

France Panorama: The Video Magazine of France Today

Vital Statistics

Title: *France Panorama: The Video Magazine of France Today*

Producer: Jem Communications, Inc.

Format: VHS

Language: Videotape in French; Guide with English instructions

Level: Intermediate to advanced

Supplemental Materials: Resource guide for teachers and learners

General Description

France Panorama is “a monthly television newsmagazine designed to bring teachers of French and their students a wealth of materials that improve listening comprehension and cultural awareness.” The monthly videotape is divided into a varying number of segments (the tape sampled included 13 different segments) of varying length, devoted to different aspects of contemporary French news and culture. It is designed to be used both in language classes, for cultural enrichment, oral comprehension and vocabulary building, and in civilization courses. The accompanying guide includes English-language background material relating to the events described; a transcript of the main speaker’s commentary; vocabulary lists which follow the speakers on the tape; listening comprehension exercises; and suggestions for more creative and ambitious supplemental projects.

The Videotape

The topics covered by the tape offered for review the following: Canaques et Caldoches;

Libération; Alain Guillo; Roland-Garros; Le Festival de Cannes; La Publicité; Mai 1968 et la Sorbonne; La Condition Féminine; more Pub; a song by Johnny Hallyday; Une Entreprise du Troisième Type; La Bagnole du Curé de Bagnoles; Les Pervenches.

Each segment is introduced by a speaker, Philippe Lefait, who is meant to portray a television anchor-person. The format of the videotape tape is such that it proceeds—in the manner of a newsbroadcast—to investigate the topic by means of classic journalistic techniques: geographic information such as maps and views of important sites; eyewitness reports; and numerous dialogues with a variety of French people. Some of the discussions appear to be spontaneous; others leave the impression of having been prepared in advance.

The visual and sound qualities of the tape are good but not outstanding. The voices are, on the whole, clear and easy to understand for students at the advanced-intermediate to advanced levels. Vocal production rates are just rapid enough to be challenging without strain—an important aspect since one of the producers’ goals is to provide a good basis for oral comprehension practice in authentic native French. The segment on the Bagnole du Curé is especially rewarding, since it includes some savory Occitan accents and characters. There are occasional segments in which background noise makes the voices hard to hear. The visuals vary in interest and quality: Colors tend to be somewhat grayish throughout, and there are some very boring and uninteresting views mixed in with more rewarding scenes such as the striking views of the May ‘68 riots, the early days of the Cannes Film Festival, and the picturesque village of Bagnoles.

Instructional Value

The conception of *France Panorama* is an excellent one. The accompanying guide provides numerous useful and worthwhile ways in which to follow up the video viewing. Unfortunately, both videotape and guide contain flaws which limit not only their interest but also their usefulness in French foreign language pedagogy.

The introduction to the videotape is snappy and interesting, and the system of identification of the segments by time codes visible on screen is very useful. Although the news program format is potentially very effective, it is handled somewhat awkwardly: The program tries to convey the excitement and feeling of being in the middle of real life—which one finds in a news program—but it is not always successful at doing so. Particularly distracting and annoying are the “jumps” from one topic to another without the benefit of transitions. The anchorman and a number of the ordinary French people interviewed come across as artificial. For example, the Caldoche family interviewed in the first segment speak haltingly and with obvious discomfort; the same type of artificiality appears in the conversation between Sylvie Feit, the former “soixante-huitard,” and her children.

A number of the segments are devoted to relatively uninteresting subjects, such as the reportage on the New Caledonian struggle in which excessive time and details are devoted to a particular violent incident. Some segments, like the discussion of the newspaper, *Libération*, are so brief as to appear as “hors d’oeuvre,” while others like *La Condition Féminine* is not about women’s liberation at all but merely an interview with two individual women and an evocation of their lives after 1968. The broad question of feminism and women’s situations in France today are touched upon only in passing. Two of the segments are devoted to non-French subjects and personalities: tennis players Lendl and Agassi are interviewed in English with subtitles (a questionable technique in a tape devoted to teaching French); and the Cannes Festival segment is principally devoted to Danish and American films. The use of “publicité” is currently popular, but the spots chosen and presented in this tape are not especially valuable.

Fortunately, there are a number of segments which hold the viewer’s interest. Among these are the following: the discussion of the Cannes Festival building and its history; the interview with young people today and their feelings about Mai 1968; the above-mentioned segment on the Curé de Bagnoles which, in this reviewer’s opinion, is the most successful portion of the entire tape; and, the last segment about the “Pervenche” meter-maids and the informal rebellion organized against them by one Parisian neighborhood (this segment is not only humorous but also revealing in that it captures certain French attitudes toward authority).

The Guide

The “resource guide” proposes numerous follow-up activities, some of which are valuable and well thought out while others are less well executed. On the whole, the guide appears to have been prepared in a hasty and careless manner: There are numerous errors such as spelling the city “Tourcoing” as “Tourquin,” on page 10, or the word “détenus” as “détained” on page 9. Johnny Hallyday’s name appears as “Halliday” on page 19. Likewise, there are occasional problems with the clarity or accuracy of the information given in the guide. For example, the last paragraph of introduction to the Mai ‘68 episode—given in English—confuses the reader when it jumps from Mai ‘68 to “the next dozen years” to the election of “a socialist president” on page 6. On page 11, “Chirac” and “Le Pen” are mentioned without being identified.

On the whole, the lengthy introductory texts in English which precede each segment pose pedagogical problems, since they belie the stated purpose of the program: to teach French by situating the student in the middle of authentic French life and language. Furthermore, the use of English in the directions for the exercises is problematic since the texts and activities in French are on a relatively demanding level (this is especially true of the two newspaper articles reprinted on pages 31-32).

In spite of the defects, there are many useful ideas in the guide. The vocabularies are useful although often inconsistent in terms of difficulty and accuracy. The exercise “A Vol d’Oiseau,”

which involves identifying the order of different topics, is most worthwhile as are the "image-freezing" activities. The "dictée-like" "Fiche-Ecoute" is a useful feature as are the discussion topics suggested under the title "Menez le Débat." Not as useful nor as well-designed are the "Fiche-Lecture" exercises based on the supplemental readings and the "Vous êtes journaliste à Antenne 2" suggestions which, if implemented, involve extensive and elaborate out-of-class preparation: Students are asked to make their own videotapes on subjects such as "les détenus au Liban" or "un match de tennis dans votre lycée ou votre collège" [sic]. A further troublesome quality of the exercises is their inconsistency. From one "rubrique" to another, the type of exercises varies: one has a full complement of activities, another has almost no activities; even the placement of exercises varies from one topic to the next.

Level of Instructional Use

The videotape program is best suited for intermediate to advanced classes, since the level of oral and written comprehension involved is fairly demanding. At this level, students can fully benefit from the sophisticated presentation and topics. The publisher suggests that first-year classes might also use parts of the videotape and guide, "if you allow for responses in English." This mixture of advanced French and English, it seems to this reviewer, poses numerous problems from both a teaching and learning

standpoint. Since the topics covered fit very well into courses on contemporary France, the program can also be useful for classes in modern French civilization.

Conclusion

France Panorama is potentially a very useful and enjoyable program capable of filling the large gap in civilization and language curricula. The lively format, up-to-date information, and the videotape medium in general add a great deal to culture courses; access to authentic French in natural settings is, without a doubt, a valuable teaching resource in language classes. However, to justify both the program's cost and its use in the classroom, it needs to be re-thought and modified for consistency in terms of interesting choice of topics throughout, lively presentation of these topics, and a careful revision of the form and content in the Guide would enable France-Panorama to fulfill its considerable promise.

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A vous la France!

Vital Statistics

Authors: David Curland, Series Editor; Brian Page, Course Writer (Text); Ann M. Moore, Marie-Pierre Wolfe (Text-Workbook); Bryan Howson (Notes for Teachers); Alan Wilding (Radio Producer); David Wilson (Television Producer)

Publisher: EMC, St. Paul, Minnesota

Copyright: 1986

Supplemental Materials: Text-Workbook; Notes for Teachers; Teacher's Guide; 15 Video Cassettes; Three Audio Tapes

Intended Users: College students; students enrolled in Continuing Education or "French for Travelers" classes

Level of Difficulty: Beginning

Language: French

General Description

A vous la France! is a multi-media program for beginning French based on a BBC television and radio series. The basic manual reproduces all texts of the conversations and "vox pop" interviews recorded in the BBC presentations. This material—clustered at the beginning of each chapter—constitutes an instructional core that generates presentation of language structures and cultural information. Selections from the actual TV and radio broadcasts are available on the 15 videocassettes and three audio cassettes accompanying the program. It is important to note that the cassettes do not reproduce all of the material originally recorded by the BBC and printed in the textbook; this is not always clear, since the book distinguishes dialogues only by their original mode of production ("TV" or "Radio"). Those instructors who use the video and/or audio program may, therefore, wish to provide students with a list of recorded material. Completing the series is a "text-workbook," which reproduces only the video texts and offers a more traditional

and systematic treatment of grammar as well as supplementary oral and written exercises.

Ideally, the user's institution would have a sufficient budget and adequate facilities to accommodate the entire package. Given the less-than-ideal resources of many language programs, however, it is fortunate that the general organization of *A vous la France!* permits several different combinations of the available material. The organization of traditional college French courses would require the substitution or addition of the text-workbook, since the basic manual provides only minimal training in grammar; if cost prohibits the purchase of the video program, the relatively inexpensive audiotapes could furnish some listening and speaking practice. A course in conversational or "survival" French, however, could easily do without the supplementary grammar book; such a class would benefit particularly from the situations and documentaries presented on the videocassettes.

The Text: A Situational Model

In his introduction, Brian Page clearly states the general objective of the course, i.e. instruction in "everyday spoken" French. Indeed, each chapter contains an abundance of authentic dialogues grounded in the daily, practical situations that students are most likely to encounter if they visit France. Subjects include such activities as ordering food and drink, making a telephone call, buying train tickets, and introducing people. The principal structures to be learned are gleaned from the conversations and inserted between them in conspicuous colored boxes. Each dialogue is followed by a series of short questions in English designed to check comprehension and assimilation of basic structures. Students may check their answers to

these “Quickies” (the rather unfortunate name given to the exercises) in the reference section at the end of the book.

Two subsequent sections outline the active material of the chapter: “Mots-clés” contains a list of essential lexical items with their English translation, and “En bref” presents relevant linguistic functions (introducing someone, expressing likes/dislikes, etc.). Further details—including etymological and sociolinguistic information—appear in a helpful section called “En plus;” although it is not presented as such, this material is clearly optional. “A propos” is a series of short articles in English on various aspects of French life; it is to be noted that this cultural information has a distinctly French bias, leaving little or no room for Francophone culture. The discussions are designed to provide students with additional “survival skills” such as tipping and hand-shaking etiquette.

Students may apply their learning in a series of varied exercises under the heading “Bon courage.” Formats include matching (words and definitions, pronouns and verbs); scrambled dialogues; and, controlled dialogue completion. The exercises may and should be used as independent learning checks, since the answers appear in the back of the book. The instructor will find further exercises and activities in the very useful *Notes for Teachers*.

Each chapter ends with a summary of the mini-documentary to be found on the corresponding videocassette. The subjects, which cover various French cultural phenomena, are first introduced in English and then summarized in French. This material provides reading practice and further information on French life. While most of the linguistic structures are presented for passive recognition, key words and expressions are isolated and translated at the end of the section.

Three review chapters and a generous reference section complete the basic text of *A vous la France!*. A concise grammar summary offers relief for the “really grammar-minded” student who may feel uncomfortable with a purely functional-notional approach. The guide to French pronunciation, French-English glossary,

and thorough indexes provide efficient and easy reference.

One practical inconvenience must be blamed on the publisher: Inexplicably, the text lacks the chapter references one normally finds at the top or bottom of each page. Consequently, readers must always refer to the table of contents to find their place; the omission makes skimming and course planning more difficult.

Linguistic Interference

The book’s situational bias and its sheer quantity of material are certainly commendable. Instructors will find the dialogues refreshing, as they lack the stilted and contrived quality so characteristic of many first-year texts. Students will welcome the mature presentation of language and culture as well as the opportunities for independent practice. Nonetheless, the textbook (and indeed the program as a whole) does present one major disadvantage: Most American instructors will object to the inordinate use of English translation in both the presentation of material and the exercises. While it is true that a first-year text cannot always dispense with the native tongue, the majority of introductory books on the U.S. market gradually reduce the quantity of English as the students’ knowledge of the target language increases. In most American texts, French is introduced rather early in directions, and English may be entirely absent from exercises; when feasible, visual and contextual support replaces the traditional alternation of English and French. Furthermore, the use of English is generally restricted to isolated textual blocks. *A vous la France!* retains an approach still found in many European programs: The native language consistently alternates with the target language throughout the book, forcing a constant shift from one system to the other. The otherwise useful exercises require students to respond to cues in English, and a great deal of material is unnecessarily translated in a most distracting manner.

In addition, potential users should be aware that the English translations in *A vous la France!* reflect British usage. This problem is certainly not insurmountable, but instructors must be

prepared to gloss expressions such as “shandy,” “bonnet,” and “white coffee.”

The Text-Workbook: Fair Companion, Poor Substitute

The authors of the text-workbook seem to view it as a possible replacement for the original manual in the context of a first-year college classroom. This choice is certainly feasible: The workbook reproduces essential dialogues from the video program, isolating active vocabulary and related grammatical structures. Students practice the basic material in a series of mechanical exercises, including fill-ins, and “dehydrated” sentences. Other exercises are less controlled, requiring students to apply their learning to a situational context. The book provides three additional chapters on reading, a pronunciation guide, the complete texts of all video documentaries, and a French-English glossary.

The text-workbook in and of itself, however, is somewhat disappointing. Some of the defects are related to purely physical inadequacies. First of all, it is printed in the form of a plain type-script, which limits visual support to bolding and rough sketches. Even the unattractive presentation would be less bothersome if the book “held together” properly: After a few days of careful reading, this reviewer found that the binding had already deteriorated to a great extent. One can only imagine what the student’s copy would look like at the end of the year.

Other mechanical problems include incomplete or confusing directions. On page 19, for example, the student is instructed to “select the correct pronoun to complete the sentence,” yet the exercise also requires a verb. On page 102, the instructions read: “Jacques et Adèle aiment faire des choses différentes. Faites des dialogues. Make up a two-line conversation in which two people state that they like to do different things.”

On the level of content, the text-workbook lacks the breadth of cultural and sociolinguistic material to be found in the original manual. The authors do not always distinguish, for example, between colloquial and standard expressions: “Ben” is translated without comment as “well.”

As a supplement to the original text and the video program, the text-workbook is certainly adequate. The grammar presentations and exercises are not always consistent with the structures presented in the main text, but with careful planning, the instructor could choose appropriate material out of sequence. The added explanations and drills might well serve as support in a college course. As the main text for a first-year program, however, this book falls short of the variety and quality available in other introductory French texts.

The Audio Program: A Limited Support System

The audio cassettes accompanying *A vous la France!* offer some additional listening and speaking practice. Lessons are divided into three parts: a pronunciation exercise, in which students repeat words and phrases after the model; selected conversations from the radio and television series, intended for listening practice alone; and oral exercises requiring students to apply their learning to a situational context.

The producers are to be commended for the excellent sound quality of the tapes. Both male and female models speak clearly and are pleasant to the ear to hear. It is important to note that the recorded conversations include authentic background noise; students will thus become immediately accustomed to the kind of sound interference they might experience in actual communicative situations.

Certain limitations render the audio cassettes less effective than other first-year tape programs. First of all, the amount of material is very limited: Each lesson runs approximately 12-15 minutes. One might have hoped for a larger variety of activities, including oral comprehension exercises, partial dictation, and assorted speaking practice. Secondly, the oral practice offered by the tapes shares the deficiency of the entire *A vous la France!* program: The final speaking activity always requires students to respond in French to an English cue. The activity itself is grounded in sound pedagogical principles. For example, students are often given an imaginary interlocutor and asked to complete the conversation with the structures they have learned. However, the

appropriate response is always stimulated by a voice whispering directions in English: "Ask how much the eggs cost." Students are thus forced to learn by translation rather than immersion.

The Teacher's Guide is designed to provide the instructor with important information about the audio program. It contains a list of the conversations from the basic textbook that have been recorded on cassette, an essential detail that ought to have been marked in the text itself for the students' use. The Guide also offers a partial tapescript, which reproduces the pronunciation exercise and the student's half of the final speaking exercise. A complete tapescript would certainly be preferable, since the instructor may wish to refer at a glance to the clues being given.

The Video Program: A Costly Gem

The 15 videocassettes certainly constitute the most attractive feature of *A vous la France!*. Skillfully executed and visually stimulating, the tapes offer an abundance of listening practice and cultural information as well as a general orientation to sociolinguistic context. The instructor may choose to use the cassettes in class or assign them for individual or group viewing outside the classroom.

Each program is hosted by a French woman and an Anglo-French man, who introduce the material in English. The hosts also intervene during and after dialogues or interviews to explain and reinforce important structures. Interruptions are generally helpful rather than annoying, since the entire conversation is always replayed at the end of each segment. Explanations are accompanied by a good variety of visual cues: Multi-colored block letters demonstrate morphological and lexical structures, and occasionally a brief but amusing piece of animation reinforces learning.

The dialogues and interviews cover a wide variety of topics, including shopping, travel, sports, occupations, and local tradition. For the first several lessons, the program is filmed in and around Grenoble; later chapters take place in Pézenas, a small town near Montpellier. In this way, the students are exposed to different regional accents, even the strongest "accents du Midi." In

order to distinguish "standard" from regional pronunciation, the hosts are careful to point out these accents before and after they occur in the conversations. It is likely that many a student bound for Aix-en-Provence or Toulouse will be grateful for this early preparation.

Each lesson ends with a "mini-documentary" prepared in English and narrated entirely in French. Clear subtitles, framed on a black background, provide a **summary** of the material rather than a complete translation. This method encourages guesswork and enables students to rely on other visual and auditory clues. The hosts assure the viewer-listeners that they are not expected to understand every word, but rather derive the general sense of the material and accustom their ears to hearing French spoken at native speed. Subjects include wine production, the logging industry, Paul Bocuse, the revival of Occitan, and "boules." All of the documentaries are visually oriented, interesting, and extremely informative.

The program could use minor improvement in certain areas. Once again, the use of English translation is excessive, particularly in the context of a visual medium. It seems rather foolish to explain a "baguette" when one could simply show it. In addition, the producers could occasionally be criticized on ideological grounds. The plight of the homeless, for example, is entirely glossed over in one documentary on the restoration of old houses. We are told at first that the historic structures long served as havens for vagrants, but subsequent discussion of restoration neglects to mention what became of the former inhabitants when young professionals took over the neighborhoods. One of the animated segments also offers a rather cruel representation of a homeless man. Furthermore, it must be noted that the documentaries are heavily male-dominated. This results mostly from the choice of subject matter: "Boules" is predominantly a male sport, Paul Bocuse is a male chef, and relatively few women are involved in the fishing or logging industry. A well-rounded group of subjects might eliminate this imbalance.

All in all, it is unfortunate that its prohibitive cost will prevent many institutions from considering this video program. Potential users

should be aware, however, that they do have the option of leasing the tapes—on a one-time basis or in view of possible purchase.

Conclusion

A vous la France! would undoubtedly be effective as a complete program. Despite its reliance on English, the course is innovative and fairly well-designed. Certain combinations, however, are not advisable: While one could feasibly limit materials to the Text-Workbook and audio tapes, this configuration is definitely

inferior to other first-year French programs on the market. The principal strengths of *A vous la France!* lie in the rich material stored in its textbook as well as the situational models brought to life in its admirable (albeit costly) video series.

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Buongiorno Italia!

Vital Statistics

Title: *Buongiorno Italia!*

Author: Joseph Cremona

Publisher: EMC Publishing, 300 York Ave., St. Paul, MN 55101

Copyright: 1987

Supplemental Materials: Notes for Teachers, Teacher's Guide, Workbook to use with Videotapes, Videotapes, and Audio Cassettes

Language: Italian

Level of Difficulty: Beginners

General Description

Buongiorno Italia! is a course for beginners based on a BBC series designed—as stated in the book's introduction—for learning “simple colloquial Italian” for use in everyday situations such as buying things, ordering a meal, asking for directions, etc. The course materials include a textbook, a Teacher's Guide, Notes for the Teacher, a series of seven audio cassettes, and five videotapes with video workbook—all of which comprise the self-contained program package. The program does not single out a specific audience but caters to both self-learners and academic Italian language students.

The Videotapes

The five videotapes of the program contain 20 twenty-five-minute video segments filmed in Stresa, Northern Italy and Orvieto, Central Italy. The order of presentation in the videos follows that of the textbook: Each video is organized around one specific function such as how to ask for something, how to ask where to find something, etc.

Authenticity of Videos

Although the author claims that the videos are based on interviews and conversations with

Italians, it is obvious to native and non-native viewers that the conversational participants are following a detailed script or cues. The conversational “script” is particularly obvious primarily because the pace of conversation is very un-Italian; it lacks spontaneity. As a result, learners using these videos are in no danger of encountering an authentic Italian conversation as it might occur on the streets, in shops, or between friends. The use of two commentators of Italian television (RAI-TV) as the native Italian “voices” also contributes to the artificiality of the videotapes. Obviously used as reinforcement and transition between different video segments, the commentators are often dull, and the examples they offer as explanation are confusing at times.

Content of Videos

In addition to lack of spontaneity and artificiality, the videos have yet an even more perplexing problem, namely content. By trying to achieve too many goals, the videos lack focus. Although the first 10-15 minutes of a video are devoted to the objective of the unit, the remainder of the tape often has little to do with the unit objective. For example, after approximately ten minutes of dealing with the unit objective of “how to ask for something,” Video 1 careens into the town of Stresa, showing the viewer places to visit like the zoo with all the animals. A panoramic view of Stresa is commendable, but as such, it has little to do with the stated objective of Unit 1. In addition, such panoramic, documentary views lend themselves to confronting students with unknown and—at this point—unnecessary vocabulary. As a matter of fact, the use of vocabulary throughout the video series does not seem to follow any criteria; the different registers of the language are never presented, and the Italian spoken is overwhelmingly formal with very few colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions.

Having a documentary portion in each of the 20 videotapes may be useful, but beginning with Video 13, the documentary portion overwhelms and almost displaces the function-oriented dialogues. Some of the function-oriented dialogues seem stilted and contrived showplaces for the function in question; they often become very long and complex interviews on specialized subjects such as wine-making, art, history, archeology, tobacco) cultivation, etc.

Sight and Sound

Although the videos seem to have been taped a decade ago—clothes as well as prices are outdated—the overall sound quality and image crispness are very good. This reviewer found the lack of attention to nonverbal communication—an essential part of communication in any language but especially in Italian—troublesome. The choice of the two locations—Stresa and Orvieto—seems to have limited the range of possible situations and examples.

Workbook

Clearly, the workbook seems to have been an afterthought. Perhaps, an American university wishing to adopt the program requested a book to accompany the videos, and presto! a workbook was born. The workbook contains the transcripts of the videos, grammar explanations, a glossary for each unit, and exercises. Generally, the exercises are very traditional, structural types; they are not overly appealing and would not automatically stimulate communicative practice. All grammar explanations are in English as are the directions for the exercises and the listening comprehension questions.

Instructional Method

For average self-learners, *Buongiorno Italia!*—apart from being very expensive—may also be difficult and boring. Completing the exercises in the workbook requires a high degree of motivation which many language teachers rarely encounter even in the structured environment of the classroom. Although excerpts from the videos could be used effectively in the classroom, the patient “cut-and-paste” editing work this would require of teachers is unthink-

able; even if teachers had the time and energy to edit the program, there is the problem of securing copyright clearance to do so.

The Audio Cassettes

From the viewpoint of this reviewer, the audio cassettes are, perhaps, even more disappointing than the videotapes. In the introduction of the text, the reader is warned that not all the sections marked “TV” or “Radio” are recorded on the cassettes. Hence, only three of the nine conversations in Chapter 8, for example, are recorded. Furthermore, dialogues on cassette often do not follow the script used in the videos; neither the version of the dialogue nor the speakers are the same.

The format of the cassettes begins with pronunciation practice of words or expressions taken from the dialogues and followed by conversations. As a concluding exercise, the tapes propose to the student that he or she reproduce similar conversations—to those they have just practiced—based upon cues given in English. The problem is that often not all the conversations with which the student has practiced up to this point have anything to do with the functional cues. For example, only one of the three recorded conversations dealing with the function of finding a room—Chapter 8—is directly related to the objective. Students are expected to reproduce the language of a particular function after having heard only one conversation dealing with the topic.

Overall, the audio cassettes are ineffective for both self-learners and classroom applications; they do not provide enough listening and oral practice, and the choice of conversations is not appropriate for the specific objectives.

The Textbook

The textbook is the most successful part of the whole program, albeit not totally satisfactory; it can be used alone without the rest of the program. Divided into 20 chapters, it also includes four sections of “Lecture” and a “Reference” section.

Each chapter of the text contains—on average—nine conversations introduced by a brief

abstract (in English) of the conversation's topic. The "Allora" section contains a glossary and highlights of the unit's grammar; "Parole e Usanze" focuses on idiomatic usage of language; "Vita Italiana" provides practical and cultural information about Italy; and "Prova un Po" offers a range of exercises for practice.

A book using a functional approach must adhere to the importance of the order in which the functions are presented to the student. The first three units of the book focus on "asking for something," "asking for directions," and "buying things and asking the price." Although the vocabulary does not always reflect frequency of use, the focus of the first three units is appropriate. Where the order of presentation becomes cumbersome, however, is that of "going places" and "finding a room." "Going places" is found in Chapter 5 (after how to say you like something, a revision chapter and the first series of readings) and "finding a room" is in Chapter 8. It seems to me that these two functions are important enough to be placed earlier in the sequence.

Also somewhat cumbersome is the fact that all English references are in British English with which many American students are unfamiliar.

The grammar explanations and practice exercises are well done, offering an excellent variety of exercises: crosswords, cloze paragraphs, multiple choice quizzes, sentence-combining, and listening-reading comprehension questions.

This book could be used in small-size classrooms in which students work in pairs and small groups or in classrooms which focus on conversational dynamics. Additionally, this text can be used effectively for stimulating conversation in more structural and traditional language classes. No matter how and where this book is used, the role of the teacher is crucial.

Conclusion

An expensive package, the total *Buongiorno Italia!* program is not the best investment in terms of quality/effectiveness versus price that learners can make. Overall, its audio-video components are stilted, stiff, and artificial; the dialogues lack spontaneity and authenticity.

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España y las Americas: The Spanish Video Magazine

Vital Statistics

Author: Cornelius P. Hamel

Publisher: Jem Communications, Inc., Teleibéria S.A.

Copyright: 1988

Intended Users: Spanish students at all levels

Language: Spanish

Level of Difficulty: 3rd or 4th year of study

Overview

Planned as a monthly television news magazine, this video series is designed to “foster listening comprehension and promote cultural awareness” (p. 2). The first video in the series, (the only one seen by this reviewer) begins promisingly enough with an excellent geographical/historical overview of Spain, a visual tour of the major monuments and plazas of Madrid, and a televised introduction to the royal family. A word about the title follows, with an explanation of the term “teleibérica.”

The “Videotape and Resource Guide” claims that this series may serve as a learning resource by providing “strategies that will enhance viewing and listening skills” (p. 2). It explains that all lessons contain the following: a cultural note providing historical background for each segment; a full transcript of the commentator’s opening remarks which “may be used for imitation, articulation, and demonstration of grammatical models” (p. 2) (although no examples show how this is done); a “bird’s eye view” section which asks students to list the principal ideas in each segment; a listening comprehension exercise; a section in which students are asked to describe elements of a “frozen frame” of video orally or in writing; an exercise providing a partial transcript of a

segment which requires students to fill in blanks while listening; suggested topics for discussion; suggestions for written homework or tests; an invitation to analyze and imitate the “ads” presented; and, a reading component of two or more passages related to selected segments.

Listening Practice

The use of oral language is natural and (according to the introduction) intended to be presented at native speed. This reviewer found the presentation somewhat too fast and believes that actual TV programs (by satellite) with professional newscasters and actors are less rapid and more deliberately articulated. Instructors and native Spanish speakers—invited by this reviewer to listen to the segments—expressed the feeling that even they had to really concentrate their attention in order to fully comprehend each segment the first time they viewed it.

The study guide provided with the videotape advises the user to “prepare for viewing” by review of “advanced organizers” (p. 3). It is highly doubtful that students will do this on their own, and, if the video is used as supplementary enrichment, it is unlikely that students will prepare for viewing as the guide suggests.

Cultural Content

After the well-planned beginning segment, the rest of the video presents a mélange of typical TV fare: a clip from Saura’s film, *El Dorado*, about colonial days accompanies a somewhat cursory discussion on Spanish writers like García Lorca, and cinematographers like Buñel and Saura; a segment on Hemingway introduces an interview with a young bullfighter, Paco Machado; a music

video; a report on motorcycle racing; a sequence on the European Economic Community, complete with maps showing geographic locations of member countries and an explanation of Spain's role in the EEC; current fashions; spot commercials for products such as Michelin tires, Scott tissues, the Corte Inglés department store, insurance, food, mineral water, soft drinks, and a travel magazine. The segments are divided in a manner similar to commercial breaks.

Limitations

According to the Resource Guide, this series is intended to provide students with an understanding of "Spanish as it is spoken today" (p. 2). Through use of language in natural settings, the series does, indeed, accomplish this. However, when the guide suggests that the series may also be used "as the basic material for a year-long course on Spain and Latin America today" (p. 2), this suggestion is overly optimistic. It would be difficult to use this material as the basis for a course because neither the video segments nor the Resource Guide provides the necessary integration, organization, or cohesion to serve as the basis of a substantive course. There is no continuity or logical progression to this series; it would require significant effort on the part of the instructor to create both continuity and logical progression. Supplementary preparation and organization of background information would be needed for the very disparate topics covered, and some sort of structure or format would be required to enable class work to follow a logical sequence through various topics and levels of difficulty. Practice exercises on use of grammar and *modismos* would be needed. Review exercises would have to be developed, and so would tests. How an instructor would be able to prepare these materials is unclear, especially if

the topics of the bi-monthly video magazine are not known beforehand but available only as issued.

The user is further advised in the Resource Guide that he or she "may use parts of the guide in the first year of training on the premise that early exposure to authentic Spanish accustoms the learner to natural speed and different voices" (p. 3); furthermore, "simpler exercises may be used as warm-ups for more challenging ones" (p. 3). Presumably, the teacher should preview both video and guide, then reorganize it all according to his or her perceptions of levels of difficulty. While it is true (and useful) that all video frames are numbered on screen and can easily be located and referred to for discussion or review purposes, the reorganization of materials—which viewing by progression of difficulty would demand—would put heavy demands on an instructor's time.

Conclusion

In the opinion of this reviewer, the *España y las Americas* video series cannot be readily and easily adapted to serve as a reasonable basis for any full-length, substantive course. Its best use would be as a supplemental learning tool, an entertaining challenge to students who want to see native, target language TV and do not have access to satellite viewing.

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España Viva

Vital Statistics

Title: *España Viva*

Author: Derek Utley

Publisher: EMC Publishing, 300 York Avenue,
St. Paul, MN 55101

Copyright: 1988

Supplemental Materials: Teacher's Guide.
Three Audio Cassette Tapes covering Units 1-15.
Four two-hour Videocassettes. Text-Workbook.

Intended Users: Beginners

Language: Spanish

Level of Difficulty: Elementary/Intermediate

General Description

España Viva is an integrated course for beginning students of Spanish based on a series of programs originally developed by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The textbook, text-workbook, teacher's guide, audio cassettes and videocassettes were developed from—and are based entirely upon—the radio and television series.

The textbook consists of 15 lessons, a series of extra dialogues, Spanish grammar section, pronunciation section, word group and vocabulary sections, and an answer key to the exercises. The symbols "TV" and "R" are used throughout the textbook to indicate sections which are directly related to the video and audio portions originally produced for the broadcasts and reproduced on the audio and video cassettes. Each lesson consists of an initial dialogue based on a specific theme from daily life (occupations, vacations, hotels, and restaurants are typical) followed by a keyword vocabulary, a brief grammar section, exercises and a cultural section devoted to aspects of Spanish daily life, history, and traditions.

Illustrations, charts, and maps appear in profusion throughout the text and are taken from

the visuals produced for the television production, as are the videocassettes. The introductory material explains that the television series was filmed in the Spanish cities of Santander, Madrid, and Sevilla. The dialogues are based on what appear to the user to be spontaneous conversations with the inhabitants of these cities—inhabitants from a broad spectrum of vocations and professions and representative of various segments of society. The audio cassettes contain recordings of the 15 dialogues with directions for students to practice repetitions as originally presented on BBC radio.

Instructional Materials and Strategies

The "How to Use the Book" section of the text instructs potential users to read the units in the textbook thoroughly before attempting to view the videocassettes or to listen to the audio tape program. The commentary accompanying this section stresses the importance of learning keywords in the vocabulary section and indicates that a complete understanding of the grammar sections is not necessary before moving ahead to subsequent exercises and chapters. Pronunciation segments of the audio cassettes generally reinforce the acquisition of phonological skills represented by the unit dialogues and "reportajes."

The student is advised to proceed at his or her pace, practicing as many exercises as may be possible within the constraints of the time available for study. The combination of the visual and auditory aspects of the workbook and videotapes—together with the textbook—focus student attention directly on the task at hand, namely the acquisition of "survival" Spanish for visitors to the Spanish peninsula. Although a small amount of information is included concerning the dialects of Spanish in Spain and Spanish America, Castilian usage is employed with few exceptions.

The teacher's guide briefly describes how the textbook may be used alone for a complete course or in combination with any of the additional materials available. It consists principally of a transcript of the audio cassette dialogues. All the materials, according to comments in the text, serve the needs of students with or without a teacher, in a formal academic setting or otherwise. The close coordination of text-workbook, textbook, and videotapes requires that the student not improvise during the course. Although transcripts of the dialogues are printed at the rear of the text-workbook, the student will commonly find—as stated—that repeated listening to the spoken material in the course is necessary for thorough understanding.

Which Came First? Pedagogy or Media?

What is unclear about most foreign language study materials based on television and/or radio programming—and *España Viva* is not an exception—is whether the educational aspects of such programs were adapted to, or were the result of, the media for which they were produced. *España Viva*—including audio/video cassettes, teacher's guide, and workbook—is very well done from an editorial perspective. The book and its accompanying educational aids envision a very broad audience. For these reasons, it is difficult to imagine a single specific setting in which *España Viva* might be used with profit; it is possible to imagine its successful use in innumerable settings. The question remains whether a program usable in all settings is truly usable in any specific setting.

Limitations

Although directions in the text intended for student users is adequate, they are minimally so in the teacher's guide. The prospective user of the textbook—whose age, status, and academic standing are of no consequence—receives advice about the most effective uses of various sections of the textbook and the supplementary uses of the audio and video cassettes. It is not always entirely clear, however, which exercises require oral or written responses by the student in the exercise

sections of the text and the text-workbook. To be fair, it may not necessarily always matter whether response is oral or written. Most exercises require oral responses, since the overall course is oriented toward speaking and understanding. English and Spanish are both used in the directions to exercises; grammar explanations are in English.

The *España Viva* materials are unremittingly British in orientation. All cross-cultural comparisons in the series are made between aspects of Spanish and British (even Scottish and Welsh) life. Monetary comparisons are made among Eurocheques, the pound, and the peseta. British linguistic usage and spelling pervade the English instructions and introductory segments of the text. Whether such spellings, pronunciations, and syntax on the audio and video cassettes would prove disconcerting to non-British students is a matter which potential users of *España Viva* should consider. The videotapes are very professionally done, complete with spectacular graphics and scenes of Spanish cities and landscapes. A considerable amount of time within the eight hours of videotape accompanying the materials is spent showing scenes from Spanish life which are not directly connected to the teaching of language. These moments, surprisingly, do not appear to have a negative impact on the immediate task of teaching the language. To the contrary, they provide a refreshing break from what might otherwise be constant "video" drills and subtitles which, in and of themselves, would make the material less attractive to prospective users.

Conclusion

Like a small number of productions of similar type in the area of foreign language/foreign culture studies, *España Viva* is informative, well-produced, and graphically/linguistically stimulating. Every student using these materials will come away with a much greater knowledge of Spain and Spanish than he or she brought to the series. Whether or not a student using these materials could gain full benefit from them outside of a structured and formal academic setting is, of course, a question which is debatable. The student who uses these well-

integrated and thoroughly prepared materials must follow instructions carefully in order to derive the maximum benefit from them.

It is refreshing to review materials for the teaching of Spanish—whether intentional on the part of author and collaborators or not—which make no unjustifiable claims regarding learner proficiency at the end of the course of study. The introduction makes clear that the materials have no specific educational aim other than familiarizing the student with “survival” Spanish

and the culture of Spain. Used carefully by learners, *España Viva* seems perfectly capable of reaching its stated “survival” Spanish aim.

J.E.T.T. Contributor Profile

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Teaching French, A Practical Guide

Vital Statistics

Title: Teaching French, A Practical Guide
Author: Wilga M. Rivers
Publisher: National Textbook Company, 4255 West Touhy Ave., Lincolnwood, IL 60646-1975
Copyright: 1988
No. of Pages: 407
Audience: Prospective and practicing teachers; methodology classes

Overview

Teaching French is, as the subtitle indicates, a practical guide for new as well as experienced teachers. In it, Dr. Rivers offers an interactive approach which is based on communicative goals. Language teaching has been changing to reflect the new demand for communicative competence; among the new ideas, there are many fads. This book helps to sort out the fads from the fundamentals. It offers a program which will allow teachers to evaluate and modify methodology to achieve better results.

Helpful Aspects of the Book

The book is divided into three sections: oral communication, written communication, and testing. Although these skills overlap, each section of the book treats these topics separately. In every section, Dr. Rivers does a good job of presenting current research and trends. She evaluates the work of different researchers and tries to show the goals of each one. Her approach allows teachers to step back and choose aspects of these different approaches which are best suited to the individual situation.

In addition, the author of this book also does a good job of offering criteria for teachers to use

in evaluating the material found in textbooks. Most textbooks seem to be a mix of good and bad material. Dr. Rivers offers the framework by which to evaluate dialogues, exercises, and readings for their usefulness and effectiveness in interactive language teaching. In this context she also clarifies those results which teachers should expect. She makes the point that often teacher expectations are unrealistic and not even achievable by native speakers. Such expectations should be modified to reflect realistic results.

Another helpful aspect of the book is the large number of ideas for exercises and productive learning games. The goals and levels of such activities are especially well delineated. Dr. Rivers groups those activities which are appropriate for elementary, intermediate, and advanced learners. There are suggestions for those activities which are best carried out orally and those which are best for written practice. These include a wide range of creative suggestions for developing skills in speaking, grammar, and writing. There are also activities for remediation, especially in the area of pronunciation.

The section on reading and writing emphasizes the goals of the learner and explains the difference in methods which a teacher may use depending on the purposes of the student. Dr. Rivers discusses translation as a special skill which some students may need to acquire, not as a learning tool.

The section on testing makes clear how difficult it is to make a good, objective test; in this section, Dr. Rivers suggests alternatives to the objective test. She emphasized that the goal of testing within the course is to give the learner the feeling that progress has been made, and to

point to a direction for further learning. For this reason, she encourages natural and non-threatening situations for evaluating progress.

Limitations

Dr. Rivers does not discuss the ideas of Lozanov and his theories of Suggestopedia. Considering that this approach is often discussed in educational circles, it would have been helpful to have her perspective on this approach.

She also has little to say about the technology of computer, video, and telecommunications which are gradually making their way into language teaching. These technologies have even more potential for good or evil than the textbooks which she analyzes. Again, it would have been helpful to have had Dr. Rivers' views on what she considers desirable in the area of technology.

Although Dr. Rivers gives many ideas for the beginning teacher, there are times when the book feels overwhelming. So much of what she suggests simply does not exist; somehow the thought of "redoing the textbook" seems discouraging. Perhaps, this is due in part to the organization of the book: it often uses lists and lists of suggestions. Such lists are good in that

they are comprehensive, but the reader sometimes loses the thread of the ideas in the midst of the lists. There is no doubt, however, that the teacher's job could be significantly helped should publishers take such a book to heart when they devise language texts.

Conclusion

In summary, this book gives practical advice for teaching French. It stresses interactive language learning which leads to communicative competence. New teachers who have been fed on such a diet will thrive in the classroom; experienced teachers will find this book can help them correct some of the practices that in the past have led to reinforce the inability of students to communicate. *Teaching French, A Practical Guide* should find a place in every French teacher's library.

J.E.T.T. Contributor Profile

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Sendas literarias: Hispanoamérica

Vital Statistics

Title: *Sendas literarias: Hispanoamérica*
Editors: Edward J. Mullen and David H. Darst;
Coordinating Editor: Pamela A. Evans
Publisher: Random House
Publisher Address: 201 East 50th Street, N.Y.,
N.Y. 10022
No. of Pages: 197
Intended Users: Advanced high school or
second year college

Overview

The editors' expressed aim in this anthology is not "to be a history of Spanish American literature" but rather, to present a chronological introduction to the major periods and movements through which Spanish American literature has evolved (p. vii). The editors' stated philosophy—acquiring a reading knowledge of Spanish is "accomplished best by presenting the student with uncut literary masterpieces annotated to the students' level of reading ability" (p. ix)—is the organizing factor around which this anthology was developed. The necessity of utilizing short selections so as to encompass a greater number of authors explains the preponderance of poetic selections comprising this anthology.

Discussion exercises called "Consideraciones" and short (less than one page) "Ejercicios de comprensión" sections of three or four parts (completion, matching, multiple choice or direct response) follow the selections of each different author. Each unit is followed by two or four "Preguntas generales" which ask students to compare, verbally or in writing, literary pieces within or between periods.

All selections are heavily glossed, and a complete vocabulary is appended at the end of the volume. The introductions to each period, written in English, provide excellent general summaries of the literary and cultural developments of the period and enable the student to learn a great deal *about* Hispanic literature without actually having to read Spanish.

Content

The colonial period is represented in one brief essay by Columbus, two poems by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and one poem by Heredia. In the second division, "The Period of National Consolidation," romanticism, realism and naturalism are discussed, but the three authors presented—Avellaneda, Viana and Palma—are not clearly representative of these literary movements. Modernism is better represented by selections from Martí, Silva and Darío, and one short story by Gutiérrez Nájara. While admitting that Spanish American literature is "by and large a phenomenon of the twentieth century" (p. vii), the editors necessarily pass over Latin America's important novels and Nobel Prize winning novelists because of their commitment to short, whole works. This section is divided into three parts: prose (containing one essay and six short stories), drama (represented by one one-act play), and poetry (comprising one or two poems by six different authors).

The editors suggest that "five college hours should be devoted to the period from the discovery to independence; five to the period of national consolidation; ten to modernism, and 20 to the twentieth century" (p. vii) Are 40 college hours needed to study 173 pages? Is it necessary to study only six or seven pages per hour when these pages include explanations in English,

extremely short selections in Spanish, and simple completion exercises and matching drills? This recommendation would seem to call for significant augmentation by the instructor.

Limitations

The editors' basic philosophy about presenting uncut literary masterpieces annotated to the level of reading ability severely limits the selection and quality of the readings. It caused the editors to settle for a preponderance of poetic selections and short stories in order to include a token representation of authors; it rules out excerpts from the fine dramas and the Nobel prize winning novels which are the truly representative works of twentieth century Latin American literature. It provides students with little incentive

to read further or to be introduced to some of the truly representative Latin American writers.

The introductory essays and readings in English provide clear and concise overviews and are probably more suitable for advanced high school students than for intermediate college students. College students should be able to read such introductory material in Spanish. In this reviewer's opinion, college students should also be introduced to longer selections from more significant works.

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Sendas literarias: España

Vital Statistics

Title: *Sendas literarias: España*

Editor: David H. Darst; Coordinating Editor: Pamela A. Evans

Publisher: Random House, 201 East 50th Street, NY, NY 10022

No. of Pages: 269

Intended Users: Advanced high school or second year college

Overview

This anthology is designed to present the advanced high school or intermediate college student with an organized survey of the evolution of a literature through the use of fairly brief whole selections. Because it deals with one country, Spain, it accomplishes its aim more successfully than anthologies spanning numerous countries. This book divides Spanish literature into the following major periods, each of which is described in English: medieval, golden age, romanticism, realism, and twentieth century. Each literary selection is followed by "Ejercicios de comprensión" which check vocabulary and comprehension; "Consideraciones" designed to stimulate student thinking about specific aspects of the readings; and, "Preguntas generales" which, like the "Consideraciones," require oral or written responses. All the readings are heavily glossed and a comprehensive vocabulary is added at the end.

Content

Within the limitations imposed by the requirement to present only whole selections and not excerpts, Darst has made a remarkably fine selection of major works and authors. The medieval period includes selections from Don Juan Manuel, the Romances, and the entire "Coplas por la muerte de mi padre" by Jorge Manrique. Golden Age selections are from Garcilaso, Santa Teresa, Cervantes, Gongora, Quevedo, and Lope. Romanticism is represented

by selections from the Duque de Rivas, Espronceda, Bécquer, and the less easily defined Pedro Antonio de Alarcon. Not much biographical information is given about the writers but the quality and importance of their contribution is briefly summarized so that a general presentation of romanticism and its chief proponents emerges. Selections from Compaamor, Clarin, and Blasco Ibañez ably illustrate the different facets of realism. "Modern" literature, beginning with the "Generation of '98" is represented by the Quintero brothers, Unamuno, and Machado; it continues with Juan Ramon Jiménez, Lorca, Aleixandre, Matute, Arrabal, and Cela—a highly representative selection.

Darst recommends that a typical college class using this anthology should dedicate five hours to medieval, ten to Golden Age, ten to nineteenth century, and 15 to the twentieth century. Given the material contained in this work, the ratio is reasonable, but the total number of hours seems excessive for the slim amount of reading actually provided. This makes the text seem more appropriate for an advanced high school class than for an intermediate college level class.

Limitations

This anthology clearly meets the editor's stated goal: to present "uncut literature annotated to...level of reading ability," test students "with comprehension exercises," and finally ask them "to consider certain literary or linguistic aspects of the readings in a discursive fashion," (p. ix). It is precisely because it achieves this goal—in the reviewer's opinion, this is a modest goal—it is more suited to high school students than to college students.

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Beginner's German Reader

Vital Statistics

Title: *Beginner's German Reader*
Author: Heinz Thörn
Copyright: 1988
Publisher: National Textbook Company, 4255 Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60646-1975
No. of Pages: 61
Supplemental Materials: Teacher's Guide
Language: German
Level of Difficulty: Beginner

Overview

Beginner's German Reader is a collection of 27 short readings ("self-contained vignettes"), sometimes in dialogue form, dealing with "German teenagers, their families, and friends who live in a working-class district of a German city." The vignettes are written in the present tense, and the use of separable prefix verbs and subordinate clauses is avoided where possible. "High frequency" vocabulary words are used and repeated often to "encourage mastery."

Each vignette is followed by a series of short content questions and occasionally by vocabulary building and "free completion" exercises, tongue twisters or word puzzles. The texts are designed for use in the "first few months of German study" to help students develop reading skills as early as possible. A German-English dictionary is also provided; it lists words (with genders but no plurals) used in the stories and exercises. The Teacher's Guide also contains cultural information, supplementary oral and written exercises, and the answers to the questions and exercises in the book.

Readings

The vignettes and dialogues are short enough to be discussed in one class period or assigned as homework. However, the texts do not always

become consistently more difficult and challenging as the book progresses. Although the introduction states that the language used in the readings is "simplified but authentic," it is actually rather stilted and unnatural. Words or expressions used in some of the texts (e.g., "Jägerturm," "Gepäckschalter," "Machen Sie rasch") are outdated and no longer used in a contemporary conversational context. One also comes across an occasional sexist statement such as "Oh, diese Frauen! Man weiß nie, was sie wollen." (Oh, these women! One never knows what they want). There is an unfortunate typographical error in one of the readings ("Er hilft *seinen* Onkel"). This should be corrected as soon as possible since the use of the accusative instead of the dative ending following the verb "helfen" is a very common mistake.

The illustrations which accompany the readings are often not "culturally authentic." The doorknobs, windows, and some pieces of furniture pictured are simply not found in West Germany. Sometimes the drawings do not accurately portray what is being described in the text. In one passage the characters are said to be playing "Tennis" while the illustration shows them playing ping-pong ("Tischtennis"). In the reading "Auf dem Bahnhof" the word "Bahnsteig" (platform) is used while the picture shows a sign next to the train track with the word "Gleis" written on it. There is no attempt in the book or the Teacher's Guide to explain the difference between these two words or to clarify their usage. This could prove extremely confusing to students.

Exercises

The exercises found in the book consist primarily of simple content questions which test student comprehension of the information presented in the readings. These questions tend to be rather monotonous and do not increase in

difficulty in later chapters.

There are other exercises in the book which are quite good. For instance, students are asked to replace an incorrect word in a sentence with the correct one or to determine which word does not belong in a group. In general, however, more variation in the types of exercises presented would have been desirable. Students could have been given answers and then asked to formulate questions, or they could have been asked to describe the characters in their own words, to postulate a different ending to a story, or to generate their own mini-dialogues to be performed in class. In general, more creativity on the part of the students should have been encouraged. An exercise like "Zeichne ein Feuer in einem Geschäft" (Draw a fire in a store) does nothing to promote active use of the language or further understanding of German culture.

Teacher's Guide

In addition to providing an answer key for the exercises found in the book, the *Teacher's Guide* also offers cultural information for the teacher, ideas for additional classroom activities, and supplementary written and oral exercises.

The best of the optional exercises are those which actively engage the students and call upon them to be creative. These include word puzzles, mixing and matching parts of sentences, and generation of personalized questions. Simple grammar exercises (verb conjugation; noun-pronoun replacement; preposition and case ending review) which reinforce students' understanding of constructions used in the texts are also good. Some of the exercises should have been required, not made supplementary or optional.

The cultural information supplied in the *Teacher's Guide* is occasionally incorrect. For instance, West Germany is referred to as the "Deutsche Bundesrepublik" and East Germany as "Ostdeutschland." In addition, it is stated that sausage, cheese and bread are "typical lunch, snack, or picnic fare," whereas in reality most Germans eat a large, hot meal at lunchtime and "belegte Brote" (bread with sausage and/or cheese) for supper.

Some of the information provided to the teacher should have been more up-to-date. When discussing television networks, it might have been

useful to mention the emergence and burgeoning popularity of cable television in West Germany. A reminder to the teacher concerning the opening and closing times of stores in West Germany would have been in order in connection with the vignette "Nach dem Kino." Since the names Goethe and Adenauer appear prominently in the illustration accompanying the text "Ein Handballspiel," it would have been advisable to recommend that the teacher talk to the class a bit about these famous Germans and explain their important place in literature and history. In addition to suggesting that the teacher practice numbers in conjunction with a discussion of the story "Hans' Zettel," the teacher could have introduced students to the German alphabet and taught them how to spell "auf deutsch," always an enjoyable activity for younger students.

Summary

The criticisms and suggestions for improvement mentioned above suggest that the book is, perhaps, due for some revision. Before the material can truly be called culturally authentic, certain of the illustrations must be replaced or redone, the language used in the readings updated or corrected, and some of the cultural information provided in the *Teacher's Guide* expanded, supplemented or revised. The exercises in the book should also be more varied and encourage more creativity. These improvements would make for more interesting readings and more exciting classroom interaction.

Beginner's German Reader is advertised as being appropriate for the beginning German language student in junior or senior high school. The nature and content of the stories, however, suggest that they could be used most fruitfully at the junior high school level. Also, an explanation of how the book could be integrated into a beginning German language course at any level is lacking. From the viewpoint of this reviewer, the most practical and effective use of the book would be as a supplement to the main textbook, used on a weekly basis either in or outside of the classroom.

J.E.T.T. Contributor Profile

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