



Materials Review

Filmstrip: Besuch im Schweizer Mittel-Westen (Switzerland USA), 1970. National Textbook Company, 8259 Niles Center Road, Skokie, Ill. 60076. (35 mm, 24 pictures, color, 3.75 ips tape; intermediate level, narration in German; with Handbook and Teacher's Key; complete set \$20.00, additional Student Workbooks \$1.30 each.)

Colorfilm of same title, 16 mm, 250 feet, with Handbook \$69.00; tape (German or English narration) \$9.00.

This attractive filmstrip, in excellent color photography, takes the students with their teacher on a trip to the heart of Midamerica — Green County, Wisconsin, with the 'Swiss' town of New Glarus as its Center. The German language signs on many of its stores and the old-country atmosphere of its framework houses, the folkfests and the Wilhelm Tell pageant form the background to a fascinating story told in modern, easy to understand German. A complete English translation is printed beside the German version of each picture description in the Student's Handbook. Five topical questions in German follow each description, suggested correct answers are given in the Teacher's Key. Besides portraying quite a unique part of the American heritage, this filmstrip offers an intriguing insight into the life-style of a particular group of German-speaking people in the United States who still maintain some traditional customs of their original homeland. The 'dirndls' worn by their womenfolk, and the 'lederhosen' shown by their male counterparts look just as homespun as the folk costumes of their Swiss ancestors. The series also contains pictures of the Amish farm people, another German-speaking group who still live the life of their forefathers on their primitive farms in that area of Midamerica.

My students found the whole presentation enjoyable and educational. By using first the picture texts from the Handbook as a reader, they acquainted themselves with the new vocabulary, then listened to the German tape narration which is clear and sharp all the way through. Subsequently, I showed the filmstrip with the tape played simultaneously; it is furnished with a beep signal to cue manual or automatic advancement of the filmstrip. This final presentation served as a basis for a question-and-answer period given orally in class. Afterwards, I used some of the picture descriptions for the assignment of short individual compositions to be done as homework. The overall result of utilizing the complete set — filmstrip, tape, and handbook — was a very rewarding one.

Materials Review

The colorfilm with the almost identical topic was used, second-year German class, by showing it simultaneously with the narration tape in English, prior to using the filmstrip with the German text. I found this procedure especially useful, since the initial showing of the film served as an excellent introduction to the subject matter as a whole. After a final showing, the film became a basis for discussion of other examples of further German cultural influences to be found in America.

This film, utilized with the accompanying Handbook, can be a valuable supplement to the German intermediate class. In conjunction with the narration in German, it can be used independently just as the filmstrip, and the color photography is of the same high professional quality.

Joan Tessman
Oak Creek High School
Oak Creek, Wisconsin

Filmstrip: Besuchen wir Familie Weber, no year indicated. Gessler Publishing Company, 131 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y. 10010. (35 mm, 35 pictures, color, 7.50 ips tape; no level indicated, narration in German; with German text; complete set \$13.00.)

This audiovisual package consists of a filmstrip containing 35 color frames and a narration tape in German, accompanied by a 4-page copy of the tape text. While the teaching level for which it is intended is not specified, it seems to apply mostly to beginning and early intermediate classes. I have used it in one of our third-semester German sections at the University of Wisconsin, Parkside, which roughly corresponds to a third-year German high school class.

The tape narration itself is adequate, furnished with 'beeps' between the pictures, which facilitates both manual and automatic projection. The whole text is presented by a female speaker, obviously a German native, with a pleasant, distinctive voice and correct accentuation.

The color pictures are of a good photographic quality and the German language used in the narration is, by-and-large, acceptable. Some corrections, however, would add to its usefulness, such as the following time description regarding picture 8: "Es ist jetzt viertelzwei ($1\frac{1}{4}$ Uhr)." Every teacher of German knows, in spite of possible variants in specific geographic regions, that this is not the generally accepted way to say "a quarter past one", but one would rather say in most parts of Germany "viertel nach eins" or "ein Uhr funfzehn".

Materials Review

The printed text gives nothing but the narration itself; there is no translation help for the student nor a vocabulary list nor are there supplemental exercises, suggested questions, a teacher's key, or follow-up exercises which could make the whole package more valuable for both student and teacher.

The general distribution of the narration throughout the sequence of pictures lacks balance. While some of the pictures are described at length (7 to 10 lines of printed text), others are dealt with summarily. Although this may be partly due to the varying picture content, it leaves the student slightly uneasy, since during the tape narration, which is geared to the filmstrip presentation, some of the pictures can be studied for a sufficiently long time, while other just flash by in a few seconds.

Nevertheless the package can be used with some success, especially for vocabulary building and for the improvement of syntax and diction, provided the teacher fills in the gaps and utilizes the text in conjunction with his own exercises.

Harry A. Walbruck, Assoc. Professor
University of Wisconsin-Parkside
Kenosha, Wisconsin

L. S. Harms. *Phonetic Transcription: A Programed Introduction*. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1964.

The appearance of a text with associated recordings which purports to train students in some aspect of general language processing is so rare that all such publications deserve a close scrutiny, even if it is six years late. (The publication came to our attention only last year.) *Phonetic Transcription* by L. S. Harms appeared attractive but a closer look leaves the teacher wondering what was intended it should do.

Although the general plan is a good one and the use of four voices, two males', a female's, and a child's, promises a thorough and organized approach, the failures outweigh the successes. The most damaging features are the cost which is excessive (price of the one reel of tape, \$37.50), the failure to really deal with phonetics, the uneven coverage by the samples offered, and errors.

The cost can perhaps be ignored. It is more difficult to ignore the fact that the International Phonetic Alphabet as adapted by Kenyon and Knott for indicating English pronunciation simply does not permit a *phonetic* transcription to be made of even one English dialect. The following simple symbols and "two-part" symbols are used:

i	u	p	t	tʃ	k			
I	u	b	d	dʒ	g			
e	o	m	n		ŋ			
ɛ	ʌ	ɔ	f	θ	s	ʃ		h
æ	ɑ	v	ð	z	ʒ			
		w			j			
aI	ɔI	au	hw					
				l				
				r				

The material covered is presented in sixteen sets of one hundred and twenty monosyllables each. The student hears each monosyllable spoken once and is expected to identify all or part of the item and write it down. (Prompts ranging from the transcription of the entire monosyllable to one segment of the monosyllable are provided for many items.) As he writes, the student moves a card down the page and checks his transcriptions by uncovering the answer supplied for each utterance.

Most of the syllables are actual English monosyllables. Some of them, usually only half a dozen or so of the one hundred and twenty in a set, are nonsense syllables. Many of the latter, however, have been obtained by overworking a few sounds, principally /ɔɪ/ and /ʒ/. Other more likely though non-occurring syllables could have been found. Furthermore, the selection of syllables is poor in that many initial and final English clusters are excluded, and some are repeated too often. There are approximately forty examples of initial English /hw/ but no examples of initial /tw/, /dw/, or /θw/. As the table of sounds above indicates, the author does not seem to regard /hw/ as a cluster. But then why give no examples of the parallel /hj/? Although /kj/ appears three times, there are no examples of initial /pj/, /bj/, /mj/, /fj/, or /vj/. Other clusters with /j/, i.e., /tj/, /dj/, /nj/, /sj/, and /lj/ are obviously missing because of the choice of dialect. Final clusters have been similarly slighted, particularly the three element clusters — which may have been saved for further exposition, however. In a selection totaling 1920 examples it is difficult to see why the coverage was left to chance and dialect — as it seems to have been. The selection of monosyllables might very well have been included at least all of the consonant sequences permitted in English and these might even have been presented in a frequency ratio that roughly reflected their frequency in English or the difficulty the student has in learning to write them.

More than this, there is a question as to whether 1920 examples are necessary to teach the very simple skill being taught. The argument that nearly 2000 examples are required in order to assure the teacher that even the least skilled student will have enough material to work on breaks down, because, although the book is described on the front cover as “a programmed introduction” it does not provide any obvious way for the student who has learned the system to proceed at the end of Set 5, by which time all the “sound-symbol pairs” have been introduced, to the two tests at the end of the book to see whether he should do any more work at all. The programing apart from this oversight is exemplary, but this one oversight is a serious one which could involve a student in several hours of work that he never needed

Book Review

to do at all. That it is an oversight is supported by the statement in the Introduction that the program can be completed in as few as four but should not require more than twelve hours. Our own conviction is that some college students can achieve the skill required in from 20 minutes to two hours, depending on their previous training in other language skills.

To return to our second and most serious objection — our objection to the title: the book has little or nothing to do with phonetic transcription, not even with the phonetic transcription of English which one might expect to be the content from the preface. The effort seems to deal with a pan-dialectic application of Kenyon and Knott's system of writing English pronunciation. The system is not phonetic but at best roughly phonemic in the classical sense. As applied here it is used to represent a phonological abstraction common to the two, probably three, dialects found on the tape, and the original possibility of presenting more than one dialect and teaching the student to use I. P. A. symbols to write the dialects in their variety is ignored with unfortunate results. Here are some examples: Neither the first or second speaker have /æ/ before /ŋ/ but something like /æɪ/. The third, and female, speaker speaks another dialect and where the first two speakers have /au/ she has something like /æu/. She also has a mid back vowel (actually a diphthong) quite different from the diphthong used by the two previous speakers. The little boy seems to speak still another dialect and has something like /ɛə/ instead of /æ/ in some words — this in addition to charming lapses in no way indicated by the transcriptions provided in the book.

Actually the crux of the matter is this, that lists of English words and non-words were made up not in English orthography but in a kind of normalized I. P. A. orthography. These were read and recorded but no attempt was then made to adjust the I. P. A. "orthography" so that it would be in some sense a phonetic transcription representing ideolectal and dialectal details of the items as spoken. This fact is most clearly demonstrated in the part spoken by the little boy where dialectal differences from the principal speaker and out-and-out mistakes are most prominent. But here are a few examples from the principal speaker: In several places he does not aspirate his initial voiceless stops; nonetheless they are written just like the ones he has aspirated. He seems not to distinguish final /ndz/ and /nz/ — no reason why he should — but his transcriptions do. Quite a number of overly strong articulations have resulted in /bv/ where his transcriptions show /v/ and one case of /pf/ for /f/. Some double stops, /bd/ and /gb/ seem to have resulted from emphatic pronunciations where single stops are shown. Outright confusions such as /n/ for /m/

and /m/ for /n/ in adjacent items are not rare. None of these would have done any harm whatsoever if only the transcriptions had shown what was actually spoken, not what was intended.

Another unfortunate fact is the non-English sequences that are introduced: /I/ and /u/ simply do not occur in stressed open monosyllables. Since the preface states that the aim is “. . . a systematic presentation of the sounds occurring in isolated syllables of General American English . . . ” it is difficult to see why any non-English forms should have been introduced at all. And, although he has omitted many English clusters, he has included one non-English cluster /sr/ and a couple of very unusual sequences, /kj/ before vowel other than high back, and /ʒ/ initially. In view of the vast number of English sequences not included and the avowed interest in General American English there seems to be no reason for such items except that the author was trying uncomfortably to make his contents match the too general title.

At the end of any such list of objections one is forced sometimes to make qualifications. There are good features to the book. It undoubtedly does fill a real need. The recording is excellent. The tempo is nearly perfect. The programing is generally good. Moreover, we don't know of any other book which tries to do what this book does try. Having complained so bitterly we are still forced to thank the author for having done a job that no one else has yet been willing to do. Glen M. Grosjean and Jesse O. Sawyer — University of California at Berkeley.