WITH NEW APPROACH — Sister Margaret Mary, O. Carm., French teacher at Mount Carmel high school in Abbeville, is shown in the top photo at the console of an audio-lingual apparatus she uses in her teaching. To the left is Beverly Nunez and to the nun’s right are Ronald LaPlace and Lee Allen Pierce. The bottom photo is a view of an actual class using the new technique in foreign languages as explained by Sister Margaret Mary in an address at a recent institute for teachers in Lafayette.

A basic principle of ALM is that grammatical rules should be subordinated to habit formation. Therefore, extensive experience with a new grammatical structure is provided in dialogues, sentences and drills. Step-by-step exercises are introduced during the pre-reading period. This is followed by a special reading-writing phase which makes use of techniques developed from recent research in linguistics.

A consideration of equal importance with a change of method is the readiness of the teacher, by attitude and training, to use electronic equipment as a teaching tool. First of all, let me say that if the teacher is not ready to teach according to the aims, methods and materials that have been decided upon, and do it without equipment, then there is little likelihood that he will do it with equipment.

The language lab does not replace it, multiplies the teacher; and the teacher who thinks that his teaching becomes easier, that all he needs do is plug the student in and presto, his work is done, has missed the boat entirely.

Let us examine briefly what a language lab can do:

1. Provides for simultaneous participation of all students in listening and speaking practice.
2. Provides a variety of authentic native voices as models for student practice.
3. Frees the teacher from some of the tedious task of presenting drill material, thus allowing opportunity for evaluating and correcting individual performance.
4. Provides facilities for group testing.

The language laboratory makes its greatest contribution as an integral part of a program in which audio-lingual instruction forms the basis for the progressive development of all the language skills. The language laboratory is at its weakest:

(1) when used only for enrichment activities.
(2) when it is expected to perform the miracle of teaching the listening and speaking skills without the coordination and integration of classroom activities and materials.

Areas of controversy:

"We agree that there is value in having students record and replay their own practice responses for comparison with the model utterances of the recorded lesson.

2. The advantages and the disadvantages of installing sound-treated booths or partitions are still being discussed.

"Teachers should not feel hesitant to admit a lack of knowledge about the new methods, materials, and media, since few people are real experts as yet. But a teacher should try to have an open mind, display a willingness to learn, and try to keep abreast of the many new developments rapidly taking place in the profession.

"Membership and participation in professional language organizations and study of the current professional journals can do much to enhance a teacher’s effectiveness, not only as an individual teacher, but also as a member of a profession.

"Summarizing: The only known way to form habits is through practice. Learning a foreign language is in this respect much like learning to play a musical instrument. No one questions that the musician must practice. A certain amount of study of musical notation alone will teach anyone to play the piano.

"Practice, then, is essential to understanding and speaking a foreign language. A competent teacher, who makes the best possible use of classroom time, and has access to good teaching materials, can indeed, successfully provide the kind of practice required. Language is a skill, it is not something one talks about, but something one does. Therefore it is best learned, not by analysis, but by analogy, not by pondering over it, but by practicing it.

"But the laboratory does not abolish the classroom. It is not a push-button miracle.