



Materials Review

Film: A Paris. Twyman Films, Inc. (329 Salem Avenue, Box 605, Dayton, OH 45401), 1976. (16mm., color; some French dialogue, no subtitles; 26 minutes; any level; minimum rental \$15.00).

This lively film which someone who teaches French has called a "nervous" production, explores the sights and sounds of modern Paris during an action-filled day and night. The camera, intent on capturing what is contemporary about the French capital, sets the tone by using famous landmarks as backdrops while devoting the foreground to signs of industrial society: the Sacre-Coeur basilica is seen beyond a train track and through a maze of electrical wires; we glimpse a miniaturized Arc de Triomphe in a vehicle's rear-view mirror; the Eiffel Tower (itself once a symbol of technological progress, now appearing almost as venerable as Versailles) poses behind a scaffold-lift.

Crisp images, skillfully photographed, portray in rapid sequences a colorful city bustling with an array of everyday activities: the baking of bread and a shot of long loaves in a wheeled cart; blood-stained white outfits of slaughterhouse butchers busy slicing slabs of beef; supper-time in an elegant restaurant; chimney-pot cleaners on the job; a man carrying a stack of chairs on his back; the routine of a traffic-control center with its multitude of blue television screens and street map (outside policemen direct a swarm of cars); an assembly line; cement-mixing trucks; a window-washer at a jewelry store paying his trade as an employee inside closes the curtains; purposeful frenzy on the crowded floor of the Stock Exchange; a construction crew at a building site; the merriment of burlesque at the Folies as viewed by an amused lighting crew; a rowboat on the Seine in the predawn calm.

The sounds evoked range widely: the singing of priests and ringing of bells at Notre-Dame; the music of a marching band and clatter of horses' hooves; the muted voice of an old man who rambles through a park reciting a literary passage; the frenetic, upbeat rhythms accompanying a fashion show in which high-fashion models briskly dress, undress, parade, moving with casual, confident grace; the humble performance of a violinist playing for passengers at a subway station as passers-by offer him coins; the chanting of demonstrators.

Since its mode of communication is mainly visual, "A Paris" could be shown as early as the start of the first-year French course. The film contains much material likely to stimulate conversation at more advanced levels. It would enliven a study-abroad orientation meeting. Director Robert Menegoz has necessarily made a selective statement about Parisian life: his eye is that of a witty urbanite who chooses not to reproduce the sanitized illustrations of guidebooks, preferring the unidealized, somewhat haphazard perspective of the permanent resident to the typical tourist's gilded recollections. Some viewers may question whether his vision, shaped into a mosaic of unconventional picturesqueness to fit the length of a reel, is any more objective or genuine than that of the vacationer whose Paris is its monuments. Some who rent this film for their classes will want to give equal time to the more familiar Paris of art historians. Finally, teachers held accountable by their local Committee on Instructional Standards will need to decide whether the occasional cuts showing bare flesh are sufficiently graphic or sensational to cause offense.

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Madsen, Harold S., and J. Donald Bowen. **Adaptation in Language Teaching**. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, 1978. xii + 251 pp. (\$5.95, paper).

How to use materials authored by others is a perennial challenge for the foreign language teacher, not because language texts are illwritten, but because the writer and the classroom teacher usually demonstrate different backgrounds and experiences which, in turn, shape their propensity to recognize what should be the scope, sequence, and content of a student text, which concepts might be given larger focus, and what kind of exercises are needed to illustrate the abstract. **Adaptation in Language Teaching** has as its objective the wedding of those differences. The book is written primarily for the teacher trainee; still, **Adaptation**

seems equally important for the experienced teacher, as well as for any author who would write for a general audience. The text will have obvious meaning for the uninitiated; those with some experience in teaching, however, may extract the greatest perspective of how to practice the lessons from its pages owing to one or more probable attempts to accomplish independently what Madsen and Bowen counsel throughout.

The book is comprised of nine chapters distributed across four sections: "Contextualization: The Textbook and the Real World;" "Usage Problems;" "Language Variety;" "Administrative and Pedagogical Concerns." In each section, the authors take pains to stress the need for "congruence" as a *sine qua non* between any teaching materials and the other common ingredients of the teaching-learning paradigm—course objectives, methodology, pace, aptitude, motivation, preferential learning styles and their interaction with the teacher's personality and class management. Early chapters, thus deal with the need for establishing clearly the situational aims and the student's level of learning in a given curriculum along with the need for matching them with the teacher's view of how the instruction is to unfold. Madsen and Bowen further punctuate each chapter with selections from contemporary ESOL texts which are used to exemplify how original composition can be modified to different and perhaps more efficient ends. The modifications, in turn, become examples of how the language of practice can be made verisimilar, interesting and pragmatic in written sample (Chapters One and Two) or in oral communication (Chapter Three) through situations made life-like and, above all, believable. Suggestions in the simplification of language while maintaining accuracy of expression and situation constitute the content of Chapters Four and Five. The importance of attention to levels of social discourse, a concept too often treated superficially in the most carefully prepared textbooks, is discussed in detail in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Eight applies "congruence" to reading with many examples of how to recast a written text without sacrificing meaning, message, or linguistic realism. The message therein is fundamental for teachers who undertake the preparation of sight reading selections from periodical literature or from textual materials in consonance with momentary need. Chapter Nine counsels how to attain for the learner the face and content validity of instructional materials through curricular design, that is, how to adapt extant materials to a variety of educational objectives always with an eye towards attaining personal and institutional agreement between the text, the teacher, and the students' needs.

The authors have included as appendices two original studies on the adaptation of materials in context (Hilferty), the evaluation and selection of textbooks independent of field testing them first (Braiden), and a reprint on the latter theme (Tucker). Therein, the reader will find a useful checklist for an *a priori* thorough evaluation of materials and their supple-

mens. Appendix four reproduces Fry's graph for estimating the readability of a text, an algorithm, however, valid only for materials in English. A basic bibliography with entries as recent as 1978 completes the book.

The authors of *Adaptation in Language Learning* purport that learning can be facilitated when the teacher is conscious of intelligent and purposeful means of manipulating instructional materials beyond guidelines which might be suggested, implicitly or explicitly, by the textbook writer. It is this reviewer's judgment that they have largely succeeded, the teacher, no matter his experience in the classroom, will profit enormously from a careful reading of their message, especially where strict attention is given to application through original example of the rationale and techniques described throughout. Finally, were one to apply to *Adaptation* Tucker's view of evaluating the potentiality of a text to aid learning (Appendix III), the book would be judged "congruent" especially as a basic reading for the methods class. Similarly, the text would be seen as readable, and a valuable contribution to the literature for second language learning.

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THE YORK STUDY

For obvious reasons there are rather few serious, objective, well designed, well controlled research projects on the different aspects of foreign language teaching. The York Study happens to be one. It is even one of the most objective, best designed and best controlled. It may be a model of its kind and, for that reason, it is quite regrettable that it is not better known in his country.

The York Study, designed in 1966, was conducted over full three years (1967-1970), in England, as a joint project of Archbishop Holgate's Grammar School for Boys, York, and the Language Teaching Centre of York University, as an attempt to measure the effectiveness of the language laboratory in a precisely defined school situation. The results were published in a 242 page volume edited by Peter S. Green, one of the investigators: **The Language Laboratory in School, Performance and Prediction. The York Study.** Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and New York, 1975.

The volume is divided into six chapters:

1. Other Research into the Effectiveness of Language Laboratories, by Dorothy Forrester, lecturer, Doncaster College of Education
2. The Design of the York Study, by Eric W. Hawkins, Professor of Education (Language Teaching), University of York
3. Teaching the Three Sets, by John Caley, Head of Modern Languages Department, Archbishop Holgate's Grammar School, York
4. Testing, by Peter Green, Senior Lecturer, Language Teaching Centre, University of York

5. Results, by Paul Braber, Lecturer in Psychology, Birbeck College, University of London
 6. Conclusion, by Peter Green and Eric Hawkins
- and finally, a section of Appendices, including various documents.

The investigators of the York Study seem to have been well aware of the previous and on-going research on the use of the language laboratory:

Bauer (1969), Allen (1960), Reichard (Oberlin, 1961), Lewis (Louisiana State, 1961), Hocking (Purdue, 1962), Moore (1962), Carroll (Antioch College, 1963), Buch and Hayes (1963), Keating (1963), Bernard & Lorge (1963), Doye (1964), Scherer & Wertheimer (1964), Johnson (1966), Lindbald, Thorsten & Stukat (Sweden, 1967), Chalon (1968), Forrester (1968), Heuser & Messelken (1969), W. F. Smith (1969), and the Pennsylvania Project (1969).

They seem to have examined carefully and critically all the data available and to have taken it into account in running their own experiment, probably one of the best planned and controlled in the field of foreign language teaching. Few other studies in the field have been as meticulous in isolating the variable they proposed to measure and in holding constant all the other variables.

The experiment involved 101 boys, beginning their study of German at age 11. The intake of 101 pupils was divided into three groups of approximately the same size (34, 34 and 33 boys). Group L was taught for the three years of the experiment using Oliver & Boyd **German: A Structural Approach**, which could be defined as an audio lingual text, and using the language laboratory for one period a week, plus a tape recorder in the classroom. Group T was taught with the same textbook, using a tape recorder in the classroom, but no language laboratory. Group N was taught using Nuffield/Schools Council **Vorwärts**, which could be defined as an audio-visual method, and using the laboratory for one period, plus tape recorder in the classroom.

The IQ scores of the pupils in each group were carefully matched, and so was their potential or aptitude for learning German as measured with the Language Aptitude Battery (LAB) of Paul Pimsleur (1966). The three groups were matched as for the material conditions of the pupils' home background and the degree of parental encouragement each pupil received, as well as for the pupils' previous experience of language learning.

In order to control the "Hawthorne effect", in other words, the effect on the pupils of taking part in an experimental study, it was attempted to make each one of the three groups involved feel as "special" as the other two. Group T, for example, was taught in a classroom equipped with closed-circuit television, and was occasionally recorded on videotape, as a compensation for not using the laboratory.

During the whole year, all three groups were scheduled for their German class at a common time each day. Homework timetables were also

exactly matched for all three groups so that every one of the 101 pupils had exactly the same exposure to German at the same time of day.

The most remarkable achievement in running the York Study, though, was probably the fact that the three groups were kept intact during the full three years of the experiment, just as the group of three teachers, who were rotated every term so that each group would have each teacher in equal proportion.

Last but not least among the many merits of the York Study, the type of language laboratory and the way it was used are carefully described. Such a feature would seem to belong as a matter of course in any study on the effectiveness of the language laboratory, yet it is surprisingly absent from some of the most loudly touted reports.

The various batteries of predictive, attitude, achievement and proficiency tests administered in the course of the experiment are precisely identified and described. The final test of proficiency used to compare the results obtained by the different groups was the Pimsleur German Proficiency, First Level (Form A) with the exception of the oral production part for which a different oral test specially constructed for this particular purpose was substituted.

The lengthy preliminaries to the discussion of the results constitute an excellent introduction to the interpretation of scores and statistics in general, explaining so clearly such terms as mean, median, range, mean deviation, variance, standard deviation, that it alone would make reading the York Study worthwhile for any nonspecialist.

That such a thorough, well-designed, scrupulously conducted experiment should show no significant difference in the results obtained by the three groups compared, is of course somewhat disappointing. It is also somewhat disquieting, for one fears that it may encourage hasty and foolish conclusions such as: the language laboratory is a useless tool.

The authors of the Study themselves are the first to warn against drawing conclusions unwarranted by the limits of their experiment. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the use of one particular type of laboratory did not affect significantly the results attained under the particular conditions of its use. The particular type of laboratory and the particular conditions of its use must be recalled. The laboratories involved (Elektron and Shipton) comprise 32 booths with listen and record facilities, with the possibility of controlling each booth from the console. Students were using the laboratory for one of the regularly scheduled periods each week. The 32 students, working with commercially produced tapes, were monitored by one or two teachers, which means that each student could benefit from individual monitoring for a maximum of about 3 minutes per period.


The control group pupils were not at all deprived of the benefits of recorded materials. They too practiced with recorded exercises played on a tape recorder controlled by the teacher.

The York Study shows that under the particular conditions of the experiment the use of individual listen-record facilities for each student did not bring any gain in effectiveness over the use of simple listen-respond facilities by a group of students.

Of course the York Study shows nothing of what could have happened if a different type of installation and a different type of materials had been used in a different way. As the authors themselves say: "...we were not measuring the use of the laboratory 'at its best', as exploited optimally by the most imaginative and inventive teacher enjoying complete freedom of manoeuvre."

Determining what is the best way of using the language laboratory, will necessitate many new experiments for which the York Study can serve as an exemplary model.

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