

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Goldsworthy:

I have read Philip Smith's article in the October *Newsletter*. I have also read the 138 page report (plus indices) which was sent to me earlier in the year. This report has a more adequate population base than the Lorge study and has fewer holes in it than the Keating report. Like the latter report, it provides additional data on what *not* to do with the language laboratory. However, I would like to suggest that no further studies of this type need to be made. My reasons are as follows:

- (1) It is not necessary to further document that a language laboratory when used like a tape recorder will produce results comparable to those achieved by using a tape recorder. (As Smith points out, "the lock-step drill arrangement" may be "a perversion of the true function of the equipment.")
- (2) The validity of the research design used by Smith and Berger is being increasingly questioned by educational psychologists and curriculum specialists. For example, Stephens in *The Process of Schooling* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston) documents 780 such studies involving control and experimental groups. Of these, 580 showed "no significant difference" or "NSD". The remaining 200 students were rather evenly divided between positive and negative results. *In short, a half century of such "research" has told us almost nothing about the relative superiority of one educational strategy or system over another!* (Examples of the areas which Stephens reported on are the following: large vs. small schools; large vs. small class size; accredited vs. non-accredited teachers; progressive vs. traditional education; live teachers vs. TV; lecture method vs. discussion method; team teaching vs. traditional teaching; and homogeneous vs. heterogeneous grouping of students.) Tables showing standard deviations, covariance, F-ratios and the like are very impressive; however, if the ultimate result of such studies is that they cancel one another out, perhaps we should ask for a cease fire while we search for a more productive means of investigation. (Notice the language laboratory studies as a case in point: Lorge, positive; Keating, negative; Smith, NSD.) Smith and Berger are to be commended upon their thorough, scholarly assessment of the various teaching strategies and systems. (Certainly, nothing of this scope and quality has been done before.)

However, would not the next step be to investigate what the laboratory can do that *cannot* be done by less sophisticated equipment?

Sincerely,

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