognized by the French Government through the award of the *Palmes académiques (Officier)* to two team members and in 1990 it won a Partnership Award from the Council for Industry and Higher Education. Despite all this, it failed the crucial test – acceptability in the profession. The challenges were apparently too great.

2 (iv) Nuffield French for Science Students

Undeterred, Professor Taylor, with two other members of the original *Le français en faculté* team and seven additional colleagues (most from Scottish universities) several of whom had been involved in *En fin de compte*, decided in the 1990s to continue working in the area of language teaching in Higher Education. By this time, the idea of teaching communicative skills was entirely, even tiresomely, politically correct and had been hijacked by non-language university departments where it became part of a fashion to be seen to be preparing students more adequately for their professional lives.

Attention had for some time been shifting to Languages for Special Purposes and this, together with research into the language competence

and experiences of Erasmus / Socrates exchange students, led the new team to the decision to prepare language learning materials for university science students. Exchanges with the Socrates programme were now extending beyond language departments and colleagues in science departments were anxious for their students to benefit fully from their period abroad. With Britain's increasing involvement in and commitment to Europe, the need for appropriate language skills to ensure graduate mobility was also becoming apparent.

Although there was growing pressure on university staff to produce research and obtain funding which would be of exclusive benefit to their own institution and would ensure their own professional advancement, the members of the team were so convinced of the value of collaborative work (or so unworldly?) that they ignored the signs and went ahead. The project received a £100,000 grant from the Nuffield Foundation who were to be our close partners and strong supporters throughout. We were able to employ a native speaker research fellow and our Socrates contacts with Grenoble were once again important for filming and recording, this time at the *Université Fourier*. The French Government supported us with official sponsorship by both the CNRS and the DGLF and through the *Institut français d'Édimbourg* and the French embassy in London. Everything augured well for this new departure.

The complexity of the preparation for the Nuffield course is reflected in the larger team of ten and in the many and varied links set up to support our work. For this course two levels were prepared simultaneously since we had identified two different groups of science students who needed to study French – those who had a GCSE or Standard Grade and those who had done French at A Level or Higher. The research required for Nuffield took us, as linguists, far beyond our comfort zone in Arts and Humanities, since most of us had very little background in science or scientific method. We also, for the first time, included CALL elements in addition to extensive video and some sound recordings.

This time we had a different team structure. There was a team for each of the two groups of students we were aiming at, with a grammar specialist in each team. Separate teams were needed for the *Travaux pratiques*, for the video and for the computer (CALL) component. The methodology remains resolutely communicative, with grammar and activities drawn from carefully contextualised scientific domains and based on experimental procedures.

Much of the research concerned Languages for Special Purposes and a number of conference papers and articles reflect this new direction in our work. Student needs and teaching methodology were also researched by the team. Liverpool University conducted a national needs survey,

reviewing skills objectives, available resources, teaching materials, staffing and timetable constraints. The survey also addressed access levels and ranges of ability and attainment in students embarking on Socrates exchanges. St Andrews concentrated on methodology and Dundee on scientific discourse and grammar while Heriot-Watt (with Liverpool) considered objectives, methodology and planned progression. The video and computer elements were researched at Dundee and Abertay. No wonder the work took so long. A team of ten was scarcely sufficient. The growing demands and stresses of teaching and other research continued apace; meanwhile for Nuffield we were involving ourselves in so many new areas that the old hands could have wished that they still had their whole careers in front of them to develop all the tempting new possibilities.

So what went wrong? Why did universities not adopt the Nuffield Course? Perhaps we had tried to do too much and certainly the on-going changes in Higher Education did not help. Not only was inter-university collaboration discouraged – unless massive external grants were obtained – but within universities financial constraints made the necessary transfer of funds from science departments to French and other departments difficult. The pendulum had swung away from the arts and language departments did not have the political influence to insist on adequate language preparation for Socrates students. The Socrates Programme itself provided for some (usually rudimentary, sometimes optional) language preparation in the host institution and science departments were all too ready to escape the responsibility. The very limited adoption of Nuffield was a bitter pill for the team who had, often at considerable cost to their own careers, devoted themselves *corps et âme* to the enterprise.

Conclusions

Changes in language teaching which had been taking place over the preceding decade also contributed to a lack of success. Far from being seen as an area of equal importance with literature and the increasingly popular area studies, language was, in a growing number of universities, taught by the temporary, unqualified (usually female) native speakers who were more and more readily available as a result of Europeanisation. Language had not, as we had hoped, acquired the serious professional status accorded to other aspects of the curriculum. It was even further from reconciliation with linguistics and facile, unstructured and unfocussed communication in a foreign language had become the norm. Inter-cultural studies were taking off and any research money available was going to developments in this new domain. Furthermore, the provision of materials for the teaching of language had undergone a

total revolution with the instant availability of current, exciting multi-media materials from the internet.

From a wider perspective we can now see that, as a profession, language teachers had been naïve in assuming that their subject was a firmly established part of the Higher Education syllabus, its usefulness so self-evident that it needed no defence. In other parts of the universities, subjects with powerful friends in politics and industry were expanding. As foreign language teachers, we had failed to make our case with sufficient political skill, both within and outwith our own institutions, in national and international gatherings. We had not sought soon enough to win powerful and articulate supporters for our cause and in the end, not even the Nuffield Enquiry made enough of a splash to reverse the trend in a world where power games and the culture of big business govern success.

Our saga therefore begins where it started, in the imperfect tense. The revolution(s) continue and our contributions are now part of a rich history. The teaching and learning of foreign languages is as alive as the languages themselves. It is precisely the movement, the flexibility and responsiveness of modern languages that draws us to them in the first place. The living, changing, elusive nature of human language means that any attempt to study or teach it is an exhilarating roller-coaster ride. If we were able, in our *trente glorieuses*, to make that ride better for our students and our colleagues, that is a privilege we can treasure.

Appendix 1

Date	Research and publications
1972	Proposal by Sam Taylor that a group of colleagues from all Scottish universities work on the creation of language teaching materials for first year students to bridge the gap between secondary and higher education language syllabi.
1973	Creation of the Scottish Universities French Language Research Project (SUFLRP) Carnegie Grant (£5000)
1976-7	First pilot edition (ring binder format) of <i>Le français en faculté</i> (limited to participating members of SUFLRP)
1977-8	Second pilot edition (members of SUFLRP)
1978	Third pilot edition (limited to participating universities)
1980	First edition of <i>Le français en faculté - Cours de base</i> (+ Audio / Language laboratory course) (Hodder & Stoughton)
1981	Creation of the Scottish Universities French Language Research Association (SUFLRA) → 3 projects: (1) <i>Lyon à la Une</i> (for second year students); (2) Translation booklet; (3) <i>En fin de compte</i> (for Honours students) Nuffield grants – 2 year feasibility studies (£3000) for <i>Lyon à la Une</i> and <i>En fin de compte</i> Sam Taylor elected President of the National Council for Modern Languages (until 1985) Creation in England of the Association for French Language Studies (AFLS) modelled on SUFLRA – 1st meeting 1982
1983	Working papers for <i>Lyon à la Une</i> published ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) Grant for <i>En fin de compte</i> (£50,000) Erasmus grant for <i>En fin de compte</i> : research collaboration with Université de Grenoble III; student exchange
1986	Publication of <i>Lyon à la Une</i> (University of Edinburgh) <i>Le français en faculté</i> (2 nd edition)
1988	Publication of <i>En fin de compte</i> (Hodder & Stoughton) Sam Taylor: <i>Officier des Palmes académiques</i>
1989	Evaluation (positive) of <i>En fin de compte</i> by Godfrey Thomson Research Unit, University of Edinburgh. Robin Adamson: <i>Officier des Palmes académiques</i>
1990	The Council for Industry and Higher Education, Partnership Awards (for commending innovation in teaching and learning in Higher Education), Rowntree Mackintosh prize 1990 (European Language Degrees – French) for <i>En fin de compte</i>
1999	<i>Le français en faculté</i> (3 rd edition) Publication of <i>Nuffield French for Science Students</i> (Hodder & Stoughton) with the official patronage of the <i>Centre national de la recherche scientifique</i> (CNRS) and the <i>Délégation générale à la langue française</i> (DGLF)

Appendix 2

Note: Many other colleagues were involved in the preparation and piloting of the materials. The names given here are those of the major contributors, i.e. whose names are listed in the publications as authors.

Project	Team members
1. <i>Le français en faculté</i>	
1973-8	Robin Adamson (Dundee), Marie-Thérèse Coutin (IFE), Brian Farrington (Aberdeen), Geoffrey Hare (Aberdeen), Margaret Lang (Aberdeen), Anthony Lodge (Aberdeen), Ian Mason (Heriot-Watt), Samuel Taylor (St Andrews), Richard Wakely (Edinburgh), Andrew Walker (Stirling)
1 st edition 1980	Robin Adamson (Dundee), James Coleman (Glasgow), Marie-Thérèse Coutin (IFE), Brian Farrington (Aberdeen), Geoffrey Hare (Aberdeen / Newcastle), Margaret Lang (Heriot-Watt), Anthony Lodge (Aberdeen / Newcastle), Ian Mason (Heriot-Watt), Samuel Taylor (St Andrews), Richard Wakely (Edinburgh), Andrew Walker (Stirling)
2 nd edition 1986	Revised by: Robin Adamson (Dundee), Geoffrey Hare (Newcastle), Margaret Lang (Heriot-Watt), Anthony Lodge (Newcastle), Samuel Taylor (St Andrews)
3 rd edition 1999	Revised by: Robin Adamson (Dundee), James Coleman (Portsmouth), Geoffrey Hare (Newcastle), Chrystal Hug (IFE), Margaret Lang (Heriot-Watt), Anthony Lodge (St Andrews), Frédéric Royal (Limerick), Richard Wakely (Edinburgh)
2. <i>Lyon à la Une</i> SUFLRA Project 1	
1986	David Bickerton (Glasgow), James Coleman (Glasgow), Helen Leitch (Jordanhill), William McDowell (Edinburgh), Ian Mason (Heriot-Watt), Héléne Mulphin (Edinburgh), Richard Wakely (Edinburgh), Andrew Walker (Stirling)
3. Translation passages SUFLRA Project 2	
1981-3	Eithne O'Sharkey (Dundee), Jenny Shirra (Strathclyde)
4. <i>En fin de compte</i> SUFLRA Project 3	
1988	Robin Adamson (Dundee), Peter Bartlett (Dundee), John Devereux (St Andrews), Chloë Gallien (St Andrews), Margaret Lang (Heriot-Watt), Jean-Jacques Pauleau (IFE), Samuel Taylor (St Andrews)
5. <i>Nuffield French for Science Students</i>	
1999	Robin Adamson (Dundee), Peter Bartlett (Dundee), Alison Borthwick (Dundee), Malcolm Carroll (Liverpool), Bridget Cook (St Andrews / Dundee), Chloë Gallien (St Andrews), Cyrille Guiat (Heriot-Watt), Margaret Lang (Heriot-Watt), Jacques-Michel Lacroix (IFE), Samuel Taylor (St Andrews), Christine Wilson (Heriot-Watt)

Endnotes

- ¹ Adamson, R., M.-T. Coutin, G.E. Hare, M. Lang, A. Lodge, I. Mason, S.S.B. Taylor, R. Wakely. A.L. Walker *Le français en faculté. Cours de base*. SUFLRP / University of Aberdeen, 1978.
- ² Adamson, R., M.-T. Coutin, J.A. Coleman, G.E. Hare, M. Lang, A. Lodge, I. Mason, S.S.B. Taylor, R. Wakely. A.L. Walker *Le français en faculté. Cours de base*. Hodder & Stoughton 1980.
- ³ Revision (1986) by Adamson, R., G.E. Hare, M. Lang, A. Lodge, S.S.B. Taylor.
- ⁴ Revision (1999) by Adamson, R., J.A. Coleman, G.E. Hare, C. Hug, M. Lang, A. Lodge, F. Royall, R. Wakely.
- ⁵ Bickerton, D., J.A. Coleman, H. Leitch, W. McDowell, I. Mason, H. Mulphin, R. Wakely, A.L. Walker *Scottish Universities French Language Research Association Project I: Lyon à la Une*. University of Edinburgh / SUFLRA, 1986.
- ⁶ Adamson, R., P. Bartlett, J. Devereux, C. Gallien, M. Lang, S.S.B. Taylor *En fin de compte Cours communicatif de français: Niveau licence*. Hodder & Stoughton 1988.
- ⁷ Adamson, R., P. Bartlett, A. Borthwick, M. Carroll, B. Cook, C. Gallien, C. Guiat, M. Lang, S.S.B. Taylor, C. Wilson *Nuffield French for Science Students* Hodder & Stoughton 1999.
- ⁸ Walker, A. (ed.) *Communicative Competence in French at Intermediate University Level; Working papers of the SUFLRA Lyon à la Une Project 1980-1983*. University of Stirling / SUFLRA, 1984.
- ⁹ Adamson, R., Cook, B., Lord, E., Napier, G., Taylor, S.S.B. (2001) *Le Chantier d'Écriture: A Computer-assisted Communicative Grammar for Advanced Students in French, German and Spanish*, a T.A.G.S. Project for the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, University of Dundee.