

The Video Connection: Integrating Video into Language Teaching by Rick Altman. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989. 184 pp.

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Most foreign language teachers, according to Rick Altman in *The Video Connection*, are not yet aware of the resources and exciting advantages of videotaped teaching materials. Currently, although interest is growing, curriculum developers, materials developers, and teachers have been slow to supplement other materials with video. There is a need for more information about what materials are available, how to integrate them into the curriculum, and what to do with them in the classroom. *The Video Connection* provides this information within the overall goal of Altman's video pedagogy, which is to make video serve a wide range of educational purposes. In Altman's view, video is one medium among others which can be integrated into the curriculum and syllabus.

In Part I, "General Principles," Altman discusses in three chapters the implications of language acquisition theory and basic methodological principles for the use of video in the classroom. Although this part of *The Video Connection* has some weaknesses, which will be discussed below, overall, the book provides a wealth of practical suggestions based on the author's own experience and that of other pedagogues. These range from "Teaching with Video" (Part II), which deals with implementing video for teaching different skills at different proficiency levels, both inside and outside the class, to other "Practical Considerations" (Part III), which introduces teachers to legal information pertaining to video and which helps them understand the hardware and technology of the VCR as well as other sources of video materials.

Altman claims to have developed a new "pedagogy" or "methodology" based on video, yet the core of this teacher's reference book would more appropriately be described as a set of techniques embedded in a discussion of some theoretical and methodological issues. Altman's "video pedagogy" is in alignment with what Larsen-Freeman (1986, p. 109) refers to as "the comprehension approach," a term which Larsen-Freeman applies to

all approaches that concentrate on comprehension as the essence of language learning in its initial stages. So it is not surprising that Altman advocates Asher's technique of Total Physical Response (TPR) (Asher, 1977) and subscribes to Krashen's Monitor Theory (Krashen, 1985; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Altman's support of TPR, however, is contradictory to his postulation that language should be learned in context. TPR is, after all, merely a revival of traditional drill exercises in which language is devoid of its natural context. It is doubtful whether there is a place in the real world outside the TPR classroom, except perhaps the military, in which native speakers command each other to "sit down," "stand up," and "drop the elephant" repetitively and without any politeness markers. Moreover, Altman's description of Monitor Theory is disappointingly simplistic from a second language acquisition researcher's point of view because it deals with only one single hypothesis from a set of hypotheses which, combined, constitute Krashen's Monitor Theory. And, whereas the Monitor Theory may be widely accepted among teachers, it has not found wide acceptance among researchers in second language acquisition (e.g., Takala, 1982; Gregg, 1984). The Monitor Theory thus provides a rather weak theoretical basis for a teaching methodology.

Notwithstanding these critical remarks, however, I find Altman's clear and comprehensible introduction to schema theory an invaluable contribution. His discussion of schema theory is all the more laudable because he follows through with appropriate suggestions for classroom teaching. Schema theory claims that the process of comprehension includes an interaction between the text at hand and the subject's own prior accumulation and organization of knowledge (e.g., Carrell, 1983). It is important to activate prior knowledge in order to ensure that the learner invokes an appropriate context for the ensuing topic of discussion. Altman describes a variety of previewing activities designed to achieve this goal. Before showing a videotaped weather forecast in a lower-level language course, for example, Altman suggests preparing learners for the difference between Celsius and Fahrenheit scales, unfamiliar weather expressions or unfamiliar names of cities, bodies of water, and geographic regions. This preparation, he recommends, can be done by discussing a newspaper weather page to bridge the gap between the learners' knowledge and the knowledge needed to understand the weather forecast on video.

Integrating video materials into the curriculum for Altman means concerted, program-wide decisions regarding the amount,

type, and location of video programs to be used. Curriculum designers are advised to integrate video materials into their larger educational planning as a way of attaining broader educational objectives. Rather than having, say, one video day a week, Altman maintains that video can support any grammatical or cultural topic as well as contextualize grammar and vocabulary by embedding language in a relatively natural context. For this reason, authentic videos are preferred by Altman. The key to finding time for video, for Altman, lies in using short video segments which supplement other materials. He also stresses that video materials must be chosen not primarily for their inherent artistic value but for their ability to fulfill a particular function in a particular course. Finally, Altman points out that the role of the teacher is to foster lively interaction with the video program because even the best book on methodology and the best teaching materials will not work if a teacher is not enthusiastic about the materials.

The strength of Altman's book lies in its wealth of concrete suggestions for teachers. A wide variety of exercises and recommended class procedures address the need voiced by many teachers for such guidance. These activities are explained clearly, and a multitude of examples based on actual videos are laid out. Even a teacher faced with a grammar-driven curriculum can find a great number of relevant activities. A teacher preparing a grammatical unit on the imperative, for example, is advised to introduce this topic by means of videotaped advertisements. After students have been exposed to the usage of this form, class activity can be devoted to getting them to produce the imperative form by creating their own advertisements. The wide range of exercises suggested by Altman includes using video inside and outside of class (for institutions with a separate video laboratory); individual viewing, group viewing, and small-group viewing; preparatory activities, follow-up activities, audio exercises with the video sound track, and cloze exercises; testing with video; video in lower-level language classes; special-purpose language courses at the upper level; video produced by students to interact with an exchange class in the target language.

Altman also calls for cooperation among language and non-language departments, even beyond the campus, in order to exchange teaching experiences and coordinate fundraising. Given this appeal to all teachers to cooperate, I wish that *The Video Connection* had included a greater variety of languages in the examples and list of sources, which come mainly from Spanish,

French, German, and occasionally from Italian and Russian. Although the forms of exercises can easily be adapted for use with other foreign languages, such as Chinese or Japanese, the book would attract and serve a broader audience if Altman had included a greater variety of target languages. Furthermore, although the subtitle of the book, *Integrating Video Into Language Teaching*, implies the teaching of all languages, no materials from the ESL/EFL domain are included. This is all the more surprising given that the international organization of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has a separate interest group for teaching with video.

Nevertheless, novices to video will find the glossary of acronyms and technical terms useful; in addition, a list of distributors of video programs, a selected bibliography, and an index provide practical information. An especially informative feature of *The Video Connection* is its up-to-date report of the rapid technological development in the realm of combining video, videodisc, and computer. Although a request form for a 30-minute demonstration video (at a cost of only \$5) is found at the very end of the book, to the reviewer's regret, the publisher did not submit this video for review, so no comment can be made.

Altman succeeds in presenting a helpful pool of advice for video-illiterate but "video-willing" foreign language teachers as well as for video-literate teachers seeking support and new ideas. In all, I highly recommend this practical and carefully compiled book to teachers, materials developers, and curriculum designers.

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Teaching and Learning Vocabulary by I.S.P. Nation. New York: Newbury House, 1990. 275 pp.

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In the recent past, pedagogical attention to vocabulary learning as a basic learner need for communicative language learning has too often been lacking. However, this situation may be reversed as teaching absorbs the increasing flow of information from research on the development of L2 lexicon (e.g., Laufer, 1986, forthcoming; Haastруп, 1987; Palmberg, 1987; Meara, 1984), on lexical-semantic relations in text (e.g., Li, 1988; White, 1988), and on the possible pedagogical applications of this research (e.g., Robinson, 1988; Sinclair & Renouf, 1988). I.S.P. Nation's *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary* is primarily composed of the familiar products of mainstream vocabulary teaching of past decades. However, it is mainly limited to recapitulating that experience, despite Nation's concern with linking instruction and recent scholarship. Viewed in this light, the book should be considered both a summation and a sign of a pedagogical tradition awaiting fresh input from the perspectives of contemporary theoretical and applied research.

Teaching and Learning Vocabulary is both a teacher-training primer and a field manual. Its first five chapters present an introduction to (and thus provide a working knowledge of) vocabulary learning/teaching issues: the means and ends of teaching vocabulary, a discussion of the acquisition of lexical items, what is meant by "communicating meaning" in the classroom, and procedural guides for measuring learners' foreign-language lexicon and for assessing textbooks' vocabulary frequencies. Sections devoted to application, with exercises for the instructor-in-training, appear at the end of each chapter.