it mutagenic for mice." What Auerbach actually said was "experiments on mice might give clearer evidence. . . ." To my knowledge no mutagenicity studies on irradiated foods have been carried out with mice.

B. S. SCHWEIGERT
Department of Food Service,
Michigan State University,
East Lansing 48823

Pitfalls of Language Training

Page's "Omnibus language proposal" (Letters, 22 Sept. 1967) suggested that several foreign languages be taught simultaneously to graduate students in the sciences. He reported that Fritz Zwicky said the Swiss employ this method because students can more easily remember similarities and differences as they pursue several languages. For many years the City College of New York required its students in arts and sciences to take three foreign languages which were begun successively in the first, second, and third years and met five times a week. Such rigorous treatment produced satisfactory practical linguists even among those with little aptitude. If nothing else, it proved the merits of extensive and continuous exposure to a language.

Yet I would discourage both Page and Zwicky because students lacking linguistic training cannot, with less time and less intensive study, acquire satisfactory skills, even in their scientific fields. Syntax and lexicology are too complex for superficial study. Zwicky claimed that scientific terminology tends to be the same in most languages. This is true of those terms formed from Greek and Latin, but not if all tongues are included. "Nitrogen" in German can be *Stickstoff*, in Dutch *stikstof*, and in French it is more likely to be *azote* than *nitrogène*. It might be possible to acquire a workable vocabulary in a linguistic branch by simultaneously studying the Romance languages, or the Slavic languages, or Teutonic languages, but this would not produce a speaking knowledge or basic understanding of syntax. Even with more intensive study of closely related languages, so many similarities are misleading and confusing that CCNY prohibited students from initiating more than two such languages simultaneously, such as Spanish and Portuguese or even Spanish and Italian.

EPHRAIM CROSS
Department of Romance Languages,
City College of New York, New York