

AN INTRODUCTION TO TAPE RECORDED EXAMINATION MATERIALS

by John Hamilton Davis

Berkeley, California: University of California Language Laboratory, 1976. 40 minutes. 5" open reel tape, two-track, 7½ ips, \$4.03. Cassette, \$5.35. Prices do not include tax, postage or handling, and are subject to change without notice.

Reviewed by Jesse O. Sawyer and Catherine Rodriguez—Nieto, University of California, Berkeley.

In the 1960's, when audio-lingual methods revolutionized the teaching of foreign languages, it seemed natural that skills acquired through the use of audio tapes should be tested through the same medium. A major manufacturer of recording tape and equipment (Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Co.) produced a set of three tapes to promote the use of audiolingual and audio-visual teaching methods. The third tape in the series was entirely devoted to testing methods. Subsequently, tapes for testing or review were produced to accompany many commercial textbooks and, in language laboratories throughout the United States, innovative teachers began to devise their own tests. But for some reason, although the use of audio-tapes as language teaching aids has continued to develop, their application in testing and evaluation has declined.

In order to understand the reason for this decline and to suggest some remedies, a project was conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, in which testing tapes produced there were auditioned, evaluated, and analyzed for question types. The work was done by John Davis, of the Department of Linguistics, during the summer and fall of 1975, after which a summary of his findings was recorded, incorporating actual excerpts from the examination tapes he had studied. The resulting 40-minute tape, entitled "An Introduction to Tape Recorded Examination Materials," completed in April, 1976, is the subject of the review which follows.

The first side of the tape is introductory, containing general remarks about the following: pace of presentation (including paused versions and repetitions), use of the target language, number of voices, student's familiarity with laboratory machinery, practice examinations, appropriateness of audio-test questions, and identification of textbook.

After a brief summary of the history of audio materials in teaching languages, David points out the importance of good sound quality in a testing tape, then goes on to discuss the pace of presenting test items and the dangers to be encountered—e.g., frustration if pauses are too short, and boredom if they are too long or if the test items are repeated too many times. Use of the target language in giving directions, numbers, etc., is recommended whenever possible, especially if students have been given practice sessions to familiarize them with the test format and the laboratory equipment to be used during the examination. Use of several voices is also recommended, not only for presenting dialogs but also to aid students in distinguishing between various parts of a question. Length and frequency of tests is treated and some recommendations are given on designing questions which test skills specifically related to laboratory work, and which make full use of the equipment available. The introduction ends with a comment about textbook and chapter identification in a test tape.

The second side of the Davis tape is divided into six sections in which are discussed respectively the techniques for testing a student's ability in the following aspects of language: sound system, dictation, comprehension, grammar, production, and translation.

Questions for the testing of sounds include examples of pairs and triplets. The listener's task is to determine sameness or difference, sometimes of only one feature, such as tone. Tests in which the student's performance is recorded are commented upon briefly. Examples of dictation and transcription are limited, although the author lists possible sources of different kinds of dictation exercises. Testing listening comprehension is exemplified by items which ask the student to select a logical paraphrase of an utterance, to choose an antonym, to differentiate sequiturs from nonsequiturs, and to select the question that produces a given answer. A somewhat different format presents a short text followed by true-false or multiple choice questions. Other examples are offered, including true-false definitions of vocabulary items.

"Grammar" testing is exemplified by questions asking a student to complete an incomplete sentence, to add a verb in a particular tense, to substitute a word which changes other parts of the utterance, to identify aspects of grammatical structure (such as gender and number) and by so-called "transformation" questions requiring such things as the use of indirect discourse or the blanket alteration of tense. The tape further demonstrates tests of a variety of skills under the category of "reaction question," in which the learner is asked to show sensitivity to syntax, morphology, and lexicon through responses expressing agreement or disagreement, through yes or no answers to questions, through answers to questions containing reflexives, or through answers limited to a particular form of the verb used.

Oral production is another primary kind of test described on the tape in which it is important to secure the kind of stimuli that allow the teacher to judge the various dimensions of spoken language. Finally, the author demonstrates how translation can be tested among advanced students through wordlists, sentences, or multiple-choice questions.

Although carefully prepared, the Davis tape falls short of the ideal. First, in terms of content and examples it is impossible to achieve a real taxonomy of examination techniques largely because language functions themselves overlap. For example, any audio-taped question will test the listener's ability to recognize sounds. A dictation tests not only sound recognition and orthography, but comprehension and (albeit indirectly) grammar as well. Thus the first category—sound system—is by no means self-contained. Second, there is a problem inherent in the use of an audiotape as a presentation device, for a tape simply is not a book whose pages can be skimmed for quick reference or review. Thus, after the first few sections, one finds it hard to remember which categories of test items have been discussed. Although Davis attempted to signal clearly the beginning of each section, the listener cannot easily find the various subsections without some trial and error efforts. In order to offset this problem, a brief outline has been prepared and placed in the box with each copy of the tape. A brief bibliography is also included. (Both follow here for reference.)

In spite of these drawbacks, "An Introduction to Tape Recorded Examination Materials" has considerable value. As far as we know, it is the only one of its kind. Produced after the first rush of enthusiasm (Davis sifted through materials used during a period of ten years or more), it gives some sense of the proven validity of language laboratory techniques in aid of language instruction along with a considerable spectrum of approaches to testing problems. Finally, though it lacks visual markers, the tape provides a listening experience essential to an understanding of the examples under discussion.

It makes sense to test in the language laboratory skills acquired in the language laboratory. But the preparation of testing materials is difficult, often requiring more research and experimentation than is possible for a teacher whose schedule is already crowded. Teachers who have tried to design taped materials for testing with unsuccessful results are very likely to become disappointed and discouraged. "An Introduction to Tape Recorded Materials" provides good models for those who wish to clarify and improve these early attempts; it is an equally fundamental source of information for the student preparing for a career in foreign language teaching, and should form part of the listening library of any institution involved in the preparation of materials or teachers in second language instruction. It is available, in either of the formats listed at the beginning of this review, from: Tape Duplication Section, Language Laboratory,

B-40 Dwinell Hall, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.
Orders should specify which format is preferred and include a purchase order number or other billing instructions.

OUTLINE (included with tape)

An Introduction to Tape Recorded Examination Materials.

By John Hamilton Davis, University of California, Berkeley, 1976.

Side I	Side II
Introduction	Examples of questions:
Pace of presentation (pauses, repetitions)	Sound system
Use of the target language, number of voices	Dictation
Student's familiarity with laboratory machinery	Comprehension
Practice examinations	Grammar
Appropriateness of audio-test questions	Production
Identification of textbook	Translation

SELECTION BIBLIOGRAPHY (included with tape)

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Lado, Robert. **Language Testing: The Construction and Use of Foreign Language Tests.** New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961. xiii, 389 pp.

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Valette, Rebecca M. **Modern Language Testing.** 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1977. xiv, 336 pp.

MARTIAN IN MOSCOW FOUR ANIMATED RUSSIAN LANGUAGE FILMS

Produced by John Halan, Distributed by Internative Film Bureau

Reviewed by Joseph Ipacs, Ohio University

Sophomore and junior level Russian students should find it relatively easy to understand the narration of the four animated language teaching films done by members of the Bolshoy Theatre. "Martian in Moscow" is the title of the films, and, as it indicates, the main character of the four films is a fledgeling Martian. He is a semi-Pinocchio, semirobot lovable mama's boy who claims to be an adult. Each of the four animated films can be shown separately, but they are more effective if presented in sequence. Each film contains three episodes.

"MARTIAN IN MOSCOW FILM 1" shows the protagonist's "Arrival in Moscow", his visiting at "The Clothing Department" of the GUM accompanied by Ivan Petrovich, the guard of the store. The Martian seems to be more at home "In the Toy Department" than among humans.

"MARTIAN IN MOSCOW FILM 2" presents the Martian and the friendly guard "In the Cafeteria", where they notice the cultural differences in culinary science. The proud old guard is happy to show the capital on "A Trip on the Moscow River". He finds out that the Martian can fly, but does not know how to swim. The little fellow has an antenna on the top of his head by which an angler pulls him ashore. The Martian catches a cold and has to be treated "At the Health Center".

"MARTIAN IN MOSCOW FILM 3" starts with the old guard, the Martian, and a family with their daughter at a bus stop. The girl has a balloon in her hand that gets loose. The Martian flies after it in "A Balloon Chase Over Moscow". In the next episode the guard shows the important monuments and famous buildings "In the Kremlin". The third episode of this film takes place "At the Bolshop Ballet School".

"MARTIAN IN MOSCOW FILM 4". The guard shows as much expertise as an intourist guide and takes his by now russified Martian companion to "A Ride on the Moscow Underground". They find amusement at "An Outing in Gorky Park". There folk art and artists from the kolkhoz are shown. The Martian visitor is getting homesick, ready to "Return to Mars", and the captain of a Russian spaceship is willing to take him along as translator-interpretor. By now the Martian speaks quite well after a year's stay in the Soviet Union.

The four films were enjoyed by Ohio University Russian students at all levels, but the first year language students did not understand the narration as the vocabulary used was beyond their reach. They showed little willingness to use them as learning tools.

Our intermediate Russian students thought that the four animated films were fun to watch and they kept the viewers' interest. The clear sound track and the excellent pronunciation of the narrator makes it easy to recognize the words they know. The cartoons supply abundant grammatical structures, verbs of going and carrying in present tense narration. This can be related in the past or future tense by the students. A bilingual text of the films might be very useful on this level. The students suggested that repeated showings of the films would be advantageous. If the students find the film too long, each episode can be used as a short unit; perhaps short compositions can be written on it.

Another alternative would be to use these teaching aids on third year level; they can be useful in "Conversation and Composition" courses. The teaching procedure should be planned by every instructor individually, since the number of hours available for the four films as well as the teaching goals for this level must be in accordance with the Russian curriculum planning.

The following programmed procedure might be a useful suggestion.

- A. Students watch the four films in sequence either in the classroom or in the language lab.
- B. MARTIAN IN MOSCOW FILM 1 will be watched for the second time in the language laboratory. Every student records the narration.
- C. Students listen to narration only, at their own speed, repeat sentences once or more times, as needed. (Assignment, PREPARE FOR CONVERSATION ON FILM 1.)
- D. CONVERSATION ON FILM 1 either in the classroom or in the lab. (Assignment, WRITE A SHORT COMPOSITION ON FILM 1.)
- E. MARTIAN IN MOSCOW FILM 1 shown with the sound turned off, students record their own narration, if film is shown in the language lab. (If film is shown in the classroom, students take turns in supplying

their own narration.) The last ten minutes of the session should be reserved for watching the film again with the sound on. Students listen to the narration of the film and mentally compare the narrator's pronunciation, vocabulary, structures, and idioms to their own. Seventeen to twenty class sessions will be used in this approach.

The visual presentation of the Martian in Moscow is quite successful as it enables the students to acquire functional vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in an easy, playful but effective way. Its simplicity allows the student to follow the characters and events clearly. There is no clutter in these animated films that would divert the students' attention. The use of few figures permits quick comprehension, and their presentation is enjoyable. There is consistency of style in all elements of time, character, movement, and background. Since cartoon characters are especially dear to most of our students and are familiar from childhood on, students can easily relate to these films.

These language teaching films present a fuller language, falling or rising intonation, higher or lower pitch, intensity of voice as the action or emotions dictate. Consequently, these animated films provide the students with stronger motivation to learn a foreign language.

In verbal translation the learning process is slowed down by continuous use of dictionaries or glossaries. In these films the pictures carry the meanings of words faster and better. Our students say "They sink in immediately".

Several aspects of life in Moscow are covered. The films will furnish the Russian students with some insight into Russian culture and civilization.

These animated Russian language teaching films can be purchased or rented from INTERNATIONAL FILM BUREAU INC., 332 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60604.

Each film can be ordered separately,

Martian in Moscow Film 1
(1 R 105) 9 minutes, color \$175/\$15 to rent

Martian in Moscow Film 2
(1 R 106) 9 ½ minutes, color \$175/\$15 to rent

Martian in Moscow Film 3
(1 R 107) 10 minutes, color \$175/\$15 to rent

Martian in Moscow Film 4
(1 R 108) 10 ½ minutes, color \$175/15 to rent

The four animated films can serve the Russian Club or other extra curricular activities planned for students of Russian.

The narration of the films can be transformed into a dramatic form. The two most fluent persons could take the roles of the Martian and

Ivan Petrovich. Others can act as the Saleslady, the Salesman, the boy Misha, the Fisherman, the Physician, the Cashier, the Receptionist at the Clinic, the Astronauts, the Scientists. If the club has more members, some can be patients at the Clinic, or guests at the Cafeteria. After a few years of experience with these animated films in the classroom, (in) the language lab, or (in) the Russian Club, we'll be able to judge the usefulness and advantages of these films better.

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Aucassin et Nicolette. 16 min. animated film. National Film Board of Canada. Dist. International Film Bureau Inc. (Chicago). Sale \$240, rental \$12.50.

La Peau de Chagrin. 10 min. animated film. Zagreb Film. Dist. International Film Bureau Inc. (Chicago). Sale \$145, rental \$9.00.

Aucassin et Nicolette is an animated cartoon based on the well-known medieval love story. The film incorporates the varied themes and actions of which the Middle Ages was capable: love at first sight, love vows, parental objections, abductions, sieges of castles, battles at sea, eastern princes and wild animals miraculously helping forlorn princesses. But the interpretation of the work is closer to Perrault or Walt Disney than to the beginning of the thirteenth century. The landscapes and buildings are simplified in form and color. Brilliant pinks, blues, emerald greens and turquoises dominate. The backgrounds are varied: the most is made of pastoral scenes, of exotic North African architecture, of medieval castles. All of the characters are puppet-like black silhouettes which move jerkily across the decor. The figures are especially effective in a battle scene in which the movements of one or two silhouettes evoke a battle. Equally impressive is the dungeon set off by the black forms of a few scampering rats. The music and sound effects are well integrated and the technical quality of the film, including the French, is uniformly excellent.

Balzac's novel, **Peau de Chagrin**, forms the basis for the second animated cartoon. The hero accepts the piece of leather which grants him his every wish, but which shrinks dramatically with every request, indicating his approaching death. The interpretation of the novel is almost shockingly modern. The background is at times so abstract that it is unrecognizable: broad slashes on the screen become steps only when a character climbs them, a solid mass of vermilion turns into a theater

curtain when one of the puppets pulls it across the screen. At times the background reminds one of Soulages, at times of Tanguy, Mondrian, Paul Klee, and a host of expressionists. The characters themselves are composites of anti-heros or anti-heroines by Modigliani, Toulouse-Lautrec, Jean-Louis Barrault and Marcel Marceau. Like the visual presentation, the music is effective if disconcerting. On the whole, the film is fascinating, but hard to follow. Even though one receives the full impact and the message the first time one views it, recognizes it as a work of art, one must see it several times to pull the pieces together and to properly appreciate the techniques.

Both **Aucassin et Nicolette** and **Peau de Chagrin** are first rate films. The problem is where and how a French teacher can use them. **Aucassin et Nicolette** would be appropriate for bilingual elementary children or for fifth or sixth graders who have studied French for four or five years. In either case, a printed script would be helpful so that the teacher could drill on certain of the rather complicated expressions. Linguistically, the film would be appropriate at the third-year college level, but students would undoubtedly find the material and interpretation juvenile. **Peau de Chagrin** could not be used at the elementary or high school level. The visual and sound effects are too sophisticated, the results (suicide) too terrifying, at least for young children. Unfortunately it would be of little use in the first three years of college French, since there is virtually no dialogue (some three or four phrases in all). I recommend it highly for use in a literature course in which the novel is read and in which students are capable of discussing this controversial interpretation within a very broad cultural context.

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