TESL REPORTER

TESL Reporter

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Using Video Movies in Listening Class
Lawrence J. Cisar, Athènèe Français

Video is becoming more and more popular as a teaching tool. It lets students experience natural English in a somewhat natural setting. Presently, however, there is very little useful, commercially produced video material for teaching EFL. The television, however, is an excellent source of English. Taped television programs, although presently caught up in legal battles about ownership and use, provide good material for learners of English. The following article will cover choosing material, presenting it in class, and evaluation of material used.

Choosing Material: Length

When choosing video material, length is very important. It is not important in the usual sense, as *you do not have to cover all the material in one class.* In fact video is ideally designed for carrying over from one day to the next. Length is important in letting the student become familiar with the characters so that the students are able to better understand what the characters are saying and trying to accomplish.

Short thirty minute segments (time is given in TV time including commercials) do not usually allow the students to become familiar with the characters. If a couple of segments are available from a series like this, there is no problem. But a single short segment is not enough.

As to cartoons—they are usually very hard. The language is often distorted and artificial, the situation is unrealistic, and they are very cultural in nature. For a very advanced class, they have value; but, for most students, they are too hard.

Full length programs (usually about one hour) can be good material. With many, the students can become familiar with the characters and the situation. The language and situation are not too rushed. But a word of caution is in order—they may move too fast and the dialogs may be too artificial in attempting to wind up the plot in an hour. A good program is *Quincy*. A poor one is *Magnum, P.I.*

Feature films run two hours and give a full development of the characters. While you may not be too familiar with them at the beginning, by the end you know all that you need to and more. Students are able to escape into the characters as they develop. The films last long enough to use up the student enthusiasm without causing boredom. They are short enough so that students who are not interested in that film have a hope of seeing something that interests them before the term is over.

The final type is the series that lasts eight to twelve hours (eg.,*Winds of War*). While being excellently done, they are too long, especially for students who don't like that subject matter (i.e. World War II). Students who like it are also frustrated, as it is hard to finish in one term (12 weeks) a program of this length.

I always use the full film and not clips. Students like to have a full story with which to work. They hate it when they get only a part of the story. They feel that there is information lacking that they need for understanding, and they worry about that lack. Students like to have an idea of what happened before and to take it to a logical conclusion before they leave it. A film clip rarely does that.

Choosing Material: Language

Length is only one thing that has to be considered. Another point is the type of language. First there must be clarity of language. The standard will vary greatly with the ability of the students. If they have not watched a movie before, they need one with very clear language. This does not mean that the language should be unnatural. A good cause of clear language is in the movie *The Mirror Crack'd*. After watching one film, students are usually ready for less clear language. I have found that John Wayne movies generally contain less clear but normal language. Exposing students to language like this in a large context is very rewarding. A rather good example is *McQ*. On the other hand, material with excessive mumbling, such as *Rocky* , is not good.

Besides being reasonably clear, the language must be idiomatic. The degree of idiomaticity needs to be determined by the type of students you have. Good students can handle fairly normal idiomatic dialog, but they will still need preparation for specialized idioms such as those found in science fiction and war movies. For this reason, science fiction and war movies tend not to be good first movies. But, as a second or third movie, science fiction can provide a lot of useful contemporary idiomatic language. Low-level students, of course, need language with few idioms. For them, the language needs to be straightforward.

Choosing Material: Setting

A third area of consideration when selecting movies is the setting. If only one movie is going to be used, almost any setting is acceptable. When you use more than one during a term, however, there should be some variety. This will appeal to the students in two ways. First, they won't repeat the same type of situation, and they will experience language in more than one style. Second, the students who did not really enjoy the first setting won't have to suffer through it again. If you use a detective story the first time, use a romance the second. Go from the 1930's to the distant future.

Choosing Material: Non-Dialog Sections

A final consideration in selection is the proportion of non-dialog sections. You need non-dialog sections to provide relaxation time while watching. The movies of the thirties and forties are great for dialog, but they go on and on. The long dialogs often overwhelm students. Modern productions are nice in that they break up the story with action scenes that help to clarify what was said. But these sections should not be overdone. If there is too much of this, not much language is learned. The James Bond films tend to have too little dialog. Also, the dialog is in such small hunks that the students don't learn anything. Again, a balance is needed.

Presenting Material

When you present the film to the students it needs to be broken up into manageable sections. In a class hour of fifty minutes, I find sections of eight to twelve minutes to be ideal. This allows each segment to be seen two times in each class period and still leaves time for a lot of discussion. Segments shorter than eight minutes leave too much dead time at the end of class.

In determining where to place the break, try to find a spot where there is action anticipated. Find a spot that will leave them guessing about what comes next so they will be eager to see the next section. In *The Mirror Crack'd* , the scene where the doors swing open and someone approaches Jane Marple makes a good break point. The students want to know what is going to happen to her. Let them worry about it until the next class. In their discussion they

will anticipate what will happen. I won't spoil the movie for you by telling.

A Sample Lesson Presentation

The students watch each segment two times. For the first showing I do not give them any vocabulary work. I play the tape and then break them up into small groups (4-5 students) to discuss what they saw and heard. (If there is a problem due to the film's historical setting, I will clarify that.) They have to try to work out what actually happened during the segment and to link it with what they have seen before. They provide the clues that are needed from the previous sections. I don't. I avoid all large group discussion and question asking at this time. I have found that if they go to the large group after seeing it only once there is too much hesitation. They are afraid to get involved.

After about ten minutes of discussion I play the same segment again. As it is playing, I put the important and/or difficult vocabulary on the blackboard. After the segment is finished, I try to elicit explanations of the vocabulary. I do not wait a long time for these as I am not trying to do intensive vocabulary development. Neither do I spend time working on other uses for these vocabulary items. My examples are based on situations similar to what they saw in the film. Some teachers might think this would be a good time for exercises using the vocabulary. I don't think so. I want them interested in understanding the overall film. I get through the vocabulary quickly and go back to the discussion of the segment. I want them to work on understanding.

When there is a short time left in the hour (about five minutes), I move to a large group discussion and question session. This allows the students to bring up things that they could not discover or solve in their small groups. I get the answers from others, and I avoid giving direct answers myself. I use questions that pull out the information that they need in order to answer their questions. The focus is on the students finding the answers through group cooperation and discussion.

Summaries for Evaluation and Comprehension

Covering the material in class this way does not tell me who really understood what happened. To determine individual's level of comprehension, I have the students write summaries after every three or four segments. From these I can see where they are having trouble, and I straighten out general problems at the beginning of the next class. The summaries also force them to bring the whole story together. I also have them do a summary when we finish a film. It may seem like a lot of work to correct and evaluate all those summaries, but it is worth the effort. To prevent students from trying to write a dictation of the film's dialog and to keep my work load humane, I let them to do only one-page summaries. I will not accept anything longer. They have to make sure that they evaluate the material properly and include only the important things.

Evaluation of the Learning Experience

Finishing the in-class presentation of the film does not end the instructional process. It is important to evaluate what happened to the students and to see if it can be made better. The first thing to evaluate is the naturalness of the language that the students developed. Did the students develop a better feel for listening to the language in normal situations? Or did they learn too many limited expressions that they can't use again or that they misuse when they try? These are questions that have to be answered separately for each class.

Other questions relate to the video material used. What was the weakness of

the movie? Will the next one compensate for that? The answers to these questions will tell the teacher what to do next.

It is also necessary to look at how the students felt about the film. Was it something that the students found enjoyable? Do not rule out the use of historical films because often the students find them to be very enjoyable. I have used the film *Ivanhoe* in class, and the students loved it. True, there were a lot of terms for things we don't use in modern society. But the language was natural and the overall situation was natural. And the terms did apply to speaking about Japanese history. On the other hand, a movie like The *French Lieutenant's Woman* would be very hard to use because the plot is complicated and the situation is unreal for many. Many native speakers have trouble with it. After each movie you would reassess what appeals to your class—what is natural and enjoyable for them.

Language is not limited to just the words written or said. Language goes beyond that. What were the visual effects of the movie? Did they aid in understanding? These are important considerations in evaluating a movie. Beautiful scenery is not what is important. Another question to be considered is did the film involve the emotions of the students. Students understand more when they feel something about the actions. If a film is boring, having good langauge will not help the student much. Also, how were the sound effects? The music can greatly affect what is understood. I don't like to use films where the music score is overwhelming. It takes away too much from the language. But some music can aid students' understanding. All of these points need to be considered before using a video a second time.

Summary

Video can be fun to use in class. It really helps your students improve their listening comprehension. It is not that hard for teachers to find good material. There is a lot available on the television every week. Wile movies are preferred, they are not the only thing. There are also series that can be used. With this wealth of material and a little preparation, a good program can be established using video material.

About the Author

Lawrence Cisar has been teaching at Athènèe Français in Tokyo for over twelve years. He has been using movies in the classroom for the last three years. Before receiving his MAT from the School for International Training, he was in the Peace Corps in Afghanistan.

Talking on Tape: The Audio Cassette as an Aid to Oral Skills Improvement
Norma A. Register, University of Wisconsin

ESL specialists have long recognized the desirability of using automated aids to further in-class objectives. Traditionally the language laboratory with commercially prepared tapes and records has been the key avenue of instructional extension, seconded, perhaps, by newer technological tools in recent years.[1] However, in some programs, the personal audio cassette is contributing to the acquisitional process also. The purpose of this discussion is to explore the range of projects and assignments that can be adapted to a personal taping procedure. When used judiciously and imaginatively, it can provide a unique and productive source of pedagogical support.

The format which a teacher may follow in utilizing a personal taping method is roughly this:[2] The student purchases an ordinary audio cassette of good quality. S/he records specified oral exercises and assignments as homework and submits the results to the teacher for monitoring. The teacher listens to the tape and records a brief appraisal of the student's work onto the same tape and returns it to the student for review.

Categories of Tasks

The diversity of exercises that can be managed by such a strategy is essentially unlimited, but I have outlined three broad categories of tasks with a partial list of examples below. I have used the technique and related suggestions to help students perfect oral and aural competence. But many of the same tasks could on occasion lend enrichment to a grammar class, a reading class, or a class treating cross-cultural affairs.

I. Guided Tasks

This category of suggestions generally progresses from simple to more complex exercises. The assignments vary in terms of the amount of structure provided and the grammatical level of solicited responses (i.e. word-level, phrase-level or connected discourse). Most texts devoted to oral skills improvement will already include some of the more elementary types of tasks, but a teacher may wish to supplement textbook materials with routines directed towards learners' special requirements (see Fig. 1, on page 10).

I.0 Drill routines

  word lists

  minimal word pairs

  target phrases

  sentence manipulation exercises

I.1 Oral readings

  a. Excerpts from newspapers, textbooks, journals or magazines in learners' fields of interest

  b. Excerpts from novels or short stories

  c. Poems

  d. Limericks

II. Semi-Guided Tasks

These are primarily oral readings as were some in the first category. But these

selections present more challenge in that learners must elaborate the readings somewhat with either creative commentary or editing. Sample instructions that might be given are the following:

a. Read a paragraph or short article, and summarize its main points in your own words.

b. Sing your favorite English language song, and tell what the song is about.

c. Read a dialogue, short skit or play, or a comic strip with another classmate or two, but edit it to your personal situation (a joint project).

III. Unstructured Tasks

These projects, while being the most technically demanding for learners, are nonetheless the most stimulating to prepare and the most exciting to audit. Items in this category will tap learners' observational abilities and analytic talents along with their oral-aural proficiencies.

III.0 Describe one of the following using no more than brief notes as a guide:

a. a process (such as cooking rice, donning a turban, warding off an adversary, or finding one's way to your present address)

b. a familiar person such as a classmate or teacher

c. a landmark in your current locale or native country

III.1 Recite one of the following, and comment on the importance of the form in your culture:

a joke

a riddle

a children's story or rhyme

III.2 Recite one of the following from your native culture and comment on its universal message:

a fable

a proverb

a song

b or c from I.1 above

III.3 Conduct a quick survey with members of the target culture on a topic of curiosity (such as why some people do or don't vote, stop smoking, go to church, ride bicycles, etc.). Tell what you concluded.

Advantages of Personalized Taping

The fundamental appeal of personalized taping is probably its potential for improvisation. If, for example, a classroom lesson deals with the pros and cons of American fast food restaurants, a logical follow-up exercise might be to have students tape a talk on their knowledge of such restaurants in their native countries or their experiences with them in the western world. But if the teaching session is taking place during the summer and several of the students are Moslems, these students might appreciate the option of doing an exercise on abstinence and their experiences with observing Ramadan in the West or, conversely, the adjustments non-Moslems must make during Ramadan while living in the East.

Another attraction of the procedure is that it is inexpensive, the cost of a cassette being minimal. It is furthermore convenient since students can usually record cassettes in the laboratory on commercial equipment or at home on personal equipment if they own a recorder. But no matter where they record, they will always have the choice of saving

their audited tapes for future reference or erasing them for immediate reuse.

A final advantage is related to affective concerns. Since both student taping and teacher feedback are handled on an individualized basis, the technique can be a boon to the learner who feels self-conscious using the target language in class or anxious when using it in a laboratory booth. Of course, such persons could not prolong the move from private taping to "live" performance indefinitely. But the technique may offer welcomed breathing space while the learner gains confidence.

Potential Problems and Their Solutions

The strengths of the method far outweigh any problems I have encountered, but I mention a few conceivable difficulties. An obvious one is the lag between learner production and teacher monitoring. Whether learners need to be commended or cautioned for their efforts, neither action can be instantaneous.

Another problem is the considerable time demand placed on the teacher for the purpose of auditing the tapes. This requirement need not become excessive, however, if the taping activity is interspersed with other types of supplemental work such as written exercises or background reading for class discussions. Varying the procedure with different homework formats will also help offset the possibility of the procedure becoming tedious for the students.

Something else the teacher will need to do to keep the workload manageable is establish a streamlined recordkeeping system so as to keep track of learners' progress. The one I have devised should serve as an example.

I have a straightforward Homework Assignment Sheet which I reproduce in large quantity (cf. Fig. 1). At the top of the sheet is a space for filling in the week number or date on which the assignment is made and

the date upon which it is due. Below that is a place for filling in the student's name. Beneath the student's name is space for adding page and exercise numbers of regular textbook-generated oral work and following that, room to include instructions for teacher-initiated tasks. If I choose to give a single assignment to an entire class, I merely write the directions on the board and let the students fill in that portion of the information. But I make a copy of each week's sheets before giving them out.

The space remaining at the bottom of the copy is reserved for teachers' comments on students' work (cf. Fig. 2). All annotated copies remain on file for the balance of the teaching session as they will prove useful at final evaluation time.

About the Author

Norma A. Register has MA degrees in TEFL and linguistics and is currently completing a doctorate in linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has taught English at New Mexico Highlands University-Las Vegas and for the Program in ESL at UW. She and UW colleagues have used the method she describes. Some publications include work in The English Record *and* LASSO Journal.

References

[1] A position paper by De Napoli, A.J. and Lyons, K. (1983). Technology and foreign language education, *Language Association Bulletin* 35, 5-7. (From *Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts*, 1985, *19*, No. 8500290) describes a variety of technological aids now being used in language teaching including the microcomputer and video tape.

[2] For a slightly different approach to the use of the individual audio cassette, see Acton, W. (1984). Changing fossilized pronunciation. *TESOL Quarterly* 18, 71-85.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT SHEET

DATE/WEEK NO. _9_   DUE DATE _3-15_

NAME _Ahmed A._

- -

I.   Record the following exercises from Evans and Lee as directed:

No. 3, pp. 108-9 and No. 5, pp. 112-13, 11-20
only

II. In addition, complete the following:

A. Review Section IV, p. 84 of EoB. Record these
word pairs:

(1)	(2)
a. sing sink	e. linger linker
b. hang Hank	f. anger anchor
c. dung dunk	g. hunger bunker
d. Kong konk	h. longer conquer

B. See board for reading exercise.

Fig. 1 Homework Assignment Sheet

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT SHEET

DATE/WEEK NO. _9_   DUE DATE _3-15_

NAME _Ahmed S._

- -

I.   Record the following exercises from Evans and Lee as directed:

No. 3, pp. 108-9 and No. 5, pp. 112-13, 11-20
only

II.   In addition, complete the following:

A. Review Section II, p. 84 of E&L. Record these
word pairs:

(1)	(2)
a. sing sink	e. linger linker
b. hang Hank	f. anger anchor
c. dung dunk	g. hunger bunker
d. Kong konk	h. longer conquer

B. See board for reading exercise.

3/17: Continued problems with long and short vowel distinctions;
e.g. [frst] vs. [fist] (#4/108) and [sɪk] vs. [siK] (#7/109).
Low back vowels still give him problems: [lɔ] vs. [low] (#12/113)
Velar nasal distinctions improve with slower pace though not
consistently: A.2.c, f and g were noticeably distorted as was
"prices sink..." in his reading on Economic Forecasting.
His intonation and phrase rhythm were very good overall.

Fig. 2. Homework Assignment Sheet With Teacher Comments

Approaches to Academic Reading and Writing
Review by Cheryl Mason, University of Iowa

APPROACHES TO ACADEMIC READING AND WRITING. Martin L. Arnaudet and Mary Ellen Barrett. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984. pp. 276, List Price $11.95. (Teacher's manual available)

Approaches to Academic Reading and Writing is designed both for advanced EFL students (TOEFL scores of 550 and above) who are already enrolled in academic classes in an English-speaking country as well as for students and scholars abroad who need to read and write in English in order to pursue their professional interests.

The latter group especially will appreciate the authors' inclusion of three "resource chapters" which are authentic selections from current American college textbooks. The three chapters are representative of academic prose and general enough in content to be of interest to students in any field. Most importantly for students and teachers who might not have access to authentic textbooks in English, these selections make *Approaches* a largely self-contained course and they form the basis for authentic academic writing assignments: short papers, summaries, critical reviews, essay examinations and research papers.

Arnaudet and Barrett's work on paraphrasing is the best I've ever seen in a writing textbook. They break this critical skill for EFL writers into a number of "pre-paraphrasing" techniques which they demonstrate at various points throughout the book.

The reading sections (designed to help students recognize the elements of organization, basic thought relationships, and textual coherence devices common to academic writing) are also well-done, though the text focuses "intensively" on analytical reading of prose for only the first 68 pages of the text.

Some teachers (myself included) may find Arnaudet and Barrett's approach a bit prescriptive. Their premise is that "if a learner of English as second language becomes proficient in *one approach* to the task—one which is acceptable in any circumstance—then that student will be able to write successfully in other coursework or in professional activities." To the extent that this is true, *Approaches to Academic Reading and Writing* is a very successful and welcome additon to the field.

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Vivifying the Writing Class
"You Are There" Style
Charles R. French, Universidad Austral de Chile

Over recent years, auxiliary language educators have become increasingly more concerned with favorably engaging student feelings in the language acquisition process. For some the matter is a primary issue. Stevick (1976:122) states flatly, "The crucial factor in second language learning is the quality of personal activation."

Note we are not talking about the communicative approach(es) per se. Granted, all communicative approaches must pay major concern to favorably engaging student feelings. But not every language teaching approach or method which does so could be called communicative in the most complete sense. Thus, Suggestopedia, for example, is of interest for the affective climate it manages to create, even though the semantic organization of Lozanov's syllabus, or any particular student processing of that syllabus in itself would perhaps be regarded of small note by most communicative methodologists.

What this means is that, "How can I get my students to communicate more?" and "How can I more deeply activate my students internally?" are not the same question.

The present article has developed from the second of these quests. It is about seeing, about feeling, about reading, and—in particular—about writing. About a particular technique of writing whose purpose, as used by professional journalists, is to arrest attention.

"You Are There"

Two men sit at opposite ends of an aluminum skiff on a muddy brown river.

A dugout canoe, its sides still wet, lies nearby on the riverbank. Two new machetes and a small pile of food are heaped next to the canoe. One of the men holds a camera in his moist hands. The other, his face streaked with sweat, calls again and again into the dense jungle growth along the shore, not 15 feet away, in the blunt words of a strange language: "Yo! Yo!" Listen, he is saying. We are friends. Do not run. We will not hurt you. Take our gifts. Don't run away. "Yo!"

Thus does Herbert Libertson begin his article entitled "New Guinea: The Outer Limits," which appeared in *GEO* magazine in April of 1982.

"She Flies Through the Air with the Greatest of Ease" by Joan Ackermann-Blount, published January 16, 1984 in *Sports Illustrated*, starts like this:

"Isn't this fun?" Edna Gardner Whyte, pioneer woman aviator, has just stalled her plane at 1,500 feet, sending it toppling in a free-fall spin. Her passenger, someone who doesn't do too well on Ferris wheels, is screaming piteously at the earth that is whirlpooling up toward her, wrapping itself around her head, unfurling like an explosion in a ribbon factory.

"Edna . . . " The scream funnels out from some unexplored part of her psyche, filling the void where the motor once roared.

"Edna. . .the motor. . .is everything all right?"

"Yes, now relax. I want you to enjoy this."

What these two leads have in common is that they are written in "you are there" style. Journalists have found this an engaging manner to transport the casual, uncommitted, image oriented magazine reader from his own concerns to those of the magazine he is holding: It is the equivalent in print of turning on the television set.

Four Components

Before considering a place for this technique in TESOL, we will briefly discuss four basic components of an arresting "you are there" vignette:

1. setting

2. characters

3. point of view

4. action

First, there is a specific, concrete setting whose chief features are sharply lit. "Two men sit at opposite ends of an aluminum skiff on a muddy brown river. A dugout canoe, its sides still wet, lies nearby on the riverbank," gives the reader—the advanced reader, at any rate—something definite to work with. "Some men are in a boat on the water. Another boat is out of the water," clearly gives less, and thus proves less arresting.

Second, there is a character or characters that become the focus of reader concern; what is happening to them—what is going to happen to them—prompts reader identification:

Her passenger, someone who doesn't do too well on Ferris wheels, is screaming piteously at the earth that is whirlpooling up toward her, wrapping itself around her head, unfurling like an explosion in a ribbon factory.

Third, there is conscious manipulation of point of view, the angle from which the scene is framed, the action filmed, the story "told." The reader, in short, is given a good seat. Everything important for him to see is shown "on camera"; anything else important for him to know is mentioned unobtrusively, whispered into his ear, as it were, while his eyes remain fastened to the screen. Once again, we refer to Ackermann-Blount:

The passenger looks up through the window at the sky and wails out loud when the slide of the sky is replaced by a slide of the earth as three Gs pass through them both like riptides. (One G is the gravitational force on a person when standing on the ground. Three Gs feel like three people are inside one's body and along with everything one has ever dreamed, thought or eaten, they're all stampeding to exit from one's head.) Edna is radiant. "Aerobatics keeps you young," she says.

Fourth, and most characteristically, there is action, happening now, at the present—to such a degree, with certain craftsmen, that the reader experiences the illusion that if he were to remove his eyes from the page, the succession of events would continue inexorably without him. This sense of the irretrievable moment is created through the use of 1) dialogue 2) present participial and absolute phrases and 3) the simple present and simple present continuous tenses, although the present perfect and present perfect continuous may be employed judiciously to fill out the situation without disrupting the effect:

"Isn't this fun?" Edna Gardner Whyte, pioneer woman aviator, has just stalled her plane at 1,500 feet, sending it toppling in a free-fall spin.

"You Are There" and
"Personal Activation"

Up to this point, we have looked at some examples of "you are there" writing, analyzed its basic components, and observed that journalists use the technique fundamentally to arrest reader attention, precisely because ... it so powerfully stirs reader feelings. And there is good reason to presume that the effect on the writer himself is even greater than that on his reader.

Psychologists have long understood that there is a mysterious power of arousal in talking in the present tense about past events. They will sometimes have a counselee relate a past experience as if it were happening in the now, all over again. This simple technique tends to revive the feelings originally associated with the experience (even perhaps uncover long forgotten facts, remembered in a flood of emotion).

There is some evidence that whole cultures have shared in an emotive "you are there" consciousness. Whorf (1956) regarded the absence of past tense markers in some Indian languages of basic importance for understanding how the people who spoke these languages experienced their lives. It would be difficult to deny that the speaking of the past in present tense (for Whorf the present was "sensuous," the past "nonsensuous") contributed in some measure to the unique time/space consciousness conveyed in the book *Hanta Yo* by Ruth Beebe Hill and especially, with more reliance on dialogue, in the TV mini-series "The Mystic Warrior" based on that novel. (The reader should be advised, though, that not all versions dubbed for international distribution conserved this feature, unfortunately.)

The main point here, though, is simply this: Recounting our experience in present tense makes that experience seem more immediate, more spontaneous, more alive—both to ourselves and others. Having

students write "you are there" style is thus seen as consistent with one of our major goals in TESOL, that of positively enlisting student feelings, of encouraging "personal activation," of setting in motion deep, admittedly not well understood emotive-cognitive processes that would seem to favor language acquisition.

Getting Started

"You are there" writing is so common these days that teachers and students with ready access to Sunday newspaper supplements or popular magazines in English will have no trouble finding a host of examples for analysis and discussion. Of course, teachers may have to write simplified versions—perhaps two or three different approximations for some especially difficult models, where both vocabulary and sentence structure would be downstepped in combination. Thus, "Some men are in a boat on the water. Another boat is out of the water" may actually be the version of preference for a first reading of Libertson in an EFL classroom. We must keep in mind that reading problems create distance, and a "you are there" piece succeeds only to the extent that distance is minimized.

While students are still at the analysis stage (implicit throughout this discussion is the conviction that careful readers become effective writers), one simple yet profitable exercise is to have them change all the main verbs of an illustrative lead to past time. Students will see that the result may still be an effective piece of writing, but it is no longer "you are there." Why? In the one we seem to observe the action from the seats, at a safe remove; in the other, we seem more involved with the performers, as if we were in their company up on stage.

Writing assignments themselves can be thought of in preliminary stages as video portraits translated into print. There's no need, in other words, to assign an entire article just so students can have an

opportunity to write "you are there." Article ideas can be merely discussed, opening images talked over, and appropriate leads written as ends in themselves. Results are often quite satisfying, intact vignettes envincing their own particular charm. They do not have to be part of a full-length article to be meaningfully experienced.

To be sure, neither our students nor we ourselves, for that matter (this is a writing activity worth sharing in with them side by side), can be expected to become Libertsons or Ackermann-Blounts. But, then, that is not the goal. Is it not enough to sharpen our appreciation of the people who bring "light to our eyes," to perhaps heighten our awareness of an event (however modest), then seek to share that awareness with those in our immediate circle, through means of the new language we are acquiring?

References

Stevick, Earl W. 1976. *Memory meaning & method.* Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. 1956. *Language, thought, and reality* . Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press.

About the Author

Charles R. French received a B.S. in Special Education in 1975 and an M.A. in Educational Psychology in 1976 from Eastern Michigan University. He has been teaching composition to EFL students at Universidad Austral in Valdivia, Chile since 1977. The present article is an outcome of an investigation sponsored by that university's Research and Development Center.

Conference Announcements

April 1-5, 1987 are the dates of the international humor conference to be held at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. Proposals on any aspect of "International Humor" should be sent before January 15, 1987 to Don L. F. Nilsen, English Department, A.S.U., Tempe, Arizona 85287.

The Latin American Indian Literatures Association / Asociación de Literaturas Indígenas Latinoamericanas (LAIL/ALILA) will hold its fifth international symposium at Cornell University, June 3-6, 1987. Five copies of abstracts (150-200 words) must be mailed to the symposium chairman no later than October 15, 1986. The focus must be on indigenous literature of Latin America or affiliated groups, but all approaches (anthropological, archaeological, art, astronomical, ethnohistorical, linguistic, etc.) will be considered. Contact: Dr. Richard Luxton, LAILA/ALILA Symposia Chairman, P. O. Box 163553, Sacramento, California 95816.

"The Four Houses of TESL": A Letter and A Response

A Reader Writes

Dear Editor:

In the July 1985 *TESL Reporter*, which I recently received, Harry Krasnick ("The Four Houses of TESL") purports to survey four disciplines (psychology, linguistics, sociology and anthropology, and literature) in an effort "to bring into sharper relief the several distinct conceptualizations of TESL which can be found among practitioners."

Aside from the fact that such a project should not be squeezed into a four page article, even to clarify an issue "in some small way," Krasnick violates several basic precepts of clear thinking and professional scholarship:

(1) His article, belying its title, is structured to close with a discussion of the future of only one of the "houses," literature, but ignores the future of any of the others.

(2) He singles out and selectively quotes from two recent articles, one a full-scale, detailed review of the most recent anthologies of short stories for ESL students, to conclude that "It is a tribute to the secure position of the house of literature in TESL that it apparently need not account for inconsistent claims made on its behalf. Literature has been TESL's sacred cow for too long." Considering that the bibliography of articles and books on TESL and literature written both in the U.S. and abroad is extensive (ERIC has its own print out of these references), two brief paragraphs on two recent articles seem insufficient to draw such a general conclusion.

(3) Krasnick contradicts himself. He criticizes the house of psychology because "... we find very few TESL practitioners who themselves were trained in psychology," but, discussing literature, he remarks, "One reason for this [the considerable influence of literature within TESL] may be the fact that a substantial number of practitioners, as noted above, received their first training in English (not in ESL)." As more people receive degrees in ESL or Applied Linguistics, remarks Krasnick, "...perhaps the influence of the house of literature will wane."

(4) Krasnick uses snippets from writings on TESL and literature to establish false dichotomies between those who say literature uses language which can aid language acquisition and others who say literature uses language different from everyday speech. These concepts do not inherently conflict.

These four points demonstrate some but not all of the typical and most dangerous flaws in Krasnick's piece. If he had spent more time reading about literature and TESL by some of the many fine scholars and writers in the field, and reading more of literature itself, he might then be able to provide the needed perspective he sought to give us.

Dr. Howard Sage
Adjunct Associate Professor
New York University

The Author Responds

TESL Reporter subscribers who have not read my article may not know what to make

of Professor Sage's assortment of ill-founded complaints because he is careful to avoid the major issue which the article deals with. Let me tell the story in plain English.

TESL practitioners with literature backgrounds want ESL learners to share their enthusiasm for Great Literature. This is only human. The painfully obvious problem, however, is that many learners lack the cultural background necessary to understand (and appreciate) that literature. What the literature proponents have tried to do is turn this into a virtue, in effect maintaining that literature must surely develop cultural awareness in the learner because literature cannot be appreciated without it!

Since most of us dare not question the value of literature for fear of being labeled "uncultured," literature teachers have managed to sneak their own favorite subject matter into the ESL curriculum virtually without having to fire a single shot (acting as *de facto* academic advisers for ESL learners in the process).

All TESL practitioners are concerned with the question of what content is of greatest value for learners. I had hoped to encourage those who are not intimidated by the "culture vultures" to give careful thought to the role of literature in TESL by illustrating the inconsistent things said about its proponents.

In the "snippets" I quoted in the article, we find one proponent claiming that literature provides comprehensible language input, and another admitting that the language of literature differs from everyday speech. (If so, why choose literature as a source of input?) In the second example, one proponent holds that studying literature increases cultural awareness, while the other one advises that cultural awareness must come before the study of literature. (Professor Sage sees no inconsistencies here.)

I regret that Professor Sage had no positive contribution to make which might have helped to clear up this confused state of affairs. I suppose that searching for nits to pick in my article was the easiest thing to do under the circumstances. Readers, though, should decide for themselves.

Harry Krasnick
University of Guam

PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES

TESL Canada '87

Getting To Your House On An Overhead Projector
Mark W. Seng, The University of Texas at Austin

The "language of directions" used in this transparency for the overhead projector will intrigue your students. They undoubtedly give and receive directions, and they realize that this is a skill which is important in their lives, even critical in emergency situations. Beatrice Orth created the original concept and artwork, subsequently modified, which is useful in teaching all languages.

Using this transparency, students can see prepositional relationships. They will also learn some alternative ways directions can be expressed. If desired, slang can be explained. For example, they may be told to "hang" a right at the stoplight.

A transparency is first made from the original (see figure 1). Because of the small details, the transparency should be made as large as possible. An enlarging copier can increase its size to fill the transparency film. (An alternative is to move the projector farther from the screen or wall, darkening the room as necessary.)

The small car (in the lower right hand corner) may be cut or drawn on a separate piece of film, or on plexiglass which can be manipulated more easily. The car does not have a front or back, which facilitates moving on its journey. The eraser of a pencil is used to move the car along the road.

The teacher first can describe the route to "your house" once or twice. Then, a student can come to the projector to repeat the directions. There are many ways to express the directions, some of which, with alternatives, are listed below. In subsequent classes, one seated student might give

directions to another (at the projector) to follow. Students might enjoy working in pairs, one directing the other. An interesting variation is to request directions for the return trip. After the students are able to give the directions orally, they can be given the more challenging task of writing them.

This map can be converted into a large chart by first projecting the picture (with an opaque or overhead projector) on a large piece of paper or poster board, and then drawing it with a marking pen. The teacher could then use a pointer to indicate the route on the wall chart. Games like *Monopoly* would provide opportunities for further practice of the directional language taught here.

Expressions used with the transparency

(Alternatives are given in parentheses)

1. out of the house

2. down the steps

3. in(to) the garage

4. turn right at the happy cat sign

5. left playground (take the first left)

6. take the second right (at the church)

7. go under (through) the overpass

8. go up (over) the hill

9. go down the hill

10. go past the cemetery

11. cross (go across) the railroad tracks

12. through the covered bridge

13. take a left at the crossroad (turn in front of, at the motel)

14. go past the sheep, (go between the sheep and the fisherman)

15. follow the river (go along the river)

16. go over the bridge but under the flying Swami

17. follow the river (go along)

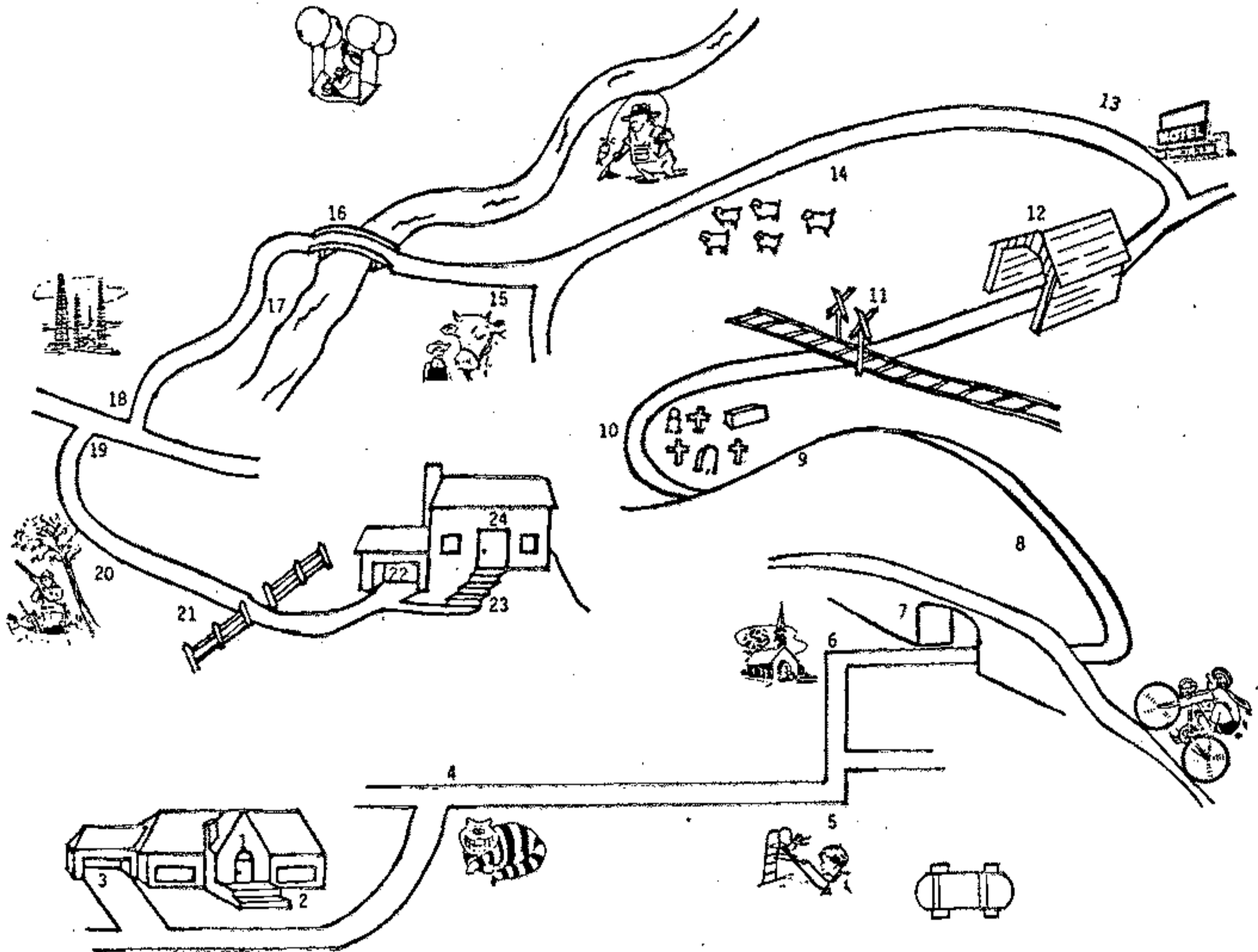18. turn (take a) right at the oil field

19. turn at (take the) first left

20. pass the hunter on your right

21. through the gate

22. into the garage next to the house

23. up the steps (stairs) in front of the house

24. into the house.