The five issues of this newsletter, which focuses on a set of video-based, commercially-produced French second language instructional materials, contain articles on a variety of topics. The instructional materials in question, "French in Action," consist of a videotape component (52 episodes), an audiotape component, workbook, study guide, and textbook. Among the topics discussed are: curriculum development using the materials; personal narratives of classroom applications; ideas for general application in teacher education and testing; hints concerning the use of specific episodes; making the transition from a different set of instructional materials; a modification of the course used with deaf college students; use in distance education; selection of the curriculum for New Zealand's educational television network; professional news and announcements; and letters. (MSE)
French in Action
Newsletter

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Creating a Network of French Action Users

April 1991

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE
French in Action pioneer Barbara Meister wins prestigious Klingenstein Fellowship
Will spend next year developing pre-college materials for French in Action

Several weeks ago, Barbara Meister received a letter from the Teachers College at Columbia University. It announced her acceptance into the prestigious Joseph Klingenstein Fellows Program. According to the letter, Meister had been selected from "a group of outstanding and talented educators...throughout the nation." Apart from her great talent as a teacher and impressive credentials, the most unique and distinctive aspect of her application may have been the nature of her proposal. As stated in her Program Plan, "The purpose of my proposal is to create a manual of guidelines for pre-university instructional strategies to accompany French in Action."

Given her young age, 27, and her limited experience compared to the other applicants, it seemed as though Meister would have little chance of being accepted. "It is very, very competitive," she explained. "Last year no language people won, and this year I am the only language person. The other applicants are mostly older people, who are already possibly heads of schools or heads of departments, so winning was really an uphill battle for me. But that says a lot for FiA. I convinced them that my proposal was valid and its objective important enough to merit a fellowship."

Meister has been using FiA as a core program to teach French to fifth and sixth graders at Collegiate, a private school for boys in New York City, where she has been a teacher for the past six years. She has wanted to "do something with the program for a couple of years now." She considers FiA to be a resounding success, even with such young children. "Because of this program, the children feel so free to express themselves. And they sound so French. [FiA] creates the desire to say as much as you can and to sound as French as you can, to really try to sound authentic. They love to imitate every bit of it. And with the video, they can imitate it physically, with their hands and eyes. Everything they see on the tape they love to do. The program really motivates them."

While teaching with FiA over the years, Meister has taken an interest in developing supplemental materials which would make FiA more accessible to children of all ages, from elementary to high school. In terms of elementary school kids, Meister finds that, "once you get to about Lesson 10 the grammar becomes too sophisticated. We need to get a handle on how to present the grammar in a way that is better suited to their level. The story itself is not a problem. It's all tongue in cheek. It's funny. They are supposed to laugh, and they do!"

Meister plans to create supplementary materials for middle and upper school students as well. Because FiA was conceived and developed with college students in mind, supplementary materials for pre-college students are not yet available. During next year at Columbia, Meister hopes to, "visit and observe and talk to teachers, find out what they are doing, what is working, what is not working, and get ideas about what they think they need; and then come up with materials which will make the program work better...for instance, showing the video, and working with the audio, and what kinds of group activities work, etc. Now that I have this year off I can really come up with things that will help everybody."

As part of her research next year, Meister is going to interview at both private and public schools. She doesn't believe that FiA is only appropriate for private school students. "Certain things about children are universal. Certainly my kids are very motivated, but on the other hand, I think you can motivate anybody if you present the language in the right way and if you make it fun. That is the thing about FiA: it's fun! If Capretz's hair looks funny, any kid who looks at the screen is going to laugh and enjoy it. When Marie-Laure is talking about loving chocolate, it's not just private school kids who are going to want to say what she is saying. I think you can make it work for anybody. It is just a matter of knowing your audience."

According to Meister, some of the things which give FiA its universal appeal and make it almost more appropriate for children than adults include the fact that it doesn't scare them. "My kids are not scared of complicated structures because they don't realize they are complicated. They just do whatever is asked of them. They don't know about the grammar that is behind it, so they don't worry about it. They just pick it up. The way the exercises are presented, they can imitate the model, and just through repetition pick grammar up. People
**FiA in the summer: Elizabeth Anglin and her summer teachers institute in Mississippi**

*Professor Elizabeth Anglin, a professor at the University of Southern Mississippi, has conducted two three-week French workshops at USM for Mississippi high school teachers, one during the summer of '88 and one during the summer of '90. In a report on the workshops, she cited their success to two factors. One was the commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers who participated. The other was the French in Action materials they used. Anglin would like to run an institute this summer, but can’t because of a lack of funding.*

*Lucia Hodgson: What inspired you to run a summer teacher’s institute in Mississippi?*

*Elizabeth Anglin: In Mississippi, as in many other parts of the country, teachers in the small towns get very few opportunities to practice their French. And sometimes teachers are not well-prepared to teach French because they are certified in another area. [Running a summer institute] just seemed like a way to allow teachers who are in very isolated situations to improve their French and to update their teaching approach and techniques.*

*EA: First of all, I’m not native French. [FiA] allowed me to run a workshop and let the high school teachers hear a whole lot of native French from different people, as opposed to hearing only my French. It was also partly a question of money. FiA enabled you to do an institute with a very limited budget. When you run a workshop you generally need a number of people to do it. Because FiA has so many materials, [the teachers attending the workshop] don’t have to count on a workshop teacher all the time. They can get modeling and feedback from the materials. That first summer I ran it all by myself, and I couldn’t possibly have done that if I couldn’t have put them to work in small groups.*

*EA: We were essentially trying to get the teachers to use French in the classroom, and we used FiA as an example to illustrate techniques for using the language in the classroom [by manipulating video materials]. What we were trying to show them was that they didn’t necessarily have to be proficient themselves [in French] to use these materials.*

*EA: Yes. They had all been intimidated by the idea of trying to speak French in the classroom, but by the end they were all amazed at how well it worked and how much more interesting it was. We had a follow-up meeting in the fall. One of them, who had started at a very low level of proficiency, was just absolutely wide-eyed at how much she had learned. She had gone home and kept working with FiA. That was what we were looking for; we were trying to let them understand that FiA teaches them how to learn.*

*For these teachers it was a real eye opener. They had always thought of French as some kind of strange code that they didn’t know very much of and that their students knew less of. They didn’t think of it as something real. I think that’s what they got out of FiA. They understood that French is a real language and that they can actually speak it and that they can actually teach their students to speak it. You can try to explain that to people, but I think that as a result of the institute, a number of them had the experience of understanding themselves that it is really true. -L.H.*

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**Would you like more information about getting your hands on French in Action exam copies and materials?**

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Or contact:
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Marie-Madeleine Watkins: Born in Paris, I attended the Lycée Lamartine, and then the Sorbonne where I earned a License de Lettres Modernes. I won a scholarship to study at Sweet Briar College, and then I earned my Masters and much later finished my PhD at the University of Texas in Austin. In '78, just before I finished my dissertation, I got my first and only job here at Berea College. Now I am an Associate Professor of French.

LH: When did you start using FiA?

MW: We are in our third year. We started the semester after Dr. Capretz made his presentation at a workshop at Wooster College. I had heard about FiA from a friend at the U of Texas. It seemed so fantastic that it was probably too good to be true, or something that was only for big league schools. I forgot about it, but very soon when I had an especially unpleasant classroom experience struggling with the various other books we used (we would change textbooks every so often looking for the perfect one) I would dream about how nice it would be to have something as fantastic and luxurious as FiA, what I knew about it anyway.

Then I attended the workshop. M. Capretz's presentation couldn't have been clearer. There was no hype. It was very convincing. On the way back, my colleagues and I decided that FiA sounded so good that we shouldn't wait to make a change. If we really believed in it, we should change right away, and right away meant for the Spring semester.

The question was: Who is going to get started with this new method? They decided that I should, and that was the most exciting thing that had happened to me in all my years of teaching. I really felt the kind of enthusiasm that teaching ought to bring. I was also a little bit nervous, because the whole thing is a little bit intimidating. It has so many components, and I wasn't sure I would know how to use them. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to control the material. But there was really no reason for me to be afraid, because after I had studied everything thoroughly, really gotten into it, and rehearsed and read and underlined and practiced, the more I looked at the method, the better it looked, and the easier it looked to use.

That spring semester, three years ago, I taught the first 101 class, and then in the fall we added two more sections, and the more we use it the happier we are. Now looking back on it, I realize that that first time around I was probably not doing all the materials justice. I was not really using them very efficiently. I should have, but that is perfectly normal, I am sure. It takes practice. Since then I have attended a couple more workshops, done on the local level.

LH: How are students doing with FiA compared to how they were doing before with other methods?

MW: Yesterday I returned some writing assignments from my third level French class, and the level of proficiency they have achieved in writing is astonishing, astounding. Most of the papers were two pages long, and the assignment was on the lesson where Robert and Mireille go to Chartres. Robert is jealous because he thinks he sees Mireille talking to the beau Sudois, or the petite Alpine rouge. Of course the question is: Did he see her or not? Does she know the beau Sudois or not? I asked them to write a letter from Mireille to Chisalaine, recounting the outing in Chartres. I got such beautiful papers, and this is not the first time. I have had many, many great papers, written in incredibly good French, something that I would never have dared ask of my students before. Before, with the old methods, we never had those writing assignments.

LH: Without mentioning any names, can you tell me the main difference between FiA and other programs?

MW: The greatest difference is the recycling of the material, the way material is seen once and then comes back again and is totally integrated. I never found that, and I have used just about everything out there, because I was never satisfied. Another is the perfect integration of culture and language, which is something that you simply do not find in the regular texts. With the other texts you have those silly little dialogues, and they are supposed to present the typical French family having lunch together, or a typical student saying, "Bonjour, je m'appelle so and so. Je ne suis pas français, je suis sénégalais. J'aime étudier, mais je n'étudie pas tout le temps." That was supposed to give us a picture of a typical French speaking student, and it was bland, tasteless. It didn't evoke any image of a French person at all. It was totally neutral, totally culturally fabricated, totally artificial. Nobody really speaks like that or would say that spontaneously. There was none of the idiomatic French that is captured in FiA.

LH: Could you compare FiA's approach to grammar to that of other text-books?

MW: I think the way FiA presents grammar in context is the only way to do it. Otherwise you have dry, boring, grammar lessons, instead of having language lessons. The students absorb the grammar. The workbook is beautifully made; everything in the workbook is meaningful. So many of those other workbooks just look like busy work. [In FiA] there is this beautiful integration. Everything makes sense. It is like all the parts of the puzzle coming together. And as far as the result, I would say that the results you get with FiA in my experience are superior to what you get with more traditional methods. I think that often the students will know the grammar just as well [as with traditional methods], and not just because they have memorized some rules, but because they know it has to be qui instead of que, for instance; because que doesn't sound right. They will say it is qui instead of que because, "Don't you remember Mireille says, "C'est l'homme qui était dans le train," or whatever. They are learning grammar the way language is learned, not the way grammar is memorized. That I think is definitely a plus.

LH: What do you think of the FiA videos?

MW: It goes without saying that it is more enjoyable to watch, especially something that is as well done. Nothing is-stilted, nothing is contrived. There is always a lot of humor in the situation and truth. The truth that is presented is never stereotypical. We are not given a caricature of French people. I tell you, Madame Courtois, les Courtois ... I swear I know these people. They were the parents of my best friend, and there are people really like that. This is very important in terms of teaching. It prepares our students. Those of our students who have spent a semester abroad with a background in FiA all say, "Oh, but I knew this. I expected this because I saw it in FiA." And it goes from being able to identify une boîte dans le bureau, to knowing about food, to not taking a whole cheese on your plate. Little things that you would not think about, but which to them make a big difference. [With other textbooks] there is no way that could happen. It is just not the same animal.

LH: How do you implement FiA in your classes?

MW: I think we do up to and including lesson 13, and after that I decided not to do more than 12 lessons a semester. 13 would be ideal, 13 would cover everything, but it just is pushing them too hard. We end at lesson 35 or 36. Starting next spring we are going to add a 104 which will take it from wherever we stop and add 13 or maybe 14 lessons. When they finish 104 they will go into a survey of French Literature or Advanced Grammar and Composition or a seminar on French Lit which I teach.

Continued on page 6

Mary-Madeleine Watkins, a professor at Berea College in Kentucky, talks about how she finally found the program of her dreams.
Carolyn Demaray will be speaking at the upcoming Northeast Conference '91 on the theme of building bridges to the AP. A teacher of French at The Hotchkiss School since '72, Demaray has been involved with FIA since before its publication. Her school taught with the prototype of the method, known as La Méthode, for over ten years before the published FIA became available. Since '73 she has been actively involved with the Advanced Placement Program, both in language and literature, and has worked for The College Board of New York, and The Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey. She graded AP exams for fourteen years, first as a Reader, then as a Table Leader and Question Leader. She was also a member of the Development Committee for both the AP Language and Literature examinations for three years. Demaray stands behind FIA as “a perfect blend of oral and written French, putting the beginning French student far ahead of any other program,” she is aware of.

Lucia Hodgson:: What is the connection between a beginning French program and the AP exam?

Carolyn Demaray: Teachers are very worried that their foundation courses will not be solid enough to prepare the students for the AP. As you can well imagine, success at the advanced placement level is only as good as its foundation. AP courses in French are not something that can be done in just one year of teaching.

LH: Why do you recommend FIA?

CD: We find that FIA gives us this good solid foundation. It provides a wonderful basis and foundation for AP pursuits later on. I have seen not only over the twenty-four years that I have been teaching that offers as strong a foundation, as pleasantly.

LH: How do you implement the program in your school?

CD: We divide it, using the first half in French 1, and the second half in French 2. We use the entire program up to about lesson 47, and then we do the last lessons very quickly, giving the students the story line and picking out selected bits from the grammar to go over, mainly because of time constraints. In terms of how it is used, we follow the proposed program just about to a T. We do just what is suggested.

I try to personalize it as much as I can, and to expand on it. I find that high school students are really interested in talking about themselves. So if we are studying Robert and Mireille going to see a movie, for instance, I will ask the students if they have been to the movies recently, what they have seen, who paid, or I will focus on what they have done lately, what they have ordered in a restaurant. When we get to the lottery, most of them are not old enough to be able to purchase a lottery ticket, but they are interested in talking about it. It seems to me that FIA is full of things that appeal to the students, and they are encouraged therefore to respond, to speak, to communicate. It gives them a wonderful feeling when they discover that they can do this.

LH: Traditional teachers tend to think that FIA over emphasizes oral work and underemphasizes the learning of grammar. Can you comment on this?

CD: It doesn't require any drilling of grammar, as such. Teachers are a little frightened that the students might not learn it. In fact, the students absorb it. It is the way a little child learns the language. I think that ultimately the contextual approach is not only easier and more natural, but it sticks with them longer. Grammar rules will be forgotten. What good is a rule if they can't apply and use it? I think it is far better to be able to use the language and use it correctly even without knowing the grammar rule. [FIA students] can use hypothetical/conditional sentences; they use the subjunctive: at aly, as they have heard it. They are able to repeat it. I think that is far better than learning a grammar rule and not being able to apply it. And to do it all in French is far better than going back and forth between French and English.

With FIA they are able to pick up the grammar and use it quite naturally, which I find is a plus to the program, and a plus eventually on the AP exam. For instance, in the essay on the AP language examination, the graders look for use of idiomatic expressions, and they don't want them just thrown in and properly used. A student who is trained in FIA will use them properly and naturally.

I don't think it is lacking in anything. It covers more verb tenses in the first year than other programs. It is authentic. The students can communicate. Even the poorer students communicate with the good feeling that they are speaking in French and making themselves understood. There is a lot of headroom for the brighter students to take off, to invent with the language, to be creative and imaginative with it.

I also find that it encourages more students to continue in French and not to be frightened to attempt advanced language study. Some students may be intimidated, or not like what they perceive as the "drudgery" of grammar learning. Learning grammar is no fun. FIA is fun, and they absorb the grammar through using the language.

LH: How do you feel about the way FIA presents the student with French culture with both a big C and a little c?

CD: It seems to me that France is a nice combination of both. There certainly are the literary families, but there are a lot of other French men and women who are going about their daily chores, living their life, taking the train, renting cars, and even winning the lottery occasionally. This is what makes it exciting and appealing to the high school student. It teaches them where they are and may inspire them to pursue the study of some other things French. Certainly from the literary selections that are in the program they may be inspired to read some literature or go on to read some poetry or what have you.

LH: What do students in your school go on to do after two years of FIA?

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FiA in the United States

French in Action is spreading rapidly throughout the United States. At this time over 100,000 students have studied with FiA textbooks and workbooks in the United States alone. The program has been used in some 1500 institutions in this country. Approximately half are pre-college level. FiA is used in all states and possessions from Alaska to Florida and from Hawaii to the Virgin Islands.

Some 40 colleges teach French to distance learners, off-campus, with FiA telecourses.

Four states - New York, Massachusetts, Texas and Utah - have acquired licenses enabling them to put the video materials in every high school in the state.


FiA on the air

Based on Nielsen data, more than 8 million people have watched French in Action on television since it premiered.

According to PBS, 100 of the 331 public television stations in the United States are airing FiA during the Spring of 1991. Those stations serve some 51% of the total number of United States television households. Major cities where FiA regularly airs include New York, Boston, Chicago, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

[If you do not get FiA on your local PBS station, write and phone to the producers. It is free for the station and will be free for you if you persevere.]

FiA can be seen on the Learning Channel (cable) three times per week, reaching 24% of all US television households. It is also carried by Jones Interable.

FiA abroad

French in Action is on television in Brazil (TV Cultura), Seoul, South Korea, and on Cable in Tokyo and Japan. It is used in France, in Taiwan, at the University of Beijing, Republic of China, in England, in Italy, and in many other places we have not yet discovered.

FiA invades Canada

In British Columbia, the Open Learning Agency has just created a telecourse centered on French in Action with additional Canadian video footage from Radio Quebec and other sources. Use of this telecourse for off-campus students disseminated throughout the vastitudes of Canadian territories began in November, 1990.

FiA in the Summer

French in Action will be taught this summer at Middlebury in the beginner course, and in the "faux débutants" course by Catherine LeGoua. It will also be taught at M.I.T.S (Monterey Institute for International Studies) under the direction of Gisèle Kapuscinsky. For teachers, it will be taught at the Colorado State University Summer Institute for Foreign Language Teachers under the direction of Elizabeth Berwanger. All three aforementioned professors are pioneers of the referential approach embodied in FiA, and outstanding practitioners of the "Capretz Method."

The Bible, Shakespeare and, of course, FiA

When asked by US Magazine (July 11, 1988) what five survival essentials he would like to have if shipwrecked, film critic Roger Ebert chose French in Action along with the King James Bible, the complete works of Shakespeare, Gates of Heaven, and Djangology, a Django Reinhardt disc anthology.

FiA Calendar for exact times and locations.

FiA appears on Jeopardy

According to the Village Voice (January 23, 1990), French in Action's "social status soared last December, when trivia king Alex Trebek of Jeopardy ushered the series into the world of bona fide pop culture with this $200 question in the category of 'PBS.'"

Question: "Portraying Mireille and Robert, [actors!] Valérie Allain and Charles Mayer show us this language 'in action.'" Answer: "What is French?"

Talking about FiA

There has been a lot of talk about French in Action, close to 150 talks and workshops since the fall of 1987. One session of a seminar at Université de Paris X (Nanterre) on the French Presence in American Medias was devoted to FiA (January 13, 1990). Another session on FiA was held at the Stage Pour Professeurs de Français à l'Etranger de CLAB (Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Besancon) on August 20, 1990.

At the annual meeting of ACTFL in Nashville, November, 1990, Carol Herron of Emory University reported on a study she conducted comparing results obtained by an experimental group of students working with FiA and a control group using a conventional text. Next door at the same time Jeanne Manning of Northern Virginia Community College explained how she teaches FiA in two different places at the same time through two-way video.

FiA at the Northeast Conference

Carolyn Demaray of The Hotchkiss School will discuss forming a solid foundation with French in Action for the Advanced Placement Examinations in her talk entitled "Building Bridges To the AP Level."

Carol Herron of Emory University will talk about the results of her study comparing results obtained by using FiA with a more conventional approach at the FiA breakfast.

Peggy Beauvais of the University of Texas will conduct a pre-conference workshop on the use of video, particularly the use of the FiA series, on Thursday, April 25. Pierre Capretz will discuss The Teacher as Video Mediator for FiA on Friday, April 26. See FiA Calendar for exact times and locations.

FiA on its way to Hollywood

French in Action has been recognized by the following awards:

- International Film and TV Festival of New York (1988)
- Association for Educational Communications and Technology (1988 and 1989)
- Ohio State Awards (1989)
- Birmingham International Educational Film Festival (1988)
- National Educational Film and Video Festival (1988)

FiA infiltrates Alabama

In an effort to garner votes for French in Action at the upcoming State Adoption meeting, Karen Mitchell of Huntsville High School in Huntsville, AL will be piloting the program with her French 2 class next year. The class of 10th and 11th graders will attempt to cover a sizable portion of Part I of FiA, implemented as it was intended for maximum success. Bonne chance!
Watkins
Continued from page 3
LH: How does FiA work for non-majors?
MW: All they have to do is take those three semesters and I think they enjoy it. One student who is a Spanish major told me that she really knows far more French at the 103 level than she did Spanish at the 103 level, because of the difference between a traditional way of teaching a language, as used by the Spanish teacher for lack of anything better, and FiA. The average French students end up being better prepared. They understand a lot more, which is so important. Training their ear - we never had that with the other methods. The students are also much more aware of cultural differences. They have absorbed culture as they went along, sometimes very consciously: I will emphasize, for example, something important about the cathedral of Chartres. Or sometimes subliminally: they are absorbing culture without being aware that they are absorbing culture, things that have to do with gestures, body language, or just getting a feeling for what it is like to be in a French street. With the old methods there we were doing our drills and reading our silly claiings, and then we would have to stop and say, "Okay now we have ten minutes left, let's talk about Napoleon," or Versailles, or whatever cultural point happened to be at the end of the chapter. For the most part high culture, or sometimes it was something like the educational system, the importance of the bac. I would try to speak in French as much as I could because even back then I knew that speaking French is not something that you do when you have done every-thing else, but that should be done every step of the way: But I had to lapse into English just about all the time, say it in French, translate it into English, mix the two. Now I speak French 99.999 percent of the time. There is no reason for me to say anything in English, except when I want to be very clear about an assignment or a date.
The rest of the time there is no reason for me to use any English, and the students expect it. Once those first two days of orientation are over, well that's it, that's the rule of the game, and there is no questioning it. And they are proud of their achievements. Sometimes at the end of the lesson I ask: "Aren't you amazed that we talked about cars vs. SNCF. Did you know you could say all this? And sometimes they say: I never would have thought that I would find myself speaking French for ten minutes on such a topic. It really feels good, it makes me feel good, it makes them feel good.

"With other programs, I brought in materials, and tacked them on with scotch tape, bubble gum, and spit. It was an effort to bring something to a class that was so poor in realistic material."

and for me it has really made teaching those elementary courses which are bread and butter, a joyful experience. Before it was mostly frustration. I always thought there had to be a better way, and FiA is the better way. It is what I have really been hoping for, never knowing exactly what shape, what form it would take. It was really what I was hoping teaching a language and letting a language could be all about.

FiA: Is it more work than other methods?
MW: No. And what work it is makes sense and pays off. I don't bring in any other materials. I have got everything and more with FiA. It is so rich. There are so many things you can emphasize, all in French, talking about the characters, the situations, the background. It's inexhaustible.

With other programs, I brought in materials, and they were tacked on with scotch tape, bubble gum, and spit. It was an effort to bring some realistic material to a class that was so poor in realistic material, but what I brought to class didn't always fit. I would bring in a song or a poem or an article, and there would be all kinds of things that hadn't been introduced so I found myself using translation.

I really can't understand teachers who use FiA as a supplement, who just show the video. That is entirely missing the point, like having a supercomputer and using it to type envelopes. It is just doesn't make sense. I think there need to be more workshops and people geting together on the local level to show that there is a correct way of using the material. Otherwise people sometimes miss the point and that is a shame.

FiA: Are there other misconceptions out there?
MW: I have heard people say that they can't adopt the program because their TA's wouldn't know how to use it. Sometimes [the TA's] are not very proficient. But the worse of a speaker you are, the better FiA is for you, because it does part of the teaching for you. You no longer have to show how bad or rusty your French is. You can just use the video to protect you. If you are in the classroom [without a video] and your French isn't very good, everybody knows it, unless of course you do nothing but use English and translate, which is what lots of people do. Another thing is that the method is so well structured, so well put together, that once you step in, you can just move along with it. Teachers can learn from the program and we can only hope that they will.

People make fun of me. They say, "You think FiA works miracles." But I really do. It has changed our professional lives like nothing else could have done. It has really transformed those elementary courses. The video is so wonderful. There is that human warmth, that bonding that exists between the students and the teachers and the video characters... They are so believable. And M. Capretz, he is my team teacher. I teach in team with him."

Sample Lesson Plan

Watkins' Built-In Review System For FiA

Basic set-up: Over the course of the week that a particular lesson is being studied, the students are given periodic testing on the previous lesson. They are also, at the start of the new lesson, given a short, to-the-point quiz on a lesson from the previous semester.

Methodology: By testing them often and in small doses, "cramming" is avoided. By not testing on a lesson until the students have gotten started on the next one, the students get a chance to assimilate the material before being tested on it. Testing students on material from the previous semester keeps them from concentrating only on the lesson they are working on, and allows them to see how much progress they have made.

Example (Ls-20):

- 10 minute review quiz on Lesson 13 from the previous semester.
- Start Lesson 20 in the lab. Students watch the video once through with headphones. Then they rewatch the storyline, then the pedagogical section, and then the storyline again.
- Review of Summary Quiz of Lesson 20.

Friday:
- Work-up of 60% of video story line of Lesson 20.
- Short quiz on Lesson 19.
- How does FiA work for non-majors?

Wednesday:
- Students are responsible for first half of workbook of Lesson 20.
- Work-up of the rest of the video story line.
- Work-up of approximately 30% of video pedagogical section.

Tuesday:
- Work-up of the rest of the video pedagogical section.
- 15 minute test on Lesson 19.

Monday:
- Students are responsible for second half of workbook of Lesson 20.
- Review of Summary Quiz of Lesson 20.
- Reinvention of the story. Talking about storyline, illustrations in textbook, small group work.

- 10 minute discussion of Lesson 14.
- 10 minute review quiz on Lesson 14 from the previous semester.
- Start Lesson 21 in the lab.

"There is that human warmth, that bonding that exists between the students and the teachers and the video characters... They are so believable. And M. Capretz, he is my team teacher. I teach in team with him."
Continued from page 4

CD: We send them right from FiA into good substantial grammar books, and they read some literary works. We have ...L’Étranger, Thérèse Desqueyroux, some La Fontaine, L’École des Femmes. Some of our students also are fortunate enough to spend the summer in France. They come back absolutely astounded that they were able to understand, be understood, get along in what they call “real” France. This in turn inspires them to go on. [Many] of them will come back and [tell me] they want to continue their studies in French. I think this is a great compliment to the program. I am so fond of French and to enjoy it, I am so fond of French grammar. I think this is wonderful for the less gifted students and it is appealing to the students. It is excellent for the really authentic, its appealing to the students. FiA is lively, it’s cultural, intonation, inflection. Or when Robert and Mireille are walking down the Champs-Elysées holding hands, and you link it to their own experience. Or when Robert and Mireille are walking down the Champs-Elysées holding hands, for instance, the teacher can gently tease the students: “I saw you holding hands with so and so.” This is a great pleasure of the program, and the students respond positively and actively to this. They learn without realizing that they are learning. They are just absorbing it. I don’t think that the program was ever intended just to be put on a TV monitor and for the teacher to go and snooze in the corner. I have them write out their lesson that they have done and mix them all up, and they recognize them and come back with an answer. They come up with the most clever things. I am always astounded.”

Another element of FiA which works well with younger children and the young at heart is its incorporation of role-playing. “They love playing the parts,” Meister says of her students. “They want to read the dialogues in the workbook [at the end of the Préparation à la communication] at least twenty different times so that they each have a chance to do it. It is like a contest: Who can sound more like Mireille or Fido? And they love the reinvention of the story. I have them write out their own sometimes at home, and they will do it over and over in class.”

Teachers are sometimes hesitant to start their young students out with FiA before they have studied with a more traditional textbook. Meister adamantly opposes that position. “If you have a chance to start kids early with language, then I would start them with FiA immediately, so that by the time they are at that awkward age in seventh grade they are used to it already. Then hopefully they won’t change their attitude. It is precisely because it is different from traditional methods that it is so great. I mean, how often do you hear: I took a foreign language for six years and I can’t say a word of it. If you start them with FiA, then maybe we have a chance.” -L.H.

CD: No. I think it is a marvelous program for students of all and many varying language abilities, the talented and the less talented. But I think that some schools may not be using the program as it is intended, and this is going to cause aberrations in what the students learn. Often it is used partially, or teachers will show the story line and try to combine it with something else, which is absolutely not necessary. It is a well-conceived, beautifully constructed program which when used in its entirety produces the desired results. To break it up and use segments here and there, or use supplementary materials, is not necessary.

LH: Some teachers feel that a program which has a major video component encourages too much passive learning.

CD: I don’t think that is the fault of the program. If FiA is viewed as passive, it is the fault of the way it is being implemented. It is up to the teacher to stop and use the video and call on the students to get them involved and to encourage them to act it out or to link it to their own experience. When Robert and Mireille are walking down the Champs-Elysées holding hands, for instance, the teacher can gently tease the students: “I saw you holding hands with so and so.” This is a great pleasure of the program, and the students respond positively and actively to this. They learn without realizing that they are learning. They are just absorbing it. I don’t think that the program was ever intended just to be put on a TV monitor and for the teacher to go and snooze in the corner. I have them write out their lesson that they have done and mix them all up, and they recognize them and come back with an answer. They come up with the most clever things. I am always astounded.”

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Become a FiA pioneer. Join the network of FiA users. Keep in touch with FiA and your colleagues. Simply fill out this card, put it in an envelope, and address it to French in Action Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Do you use FiA as your core materials? ______
As a supplement? ______ As a telecourse? ______
In college or university? ______
At what level(s)? ______
In pre-college courses? ______
In what grade(s)? ______
At what level(s)? ______
Other? ______

Name _____________________________
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Do we have permission to make your coordinates available to colleagues? Yes ______ No ______
Does that include your phone/fax numbers? ______

Signed _____________________________ Date _____________________________

9
Réinvention de l'histoire

This "réinvention de l'histoire" was created through the collective efforts of a first year college class at Yale. The class had just finished Lesson 21.

Hemingway est assis sur un banc au jardin du Luxembourg. Michel-Ange s'approche.
Michel-Ange: Pardon, Monsieur, est-ce que vous voudriez bien me permettre de faire votre portrait?
Hemingway: Mon portrait? Pourquoi?
Michel-Ange: Eh bien, je trouve que vous avez la tête de Moïse, et je dois faire le portrait de Moïse. Vous permettez?
Hemingway: Oui, si vous voulez... Alors, comme ça, vous faites de la peinture?
Michel-Ange: Oui, enfin... je barbouille.
Hemingway: Mais ne vous excusez pas; il n'y a pas de sot métier... Vous avez un petit accent. Vous n'êtes pas français?
Michel-Ange: Non, je suis italien; je viens de Rome. Vous connaissez sûrement, tous les chemins y mènent.

Hemingway: Non, pas encore, mais je compte y aller dans quelques jours. Je viens des États-Unis...
Michel-Ange: Ah, vous êtes américain?
Hemingway: ... Oui, et j'invente des histoires, c'est mon métier. On dit que l'histoire de Rome est très importante, alors je dois absolument y aller.
Michel-Ange: Voilà, j'ai fini.
Hemingway: Est-ce que je peux vous inviter à prendre quelque chose à la Closerie des Lilas? C'est tout près.
Michel-Ange: Ah, je regrette, je ne peux pas accepter.
Hemingway: C'est dommage. Moi, je vais tous les jours déjeuner à la Closerie: leur whisky est excellent. Eh bien, au revoir.
Michel-Ange: Au revoir, Monsieur, et merci.

Tuyaux

Mystère et boule de gomme

A good way to stimulate the students' interest and to get them to talk is to have them try to elucidate one of the many mysteries hidden in the FIA story. For example, in the video for Lesson 22, you can ask them: Is the "shifty-eyed garçon at the Closerie des Lilas cheating Robert when he quotes him the price for the kir? He tells him that "le service est compris," and that it is, "quinze pour cent." But is it really? Could he be overcharging him? Is that why his eyes are so shifty? Is that why Robert doesn't look happy? This "tuyau" was contributed by Marie-Madeleine Watkins of Berea College in Kentucky.

Sur le carnet de
Tante Georgette

En avril ne quitte pas un fil.
En mai fait ce qu'il te plait.
Marianne Gehr teaches at the Menominee Indian High School in Keshena, Wisconsin. She generously agreed to share some of her impressions of French in Action with our readers. Here are some of her contributions:

I heard about this wonderful French program on television. So I tuned in and discovered for myself what an absolute delight FIA was. I felt that I should investigate it further. I ordered all the materials. At that time, toward the end of my first year of teaching, I was using other materials I had inherited that were rather outdated. When I discovered FIA, I thought, "This is wonderful; this is exactly what I need." So, I began just trouble shooting with it. It was the last quarter of the school year, three years ago. I wasn't really sure how to teach it or how the kids would react to it. But, I just wanted to know more about it, thinking that rather than waiting for fall, I could just see how it would go over and what I could do with it.

I discovered, of course, that it is wonderful, that it's just so much fun. Not only did my students really have fun watching the video, they seemed to learn a great deal. I also enjoyed teaching it immensely! I've always enjoyed teaching French, but this was clearly the best learning system that I had stumbled upon.

**Video**

I love the video. I think that it's just so much fun. It sets FIA apart from all the other learning systems that I have come into contact with. I love the authenticity of the language. I love the story line: it's full of intrigue, humor, and romance. I love the scenes of Paris and of France; the true-to-life family situations. I find the instructional portion of the tape very useful. The guignol is an important part of the program.

The video component is so important in part because the characters seem like real-life people that the students can relate to. The family situations in the video are classic; the story is universal. All high schools have a dragueur. I'm really in love with the characters. They're like family. And I feel that I see new things each time. As I become more familiar with the videos, I learn which things to point out and emphasize, little things that keep up the students' interest.

**Audio**

I feel that they have to be using the language outside of the classroom, and practicing, practicing the various phrases in order to feel comfortable speaking them. I tell my kids; even college kids. My daughter had a roommate who was taking a beginning level French course at a local university, and the professor showed the video in its entirety. She said, "The lights went out and the kids began snoozing." Even though she thought it was good, it didn't hold their attention. The way I show it is always changing. I am not sure how I am going to do it next year, but at this point, rather than showing the video in its entirety, I break it up, even the story line. I explain little bits and pieces. And the kids are interested. They have to have this explanation in order to really understand it. They want to get on with the story. They sit on the edge of their seats when I put it on.

"The element of surprise is so strong, and I am convinced that having to wait to find out what will happen next increases their enthusiasm for learning French."

They don't know who the homme en noir is, or what's going to happen with Robert and Mireille; when they are going to meet. It's like a soap opera; we just have to wait and see what happens. The element of surprise is so strong, and I am convinced that having to wait to find out what will happen next increases their enthusiasm for learning French. We have so much fun with the language.

**Style of Teaching**

Each year and during the year, I modify the way I teach with FIA. When I first started, I used to show the tape in its entirety. That was a huge mistake, especially for high school kids; even college kids.
FiA at the Junior College

Barbara Vigano of Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, California has a lot to say about FiA. Here are some remarks culled from a recent interview:

The evening classes at a junior college attract a varied group of students - people who are very intellectual, people who work hard during the day and are tired in the evenings; others who just want to see whether they can handle a foreign language and take a course to try their minds at college for the first time in their lives. I noticed that FiA satisfied the demands of a very wide range of people. With a more traditional approach, people who have a hard time intellectually drop out very quickly. These people stayed with the program and got a taste of foreign language.

Preventing Attrition

Because I had had such a fantastic experience with FiA, when I was capable of influencing the textbook decision at the junior college, I pushed for FiA. After one year, we switched. They had been using a traditional book that I used for eight years at the university. The attrition was terrible. The course was too difficult, too grammatical, too theoretical, and too intellectual for eighty percent of the student population. Now, the word is getting around to the high schools in the neighborhood that French is being taught with FiA and I feel that it’s going to increase the enrollment. At the beginning, the program can be difficult for honest-to-goodness, real beginners. But, it keeps them in the program, as I said before. At the same time, it challenges the faux débutants who find so much in there that they have never learned before, even though they already had a semester or two of French when they started. The attrition level, which is very important at the state-funded junior college, decreased with FiA, and enrollment seemed to be increasing.

I am amazed by the number of students who have stayed with French and the evaporation of the notion that French is so difficult, so intellectual, and so elitist. Because of the cultural aspect of FiA, students see French as more of an introduction into a different way of life and a different culture than as a linguistic lesson. This is what keeps them in the program.

Grammar

I used the later lessons of FiA to complement the class that was still using the conventional text. With that text, they were supposed to learn the subjunctive in a very theoretical way. So, I used FiA to illustrate the subjunctive. We saw the section about the cinema.

Pacing Lessons

Our pace is much slower than the one suggested by Capretz for the college level. We take lesson number 2 very slowly in order to retain people, and we only get as far as lesson 9 in French I. We are on the semester system, but we only meet four hours per week, and there is no mandatory language lab. Retaining the students is more important than the amount they learn. I pace the lessons with the students, and when it is going too fast, we just slow the program down.

Continued on page 6
Cendrillon avait encore l'air triste.

D'un coup, l'aubergine est devenue une magnifique Alpine-Renault decapotable. Mais Cendrillon portait une ravissante jupe rouge, exactement comme celle qu'elle avait admirée l'autre jour à Frisunic.

La marraine est restée à la maison avec le père (qui n'était pas allé au bal). Elle a sorti une cassette vidéo de son sac, et elle lui fait connaître L'Amour l'après-midi qu'il n'avait jamais vu parce qu'il n'allait jamais au cinéma.

Et Cendrillon est allée au bal. Quand le prince (le fils unique de la famille aristocratique) a vu Cendrillon, il a cru que c'était une princesse, il est tout de suite tombé amoureux d'elle, et il a voulu faire sa connaissance. Il s'est approché d'elle et lui a dit:

-Belle princesse, je suis le prince de vos rêves. Je viens d'une vieille famille aristocratique, et je m'appelle Hubert de Pinot-Chambrun.

Et il a dansé avec Cendrillon pendant toute la soirée.

Mais soudein, la cloche a sonné. Il était minuit. Cendrillon avait promis à sa marraine de rentrer bien avant. Elle s'est levée comme un ressort en disant:

-Oh la la, minuit! Il faut que je me sauve, je ne vais pas rouvrir mon Alpine. La police va l'empoîter!

Elle est partie, elle a été promise à une mariée aristocratique, et elle a emporté son sac. Et elle a dit à Cendrillon et à ses deux soeurs:

-Je vais chercher partout la pantoufle de verre, à Cendrillon, quand le Prince Hubert est entré dans la maison, il n'a pas reconnu Cendrillon, et il a dit:

-Comme c'est bizarre, comme c'est curieux, et quelle coïncidence! Je crois avoir vu quelque part la domestique de cette famille! (Parce qu'il croyait évidemment, que Cendrillon était la domestique!)

Et il a dit à Cendrillon et à ses deux soeurs:

- Veuillez avoir l'obligation d'essayer cette petite pantoufle!

Mais le Prince Hubert, qui jouait très bien son rôle de grand aristocrate, a regardé autour de lui et il a dit:

- Que ces nanas sont mal habillées! Quel taudis infect! Ce n'est qu'une cage à lapins, cette HLM! Un logement pour des ouvriers!

Quand Cendrillon a entendu ça, la moutarde lui est monté au nez. Et elle a dit au prince:

- Des nanas? Un taudis infect? Des ouvriers!!! Oui, mon père est menuisier, mais sachez, cher Prince, qu'il n'y a pas de sort miêter et que la classe ouvrière a des mêmes droits que les descendants des oppresseurs du..."yen Age!

Puis, Cendrillon s'est retournée et, sans un mot, en trois gestes précis, elle l'a envoyé rouler dans la poussière en disant:

- Je n'aime pas qu'on se moque des gens! Et maintenant, je vais me marier avec un beau garçon boucher, dans l'église de la Madeleine, à cause de l'escalier, vous savez. Au revoir, mon Prince. Tenez-vous bien, et soyez sage!

This composition was submitted by Professor Will Browning of Princeton University, Princeton, NJ. It was written by one of his students, Mitos E. Kateridou.

Hommage à Monsieur Capretz

Les cheveux gris, longs et drôles
Les plus ridicules, comme d'une folle

Un grand nez comme Astérix,
Son corps gros comme Obélix!

Il parle beaucoup, plus que moi ou toi
Il ressemble plutôt à Mme Courtous

Il me fait rire quand il explique un mot
Parce qu'il mouvoit ses bras comme un robot!

Il n'est pas dans le vent, tu as vu ses lunettes?
Elles sont si grandes comme les yeux d'un insecte!!

Il est amusant parce qu'il croit qu'il est distingué,
Ça me tue quand il dit "c'est utile pour apprendre le français!"

* ...Parce qu'il lève les bras comme un robot
** ...Elles sont aussi grandes que les yeux d'un insecte!
FiA, Fun, and French Culture

Professor Catherine ILeGouis currently teaches at Mount Holyoke during the academic year and at Middlebury College during the summer. Here are some excerpts from a recent interview:

My background was strictly literary. I wasn't interested in teaching language per se. What happened was that I found FiA so compelling that I became very involved in teaching. As a Frenchwoman, I found FiA as rewarding to teach as literature because it's really my culture that is getting across. It's so authentic, I can give students a general sense of the culture that is fundamental to any French person. To my knowledge, you just can't do that with other language teaching materials. When I started teaching with FiA, I would come across a scene in the video and think, "It is so true to life". FiA describes an entire atmosphere; an entire culture. And that's part of what has made me like it so much.

Starting and Majoring in French in College with FiA

With FiA, you can accomplish in two years what takes at least twice as much time—if not six years—to accomplish with another method. You can take students who have never had any French and get them all the way into literature classes in four semesters. At Mt. Holyoke, we have students who are not starting French until college and then majoring in French, which was much more difficult to do before. With FiA, they learn very quickly. So, they are able to deal with literature much more effectively and much earlier on. What I see emerging out of the FiA courses at Mt. Holyoke is a number of excellent students who can really do well in French literature.

FiA Students and French Literature

I started off a group of women last year who took FiA with me in a semi-intensive course. They are now in their fourth semester of French (two of them went to Middlebury this summer, and for them, it is the fifth semester). They are now taking my course on decadence in the 1890s—Huysmans, Mallarmé, Verlaine: authors who are notoriously difficult to read—and they are doing fine. They can participate. They have developed a keen sense of cultural context. Some of my colleagues find it difficult to believe. Two years ago, at the end of the Middlebury summer session, I took a group of early intermediate students through Huis Clos in two and a half days and then through L'Etranger in about five days. I thought they would be challenged by very factual, what-happened-next questions, but they thought they could do better than that. They wanted a philosophical discussion, and they were able to carry it off. It was amazing. My students who have learned with French in Action really do better than those who have gone the traditional route. They speak better, they write better, and they understand everything I say in class. I get a lot of students at the introduction to literature level who just can't understand the gist of what I'm saying. They seem never to have heard French spoken at a normal rate. The ones who are coming from a FiA background don't even bat an eye, because they are used to hearing French spoken at the regular speed.

Using the Video

I use it in class to present the teleplay, working on the text line by line. As I go through the teleplay, I present everything that is going to be focused on in the audio tape and the workbook. I work on new exercises as the situations arise in the teleplay. For example, in lesson 37, the point at which the ouvreuse gives the movie tickets back to Robert, and Mireille says, "elle te les a rendus", is actually the beginning of a whole set of exercises in the workbook. So when I get to that sentence in the teleplay, I start the exercises in class. I do that for almost every exercise. I know large portions of the text by heart now, so as soon as I see it on the screen, it triggers the exercise in the workbook in my mind. I also work on the vocabulary in the story, so that when they leave my presentation, the students have already started all the work on the audio tape. When they start working on their own in the workbook, nothing is going to seem completely new.

Grammar and FiA

The grammatical structures presented in the lessons give students a very wide range of expression, the maximum range at each level. With other textbooks, the student has a very small range of action because of the linear progression. The grammar in other methods is presented much more traditionally, and it is the kind of grammar that corresponds to the needs of native speakers or linguists, not to the very different needs of people who are learning a second language.

We learn French, or whatever our native language is, without a theoretical grammar book. We didn't start with the passé composé or the futur antérieur or the présent de l'indicatif or anything in particular. We were surrounded by large amounts of our native language. We listened and eventually we figured things out and found our way through, learning to say as much as possible with the little that we had grasped. French in Action is not a disorganized presentation of grammar—it's a different arrangement of grammar. It is extremely orderly, extremely rational, and logical. Nothing has been left to chance in the way the students' encounter with grammar is structured.

It is not as if FiA starts with the subjunctive and finishes with the present indicative. It is true that it does start with the futur immédiat before the present. This is because the presentation of grammar in FiA is not dictated by tradition or theoretical considerations, but by the pragmatic requirements of communication and acquisition. Yet from what I know from other textbooks, I really find that FiA presents the general points of grammar in roughly the same sequence as other textbooks, with only a few important differences. However, it is inside the sequence that it is totally different: the way it is presented, the way the student is made to intuitively grasp what is going on instead of being told ("You put the pronoun here and the first part of the negative there and the verb there and so on"), the way the student is given examples and is led to use the grammatical structures and then realizes and understands how it works ("Oh, that's where the pronoun goes! That is where the first part of the negative goes!").
If you need help or information, or can provide help or information to your colleagues, this bulletin board is for you. Please address written notices to the French in Action Newsletter at 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511

I am interested in learning more about FiA and would consider it either as a telecourse or as core material. Do you have anything similar for Spanish? Are any workshops/seminars scheduled soon in the midwest?

The Annenberg/CPB Project has funded a Spanish project featuring video, print, and audio to be released in 1992. Call 1-800-LEARNER for information. Although no workshops are scheduled in the Midwest at this time, workshops are now being planned for next year. Please contact Mary Coleman at the Yale University Press. Tel: (203) 432-0912.


I am a new faculty member in the French department at Russell Sage College and I will be teaching French in Action for the first time in the Fall of 1991. I have read the April 1991 issue of the FiA Newsletter and have found it very informative and inspiring.

My problem is that I have a difficult time preparing a syllabus for my beginners' course. Since there is so much material in both the workbook and the textbook, I sometimes wonder if it is really possible to finish the first set within a 15-week period. I realize that there are 52 lessons overall, which would average 13 lessons a semester. I have already made a draft of the syllabus for my French 101 course (beginners') which covers lessons 1-13, but somehow I am doubtful about its clarity and organization.

Thus, I would very much appreciate if you could provide me with copies of carefully and consistently arranged syllabi (covering 4 semesters, from beginning to advanced) that had been used over the years, with big success, by FiA instructors. I would be truly thankful.

(continued)
Vigano
Continued from page 2

where the subjunctive is used several times, and suddenly it came alive! They saw the lady say, "Il faut que vous attendiez encore un peu," and "Il faut que j'aille au théâtre," and we complemented this with the Pariscope and Minitel. The subjunctive is embedded in the discussion about cinema and theatre in FIA. Suddenly, the subjunctive meant something. It was wonderful.

Training Part-Time Teachers in FIA

I have a demonstration cassette that I show to the part-time teachers. I give a workshop to show them how it works. I don't hire anybody before he or she has watched at least two or three lessons on how FIA is used in the classroom.

I think it is easier to train teachers in FIA than in other methods because the training involves coming to see how it is done. They see it used in class. Before, with the traditional method, part-timers were simply given the textbook. Now, they go into the classroom much better prepared than with other methods. Teachers who are not native-born French speakers can learn from FIA.

Teachers embrace FIA very enthusiastically. We've been giving both teachers and students a questionnaire after six weeks and then again at the end of the semester. One teacher wrote, "I would never want to go back to teaching with the textbook alone." The student responses were 83% enthusiastic and 16% positive with slight restrictions. Usually, if they had a complaint, it was that the tape was too fast. Only 1 out of 95 students who returned the questionnaire said it was boring. He had had some French before.

Going to France After Studying With FIA

As I was writing a recommendation for a student, it occurred to me that FIA students are incredibly well prepared for going to France. I was writing for a student who was not one of the very top students, but because he had gone through FIA and been very enthusiastic about performing the oral skits and listening to the cassette, he was prepared for the barrage of French that he would be facing. He would be ready to plunge in the first or second week instead of having to wait for five or six weeks until his ears were acclimated to the French way of speaking. Even if FIA students have only had a semester of French, they are better prepared for going to France than if they had studied a year of French with a traditional book: they are already immersed in the French way of speaking and behaving, and they hear French spoken at normal speeds from the very beginning.

Sur le Carnet de Tante Amélie

- Cette pauvre Georgette perd la tête; elle ne sait plus ce qu'elle dit. Elle vieillit!
- L'autre jour elle disait: "En Avril ne quitte pas un fil..." Qu'est-ce que c'est ce qui? On a toujours dit:
- "En Avril, ne te découvre pas d'un fil.
- En mai, fais ce qu'il te plaît."

Du moins, c'est ce qu'on disait du temps de mon pauvre mari.

Cancans

Il paraît que Hubert est passé à la télé l'autre jour! Si, si! Une carte postale de Genève m'est tombée sous les yeux, par hasard. Ça disait: "J'ai eu la surprise agréable de tomber hier soir, à la TV française, sur un téléfilm dans lequel "Hubert"-votre Hubert- tenait un petit rôle. Je ne sais pas s'il s'agissait d'un film récent ou une reprise. Dans tous les cas, Hubert paraissait un peu plus "empêché." Le film lui, était une comédie légère, amusante, et sans prétention, au rythme allègre. L'héroïne de l'histoire, Noëlle (Karine Viard) venait de se faire plaquer par l'ex "Hubert," son fiancé jusque là, et avec elle, conducteur de bus à la RATP... Le film était une parodie directe d'un film américain célèbre, et il n'y a pas de quoi! Et "Que votre joie demeure," comme dirait Giono. Ed.
students, in all sincerity, that, if they come to
class and practice at home, after four years,
they will be able to speak French very well.
No matter which French-speaking part of the
world they go to, they will be able to
successfully communicate. I believe that with
all my heart with this system. I could not
make this promise with something else, but I
fully believe in this system.

Success Stories
I had a level one student who was very
motivated; he came in on his noon hours, and
I tutored him with FiA. He went to France
and did just fine. After one year of French
with me, he tested into third semester French
in college, and did well, a B average. And the
vocabulary stayed with him. When I see him
today, he'll say different things that are
directly from the program. I find myself
using these little phrases from FiA. They are
so meaningful.

Another thing that I do is involve them in
"French Forensics," a highly competitive state
competition. They have done very well at the
regional and state levels. All five students that
I have entered have received gold medals. It
is quite an honor for my students. I feel that
their success is in large part due to Capretz.
Capretz does not speak slowly. He speaks in
a normal cadence and my students are used
to this. Last year, I went to Florida for about a
week, and a substitute teacher came in. I
guess my students had been taking me and
the Capretz system for granted, because they
just felt that she wasn't speaking normally.
They are used to hearing French as it should
be spoken. They could tell that she was
speaking too slowly.

Calendar

Events Featuring FiA

October 17, 1991
Workshop
With Pierre Capretz
University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth
Dartmouth, MA

October 24-26, 1991
Foreign Language Association
of North Carolina
Research Triangle Park, NC
-Yale University Press Booth

November 22, 1991
Workshop for Secondary School Teachers
With Barbara Meister of the Collegiate
School, New York, NY
Washington, DC
3:00pm-5:00pm
CPB Building, 901 E Street NW, 2nd Floor

April 2-5, 1992
Northeast Conference on the Teaching of
Foreign Languages
New York, NY
-Session with Pierre Capretz, et al.
-Yale University Press Booth

April 28, 1992
Workshop
With Pierre Capretz, et al.
Marywood College
Scranton, PA

November 22-26, 1991
American Council on the Teaching of
Foreign Languages
Washington, DC
-Yale University Press Booth
-Session by Carol Herron of
Emory University on acquiring
grammatical structures by guided
induction—a comparative study of
two different approaches to working
with students on grammatical
structures that students actively use in
FiA
Saturday, November 23
5:00pm-6:15pm
WCC, Room 10

-Session with Jeanne Manning of
Northern Virginia Community
College, Pierre Capretz, and others on
various ways to use FiA to teach
vocabulary, grammar, culture, and
writing
Monday, November 24
10:00am-11:15am
WCC, Room 33

-Session with Martha Pereszlenyi
Pinter of John Carroll University and
John Savage of Kent State University
on creative use of video to achieve
proficiency in oral communication,
reading, and writing
Monday, November 24
11:30am-12:45pm
WCC, Room 33

Become an FiA pioneer. Join the network of FiA users.
Keep in touch with FiA and your colleagues. Simply fill out
this card, put it in an envelope, and address it to French in
Action Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511

Do you use FiA as your core materials?
As a supplement?
As a telecourse?
Comments:

Name ____________________________
Department ________________________
Institution _________________________
Address __________________________
City ______________________________
State __________________ Zip ______
Phone ____________________________
Fax ______________________________
Two options concerning where to begin a video presentation:

1) You may skip the beginning of the tape and start with the actual beginning of the lesson; that is, right after the last frame of the bateau mouche on the Seine. You thus avoid the shots common to all lessons and the summary in English.

2) Or, alternately, you may use the beginning of the tape as a “mise en train”. It is always good to start a class with some exchanges “à batons rompus,” using words and phrases that are, at that point, very familiar to the students, so that they have a chance to speak in a relaxed way and gear up into speaking French. You can achieve this by showing the tape from the very beginning, at high speed, and asking them to identify what they see. You whiz through the countdown and ask them: “Quels sont ces nombres?” And they have to say them as fast as they flash by. “Quels sont ces lettres?” Wl.. Gl.. Bl.. Hl.. “Qui sont ces gens?” La famille de Mireille! “Et ça?” Mireille! “Et ça?” Ses parents!... Son père... Sa mère.. “Et ça?” Sa sœur.. Tonton Guillaume! Etc.. Racing against the video usually wakes students up and gets them excited about their successes.

Give students plenty of opportunities to re-enact scenes from the videos, introduce variations, recombine what they have learned to produce something new. They will surprise you with their creativity. When I asked my 5th graders to think of some favorite scenes from lessons 2-5 and to re-enact them and embellish upon them, I was amazed by their retention and ingenuity.

For instance, two boys pretended to be Marie-Laure and Marie-Laure. Mireille was reading “un roman d’aventure” and Marie-Laure was annoying her with question about it. Then another boy, playing the postman, brought a package and exclaimed: “J’espère que c’est des chocolats!” Marie-Laure tore open the gift. When Mireille asked if her sister would share, Marie-Laure touched Mireille’s nose with the tip of her finger and said, “Je ne sais pas, il faut voir, si tu es gentille.”

In a shorter scene, one boy pretended to hold a machine gun and shouted, “Je suis un criminel!” Three other boys lined up and, grinning, answered, “Nous sommes les victimes.” The “criminel” proceeded to shoot them down and they collapsed laughing.

This tuyau was provided by Barbara Meister from the Collegiate School, New York, NY.

Ce tuyau nous a été communiqué par Le Vieux Professeur

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French in Action

Yale University Press
92A Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520

Other methods. I have taught with other materials that are just deadly. They manage to take an exciting language and turn it into the driest, dullest thing in the world. FiA is a laugh a minute. I have taught the 52 lessons more than fifteen times now, and I know it almost by heart, and yet I am never tired of it. Just when you are at the end of the hour, everybody is tired, it’s Friday, you press the button on the VCR and something so hilarious comes on to the screen, and it is just so funny, everybody bursts out laughing and is totally refreshed and ready for another big effort. I really think that is how students can sustain the effort of such intense learning: they’re having a great time.

The humor in FiA is one reason why it is a good introduction to French culture. If you can understand the sense of humor of a culture, you are really coming very close to understanding some of the foundations of that culture. If you can start to understand how some of the puns and punchlines of French in Action work and apply them to your own situation, as my students are able to do after just a few lessons, you have really reached a level of understanding that is almost impossible to attain with any of the conventional methods.

Tuyaux
French in Action as a Model for Video Language Programs

By Deborah Fraioli and Mary-Ann Stadler-Chester
Department of Foreign Languages
Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts

French in Action, the video-based course designed at Yale University by Pierre Capretz, began its first full 52-segment series on 120 PBS stations throughout the U.S. in September 1987. Within less than a year, textbook publishers began to include questions on their textbook surveys asking to what degree teachers saw video as a necessary component of future foreign language programs. Some institutions immediately bought the full program, pleased with what they had seen and ready to be innovative, but the following year did not adopt FiA as a core course. They sought to familiarize themselves with the program before making a decision to adopt it to the exclusion of other materials. In the meantime, they introduced FiA as a supplement to their traditional textbooks. Other institutions may have considered purchasing FiA, but they were unsure if a video-based course would fit satisfactorily into their budgets or allow them to attain their teaching goals.

At our institution, the French in Action program was put into place, in toto, as a team-taught, intensive French course in 1988. This was to be the first team-taught course in the department, the first intensive language course, and the first requirement-level video language course to be offered at the college. Anyone who watches the FiA videotapes can immediately perceive the potential benefits of a video-based language course. Television as a language teaching medium has the advantage over both the textbook and the classroom in a number of ways. Television can be more interesting, faster-paced, more culturally authentic, and more entertaining. It can teach culture in the narrow sense, that is, cities and monuments, or it can demonstrate the less obvious cultural behavior of body language, including gestures, facial expressions, and cultural mannerisms, in other words, French truly “in action.” Television has at its disposal multiple special effects and production techniques that make it more efficient than the blackboard or the printed page, showing scenes that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. And the bonus is that a video-based program like FiA can convey contexts for meaning that eliminate the need for the viewer’s native language. This “methode référentielle,” in which French words are matched not with their English equivalents but with what they actually represent in the French culture, allows work with the program to be conducted entirely in French.

This wealth of material may be seen by some as a disadvantage when considering adoption of the French in Action program as the core “text.” While valuing it as a resource for enrichment, some may feel reticent or skeptical about switching over to the entire program, concerned that a video course would offer exposure without mastery. They may be concerned that the program would teach only slang and informal speech, or, conversely, that the videotapes would be at too high a level of linguistic production to develop transferable skills in the student. They may also fear that...
Model

Continued from Page 1

FiA would prove useful only to the student who wishes to study abroad, and not provide an adequate foundation for the future study of French literature. They may wonder whether students, while becoming more linguistically and culturally aware, would, nevertheless, be deficient in spelling, accuracy, and knowledge of grammatical structures, or be unable to read or write. In short, would they become passive receivers of knowledge, unable to produce correct, imaginative speech or writing of their own?

In fact, Pierre Capretz's method has answers to these concerns built into the program itself. His method incorporates many new creative approaches to language teaching and learning. It is designed to be used as a whole and when employed as such, we have found that it works. In adopting the Capretz approach, we have also found that it is important to follow the program closely to ensure its success.

Some of the greatest benefits of French in Action occur in areas not always measured by traditional testing, such as quickness of response, ability to use humor, skill at circumlocution, willingness to guess, and readiness to take linguistic risks. Still, the students who learned with FiA at our institution tested at or above average on the Educational Testing Service Placement examination given at the end of the year, even though this type of test is not an appropriate evaluation tool for the program. Our experience has shown us that the French in Action method is highly innovative (even apart from its innovations in the field of video), and that its methodology is often unusual, even heretical. But the program, when taken as a whole, is as intelligently conceived and developed for achieving the ultimate goal of proficiency in a foreign language as any that has appeared to date.

"For Capretz, to be plunged into the foreign culture is to be bombarded by an ocean of random stimuli without a life preserver."

Capretz's approach is, in essence, modified immersion. Based on observation and inference, the method "gives you the advantages of the immersion method without its chaos." For Capretz, to be plunged into the foreign culture is to be bombarded by an ocean of random stimuli without a life preserver. The innovation of French in Action is to take immersion one step further, rendering authentic speech comprehensible by breaking it down into structured components, in other words, to offer immersion coupled with a systematic way of coping with it. Bit by bit, using the arsenal of video techniques at his disposal, and a wealth of camouflaged occasions for repetition, Capretz provides the

continued on page 3
This tuyu was provided by
Barry Lydgate, Wellesley College

Wellesley College teaches French in Action in a classic sequence: Part I (lessons 2-26) in the first year course (Beginning French), and Part II (lessons 27-52) in the second (Intermediate French). On average, 120 students a year elect the intermediate course. Of these, about half are students new to Wellesley who have had one or more years of French in high school, and have learned with methods and materials other than FiA.

By the end of the fall semester, these new students are generally at the same level as their classmates who took the beginning course with FiA. However, the first few weeks can be quite difficult for them. Although our placement procedure has assigned them all to the intermediate course, they are at wildly differing levels of competence in the four skills. They need to get to know the characters and the story line, to understand the allusions and the inside jokes. Although many of them have had as many as four years of high school French, they are faced with an unfamiliar pedagogical approach that obliges them to rethink their relationship with the language. They must also learn the habits, so basic to French in Action, of hypothesizing about meaning and of maintaining an equilibrium between what is understood now and what is held in temporary limbo, to be clarified and mastered another day.

Here are two suggestions for reviewing lessons 2-26 that will bring new students up to speed:

1) The first solution involves reviewing Part I over a three-week period.

For review, an instructor might present the feuiletton sections (story only) of Part I using the Short Cut to French videos, presenting lessons 2-11 in week one, lessons 12-19 in week two, and 20-26 in week three. In the class periods following the presentations, instructors can review both the story and the main grammar points of each group of lessons. In preparation for class, students can be asked to review the Short Cut segments in the language laboratory, read the corresponding portions of the textbook, and complete a series of written exercises.

This solution will produce familiarity with the story and with the major features of the pedagogical approach.

2) Another solution is to spend the first three weeks reviewing Part I through the use of abridged lessons without audio, interspersed with whole lessons that include the audio program. The advantage to such an approach is that it will familiarize students new to FiA with the full panoply of material in the course.

Devoting three full weeks to the review of the 25 lessons, one might spend one class period on each of 6 whole lessons: lessons 12, 14, 19, 22, 23, and 26. These are six important loci of grammatical points and lend themselves flexibly to review of other material. The three video presentations would use Short Cut grouped as follows: lessons 2-14, 15-22, and 23-26. Students should have videocassettes of Short Cut, along with those of the six complete 'lessons, available in the language or video lab. Sufficient copies of the workbook for Part I can be put on reserve in the language lab and in the library, so that instructors can use written exercises for the abridged intermediary lessons. Students should work with the audiocassettes of the whole lessons.

This method of review takes advantage of the complete spectrum of French in Action materials, and immediately gets students doing more fully what they enjoy most: listening and speaking.

In French in Action, each videotape begins with an immersion segment, a 10-minute dialogue in an authentic setting, followed by a 20-minute "lesson" orchestrated by Capretz. The dialogue presents an episode, solely in French, of the ongoing narrative about the activities of Mireille and Robert. The students get the gist of the story by watching the action and picking up visual cues. The speech is authentic and at normal speed, complete with slang, idioms, street noises and sound effects, and variations in the age, accent, and social status of the speakers. Few concessions are made to the beginning language learner at this point.

The remaining lesson part of the tape breaks the dialogue down into smaller parts which are designed to render it comprehensible and to help the student master the linguistic content—vocabulary, idioms, linguistic patterns, and grammar. The lesson is followed by a simple recapitulation quiz that bolsters the students' confidence by showing them what they now know. The video ends with a novel recombination of elements from the lesson in an entertaining "guignol" skit. The material in the videotape is then reinforced and expanded in the essential ancillary components that make up the program: the workbooks, audio tapes, study guides, and textbook.

The dialogue in the immersion segment is the core from which the lesson’s vocabulary, grammar, and idioms arise. It is the "sine qua non" of the lesson, in that all further work tends towards the mastery of this dialogue and its structures. What this means for the way grammar is taught is new and eminently sensible since, in contrast to traditional textbooks in which the dialogue is written in consideration of the grammar to be learned, the Capretz method teaches the grammar to be learned in consideration of the dialogue and with an eye to the students’ needs for necessary life preserver. The student not only comes to comprehend a sophisticated level of speech, but also, by internalizing advanced linguistic structures, to use difficult constructions creatively and naturally in speech and writing.
expressing themselves on the same topic. In a lesson on fixing up the Belleau's vacation house, for example, students are taught the verb "moderniser," the very useful expression "transformer quelque chose en quelque chose," and causative "faire." Although the meaning of the causative "faire" construction is not hard to grasp intellectually, the crucial distinction between doing something oneself and having it done for you is hard to pick out immediately in the target language, and harder yet for students to learn to use on their own. But the Capretz method comes to their aid offering a multitude of opportunities to learn the construction and to reinforce that learning.  

**The speech is authentic and at normal speed, complete with slang, idioms, street noises and sound effects, and variations in the age, accent, and social status of the speakers.**

The dialogue segment of the videotape, like any dialogue, includes the repetitions and redundancies found in authentic speech, which textbooks necessarily reduce in order to maintain interest and economize space. Capretz has cleverly structured his dialogues with pedagogical goals in mind, and he and his associates have capitalized on what is specifically useful for language teaching in the video medium. In *FIA*, the characters and their idiosyncrasies have been carefully selected to allow for unobtrusive and humorous repetitions. Marie-Laure, for example, the ten-year-old sister, yells insistently, "C'est un banc public...c'est un banc public..." during a fight with her sister Mireille in the Luxembourg Gardens. This repetition, tolerated by the audience in a child throwing a tantrum, teaches the children that the "c" in "banc" is silent. In other instances, Marie-Laure is the medium for exposing potential misunderstandings in the language when she confuses "belote" and "pelote" or "Armontain" and "Américain." Similarly, Robert confuses "slip" meaning briefs with the English word "slip" (feminine underwear). Characters' obsessions, like Robert's obsession with Mireille, are another way to introduce repetitions. The sentence: "Robert se demande si Mireille sera chez les Courtois" becomes the linguistic leitmotif of one lesson. His obsession becomes our chance to hear numerous repetitions of the sentence. Although in *FIA* one is often aware of being assaulted over and over by a particular phrase, there is a certain pleasure and security in the recurrence of the familiar phrase. And since the dialogues are done with wit and sophistication, we willingly suspend our disbelief. Capretz sometimes even pokes fun at his characters and parodies national stereotypes (for instance, he gently calls into question Hubert's family's ownership of the chateau of Chambord) gives the videotapes an extra intellectual depth, which becomes a pleasure to be especially savored by the teacher, whose own interest in the program is the best assurance that the students' interest will be maintained. Furthermore, it permits the students to see that if Capretz can question his own characters, they also need not accept all aspects of the story. The students' active participation is further encouraged in the workbook section "Mise en scène et réinvention de l'histoire" where they can deconstruct the original plot line and reinvent it.

In acquiring a language, one needs to learn language usage as well as the meanings of the words. A textbook dialogue rarely offers a word in more than one context, but through the use of video, one can handle cover a variety of situations in which a word may be used. One learns, for instance, that "plonger" (to dive) does indeed coincide with the English meaning in that it is not restricted to a dive off a diving board, but can include a plunge from a burning building. Often a number of idiomatic uses of a particular verb are subtly integrated into a particular lesson. In chapter 8, students learn that Oncle Guillaume "a des

*Continued on page 5*
Many of our colleagues ask about French in Action broadcasts on public television stations. Is it broadcast in my area? When is it broadcast? On which channel?

French in Action is broadcast on most major PBS stations. However, programming at each PBS station fluctuates considerably and schedules vary from station to station. In addition, PBS broadcasts are not always listed in the TV Guide. The best way to find out about French in Action broadcasts in your area is to call the program director at your local PBS station. If French in Action is not aired in your area, you can ask your colleagues, friends, students and their parents to call or write to the program director. This will serve to remind him or her that there is a strong interest in the program.

Position open for school year '92-93

Saint Paul's School in Concord, NH is looking for a teacher of French who has experience using French in Action. Applicants should have native/near native fluency. Supervision in the dormitory is expected, as well as assisting in sports. Please send cover letter and C.V. to: Roberta Tenney, Dean of Faculty, Saint Paul's School, 325 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301

Workshops

Dear Readers:

This fall, we announced that Yale University Press would be sponsoring teacher support workshops. The response was overwhelming. Many of you expressed interest in attending and even co-sponsoring workshops. We'd like to thank you for your thoughtful and insightful responses.

We will be posting information about the workshops in the "Calendar" section of the FIA newsletter, as well as contacting those of you on our mailing list about workshops in your area. We already have several workshops planned throughout the country. If you are not on our list, please complete the form on page 7, mark the box about workshops, and return it to us.

Many thanks again. We appreciate your responses, and look forward to hearing from even more of you. —MC

Change of Address

To order the French in Action videos or preview videotapes, the new address for the Annenberg/CPB Project is: The Annenberg/CPB Collection, P.O. Box 2345, South Burlington, VT 05407-2345. They can still be reached by phone at 1-800-LEARNER.

The pedagogical segment also offers the opportunity to clarify problems presented by "faux amis." When Mireille and Robert are showing an accident as bystanders, it is understood that "assister à" does not mean to assist or help. In other instances, video images immediately forestall any confusion over the meaning of words such as "articulation" (joint), "circulation" (traffic), "pièce" (room, coin), and "relations" (acquaintances).

Not everything that appears in the video is intended to be learned actively. Sometimes images flash on the screen in such quick succession that viewers are not quite sure what they have seen, yet they absorb the message almost subliminally. This information adds to the students' store of passive knowledge. Movie clips and advertisements from French television change the pace, add interest, and heighten curiosity, demonstrating the actual use of expressions and idioms that have just been presented pedagogically. Seeing these expressions used in real-life situations also confirms to the student their verifiable usefulness in the language.

It is in the pedagogical section of the video that the student first encounters the grammar of each chapter. There is, contrary to what one might expect, a formal grammar presentation in most of the video lessons. To enhance the learning of grammar topics such as verb conjugation, tense formation, adjective agreement, and the use of pronouns, different colors and video techniques are used. Important endings flash on the screen to call the students' attention to them, and alternate flashings are used to contrast potentially confusing elements. Essential grammatical distinctions are often enacted on the screen while the verbal equivalents are shown as subtitles. For example, images rapidly alternate between "elle promène Fido" and "elle se promène." Capretz repeats a sequence such as this as many times as necessary for the student to assimilate it. Whereas in FIA the screen time spent on a particular point is proportional to its importance or its difficulty, students faced with a textbook alone may not recognize what is important and may not concentrate their attention appropriately. The speed and efficiency of video grammar presentations make them more effective than traditional blackboard or textbook presentations.

With the completion of the viewing of the video lesson, the student moves from the role of language receiver to that of language performer. Repetition and reinforcement in the form of active participation of the student now take place with the workbook and the audiotapes. It is in the workbook that grammar is formally taught, with explanations, charts, and exercises. Unlike other grammar books, the French in Action workbook does not merely present a topic once, leaving review up to the initiative of the student. Instead, the workbook provides systematic review, optimally spaced throughout the book so that the topic remains familiar. Also typical of the workbook is that the deep pedagogical purpose of some exercises is not made explicit.
Model
continued from page 5

agreeably hidden beneath the surface. 9

The audiotapes are coordinated with the workbook. Together, the two offer, in addition to grammar practice, further opportunity for listening, speaking, and writing. The student gets essential practice in repeating, phrase by phrase, the basic sentences of the video dialogue. These basic sentences become the answers to questions that periodically break up the dialogue. The student moves quickly and confidently through the answers, since the answer to each question is always the material just uttered. By the end of the workbook lesson, the student is ready for "Liberation de l'expression," a section for free expression and creative recombination of story elements. The novel use of open-ended questions in this section furthers self-expression by inviting unlimited personal input. For instance, when asked, "De quoi peut-on se tromper?", the student can answer, "de porte," "de numéro de téléphone," "de planète..." Or, if asked, "Dans quoi peut-on se sentir bien?" the response can be, "son short," "sa peau," "son fauteuil..." Even within the limits of the students' experience with the language, the number of original, even humorous responses of which they are capable is surprisingly gratifying. In fact, originality and humor abound in the FaA classroom.

After 52 lessons of French in Action, a reasonable proficiency in speaking French can be attained. This ability should allow the student to function almost immediately upon arrival in the foreign culture, but it is not limited to French for travelers. Beyond the more obvious practical purpose of certain vignettes or exercises is the less evident linguistic structure that is being inculcated. FaA makes no effort to expose its pedagogical strategies nor are they, by any means, always obvious. The linguistic goals of each lesson are clearly stated in the study guide, so that disguising the grammatical objectives elsewhere in the lesson seems wholly appropriate, since undoubtedly the heart of the program's success is the feeling it generates that learning French is fun and entertaining. We should not assume that the program is in any way haphazard or superficial just because we do not see its inner workings. In traditional textbooks, we know all too well what the grammatical structure of the lesson is and it was clearly the intention of FaA to avoid this mode of presentation.

Through the Capretz method, the student of FaA has the potential to understand and use much more sophisticated language than does the user of a traditional textbook. The method concentrates on making language of natural complexity comprehensible and then functional, instead of introducing a watered-down version of the language and then expecting that somehow, although a model for it has never been offered, students will arrive at speech of natural complexity on their own. It is as if in FaA someone were given a puzzle, watched it be put together again, not only in the original way, but also in new combinations. Such a process would seem to have positive implications for the students' future ability to handle the language of literary texts in upper-level courses.

The videotapes in FaA prove that most of the traditional function of the language textbook can be taken over by video and that the visual element can have a much bigger role than previously thought in what is generally considered an essentially verbal process. Indeed, a picture can be worth a thousand words. Through visual means, the meanings of words can be established and their range of meaning, both figurative and literal, range of usage, and appropriate speech contexts delineated. That all this information is imparted in the agreeable context of a witty and engaging story, aided by cartoons, television commercials, movie clips, interviews, and outstanding cultural footage, underscores the superiority of the medium.

9 in an early workbook lesson, emphasis is placed on infinitive endings. This ensures that when the "futur immédiat" is introduced in the following lesson, the student can focus on the forms of "aller" since the infinitive forms are already ingrained.

---

Les Cancans de la Concierge

—Vous ne savez pas? Il paraît que Hubert fait dans l'immobilier!

—Hubert? Non, ce n'est pas lui, ce sont ses oncles qui construisent des HLM!!

—Non, non! Lui, Hubert, j'ai entendu dire qu'il était devenu agent immobilier, un véritable requin d'ailleurs, un magouilleur qui chasse les locataires qui le gênent, relève les vieillards en asile... une ordure!

—Mais non! Ce n'est pas Hubert! C'est Franck Lapersonne... enfin, non, je veux dire: Franck Lapersonne, l'acteur qui joue Hubert dans French in Action, eh bien, il joue Leduc, un agent immobilier pas très scrupuleux, dans Pignon sur rue, une comédie de J.L. Bertuccelli qui est passée à la télévision suisse, sur TSR, en novembre dernier.

—Ah bon! Je me disais aussi... un jeune homme si comme il faut...

—Il ne faut pas croire tout ce qu'on dit!

—Non... mais, quand même, il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu, comme dit Mademoiselle Georges.

Un agent immobilier prêt à tout pour faire des affaires. Grimaud (Daniel Prévois), un véritable requin, écume depuis des années le quartier où il a pignon sur rue...

Quand le pignon a pignon sur rue

The all-French format, which might seem frightening to the students at first, becomes non-threatening when they realize how much

Continued on page 7
opportunity they will have to make educated guesses before they are expected to understand. In fact, they will gradually see that understanding is not dependent on knowing each English equivalent and that failing to understand every word is not catastrophic. Since they are constantly analyzing clues for the meaning, the students become willing guessers. Also, immersed as they are in the foreign language, they are not paralyzed with fear about speaking, and, in time, they become

"Using French in Action, students inevitably build confidence in their ability. The program is structured so that they will rarely give wrong answers if they have followed all the steps."
The following "réinvention" is adapted from a writing exercise done by Hakan Avci, a student in the introductory intensive French course at Yale (after lesson 34).

Lili

Robert arrive dans la rue de Vaugirard, trouve le numéro 18, et entre dans le vestibule. Il cherche la liste des locataires mais il ne la trouve pas ... parce qu'il n'y en a pas. Alors il se dirige vers la porte de la loge de la concierge et frappe. Une jeune fille souriante ouvre.

La concierge: Oui, Monsieur?

Robert: Les Belleau s'il vous plait, c'est à quel étage?

La concierge: C'est au quatrième étage à droite... Vous venez pour voir Mireille?

Robert: Vous la connaissez?

La concierge: Si je la connais! Bien sûr que je la connais! C'est une drôle de fille.

Robert: Ah oui! Pourquoi dites-vous ça?

La concierge: Oh, je ne sais pas, moi... Ce qu'il y a de sûr, c'est qu'elle a des amis bizarres. Tenez, par exemple, elle avait un ami norvégien qui était étudiant à la Sorbonne, comme elle. C'était un peintre tout à fait extraordinaire ... mais, aussi, c'était un psychopathe, vous savez. Il venait souvent ici, avant. Mais plus maintenant. Parce qu'il est à l'hôpital maintenant. Mireille m'a dit qu'il s'était coupé un petit doigt et le lui avait envoyé, par la poste, parce qu'il l'aimait.

Robert: Sans blague! Rien que ça! Ça a dû être horrible pour elle.

La concierge: Oh non, pas du tout. Elle a une...ère très calme. Même que ce garçon stupide avait oubli son anneau sur le doigt. Elle l'a vendu, et avec l'argent elle a acheté quelques souris vivantes pour Lili.


La concierge: Lili, c'est le serpent de Mireille, un boa. Il mange toujours des souris vivantes. Il aime ça. C'est un animal énorme, mais il n'attaque jamais personne ... enfin presque jamais. Je dis presque jamais, parce qu'il y a un an, il a déchiré le pantalon du plombier. Mais il ne lui a pas fait mal. Enfin, pas vraiment...

Robert: Oh, la, la, mais c'est inquiétant tout ça!

Je n'étais pas au courant, moi! Je viens de rencontrer Mireille il y a quelques jours. Je suis invité à dîner chez eux, ce soir.

La concierge: Très bien, mais soyez prudent. Mme Belleau est une excellente cuisinière, mais elle adore créer des plats extraordinaires et quelquefois dangereux. On dit qu'un ami de M. Belleau a failli mourir à cause des cèpes aux framboises que Mme Belleau lui a servi. Enfin, Mireille m'a dit que ce Monsieur n'était pas exactement un ami de M. Belleau, mais seulement un autre ingénieur de chez Renault que M. Belleau n'aimait pas beaucoup.

A ce moment là, Robert s'aperçoit qu'il n'a pas très faim. Il remercie la concierge et il se dirige vers la porte de l'immeuble. Quand il se retrouve dans la rue de Vaugirard il commence à courir dans la direction du Home Latin. Il ne prend pas le métro parce qu'il a peur de se perdre, mais il court, il court pour aller vite manger au resto-U. Un repas simple mais équilibré, sans cèpes et sans framboises.
Professor Mark Weinberg and his colleagues are piloting French in Action at Gallaudet University where a specially modified version of the course is being designed for deaf students.

Professor Weinberg and Gallaudet’s FiA team explain why FiA’s visual approach to language learning would be so effective for his students:

Many students tend to regard language acquisition as a compartmentalized task involving memorization of isolated vocabulary terms and grammatical rules. These students experience difficulty in the concrete application of such information because they cannot always strike a working balance between abstraction and function. The consequences are twofold: 1. Frustration and a feeling of personal inadequacy to accomplish what appears to be an overwhelming and seemingly futile task, with ensuing loss of interest in the subject matter; 2. After some degree of grammatical mastery is achieved, a false sense of competency which inevitably leads to disillusionment when actual communication is attempted.

Reading is often done word-by-word rather than globally. Looking up each word in a bilingual dictionary, then writing down the first given English equivalent above the French text is a common procedure. The inadequacies and tediousness of this approach are obvious.

In many instances no doubt, the problems students face in language acquisition stem from lack of exposure to the interactive nature of language. It seems only normal that misconceptions would arise concerning the purpose of language in general, the value of learning a language and the way to go about such a task. Despite the best intentions and expertise, teaching methods, goals, and measurement of student achievement can foster this situation. Cultural information and much of the rapport between behavior and the written or spoken code (the very heart of language, what makes it an effective means of communication) is typically difficult to integrate into the traditional curriculum because of time limitations. Such considerations often become an appendage rather than an integral part of the course even though teachers and students alike agree on their instructional value and the personal enrichment which can be derived from them.

Instructional advantages of the FiA program for Gallaudet students

The FiA program represents a highly desirable instructional program for Gallaudet students for several reasons: Methodology and objectives focus on “total language teaching.” Language and culture are presented simultaneously through “planned immersion” which closely simulates the on-location experience. The aim is the development of communicative proficiency through watching real people interact in true-life situations.” The video scenarios acquaint students with “linguistic distinctions appropriate to diverse social exchanges.” Most importantly, the FiA program makes students realize that “the acquisition of a language does not merely entail learning grammatical structures but depends on a complex system of verbal and non-verbal...
This "réinvention" by Tessa Crowley, Polly Markos, and Nikki Mullaney, students at the Academy of the Holy Cross in Kensington Maryland, was submitted by their teacher, Sister Jeanne Buisson, C.S.C.:

**LE PETIT CHAPERON ROUGE**


Le Petit Chaperon Rouge dit: "D'accord, je vais la lui apporter. Mais, est-ce que tu sais où je pourrais louer une voiture?" (C'était une fille moderne!)

La Maman: “Oui, chez Avis! Va au garage Exxon, en bas du Boulevard Saint Michel, si tu veux.”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: : “Merci, Maman. Au revoir!”

Au garage Avis.


Le garagiste : “Oui. Qu'est-ce que vous voulez? Une grosse ou une petite voiture? Changement de vitesse automatique ou manuel?”


Le garagiste : “D'accord! Je peux vous la donner.”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : “Formidable! C'est combien pour la journée?”

Le garagiste : “500F.”

Pendant que le Petit Chaperon Rouge passe devant le lion (de la place Denfert Rochereau), qu'est-ce qu'elle voit? Un loup! Un grand méchant loup horrible avec un chapeau noir, dans une voiture noire. Il se penche à la portière et il lui demande: "Pardon, ma petite, est-ce que tu as un peu de moutarde?"

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge : "De la moutarde? Mais bien sûr! J'ai de la Grey-French in Action Newsletter Editor for Yale University Press: Mary Coleman

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French in Action: The Distant Learner

Since its premier in 1987, many colleges and universities have used French in Action as a telecourse for distant learners. These learners are usually older than traditional students, and they cannot attend regular on-campus classes because of work or family commitments. Distant learners work more independently, watching the television programs and reading the print materials at home or work, with guidance from the course faculty through a variety of communication and instructional techniques.

Distant learners have benefited in recent years from the expansion of such communication technologies as fax machines, voice mail, and electronic mail. The real challenge, especially with foreign language courses, is how to humanize these electronic media and to create interaction between faculty and students. What follows are two examples of colleges that have successfully met the challenge of distance learning using French in Action — Northern Virginia Community College and Colorado State University.

Northern Virginia Community College

In 1990-91, Northern Virginia Community College, which has five campuses and 35,195 students, offered French in Action as its first foreign language telecourse. FiA telecourse students had the same assignments, the same expectations, and the same course credit as our on-campus French course. However, we adapted the telecourse by adding four, college-produced, 30-minute televised segments — an orientation and three review sessions before major tests. We also made the telecourse more flexible by encouraging students to fax us their compositions and to leave their dialogues and receive instructor feedback on our 24-hour voice mail machine.

From student evaluations, we have learned that the major advantages of the televised course are flexibility and adaptability. One student wrote, “I can view the lessons at my own pace and on my own schedule. If this approach were not available, I would not be able to be enrolled in the course.”

But, do students learn from French In Action? Yes! Their speaking skills are comparable to my on-campus students. Their compositions are better, more imaginative, perhaps reflecting the level of maturity of many telecourse students. Because I gave the same tests to three groups of students -- on-campus, teleconference, and telecourse -- I know that the test scores of the groups are comparable.

We feel we attracted students to our FiA telecourses who would not have taken a course at all, and we will continue to offer French in Action.

Students are enthusiastic about the visual and aural approach of French in Action. One student wrote to me recently, “I'm moving and can't continue your course. How will I know what happened to Mireille and Robert? How will I find out who the Man in Black is?" Let's hope she finds another institution that will offer French in Action as a telecourse.

Colorado State University

In January 1988, I began developing French in Action into four semesters of freshman and sophomore telecourses for Colorado State University. To date over 120 students have taken these telecourses. In fact, I have been so impressed by FiA's fascinating method, its spectacular on-site filming, and its compelling story line that I also use FiA in on-campus classes.

One of the strongest aspects of FiA is its tutor. Each week students spend from six to eight hours on the video, audio, and print materials before sending me a quiz from the study guide, a short essay, and a short tape. Thus, students must assume the responsibility and work through an entire, carefully guided sequence before I ever see their work. My role is tutor, modeling phrases and taping suggestions right onto the students' recordings.

Though I never see them, some of my telecourse students take on more personal-


Presentation and recapitulation of material during the video lesson are carefully sequenced, yet give the impression of being nonlinear. The viewer has the feeling that several things are happening at once, as they do in real communication. The program makes use of multimedia. Both these facets of the FiA approach reinforce the notion that language is made up of diverse elements. This should give students a clearer understanding of the spontaneous nature of language and help them develop a sensitivity to the functional application of abstract grammatical notions.

Thanks to FiA’s contextual approach, students should gain a better understanding of how languages work within sociocultural frameworks. Additional benefits could include: development of better study habits through increased motivation, improvement of deductive skills, greater confidence and self-reliance in problem-solving and in dealing with unknown situations, and heightened awareness of the advantages of learning a foreign language as a means of communication and as the key to a different culture.

Two other important considerations are the visually attractive quality of the FiA video component and the fact that characters in the scenario often make use of nonverbal communication. Moreover, the combination of the mock classroom scenes and the storyline scenarios is an ingenious way to allow for the use of two levels of French: Characters in the storyline communicate at a normal rate with true-to-life French, while those in the classroom use simplified French at a slower rate. Students are thus exposed to the language in its natural form through the storyline, yet gain a sense of peer presence through the mock classroom: students in the video exhibit frustrations, humor and general behavior typical of the classroom dynamics. The instructor in the mock classroom is congenial and amusing yet displays an aura of expertise. These behavioral elements could have positive effects on students’ attitudes toward their own classroom, classmates and instructor.

Traditional and FiA approaches compared

Traditional approaches frequently stress the presentation and study of selected grammar points at the onset of a given lesson. Assignment and correction of written exercises which apply the grammar in question follows. If assigned, readings are sometimes accompanied by written exercises which test content comprehension and are often grammar-based. Time permitting, cultural material is presented. Correction of exercises is often done as a group in the classroom, using student answers as models. On tests, students are to display mastery of grammatical points by completing exercises and answering questions similar or identical to those done in class and as homework.

The FiA program represents a departure from traditional approaches in that it places greater responsibility on the student. This encouragement of learner autonomy does not, however, completely abandon the student to cope with acquisition in isolation. Constant guidance is given at every stage. Since contextual situations are presented before grammar, students are confronted with the language as they would be in real life. Grammatical points are introduced indirectly at first during the video segment through examples and repetition. When, following this preliminary phase, grammar notions appear in the workbook accompanied by brief explanations, students should be able to grasp them more readily because they will have already been exposed to examples of usage a number of times. This approach should build confidence by reducing "grammar trauma" in students who are naturally inclined to shy away from analyzing abstract linguistic elements.

The focus on individual lab work permits students to concentrate on their own weaknesses and frees up class time. Exercises are designed to allow students to correct most of their own work, leaving class time for more stimulating and challenging activities. Classroom interaction thus becomes an extension and enhancement of individual work, rather than the opposite (more traditional) format. Instructors are advised to stress the participatory, collective nature of such activities and aim at creating a natural, relaxed atmosphere in order to lessen inhibitions and fears of making errors. A remark in the Instructor’s Guide bears witness to this positive, open pedagogical stance adopted by the authors of FiA: “Teacher and students need to remember that in communication any response is a great triumph, and the only defeat is silence (p. xxvi).”
Quelques minutes plus tard, le loup frappe à la porte et parle avec une petite voix pointue.

Le loup: “Ma chère grand-mère, c’est moi, le Petit Chaperon Rouge.”

La grand-mère: “Ah, ma petite Minouche! C’est toi? Mais, Ça fait une éternité qu’on ne t’a pas vue! Entre, s’il te plaît.”

Alors le loup entre et il mange la grand-mère, parce qu’il avait très faim. Mais il n’est pas content parce que la vaisselle est sale! La fourchette est pleine de jaune d’œuf. Il dit: “Qu’est ce que c’est que ça? On ne lave plus la vaisselle dans cette maison! C’est incroyable! Et les couteaux qui ne coupent pas! Oh, là! Si on ne peut plus manger une grand-mère tranquillement maintenant! Où va-t-on?”

Quelques moments après, le Petit Chaperon Rouge frappe à la porte de la maison.

Le loup: “Entre, ma chère enfant. Appuie sur le bouton et la porte s’ouvrira.”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge pense: “Tiens, Grand-mère doit avoir très mal à la gorge.”

Elle entre et met la soupe qu’elle avait apportée sur la table.

Le loup: “Bonjour, Bibiche. Comment ça va?”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Grand-mère, vous avez l’air bien étrange.”

Le loup: “Ah, oui?”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Grand-mère, que vous avez de grands yeux noirs!”

Le loup: “C’est pour mieux te voir, mon enfant.”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Grand-mère, que vous avez une grande moustache.”

Le loup: “C’est l’âge, ma petite!”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Grand-mère, que vous avez de grandes dents pointues!”

Le loup: “Oui, c’est pour te manger!”

Et le loup bondit sur le Petit Chaperon Rouge pour la manger. Mais, à cet instant, un jeune homme, appelé Robert, passe et entend les cris de la petite fille. Il se précipite dans la maison juste à temps pour sauver la petite fille. Ça, c’est un homme courageux!

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Juste au moment où vous êtes arrivé, j’ai réalisé que ce n’était pas une vraie.”

Robert: “Qu’est-ce que tu veux dire, ‘ce n’était pas une vraie’?”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Ce n’était pas une vraie grand-mère.”

Robert: “Comment le sais-tu?”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Parce qu’elle avait de la moustache.”

Robert: “Ce n’est pas une raison. Il y a sûrement des grand-mères qui ont de la moustache...”

Le Petit Chaperon Rouge: “Peut-être, oui. Mais elle, elle avait une moustache... comme ça!”

Et la grand-mère? Ah oui, la grand-mère, c’est vrai! Eh bien, la grand-mère, oui, oui, on l’a retrouvée vivante... quand on a fait cuire le loup au barbecue. Elle était à peu près intacte, juste une petite éraflure sur la joue gauche...(Mais le loup était un peu dur. Trop cuit!)
This tuyau was provided by Barbara Knauf of Yale University

Having your class write a collective novel is a good way to give them a sense of their collective achievement -- and to create a great imparfait vs. passé composé exercise by the way:

1. Announce to your class that, as a devoir écrit, everybody will write a chapter for a collective novel. Together, choose names for a hero, heroine -- or both, and decide on chapter titles. A roman de formation, spanning the heroes' adventurous lives from birth to marriage, death or mysterious disappearance, works well to assure some continuity (souvent saugrenue!). Every student picks one chapter heading, and writes the chapter (really just a paragraph) for the next day.

2. Students are asked to obey two rules for the composition: 1) employ only the present tense; 2) make sure that their chapter contains both some action or event, and a description of the arrière-plan.

3. Collect the chapters, correct them, and put them together (typing it up works best).

4. Hand out the corrected "novel" and use it as an imparfait vs. passé composé exercise by reading it together in class and transposing it into the past (that's why you want both events and descriptions).

Chances are that the "novel" will be hilarious, and that the whole class will be impressed by and justly proud of this collective chef d'oeuvre!

COURSE OBJECTIVES

There is a theory about learning a foreign language -- acquire it first, and then learn it.

In our class, we do exactly that, by immersing ourselves in a story about people who only speak French. Indeed, we watch a movie -- an on-going story -- about some French people -- Mireille, a pretty young woman; Marie Laure, her cute little sister who is always getting into trouble; Robert, the handsome American who falls in love with Mireille; Jean-Pierre, the obnoxious pick-up artist; and family, friends and others who make up the cast of French in Action.

GRADES

30% Participation in Class
30% Attendance
20% Friday Quizzes
20% Homework

Grade yourself, too... keep score, and hand in your score-card with the Workbook on Friday!

FINALLY

If you're having problems understanding me or the movie, don't worry. You're not meant to understand everything, or even most of what you see and hear.

So observe, listen, and get involved. Try to figure out what's going on. You'll soon find out that you can guess correctly most of the time... and say a few things in French yourself.

My class is relaxed and informal. There's no reason to feel embarrassed.

You have to try to speak, and don't forget that you learn by making mistakes. So loosen up!

If you have questions in English -- write them down, and come see me after class. Don't introduce English here, because in this class, everybody speaks French! BON COURAGE!
French in Action in Australia

Melbourne - French in Action, currently screening on the national ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) TV network, is broadcast throughout Australia as part of the pilot "TV Open Learning" Project. The Australian government is funding the project to provide wider access to higher education, particularly in rural and remote areas ("the outback"). The French in Action course is being offered throughout the country by the University of New England, located in Armidale, New South Wales.

The program was launched here in early March by the Australian Minister for Higher Education along with other TV Open Learning courses. French in Action has by far been the most popular Open Learning course, with about 2,000 people enrolled. Enrollment is at least five times higher than had been expected. The program has even provided television rating points and vied heavily with the popular breakfast show, "Good Morning Australia."

Yale University Press to publish tests for French in Action

New Haven- Yale University Press is pleased to announce the November publication of French in Action Test Banks. Written by Béatrice Abetti, Elizabeth Anglin, Elizabeth Berwanger, and Carolyn Demaray, the tests represent a range of difficulty and appropriateness for various learning situations, from secondary schools through four-year colleges. There are four tests for each lesson, and they are designed to allow the instructor maximum flexibility in adapting to the needs of individual classes.

The Test Banks package consists of a complete set of teacher's scripts for each test, with guidelines for administering the tests and answer keys, or suggestions for alternate responses, where appropriate, and a complete set of students' tests, suitable for duplication.

The price of the package is $100 and includes permission to duplicate the students' test for classroom use.

FiA Test Banks ordering information:
Address your order on official school purchase order or school letterhead to:
Yale University Press
92A Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520
Attn: Special Projects
Sorry, no phone orders.

FiA News

Become an FiA pioneer. Join the network of users. Keep in touch with your colleagues.
Simply fill out this subscription form and send it to:
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Name_________________________________Institution______________________________Department_________________________

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City___________________________________State________Zip_____________________

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Do you use French in Action as: ______ a core course? ______ a supplement? ______ a telecourse?

Check here if you would like to receive more information on the French in Action Test Banks:_________
A la recherche du numéro 18

On a recent trip to France, a group of my students took an hour off to hunt down the infamous 18, rue de Vaugirard, hoping sans doute to catch Mireille qui sortait de chez elle... or at least to have their pictures taken in front of this apartment with such a beautiful view (except for the Tour Montparnasse — quelle horreur!) of the Jardins du Luxembourg.

Please make note for future tourists that this new Mecca (which proved more of a draw than Jim Morrison's grave), is, however utile pour apprendre le français, as fictitious as the rest of the story!

Dr. Casey Black
Northern State University
Aberdeen, SD

Yes, indeed number 18, rue de Vaugirard is fictitious; for the very reason illustrated in Professor Black's letter. Before FiA was filmed, we at Yale and at a few other institutions were teaching with a prototype course. So many of our students would rush to the real building on rue de Vaugirard and ring the bell, hoping that Mireille would open the door, that we were obliged to move Mireille and her family twice.

When we made preparations to film French in Action, we anticipated the problem would be, of course, worse after the program was seen by tens of thousands of students and millions of home viewers. So, we had to find a number on rue de Vaugirard that would not pose a problem. I selected number 18 precisely because it does not exist. (If it did, it would be the back of the Odéon Theatre.) This solution created only a minor difficulty: whenever we wanted to shoot in front of Mireille's house, the crew had to bring a ladder to take down the actual number, replace it with number 18, and put back the right number when we were through.

PJC

We have been told many times that switching to French in Action has boosted enrollments. We received a letter from Professor Weinstock at Rockland Community College in Suffern, NY, who says: "Grâce à votre French in Action vous avez ressuscité notre département de français. Avant French in Action, 28 étudiants dans le cours de français; après French in Action, 125 étudiants. Les nombres s'améliorent de semestre en semestre."

Qui dit mieux?

Congratulations to Professor Weinstock and the French department at Rockland for a job well done!

Des étudiants nous écrivent:

Cher M. Capretz,

Je ne peux pas vous dire comment votre cours, French in Action, m'aide à comprendre et à étudier le français... avant cette année, la langue ne me plaisait pas beaucoup, probablement parce que les livres que nous utilisions étaient ennuyeux. Ils n'avaient guère d'humour, pas de personnages intéressants. J'admire votre énergie. Je regrette de ne pas avoir commencé à étudier le français avec French in Action. A propos, mon frère Fred est allé à Yale, mais c'est dommage qu'il n'ait pas étudié le français quand il était à l'université — vous auriez été son professeur!

Erik Campano

Notez Bien:

Effective 10/1/92, the price for the FiA audio cassettes is $60.00 per part.

MEC
In 1992, the Auckland Institute of Technology decided to run French in Action as part of Educational Television (ETV), a telecourse program sponsored by the university in conjunction with Television New Zealand (TVNZ). The first broadcast was made in April 1993. French and psychology are the first two subjects being offered and so far, the program seems to be generating a lot of interest. As of April, ETV had received about 2,000 inquiries, over half of them for French in Action.

Jackie-Ann Ross is teaching the French in Action telecourse at Auckland, in which 150 students are currently enrolled. The following is an abstract of a presentation about French in Action she recently did at the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers’ Conference:

1. The story behind the scenes

Pierre Capretz started teaching in 1949 and was dissatisfied with the methods at his disposal right from the start. “I soon became convinced a radically different approach could and should be found,” he said. “I was privileged to participate actively, in the sixties, in the ‘audio-lingual’ revolution in this country but felt all that time that bringing authentic spoken language to the students was not enough, and that we had to show them the speakers speaking the language, the circumstances in which it is spoken, and the cultural reality it refers to.”

“What attracts students to the study of a foreign language is ...the opening up of a new world by the foreign language...”

Capretz used films or excerpts from films. But the problem every teacher faces with native language documents of this kind is the level of language used. The teacher has no control over the input, and always ends up having to explain far more vocabulary than is desirable. That is why Capretz decided to create his own film, in which he could control the vocabulary and grammatical and situational input. The French in Action program was published in 1987 and was incredibly successful. In 1989, the whole series was broadcast three times in a row. By the Spring of 1990, an estimated 8.5 million people had watched the program. Though the success was rapid, the gestation and elaboration of the program was slow. The product we now have is the outcome of nearly thirty years’ work. Six prototypes were developed and tested in a dozen or so American institutions over twenty years. An additional three years were taken in the hunt for funding and in contract negotiations. Another three and a half years then were needed to finalize the project: scripts had to be written, situations filmed and edited, support materials written and produced. In all, over three hundred people worked on this project either in the States or in France.

2. The methodology

So what makes French in Action so different from other methods? Well, let’s look at some of the general notions upon which the course is based.

1. Learning is a function of motivation;
2. A printed text in a foreign language (by itself and in itself) is not particularly motivating, especially for beginners;
3. The simplified language proposed by most textbooks turns students off;
4. Students are equally turned off by unnatural language that does not carry actual information;
5. Learning the transformational rules that enable one to decode a foreign language into one’s own may be an exciting intellectual exercise but this kind of activity is not particularly fascinating for students who have not yet opted for careers as cryptologists;
6. What attracts students to the study of a foreign language is not its appear-

continued on page 3
1. French in Action Newsletter

We welcome any and all news of interest to the community of French in Action users. Please send newsworthy items that you'd like to share to the French in Action Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Capretz receives honorary degree from Middlebury College

Middlebury, VT – In August, Middlebury College granted an honorary Doctorate of Letters to Pierre Capretz in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to and leadership in the advancement of the teaching of French. Professor Capretz received this citation (see right) from the President of Middlebury College. Congratulations to Professor Capretz on this well-deserved honor!

Meister and Juhel wed

Coral Springs, FL – On December 27, 1992, Barbara Meister of New York City’s Collegiate School and Jean-Marc Juhel of Trinity School, also in New York, were wed at the home of the bride’s sister. The two veteran FIA teachers were introduced in June 1992 when the director of Columbia University’s Klingenstein Center invited them to co-present a workshop on video pedagogy. A long-distance romance ensued (Jean-Marc was teaching in Colorado until recently). Comme c’est curieux, comme c’est bizarre, et quelle coïncidence!!

Pierre Capretz, Doctor of Letters

Pierre Capretz: teacher, cinéast, father of Robert and Mireille, educator from the future.

You have shown your colleagues that future in creating the first truly video-based method for teaching a language. You have shown us as well the rich results of pedagogy developed over the longue durée, and have made us keenly aware of the benefits — indeed the necessity — of humor in language learning. You have provoked us into remembering that contact with another culture does not always comfort one’s own cultural assumptions and practices. In short, you have shown us that in learning a foreign language one can and must remain a thinking adult. At Middlebury we have never doubted that premise, and in honoring you tonight we celebrate our own strongly held beliefs and traditions.

It is therefore my privilege, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Middlebury College, to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa, with all the rights, honors, privileges, and responsibilities here and everywhere appertaining to this degree.

August 13, 1993
Office of the President
Middlebury College

Manning retires

Boulder, CO – Jeanne Manning has retired from her position at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria. Jeanne helped create a very successful telecourse program at the college, where they used technology to teach distant learners. Jeanne now lives in Boulder and is still very active with French in Action.

Epp receives award for excellence in teaching

Lincoln, NE – Anthony Epp of Nebraska Wesleyan University has received the Burlington Northern Award for Excellence in Teaching. Our congratulations to Mr. Epp! (Be sure to see Mr. Epp’s letter in the “Bulletin Board” section.)

French in Action Newsletter

Number 5
Contributors: Jackie-Ann Ross, Clifton Garrett
Editor for Yale University Press: Mary E. Coleman

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tance as an abstruse code — saying the very same things that are said more simply in their mother tongue — but rather, the opening up of a new world by the foreign language;
7. Understanding is a prerequisite to speaking;
8. Students, at any point, can understand much more than they can say;
9. There can be no understanding of language without a knowledge of the context in which the language occurs;
10. Language cannot be invented by the learners; it can be imitated and adapted to individual use through recombination of observed segments.3

The questions that were raised were: How, then, do we keep the students motivated and interested? How should we introduce new language? How can we talk to our students without babying them? How can we revise vocabulary and grammatical structures without boring them? The format that answered these questions was the soap. Soaps have the ability of hooking people. There is satisfaction in seeing the same

...How, then, do we keep the students motivated and interested? How should we introduce new language?... The format that answered these questions was the soap."

people week in, week out, in following their adventures. Though the focus in FIA is on two young people, Mireille and Robert, Mireille's family is always in the background and introduces people of all ages. This makes the story more "realistic" and interesting.

The soap format with which TV viewers are familiar enables the teacher to stop the video at critical moments. It creates suspense between episodes and thus maintains the students' interest. Soaps also allow the presentation of a whole series of culturally relevant vignette situations in which natural French can be spoken and understood. They are ideal for the introduction and systematic repetition and revision of new vocabulary and grammatical structures. The FIA soap parodies conventional soaps thus creating the requisite emotional distance between the viewers and heroes that frees students in their reinvention exercises.

This medium presents students with an interesting and large corpus of words. Because students can understand more at any one time than they can say, the medium allows the teacher to talk to the students, using complex structures which the students can understand because they are contextualized, and to which they can respond using simple language. The visual approach is therefore a great help in excluding English from the learning process. Indeed, French is not a coded version of English. In putting new words in concrete situations, students learn to do without English. They are trained to guess at meanings from the context. This stresses a more active role in the learning process for the student.

What the students experience with this course is controlled and guided sequential immersion. "For Capretz, to be plunged into the foreign culture is to be bombarded by an ocean of random stimuli without a life preserver. The innovation of FIA is to take immersion one step further, rendering authentic speech comprehensible by breaking it down into structured components. in other words, to offer immersion coupled with a systematic way of coping with it. Bit by bit, using the arsenal of video techniques at his

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Calendar

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<td>Oklahoma Foreign Language Association, Tulsa, OK</td>
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<td>October 21 - 23, 1993</td>
<td>Illinois Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Peoria, IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 27, 1993</td>
<td>Workshop for French in Action Teachers*</td>
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<td>with Barbara and Jean-Marc Juhel</td>
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<td>French in Action workshop*</td>
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<td>with Alan Astro of Trinity University, San Antonio</td>
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<td>Toronto, Ontario, Canada</td>
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<td>Yale University Press booth</td>
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*Advance registration is required. For more information, please contact Yale University Press at (203) 432-4912.
The following work of art was composed and recited by a chorus of students at Darien High School in Darien, Connecticut, on the occasion of Professor Capretz's visit:

Bonjour, Monsieur Capretz et comment allez-vous? Nous voulons vous souhaiter la bienvenue! Nous sommes étudiants en dernière année fiers d'avoir fait cinq ans de français.

En y réfléchissant, nous sommes contents de vous dire qu'apprendre le français était un plaisir.

Quand nous partirons pour l'université Nous n'oublierons jamais Robert et Mireille.

Et nous nous souviendrons toujours du professeur Qui nous a souvent mis de bonne humeur

Avec vos histoires si drôles, si utiles, si rares Et ce monsieur en noir: bizarre! bizarre!

Quand nous ferons des voyages, n'importe où Vos leçons de French in Action seront toujours avec nous.


Votre visite aujourd'hui nous donne de la joie Merci, Monsieur Capretz, merci mille fois!

This réinvention de l'histoire was completed by Cristina and José Salinas, a husband-and-wife team at Northern Virginia Community College whose child was born during the Spring '93 semester. Little Daniel was compliant with his parents' wish that he be born during Spring Break, so that neither parent would miss a class of French in Action. He inspired the following (after leçon 10):

José: Ça fait quatre heures qu'il pleure! C'est ton tour!!

Cristina: Mon tour! Il est trois heures du matin.

José: Tu es sourde ou quoi? Je dis que c'est ton tour.

Cristina: Je ne suis pas sourde. Ce n'est pas de jeu....Alors, va chercher du lait.

José: Je ne suis pas la bonne.... (De la cuisine) Je ne trouve pas de lait. Où est-ce qu'il est?

Cristina: Ce que tu peux être bête! Dans le réfrigérateur, évidemment!

José: Idiote! Je ne vais pas lui donner de lait froid!


José: Il est très beau. Je l'adore.
Yale University Press to release new edition of French in Action

New Haven, CT - Yale University Press is proud to announce the forthcoming publication of the second edition of the French in Action print and audio materials. Copies of the materials will be available for review next Spring. The new edition will make FiA’s innovative methodology even more accessible and flexible. New features include more workbook exercises, all-new audiocassettes, and new sections for reading and writing exercises. To receive review materials next Spring, complete and return the coupon on page 7 or contact Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520, Attn: French in Action.

New Test Banks well received by French in Action community

The recently released testing program continues to grow in popularity among French in Action teachers. The Test Banks by Béatrice Abetti, Elizabeth Anglin, Elizabeth Berwanger, and Carolyn Demaray are a complete set of tests for lessons 2 through 52, covering the entire sequence of instruction. There are four different tests for each lesson. The tests represent a range of difficulty and appropriateness for various learning situations, from secondary schools to four-year colleges. They are designed to allow the instructor maximum flexibility in adapting to the needs of individual classes. The test bank package consists of a teacher’s manual that includes complete scripts for each test, with guidelines for administering the tests and answer keys, or suggestions for alternate responses, where appropriate, and a complete set of students’ tests, suitable for duplication. The purchase price of $100 includes permission to duplicate the students’ test for classroom use.

If you’d like to receive a sample chapter from the Test Banks for review, please complete and return the coupon on page 7 or contact Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520 Attn: French in Action.

Australia now broadcasting Part II of FiA

Melbourne – In our Fall 1992 newsletter, we reported that, as part of the government-funded “TV Open Learning Project” to promote wider access to higher education in remote parts of the country, ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) began broadcasting Part I of French in Action in April 1992. The series has been so popular that it has provided stiff competition for the popular breakfast show, Good Morning Australia. Due to its enormous success, ABC is now continuing with the second part of the program.

French in Action in Taiwan

Taipei, Taiwan - French in Action is now available in the Far East through Central Book Publishing Company in Taipei.

Do you have any helpful hints you’d like to share with your colleagues? We’d love to hear about them! Please submit your original tuyaux to the French in Action Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

This tuyau was provided by Clifton Garrett of Bakersfield College in Bakerfield, CA.

For instructors who have access to a video camera or mini-cam, here’s a suggestion to “prime the pump” for student responses to the Mots en liberté section in each FiA lesson. These sections pose questions which provoke responses that activate recently learned structures and vocabulary.

Compile a list of these questions and, when travelling in a Francophone country, carry them along with your mini-cam. When you make the acquaintance of French speakers, let them know that you are working on a little project to enliven your instruction of the language by videotaping people responding to the questions. It doesn’t take long; a ten- to fifteen-minute session of taping can encompass many questions. Then, after editing, the results when played back to a class provide authenticity to an exercise that may sometimes seem too unreal and academic for some students.

Almost without exception, my subjects responded warmly and with animation. To one little old lady whom I met at a senior citizens’ center in a Provençal village, I posed a question from Lesson 11: “Qu’est qu’on peut faire quand il fait beau, en été?” She answered with a twinkle in her eye and without the slightest hesitation: “On peut faire du nudisme!”

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Dear Professor Capretz:

I attended a French in Action workshop at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville this spring and it has completely revitalized my use of the FiA program. I learned so much from the UTK workshop and feel much more confident about my use of the materials. I am in my 20th year of teaching French and cannot imagine ever going back to a non-video program. Thank you for your brilliantly and creatively crafted program. You have revolutionized language teaching and learning as far as I'm concerned.

One last remark: I was at a summer institute for French teachers 11 years ago when you and Professor Lydgate made a presentation about your project. I knew then that I wanted to change over to your materials, but it took me eight more years before I got the courage to do so.

Thank you again, Professor Capretz. As I'm sure you've heard before, one of my students said last week: "I've learned more in three weeks than I learned in the two years I took French in high school."

Anne F. Curtis
Chattanooga State Technical Community College
Chattanooga, TN

Dear French in Action Newsletter:

Very soon after I started using French in Action in Beginning French at Nebraska Wesleyan University, I realize that it was enabling me to teach French the way I had become convinced that it was best taught. Let me explain. In most texts, one has exercises which one assigns and then must check in class. FiA bypasses that step, putting all the responsibility for checking on the students. Thus, in class I am able to spend an entire hour every day bombarding students with French for which they are prepared, yet which they do not see. In addition, I find a kind of interest from students which other texts fail to elicit. Students want to know what happens next. They get aggravated with Robert. Although theoretically turned off by Jean-Pierre, they openly admit that he fascinates them. After one year, I think the students have a wonderful feel for the language. But in addition, they know what France looks like. In terms of the Quartier Latin, they know it all except for the smells.

Anthon Epp
Nebraska Wesleyan University
Lincoln, NE

Position wanted

Teacher with many years' experience with French in Action at Yale, Mount Holyoke, and Middlebury is relocating to Chicago and seeks French teaching position in the area. Please address possible leads to FiA Newsletter, 111 Grove Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

Dear French in Action Newsletter:

I don't know if you remember me, but I took Intro to French with you last year. I just wanted to drop you a note saying the pride of French in Action. I'm in Europe now on a post-graduation trip and I've used so much French I'm unbelievable. So far, in France, I've visited Nice, and now I'm in Paris. Although I didn't expect to use any French here (everyone told me how much the French hate French-speaking Americans), I have found that a lot of people don't speak English - which makes for a perfect opportunity for me to put my elementary French to the test. My

Postcard to Barry Lydgate from a former student at Wellesley College

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Anne F. Curtis
Chattanooga State Technical Community College
Chattanooga, TN

Interested in meeting other FiA teachers in your area?

Several teachers have expressed interest in contacting others in their area who also teach with French in Action. If you'd like to form a group or just get in touch, please let us know by calling Yale University Press at (203) 432-0912.

Anthon Epp
Nebraska Wesleyan University
Lincoln, NE
New Zealand
continued from page 3

disposal, and a wealth of camouflaged occasions for repetition, Capretz provides the necessary life preserver."

3. The grammar question

Some people have criticized FiA for the lack of grammar and grammatical exercises it contains. All I can say is that they cannot have looked at it properly. "It is in the pedagogical section of the video that the student first encounters the grammar of each chapter. There is ... a formal grammar presentation in most of the video lessons.... Essential grammar distinctions are often enacted on the screen while the verbal equivalents are shown as subtitles. For example, images rapidly alternate between 'elle promène Fido' and 'elle se promène.'"

The tape and workbook exercises ensure that students can test their understanding and grasp of this new form. 'New' in this method really means that this is being focused on for the first time. Capretz's way of familiarizing students with a new grammatical structure is to introduce it but not to focus on it until the students have heard it a few times. When he does focus on it, the students feel they already know it.

A brief study has been made of grammatical ability and general results achieved by two groups of students, one using a traditional textbook, and the other French in Action. The former is a more traditional grammar-in-context course and grammar takes a central place in each chapter. In FiA, grammar is introduced in an original but totally logical way. Structures are brought to the students' notice when they need them and are constantly revised and repeated. They are also introduced in such a way as to give maximum oral flexibility. For example, *aller + infinitif* is introduced in lesson one. The students do not know how to conjugate any verb other than *aller,* yet they can already express a lot. These two groups of students both had had three terms of the traditional text. They were tested at the beginning and at the end of the experiment, which lasted one semester. They were taught by the same teacher. Although more data would be needed to verify the results of this experiment, the outcome of the tests showed that the French in Action group did significantly better in the grammar scores, although otherwise they only did marginally better than their counterparts using the traditional book.

4. The level

The Capretz method was originally devised for use at the university level, but it is being used successfully in high schools throughout the US. It is interesting to note that students having completed two years of FiA at school "can safely be placed in advanced courses" at university. This is due in part to the vocabulary students are taught. If the context calls for what other programs would term advanced vocabulary, Capretz introduces it and the students accept it without realizing its difficulty because it is "relevant to the story and highly practical."

Added to their knowledge of vocabulary is the insight into French culture they obtain often subconsciously from watching the video. This helps them tremendously and gives them a great advantage over other students when it comes to dealing with French literary works.

5. How to use FiA in class

"The recommended procedure is for the teachers to show the video — a brief segment at a time — playing back utterances several times if necessary, to make sure that the students perceive the sounds spoken and then gain a global understanding of what is said. Since the language used in the video is natural and has not been simplified, students are, of course, not expected to understand everything at first; instead continued on page 8

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Please send me the following:

- A sample chapter from the Test Bank.
- Second Edition review materials

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they get a general notion of what is going on. Comprehension will be gradually refined as the spoken text is manipulated further."

Once they watch the video, students do a text work up using the audio tape. This covers the vocabulary from the video and requires students to repeat words, then give brief answers before moving on to longer ones. It covers pronunciation and intonation as well as comprehension.

The students then continue to listen to the audio tape and complete the exercises in the workbook. These cover a whole range of activities: observation, grammar rules, tonic stress pronunciation, activation exercises right through to self-tests and reinvention exercises of the story line.

The last step is the textbook itself, in which they read the text from the video. The words the students must focus on are illustrated to enhance understanding and retention. At the end of the text is a series of questions that students should now be able to answer without difficulty.

Last of all is a document relevant to the subject matter of the lesson: a short poem, a cartoon, an extract from a song, a play.

Editor’s note: Ms. Ross’s original piece continues with a sample lesson plan from an earlier issue of the French in Action Newsletter (No. 1). If you would like to receive this or any other back issue of the Newsletter, please address requests to Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520 Attn: French in Action.

NOTES
1Pierre J. Capretz: Unpublished Private Communication to J-A Ross, April 15, 1993


4“French in Action as a Model for Video Language Programs” by Deborah Fraioli and Mary-Ann Stadler-Chester, French in Action Newsletter 3, (1992), pp. 2-3

“French in Action as a Model for Video Language Programs” by Deborah Fraioli and Mary-Ann Stadler-Chester, French in Action Newsletter 3, (1992), p. 5


