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## An overview of the John Trim collection

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### About the author

*Anni Inkiläinen is studying at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, to become a teacher of German. She visited the communication, documentation and resource centre of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe within the framework of a study visit from 28 February to 11 March 2011. The aim of her visit was on the one hand to get an overview of the work of the ECML and the Centre's services and benefits for a language teacher, and on the other hand to visit local schools. This article focuses in particular the John Trim collection, a special library collection of the ECML.*

The John Trim collection is located in the communication, documentation and resource centre of the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages). It was donated by Mr Trim in 2004, when he gave his personal collection of books and documents relating to his lifelong work on languages to the ECML. John Trim's expertise is in the field of phonetics, linguistics, language didactics and policy.

The John Trim collection consists of more than 3200 resources. It has many interesting subjects, which may interest foreign language teachers or teacher trainers. One particularly significant item for language teaching in Europe is the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). As Trim was a member of the group which planned the CEFR, the collection provides a unique cross-section of documents on this area. The collection includes a vast amount of material related to the development of the *Threshold Levels* and the *Common European Framework of Reference*. One of these resources' is John Trim's lecture on the role of the CEFR in teacher training, where he discusses the meaning of the Framework.



An important part of the collection is devoted to documentation on the work of the Council of Europe from 1971-1997, especially with regard to the Modern Language Projects. This area might also provide an interesting subject for more in-depth analysis.

The collection has different pedagogical resources on various themes, such as teacher training, linguistics, translation, language education, foreign language teaching, learner oriented teaching, language learning, language education and technology and teaching resources.

As a trainee German teacher I have concentrated on a few sections of the collection that are of particular interest to foreign language teachers: **Foreign language teaching, foreign language learning, foreign language teacher, and language education and technology.** I will examine a sample of publications in each of these categories, although this represents only a small part of this extensive collection. I have also made use of the thematic bibliographies of the John Trim collection, which can be found online on the ECML's website (Resources section).

In the category of **foreign language teaching (E 10)** there are publications on different approaches to language teaching in general. An example of 'language teaching methodology' material is the book *Language teaching analysis*, which among other things guides the teacher through various theories on the nature of language and language learning and presents an objective analysis of available materials. There is also a section devoted to techniques, which enable the teacher to analyse his/her own language teaching and that of others.

Within the category on 'Classroom interaction' the publication *Something to say? - promoting spontaneous classroom talk* provides examples of oral exercises and encourages teachers to engage pupils in meaningful tasks in order to develop their speaking skills. The writers hope to show that the language of participation and interaction can be as important as - or even more important than - the topic-based content of textbooks or more conventional schemes of work. The book describes some key principles of presenting and practicing new languages. It points out the meaning of multi-sensory drilling, because each individual has his or her own preferred learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory or kinesthetic). Over the course of my personal training I have also noticed the importance of using a variety of teaching methods. It is easy to confine oneself to one or two types of classroom exercise, but a teacher should always remember the fact that different methods have different strengths and weaknesses. Only the use of a variety of techniques ensures that all pupils can benefit from the lesson.

The category 'Teaching language and culture' is also an interesting section for the foreign language teacher, because the teaching of culture has become a significant part of language teaching. The book *Teaching and learning language and culture* containing a chapter on assessing cultural learning which may be highly useful for a teacher. The writers identify three inter-related areas for the purpose of assessment of cultural learning: "knowledge", "attitudes" and "behaviour". This division should help to clarify what teachers hope students will learn during and by the end of a foreign language and culture course. "Knowledge" is the factual knowledge, such as historical and geographical facts, which students need in order to communicate interculturally. The assessment of "attitude" is more difficult but could, for example, be based on empathy, which has both affective and cognitive aspects. The alternative for attitude measurement would be to evaluate courses instead of individuals. "Behaviour" here is a very broad term not limited to notions of politeness or etiquette, but "whatever one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its (other culture's) members" (139). This chapter then deals with how to assess these aspects of cultural learning and provides some examples of assessment.

In the category of **foreign language teacher (E 12)** there are publications, for example, about 'teacher's development'. *Language teachers at work – A description of methods* reveals basic techniques used by a number of language teachers. It includes over 40 case studies describing what is systematic and regular in teachers' methods, has tabulated comparisons of stage-by-stage techniques and gives suggestions for classroom experimentation, which every teacher can use to improve their classroom effectiveness. Interestingly the book presents various teachers personally and compares their different techniques and methods, such as the amount of time spent talking by the teacher and by the student respectively in the classroom, and the teacher's use of foreign language during the lesson. As I myself have noticed, the degree of foreign language use in the classroom is an open question. Normally, the more a teacher uses foreign languages the better, but it is sometimes easy to overuse the mother tongue out of concern that the pupils will otherwise not understand everything. This book may also be useful to provide means of describing, comparing and planning lessons.

In the category of **foreign language learning (E 13)** there are materials ranging from conference reports to handbooks on foreign language learning strategies. One example is *Auf der Suche nach dem Sprachlernabenteuer*, which contains an interesting article entitled "Tandem per Internet und das International E-Mail Tandem Network", which deals with computer mediated communication and online tandem learning with electronic mail. Tandem learning is a form of autonomic learning, which can be used to support regular language learning in the classroom. It involves learning through authentic communication with a native speaker, who acts as model and who corrects and supports the

language learner. It is based on mutuality: both partners should profit from the tandem. One of the advantages of tandem learning is that it is more casual than course learning. Electronic mail and internet forums offer inexpensive access to this kind of language learning. It also involves communication with a real person, which makes it more interesting than artificial classroom exercises. This is an important part of learner motivation. For the teacher tandem learning also offers a means of promoting intercultural learning.

*Teaching how to learn – Learning strategies in ESL* is a handbook for teachers to assist them in developing the learning strategies of their students. It includes both theoretical aspects of learning strategies as well as many practical ideas for teachers, e.g. making learning plans. There is an activity worksheet book as well, which gives some practical exercises.

The most extensive category of the John Trim collection is the category **(E 16) Teaching resources**, which contains various teaching materials, such as grammar books, textbooks, readers, games and recordings. This category would also enable researchers to put together an overview of the development of teaching material over the years.

The category **(E 15) Language education and technology** offers a similar opportunity for research into the development of technological teaching resources. For example the book *Modern language teaching and learning with gramophone and radio* from 1930 describes the possibilities of using the (then) new technology of the gramophone. "We have now at hand the power to fill the classroom with the clear, rich tones of the most able and eminent teachers... The radio, gramophone and talking picture, must inevitably play an important role in the language lessons of the future. The teacher's task will be lightened by their use. They will relieve him of considerable strain, and save his voice" (Preface). The book goes on to offer advice on using the gramophone in the classroom, which at that time was a modern technique in foreign language teaching.

*Audiovisual techniques in teaching foreign languages* from the year 1960 in turn provides the answer to the question of how a teacher can effectively use the richness of audiovisual devices such as "phonograph records, playback machines, projectors, filmstrips, tape recorders, microphones, motion pictures and laboratory equipment" (Preface). This was also a step further in terms of language teaching technique.

After the language laboratory the next step taken by modern language teaching seems to be the use of video. The resource book *Video for teachers* from 1991 offers the classroom teacher activities in which video can be used to promote language learning. It is interesting to see how far the development of technical devices used in education has advanced, when one considers the modern use of online teaching methods via Internet.

This large collection offers many possibilities to research various interesting themes in the field of languages. I am very pleased that I had the chance to make this small adventure into this collection. In such a short period of time I could only catch a small glimpse but I hope this introduction may encourage others to investigate this collection more deeply or to focus on a particular part of it.

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