

Le Mot Juste

French Academy wrestles with the ordinateur age

The French have always been jealous of the "purity" of their language and for a hundred years or more the French Academy has been slowly—very slowly—working on the compilation of a dictionary which will preserve the desired degree of exactitude and bar all foreign immigrant-words.

But now the Academy has been forced to change its pace. The new sciences have forced it to hold weekly sessions. And words that the French man-in-the-street has borrowed from the English language also demand attention.

These every-Thursday sessions have already produced results. The Academy has rejected "fuel-oil" for "mazout." "Marketing" is condemned in favor of "commercialization," "royalties" in favor of "redevances," and "engineering" in favor of "génie industriel." "Le standard" is to be replaced by "la norme" and the adjective "standardize" by "normalize." The term "standard téléphonique" (switchboard), long in current usage, has been retained.

On the other hand, the members of the French Academy have decided to accept "bulldozer" if it is pronounced bouldozeug, as well as "pipeline," although "oleoduc" may also be used.

The term "vulcanologie" will be reserved for the processing of rubber and "volcanologie" will be used for the science of volcanoes. "Automation" has been rejected for "automatization" or "automatique" depending on the case.

The Academy also decided on definitions for several newly created French words:

Informatique: relating to rational processing, especially by automatic machines, of data considered as a foundation for knowledge and communications in technical, economic and social fields (data processing).

Logistique: that part of military strategy designed to supply armed forces with everything which they need to subsist, to maneuver and to fight (logistic).

Ordinateur: automatic machine which in the field of pre-established programs or structures, performs arithmetical and logical operations for scientific, administrative or accounting purposes (computer).

F. C. Livingstone

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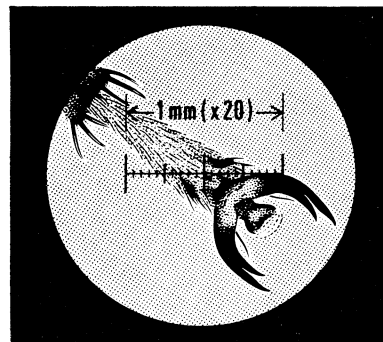
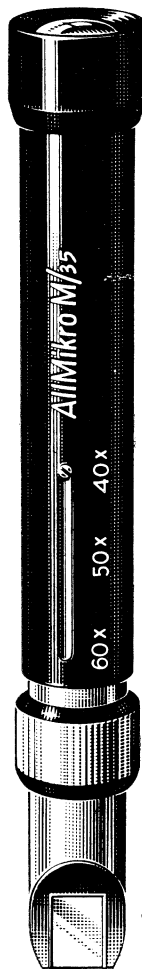
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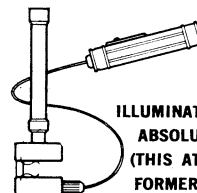
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