In This Issue...

Teen Talk: What are the Implications for Second-Language Teaching?

Marcel Danesi

Since second-language teachers are faced with the task of imparting communicative language skills to learners who think and speak in terms of a language of their own making, it is is important that they become familiar with that very language if they are to make their their teaching relevant.

Introduction

The extensiveness of the research on adolescence over the last few decades has become truly mind-boggling. The number of periodicals, monographs, and books on all aspects of the psychological and social development of contemporary youths has reached astronomical proportions. And most of the literature portrays adolescence as a stormy, problematic, and often traumatic stage of human growth.

Have adolescents always been this way? Or is their behaviour a symptom of the times? The Ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, tells of a Sumerian letter, dating back 3,700 years, in which a father writes despondently about his adolescent son loitering in the public square after school, wandering about the streets at night, answering back in an insolent manner, and appearing indifferent towards his future. This portrait of a bored and insubordinate youth four millennia ago closes the gap of time rather dramatically, seeming all too close to our own age. But the Sumerian adolescent was different from today's teens in many significant ways. Contemporary teenagers belong to a social cosmos animated by cliques, parties, rock music, peculiar dress and hairstyles; and they speak a language all their own. When did this all come about? Did medieval youths have their own music, dress codes, and language? Were the youths of the thirties and forties in this century *teenagers* in the contemporary sense of the word? A glance at the cultural history books tells us, in fact, that the social personae we now recognize as *teenagers* became a distinctly recognizable group in society only in the mid fifties.

Since then, research on all aspects of adolescent behaviour and development has occupied the attention of myriads of human scientists. Of particular relevance to the theme of the present discussion is the research that has been conducted on the particular kinds of social functions that discourse takes on at adolescence. Such work has made it rather obvious that the ways in which adolescents speak can hardly be characterized as "slang." As a social construct, adolescence

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> The language graduate who never reads a professional journal and participates only minimally, if at all, in professional meetings, will stagnate. There is an onus on the profession in all areas to upgrade and keep abreast of current developments in the field.
> — Peter Heffernan

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The Foreign Language Association of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC. *Contact:* Mary Lynn Redmond, 6 Sun Oak Court, Greensboro, NC. 27410. Fax: [910] 759-4591. E-mail: redmond@wfu.edu

March 6-8, 1997
Southern Conference on Language Teaching and the South Carolina Foreign Language Teachers' Association. Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact: Lee Bradley, SCOLT, Executive Director, Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA 31698. Tel. [912] 333-7358. Fax: [912] 333-7389. E-mail: lbradley@grits.valdosta.peachnet.edu

Teen Talk

has engendered its own speech patterns, its own distinct and easily recognizable modalities of discourse programming that children approaching puberty acquire unconsciously from their social environment. Adolescent speech is socially-coded behaviour deriving its characteristic categories from a process that can be called *signifying osmosis*. The speech traits that are easily recognizable as adolescent discourse features can be said to be anchored in behavioural patterns that are signifying – socially-meaningful – to the peer group, and osmotic – picked up in relation to that group so as to manifest adherence and conformity to peer-acceptable and peer-sanctioned models of behavior.

Over the last four decades, much work has been conducted on how adolescents speak and on what this implies. So, there now exists a solid tradition in the language sciences of investigating adolescent speech patterns in themselves; but little or no work exists, to the best of my knowledge, that correlates these patterns to the educational implications that they hold in store. The specific question that will guide the present discussion will in fact be: By better understanding the nature of contemporary teenage discourse, will we, as language teachers, be in a better position to make our classrooms much more responsive to our clientele, more realistic in our objectives, and hopefully more effective in realizing the fundamental goal of transmitting proficiency in the second language?

What is Adolescence?

It is important to understand that the language adolescents speak, and indeed *adolescence* itself, are concomitants of twentieth-century culture. Although most people use the terms *teenagers* and *adolescents* interchangeably, I would suggest that it is crucial to differentiate between *adolescence* and *teenagerhood*. I would restrict the former to designating a psychosocially-marked period of human growth and development, and the latter to the peculiar lifestyle behaviours that

characterize young people living in modern industrialized cultures (Danesi 1994b). Teenagerhood has become a reality by virtue of the fact that our young people live in a culture that provides them with *their own social cosmos* and with all the symbolic accoutrements that this entails – with their own musical forms of recreation and aesthetic expression (rock music), with their own media representations and artifacts (magazines, movies, etc. directed at teenagers), with their own fashion vogues, and so on. Anthropologists have found that in cultures where marriage, or movement away from the natal environment, coincides with the advent of puberty, the kinds of psychosocial behaviours that we now associate with teenagerhood – the allegiance to a clique, the hanging-out displays put on for peer audiences, the fascination with parties, etc. – simply do not emerge.

> *Contemporary teenagers belong to a social cosmos animated by cliques, parties, rock music, peculiar dress and hairstyles; and they speak a language all their own.*

The idea of making adolescence a specific period for psychologists to study was put forward as a working proposal in 1904 by Stanley G. Hall in his book titled, logically enough, *Adolescence*. But it was not until the end of World War I that *youths* and *young adults* came to be viewed as a distinct group by society. And it was not until the late forties that the term *teenager* was coined to indicate the emergence of a new social *persona*, requiring a special kind of handling in the marketplace, in the media, at home, and at school. By the mid-fifties the culturally-fashioned image of the "sweet sixteener" was enshrined in books, songs, and cinema prototypes. Songs of that era, like *Sixteen Candles, Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen, She Was only Sixteen,* bear witness to the emerging reality of those times. The break-point of "sixteen" was extended by a few years during the *hippie* sixties and early seventies to encompass the entire high school period. From the

eighties onwards, teenagerhood has been starting increasingly earlier – well before puberty – and ending much later – well beyond the high school years. As Gail Sheehy (1995) cogently argues, in our culture people are taking longer to grow up and much longer to grow old. This is rather striking evidence that cultures can indeed reshape the genetic paradigm in humans to accommodate their own requirements – the extension of the adolescent years has been carefully nurtured and vigorously reinforced by adult institutions (the marketplace, the media, etc.). Without teens, work related to schooling, to a large chunk of the music and cinema industries, to the faddish clothing business, to the fast food commercial empire, would virtually disappear.

> *By better understanding the nature of contemporary teenage discourse, will we, as language teachers, be in a better position to make our classrooms much more responsive to our clientele, more realistic in our objectives, and hopefully more effective in realizing the fundamental goal of transmitting proficiency in the second language?*

But the advent of this social persona has had some unwanted consequences. In our society, the adolescent years are now felt to be problematic ones – to parents, to educators, and to teenagers themselves – both in terms of psychological development and social maturation. Unlike childhood, which is perceived to be a period with well-defined milestones of "smooth" growth, adolescence is conceived as being a fractious, rebellious, emotionally traumatic period of development. This is why it is regularly characterized as a "transitional" period by developmental psychologists and the general public alike. The question is: "If coming of age is so emotionally turbulent, why would Nature have gone so far out of Her way to wreak such havoc upon

her sexually-maturing human progeny?" Or is the experience of adolescence as an uneasy and troubled period a culture-specific one? Indeed, in many societies around the globe the anthropological record reveals no specific developmental problems associated with their pubescent members. Only in ours, as Desmond Morris (1994: 173) writes, does the bizarre situation arise where young mothers who have not succumbed to the restraints of society are "still viewed as schoolchildren."

Since mid-century, the social conditions and attitudes in our culture have been such that they have brought about a developmental incongruity in emotional, sexual, and social processes in pubescent individuals. The astronomical number of psychological and psychiatric periodicals, monographs, and books devoted to the so-called "problems of adolescence" bears witness to the symptomatology that this incongruity has brought about. By making school obligatory during the pubescent years, by passing legislation intended to protect young people from exploitation, and by targeting adolescents primarily as consumers, we have created the social conditions that favour and sustain the peculiar (and often unwanted) psychosocial behaviours that we have come to expect in adolescents (see on this point the recent excellent exposition by Côté and Allahar 1994: 3-32). The adolescent phase is now experienced by teenagers and adults alike as a stressful and difficult one. Biologically, human beings become adults between the ages of eleven and sixteen (the pubescent period), but legally they do not become adults until they approach twenty years of age. And socially they are really not looked upon as adults until they are well into their twenties and have settled into the work world. This gap, in modern society, between the arrival of sexual urges and the arrival of social adulthood creates many problems. It transforms the adolescent period into a turbulent emotional phase in the human life cycle and one where parent/offspring relations are strained to the maximum.

Without a high school environment and "teen-directed" cultural industries to nourish it, the incongruous form of development associated with the adolescent years would probably disappear. Teenagers typically perceive school more as a social cosmos than as a learning environment, within which they center their lives. In junior high and in high school the adolescent's view of the world is strongly influenced by the attitudes and behavioural standards of the peer group, which imposes its own codes of conformity (in dress, in hairstyle, etc.), of social behaviour (in smoking rituals, in participation at party events, etc.), and of morality (peer-based honour codes) for membership. The clique provides a specific context within which adolescents can bond with their peers, seek protection, and gain status; the clique has the sociological function of drawing together specific members of the adolescent community and of keeping outsiders out. The reality of adolescence today is that it has become, paradoxically, a period of establishing individualism and of seeking conformity to the peer group at the same time.

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To a teenager, the changes in bodily appearance and function at puberty (or just before it) become enmeshed with perceptions of the Self. This is why the adolescent becomes obsessively concerned about physical appearance. Inhabiting a strange new body, the adolescent starts to feel awkward, anxious, guilty (or afraid) of certain physical desires and feelings, and totally enwrapped in a developing social consciousness – an intense and all-pervasive awareness of, and sensitivity to, what others think of him

or her. Membership in a peer group becomes the primary locus within which the adolescent seeks temporary shelter from the ravaging effects of his or her heightened consciousness of Self. The peer group serves, at first, as a kind of asylum from the new burdens emanating from this intense form of social cognition. It allows the adolescent an opportunity to "blend in" with peers and to separate his or her Self, so to speak, from sex-based bodily changes (see Kroger 1996 for a recent summary of the research on identity in adolescence).

While it might be largely true that *adolescence* is a biologically-segmentable stage in the life cycle of human beings (and of all primates for that matter), it is not true that *teenagerhood* is its inevitable social offshoot. As mentioned, in many cultures the kinds of problematic behaviours that we associate with North American teenagers do not manifest themselves. By mid century, the great anthropologist Margaret Mead (1939, 1950) had assembled a large corpus of data on Samoan society which showed that the emotional experiences of North American adolescents were not unavoidable. Mead discovered that Samoan children followed a continuous growth pattern, with no abrupt changes, from one age to the other. Simply put, the traditional Samoan culture had *adolescents* in the sense defined above – juveniles capable of reproduction – but it did not have the kinds of individuals whom we immediately recognize as *teenagers*. Moreover, Mead found that the period of *adolescence* need be neither stormy nor stressful. She maintained that culture has much more effect on the way adolescence is experienced than can be accounted for primarily by biology.

In most of the Western world, the appearance of the teenage *persona* on the social stage of culture has led to significant changes in social structure and economic behaviour. It has also had notable consequences on the processes that characterize the child's psychosocial development at puberty. The typical bodily postures, facial expressions, emotional outbursts, modes of dress, and discourse features that we have come to see carved into the teenage persona are

anchored in behavioural patterns that are socially meaningful to the peer group, not to adults. These take shape in the growing child as he or she becomes highly sensitive to peers at puberty. Teenagers literally "pick up" their ways of acting, thinking, and speaking osmotically from each other.

The Nature and Function of Discourse at Adolescence

Of particular interest to second-language teaching are the functions that discourse takes on at adolescence. The typical teenager is highly sensitive to speech as social symbolism. To teach the contemporary adolescent SL learner the target language as an abstract code has little meaning. In a recent poll I conducted of 100 teenagers studying Italian as a second language in the greater Toronto area, most (84) found the subject matter of the curriculum irrelevant to their needs and expectations, perceiving the contents of the course as reflective primarily of adult modes of discourse and of adult life themes. On the other hand, the majority expressed curiosity about how the teenagers of the second-language culture spoke, what their lifestyle tastes were, how they expressed *coolness* in their own language, and so on.

Young people have always resorted to code words since the Middle Ages in order to strengthen group identity and to set themselves apart from others. Medieval university students, for instance, used the word *lupi* "wolves" to refer to spies who reported other students for using the vernacular instead of Latin (Eble 1989). If adolescent slang has a specific social function, then it can hardly be considered a form of aberrant communicative behaviour. For this reason, I have preferred to call it *pubilect,* a contraction of *puberty* and *dialect* (Danesi 1988). *Pubilect* can be defined simply as "the social dialect of puberty." Hudson (1984), too, sees a difference between *slang* in general and what he calls more specifically *teenage slang*. The latter is the code

> used by teenagers to signal the important difference they see between themselves and older people" (Hudson 1984: 46).

Indeed, adults frequently resort to slang to colour or emphasize their messages (Hughes 1991). But for teens, pubilect is their primary means of oral communication with peers. So, it can be said that *slang* is a speech option available to the population at large; *pubilect,* on the other hand, is the particular code used by teens to produce their typical utterances. (For an in-depth look at the categories and functions of teenage discourse consult: Gusdorf 1965, Britton 1970, Leona 1978, Labov 1972, 1982, Rector 1975, Adelman 1976, Milroy 1980, Romaine 1984, Rizzi 1985, Shapiro 1985, Eckert 1988, Nippold 1988, Danesi 1988, 1989, 1994a, De Paoli 1988, Eble 1989, 1996, Munro 1989, Andersson and Trudgill 1990, Eder 1990, Slossberg-Anderson 1990, Cameron 1992, Labov 1992, Rampton 1995).

> *In junior high and in high school the adolescent's view of the world is strongly influenced by the attitudes and behavioural standards of the peer group, which imposes its own codes of conformity (in dress, in hairstyle, etc.), of social behaviour (in smoking rituals, in participation at party events, etc.), and of morality (peer-based honour codes) for membership.*

The whole gamut of emotional responses that teenagers have to their immediate context, as well as the creative strategies they employ to handle specific social situations, are reflected in the ways in which they *program* their discourse texts. In previous work I have referred to the main categories of adolescent discourse programming as:

- Emotive Language Programming,
- Connotative Language Programming and
- Clique-Coded Language Programming.

I will describe them briefly here. The peculiar intonations, words, and other modes of speech that teens pick up from each other osmotically reveal how they come to interpret themselves, others, and their environment in signifying ways. Thus, knowing what teenagers talk about, and why they talk the way that they do, has obvious implications for parents and educators alike.

Emotive Language Programming

The term *emotive* was used by Roman Jakobson (1960) to refer to the fact that a speaker's emotions, attitudes, social status, etc. converge to shape the specific way in which he or she will construct a verbal text in a particular context. The emotive function varies in degree according to type of message: poetic texts, for example, tend to be more emotive than information-transfer ones. Jakobson called the effect – physical, psychological, social, etc. – that the verbal text has on the receiver as the *conative* function. Emotive Language Programming refers to the common tendency among adolescents to speak with intensified language markers (increased rates of speech delivery, overwrought intonation contours, expressive voice modulations, etc.). For instance, utterances such as

"He's sooooo cute!"

"She's faaaaar out!"

"That's amaaaazing!"

exemplify the common Emotive Language Programming pattern of overstressing highly emotional words by prolonging their tonic vowels. Utterances such as

"We called her up (?) (intonation contour like a question)...

but she wasn't there (?) (same contour)...

so we hung up (?) (same contour)"

show regular rising contours (as if each sentence were interrogative). Called colloquially by the media as "uptalk," it is, in effect, an implicit tag questioning strategy. A *tag* is a word, phrase, or clause added to a sentence to give emphasis, to seek approval, to ascertain some reaction, etc.:

"She's coming tomorrow, *isn't she*?"

"That was a good course, *right*?" etc.

The "uptalk" pattern demonstrated by adolescents is, in effect, a tag questioning strategy without the tag. This common Emotive Language Programming discourse trait probably indicates the need of teenagers to ensure the full participation of their interlocutors.

Emotive Language Programming also manifests itself in the abundant use of interjections, exclamations and grunts

"Yuch!"

"What's happening?" etc.,

which reflect the adolescent's need to draw continual attention to his or her feelings, opinions or attitudes. Swear words are also manifestations of this feature. Exaggerated irony or facetiousness

"Get off my case!"

and the use of "like"

"Like, I called him up, but, like, he wasn't sure, if he, like, could come.."

reflecting an unconscious hesitancy in expression, are other aspects of Emotive Language Programming.

Essentially, Emotive Language Programming reveals a strong tendency in adolescents to project their feelings and to seek approval of what they are saying. My own research shows that Emotive Language Programming shapes roughly 70% of all adolescent utterances (Danesi 1989). There is nothing particularly surprising about this feature of pubilect. Speech can always be used to reveal emotivity. The use of alliteration, or the repetition of sounds, for various effects – "sing-song," "no-no," etc .– are manifestations of this basic tendency. Even as adults, we commonly lengthen sounds for emphasis:

"Yesssss!"

"Noooooo!" etc.

We regularly use intonation to express emotional states, to emphasize, to shock:

"Are you absolutely sure?"

"Noooooo way!" etc.

The language of cartoons and comic books, incidentally, is replete with sound-modeling verbal techniques:

"Zap!"

"Boom!"

"Pow!" etc.

Verbal descriptions are, more often than not, sound-imitative – a mean individual, for instance, is typically compared to a snake as being "slithery," "slippery," "sneaky," etc. The difference between Emotive Language Programming in adult and adolescent discourse lies in the degree and extent to which it is used. It is an option in adult discourse, while it is a constant feature of pubilect.

Connotative Language Programming

Connotative Language Programming refers to the tendency of adolescents to coin descriptive words, or to extend the meaning of existing words, in highly connotative ways. Connotation is at the core of the adolescent's socioaffective modeling of reality. In the mideighties words such as *loser, gross out, air-head, slime-bucket,* and others were in widespread use in teen pubilect. More recently, *vomatose, thicko, burger-brain, knob,* have gained currency. But no matter from what generation of teens the words come, the programming mechanism is the same – it is grounded in a constant need to describe others in highly connotative ways. The way in which Connotative Language Programming works was revealed during an interview session I held with several teenagers in 1988 in a local area Toronto high school. They were asked to explain, in their own way, the semantic differences among three words that permeated the teen pubilect of that era: *nerd, dork* and *geek.* One informant defined *nerd* as "a social outcast..male, greasy, studies chemistry all night long..someone I would never talk to." Another described a *dork* as "more socially acceptable, although he always bumps into people and drops things." "Dorkness," another informant added, "is not a permanent state." A *geek* is "someone who doesn't take showers, who is slimy, greasy, and drippy." One informant pointed out that there was a particular kind of *geek*, known as a *leem* in her school, who was particularly odious. He was someone "who just wastes oxygen."

Connotative Language Programming reveals rather conspicuously that adolescents are keenly sensitive to bodily appearance and image, as well as to the perceived sociability of peers. At puberty the changes in physical appearance, and the emotional changes that accompany them, are perceived in our culture as problematic. Teenagers become inordinately concerned about their appearance and behaviour, believing that everyone is constantly observing them (Elkind 1967, Erikson 1968, Buis and Thompson 1989). This is why they talk continuously about how others act, behave, and appear. Language, dress, musical tastes, and other signifying codes become evaluative grids for assessing peer appearance and sociability.

The topics of discourse in a language class should reflect what teenagers do and think about. My guess is that this will make the learning of the language meaningful and effective at the start. The teaching approach would thus be synchronized with the psychosocial reality of adolescence.

During childhood the individual's modes of interaction with the environment are centered upon a constantly-developing consciousness of Self. The child is typically concerned with learning about how the Self fits into the scheme of things. At puberty, however, the child's social consciousness emerges and begins to dominate his or her thinking and actions. While human beings of all ages are influenced by their consciousness of others, and tend to conform to behavioural models that are acceptable to their peer groups, teenagers are particularly susceptible to this kind of influence, simply because their social consciousness emerges for the first time on the developmental timetable as a powerful mental Gestalt. The Connotative Language Programming phenomenon is a symptomatic manifestation of its power over cognition during adolescence.

Connotative Language Programming is a creative strategy which translates into words the teenager's perceptions of others. As an example of how it might work, consider the following situation that I documented during another interview at a Toronto high school. A female teenager I was interviewing was being ogled by a male peer in her grade nine class whom she apparently disliked. She revealed to me that the reason why she disliked him was because "he is a loser." His advances towards her repulsed her. Seeing him as a tall, gangly, and pimply individual, she described him to me as a *zit-pole*. In so doing, the female teen had taken several aspects of the male teen's physical appearance – facial blemishes (*zits*) and lankiness (*pole*) – and forged them into a descriptive term that revealed how she felt about him. This is essentially how Connotative Language Programming works. It allowed her to make a judgement without commitment.

In an intriguing study, Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 88-89) asked 55 teenagers aged 13 to 14 to give expressions for a "stupid person." Their aim was, clearly, to examine the workings of Connotative Language Programming in a specific semantic domain. Among the words produced by the adolescents are the following self-explanatory metaphors: *wally, dingo, dozy, dodo, drip, dickhead, goof, thicko, nerd, banana, peabrain, knob, spasmo, dildo, burgerbrain, dappo.*

Eble (1989, 1996) has provided the most extensive survey of the semantic dynamics involved in the formation of such words. These include the recycling of old words (*preesh*, from *appreciate*), affixation (*geekdom*), word combining (*pizza dude*), shortening (*bod* for body), acronymy (*MLA = masssive lip action* for *kissing*), onomatopoeia (*barf* for *vomit*), rapping (*Yo* = greeting), and so on.

The data collected by Teresa Labov (1992) also reveal some interesting aspects of Connotative Language Programming that are germane to the discussion here. She was able to quantify in percentages the degree to which college students (late adolescents) recognized various terms. For instance, the term *jock* was recognized by 90.42% of her in-

formants, whereas *fleabag* produced only a 6.51% recognition quota. This indicates rather conspicuously that there is much regional variation in pubilect, and that only some of the words coined by teens gain general currency. Labov also provided variation data for the definitions given to various terms, as well as for the terms more likely to be known by males vs. females, white vs. Afro-Americans, city vs. suburban dwellers, public vs. private school informants, east vs. west coast informants, and first vs. second-year college students. The picture that emerges from her study shows two general things. First, there are some elements that cut across all varieties of pubilect. These cohere into a pubilectal "meta-code." Second, there is much diversity and variation in how teenagers speak.

Clique-Coded Language Programming

My own data suggest that the ways in which teens speak, and what they speak about, also vary according to the specific clique to which a teenager belongs. Clique-Coded Language Programming refers to the fact that teens will talk mainly about what is of direct interest to their clique members. As Cooper and Anderson-Inman (1989: 239) have aptly pointed out, Clique-Coded Language Programming is ensconced in strategic behaviour:

> Gaining control over marked linguistic features shows a growing competence in the use of communicative strategies that both realize and regulate behaviour and speech patterns appropriate to gender and peer group membership.

The second-language curriculum needs to be endowed with a new sense of relevance to the adolescent beneficiary.

An especially interesting aspect of discourse among teens is its use for the attainment of power within the clique. Nearly a decade and a half ago Maltz and Borker (1982: 207) noticed that male teenagers in particular achieved relative status in the fluctuating hierarchy of their clique by learning how to manipulate their

verbal interactions with peers. A male teen does this typically by using language, in all its communicative modalities, to assert a position of dominance, to attract and maintain an audience, and to assert himself when other speakers have the floor. In effect, the Maltz and Borker study demonstrated that teenage boys are continuously testing the verbal skills of one another in staged "verbal duels" in order to gain the upper hand. Those with ineffectual verbal skills will either become outcasts or be compelled to accept lower status within the peer clique hierarchy.

The strategic use of aggressive and obscene language in verbal duels plays an extremely important role in asserting leadership within male cliques. Eder (1990: 67) has labeled this form of verbal dueling *ritual conflict:*

> Ritual conflict typically involves the exchange of insults between two peers, often in the presence of other peers who serve as an audience. This activity is usually competitive in nature, in that each male tries to top the previous insult with one that is more clever, outrageous, or elaborate.

The goal during ritual exchanges is to "keep one's cool" by not letting the opponent realize that one is wavering. Eder (1990: 74) points out that "the ability to respond to even personal insults in a non serious manner is a critical skill needed for successful participation in ritual insulting." Verbal conflict skills are developed through frequent participation in dueling exchanges. It is for this reason that those individuals who hang out more with the group seem to get a firmer command of the conflict techniques needed to succeed at verbal duels (Labov 1972: 258). The peer audience participating in this activity acts as a kind of critic. If the exchange ends with someone verbally destroying the other, the audience will invariably proceed to ridicule and defame the loser. In many cases, this post-defeat mockery unfolds in terms of a stage-like scornful scenario.

Topics of Discourse

It should be pointed out that the Emotive Language Programming, Connotative Language Programming and Clique-Coded Language

Programming categories are general properties of pubilect. The tokens generated by each category are, of course, subject to a high degree of variation and ephemerality. Indeed, the very fact that the emotive and connotative tokens seem to change with extreme rapidity is proof that the categories are highly productive ones. Teen vocabularies in particular (a Connotative Language Programming feature) are highly unstable. As Eble (1989: 12) appropriately points out, "by comparison with vocabulary change in the language as a whole, which sometimes takes centuries, the rate of change in slang vocabularies is greatly accelerated." Interestingly, some words have more staying power than others: *cool* and *chick* (female teen) go back to the fifties; *stoned* (inebriated, drugged out) comes out of the sixties; *wheels* (car), and *bummer* (unpleasant experience) have been around since the seventies.

Of particular interest are the kinds of discourse that teens engage in. Both from my own research and from the relevant literature, it can be seen that the themes that surface most frequently in adolescent discourse are centered around the immediacy and urgency of peer-related events – e.g. music preferences, party-related activities, sexuality, automobile ownership, physical appearance, inter- and intra-clique relations, etc. Especially prominent in adolescent discourse is the panorama of daily events associated with the school. The high school is where friendships are forged, clique allegiances established, conflictual behaviours between teens and cliques developed, social personalities manufactured, and so on. The school has become a closed social system. Newcomers must pass initiation rites; outsiders are looked upon with suspicion and must be introduced into the school by a school member; *losers* are marginalized. Sex and violence are learned here, where they are real, not on television. There simply would be no teenagerhood without high schools, as adolescent discourse reveals.

Findings on Italian-Speaking Adolescents

To examine the possibility that pubilect is a characteristic phenomenon of teenagers in other parts of the industrialized world, I conducted research several years ago on adolescents living in the city of Naples and attending the "Liceo Genovese" of that city, Seventeen students (ages 15 to 17) were the informants chosen for the study. What became obvious to me right from the start of the project was that their discourse was shaped by the same Emotive Language Programming, Connotative Language Programming and Clique-Coded Language Programming categories that characterize North American pubilect. The Emotive Language Programming category was behind such utterances as

> "Devo, mmm, dire che, mmmm, non capisco, mmmm" ("I have… to say that.. I don't understand..,")

with the "mmmm" being equivalent in nature to English "like"). Rising intonation contours, exaggerated prosody, and the like were also found to be typical concomitants of adolescent utterances.

The Connotative Language Programming category was also found to be a highly productive one: a *togo* was used by the teens to refer to someone who is, in their words, "bello, stupendo, divertente" ('handsome, stupendous, fun to be with," equivalent to English *cool*); *grasta* was coined to describe a female who is "cretina, stupida, scema" ("cretin, stupid, jerk," equivalent to English *geek*); *secchione* was invented to refer to someone who is "troppo studioso" ("studies too much," equivalent to English *dork* or *nerd*); and so on. Ongoing research in several other parts of Italy has revealed similar findings (Titone 1996). Pubilect seems to be a characteristic feature of the language of any culture where adolescence has come to constitute a distinct social category. Pubilect is coherent, regular, predictable, and anchored in socially-meaningful contexts (peer interaction).

Implications

What are the pedagogical implications, if any, of the work on pubilects the world over? Does the handiwork of the linguist have anything to say to the teacher: i.e. does the study of teenage language offer anything useful to the second-language teacher or curriculum planner? I believe that it does. It is my view that the second-language curriculum needs to be endowed with a new sense of relevance to the adolescent beneficiary. Efficiency at second-language communication for an adolescent learner in our society entails knowledge of how the second-language adolescents themselves speak. Adolescents find a learning syllabus tailored for and built around adult interests (buying in stores, travelling abroad, etc.) of little or no interest. Phoning, planning parties, describing physical appearances and lifestyle fads, on the other hand, are perceived to be much more meaningful to communicative needs.

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There is nothing radical about this suggestion. After all, SL curricula for children are always synchronized with the reality of childhood. It is clear, therefore, that communication in the target language will be meaningful primarily if it unfolds in terms of the discourse topics related to adolescent experiences. This does not mean that these should be imparted directly to adolescents learning another language. It simply means that language teachers will have to take into account that the adolescents of the target language also talk in ways that are similar to the adolescents they are teaching. And since pubilect constitutes one of

the conceptual filters and templates which shape the adolescent's view of the world, it can be incorporated into the contents of a course profitably. To involve the adolescent in any other kind of discourse universe initially would make the learning experience abstract and artificial. The topics of discourse in a language class should reflect what teenagers do and think about. My guess is that this will make the learning of the language meaningful and effective at the start. The teaching approach would thus be synchronized with the psychosocial reality of adolescence.

> *The high school second-language teacher, in particular, knows that he or she will not attract any clientele if the contents of his or her course are devoid of any significance to the adolescent's world of experience.*

But the language teacher should consider this strategy only as a point-of-departure. Indeed, the teacher is in an excellent position to transform the adolescent's pubilectal speech patterns into more standard (adult) forms, by gradually making these a point-of-arrival. This is a version of the educational principle which posits that effective teaching is based on helping the learner go from what he or she knows to what he or she should know.

Conclusion

The research on adolescents that I started over a decade ago has made me realize, more than ever before, that verbal communication is rarely a script-based, disembodied, information-transfer process – a theoretical model under whose influence many contemporary discourse analysts continue to work. Pubilect and many other discourse phenomena lead me to believe, on the contrary, that verbal communication is hardly ever a neutral act. It seems, almost always, to involve what Goffman (1959) has called strategic interaction, a mode of human interactive behaviour that unfolds

in terms of the enactment of ego-centered agendas, goals and affective states (see also Di Pietro 1987). In contrast to children, adolescents learn to use verbal discourse strategically to portray themselves in everyday life. And this is what they want to learn how to do in the target language.

The models of curriculum planning that have characterized second-language teaching in this century have been influenced by "scientific" models of linguistic and communicative competence. Their sequential organization of linguistic and communicative structures for classroom utilization has, in other words, been based on specific views of how we develop language and the ability to communicate. But today, we are going back to the drawing board. Curriculum planning has become as diverse and varied as has second-language teaching pedagogy generally. My own prediction is that curriculum design will continue to play a role in second-language teaching, but that it will not be the monolithic one that it has attempted to play in the past. Today, we talk about "curricula" or "syllabi", not of one syllabus for all. And this, in my view, is a healthy trend. Today, every teacher is a curriculum designer, who shapes and molds his or her pedagogical "plan of attack" according to past experiences, present realities, and personal preferences. The high school second-language teacher, in particular, knows that he or she will not attract any clientele if the contents of his or her course are devoid of any significance to the adolescent's world of experience. The "flow" of language in second-language teaching should go from pubilect to adult language , as it does over the course of modern life.

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Bringing Songs to the Second-Language Classroom

Thierry P. Karsenti

The article highlights ways of channelling students' passion for English music, through motivating second-language activities.

Second-language educators know how to recognize motivated students when they see them. Such students are eager to learn, unafraid of making mistakes, persistent, excited, creative, energetic, and quick to begin the tasks assigned. They are fast learners, undaunted by new challenges, who perform well both independently and in groups. Indeed, these students appear to be natural leaders and set a high standard for class participation. Their work is always punctual, well-prepared, and of high quality.

Language teachers are also well aware of the motivational problems encountered in the classroom. Each year, they are faced with students who are often absent and display apathy-like levels of effort when present. Nowadays, it seems more and more difficult to find ways of motivating students to learn a second language. Brown (1994: 20) highlights motivation as one of the most important principles of language teaching; in fact, he states that

> If all learners were intrinsically motivated to perform all classroom tasks, we might not even need teachers!

Mollica (1994: 15) also argues that:

> Motivation is one of the prime tasks of teaching. Motivation should be constant and should not stop at any given point. Motivation is important at the beginning of the lesson as a means of introducing the material, stimulating interest, arousing curiosity and developing the specific aim; but it is equally important for teachers to provide motivational activities which will arouse and retain the interest of students.

Therefore, as second-language educators, it sounds only logical to look for language activities that are intrinsically motivating for students.

Educators around the world know how popular the lyrics and music of English songs are with most students; The Beatles, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Pink Floyd, Bon Jovi, and Elton John are famous worldwide. There is no need to force second language learners to listen to English music in the cafeteria, in the hallways, or after school. They do it with great pleasure, and they do not hesitate to use even their hard-earned spending money to buy their favourite albums.

What Does Some of the Literature Say?

In her article, "A spoonful of Singing," Berghouse (1970) argues that songs are a very powerful means for teaching a second language at the elementary school level. In particular, she promotes the use of songs to help students recognize important language elements such as numbers, letters of the alphabet, days of the week, seasons, parts of the body, and animals. Berghouse suggests that, initially, the teacher should sing each line and have the children repeat it. As the song becomes well-known and the children become used to the format, actions can be added.

Bechtold (1983) believes that music can be very useful in the second-language classroom, particularly in the teaching of vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structures. She maintains that songs are most effective to reinforce aspects of the language learned.

According to Murphey (1992), it is important to use pop songs in the second-language classroom. The author randomly selected a Top 100 music chart and carefully analyzed the first fifty of these English songs. The results of his study show, among

other things, that pop songs tend to be short, repetitive, catchy, and sung more slowly than normal discourse. Murphey states that this makes pop songs a very motivating and effective teaching tool.

> *There is no need to force second-language learners to listen to English music in the cafeteria, in the hallways, or after school. They do it with great pleasure, and they do not hesitate to use even their hard-earned spending money to buy their favourite albums.*

Dale Griffee's book, *Songs in Action* (1992), provides an introduction to using songs in the language classroom. It presents a wide variety of activities for teaching new vocabulary, for developing listening or writing skills, or simply for adding a motivating element to the classroom. His book is definitely a must-read for any teacher thinking of using songs in the second language classroom.

Integrating Songs in the Second-Language Classroom

The following are some activities which are useful if teachers are planning to introduce songs in the second-language classroom.

Activity 1:

Find Someone Who...

Usually, during a song activity, students do little talking; indeed, they are often quite passive. As speaking is a very important skill (Wingate, 1993), it is essential to engage students in active, meaningful pre-listening oral tasks. Teachers need to get their students involved; they need to get them to talk. However, this is one of the most challenging tasks confronting any second-language educator. Developing speaking skills is essential, not only because the literature says so, but also because it is the single way to better prepare students for the real out-of-class talking world. In the *Find Someone Who..* activity, students have to find people in the classroom

who fit the criteria outlined in the handout. They must circulate in the class and ask their peers questions such as

"Do you love rap music?",

"Do you listen to heavy metal music while doing your homework?".

This task is a good warm up for a song activity. Learners will not communicate solely with the teacher, as in more traditional classes, but also with all the other students in the classroom. The following handout can be modified to suit various needs and time constraints .

"Find someone who..."

1. loves rap music.
2. detests country music.
3. likes going to concerts.
4. knows how to play a musical instrument.
5. has seen a famous musician in a live concert.
6. dislikes jazz music.
7. admires Elvis Presley.
8. enjoys listening to classical music.
9. prefers dance to punk music.
10. listens to heavy metal while doing homework.

Activity 2:

Fill-in-the-Blanks

The primary purpose of this activity is to develop listening skills and to extend the vocabulary knowledge of the students. It can be used with any song, to introduce or review vocabulary. However, this activity is most appropriate when both the teacher and the students need a break from a long week of hard work. It can also serve to reward students for exemplary work habits or good exam results.

In this task, students are required to listen to the song and fill in the blanks with the missing words. The song could be played more than once to give students enough time to gather all the answers. It is also a good idea to go beyond the fill-in-the-blanks phase and have the students answer questions pertaining to the song. Sample questions are provided in the following example based on the song "Daniel" (music by Elton John, lyrics by Bernie Taupin).

Daniel

Daniel is _____ tonight on a _____

I can see the red _____ _____ heading for Spain

Oh and I can see Daniel _____ _____

God it looks like Daniel, must be the _____ in my eyes

They say Spain is 0000 though I've never been

Well Daniel says it's the best _____ that he's ever seen

Oh and he should know, he's been there enough

Lord I miss Daniel, oh I miss _____ so much

Daniel my _____ you are older than me

Do you still feel the pain of the scars that won't _____

Your eyes have _____ but you see _____ than I

Daniel you're a star in the face of the sky

Daniel is _____ tonight on a _____

I can see the red _____ _____ heading for Spain

Oh and I can see Daniel _____ _____

God it looks like Daniel, must be the _____ in my eyes

Oh God it looks like Daniel, must be the clouds in my eyes

(Music by Elton John; Lyrics by Bernie Taupin. Available on the album *Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player.*)

Understanding Songs

Listen to the song "Daniel" and answer the following questions

1. In your opinion, what is the song about? (death, love, travelling, friendship)
2. What kind of feelings does the writer express? (fear, sadness, happiness, hatred)
3. Explain why the writer feels "clouds" in his eyes.
4. Is the writer optimistic or pessimist? Justify your answer.

It should be noted that this activity is more stimulating when interesting information about the song and the singer or band is revealed prior to the listening stage. This introduction makes the listening task easier because it contextualizes the song and makes it more accessible to the students. As well, it activates the

language they already know. The activity is therefore also more effective because the learners are better prepared. In the following example, the success of a famous one-armed drummer can even lead to a discussion on how anything is possible.

Top Rock Drummer
Rick Allen (Def Leppard)
Has Just One Arm

There are not many drummers with one arm. Well, here comes Rick. He lost his left arm in a car accident in 1984 but he barely skipped a beat. Within weeks, he was back at his drums. With a hyper-modern drum kit, he is still able to hit the drums. Today he is one of the rock world's hottest drummers. The kit Rick uses has manual foot pedals, so his left foot can do the job his left arm used to do. Rick was only 16 years old when he joined Leppard, and made his first appearance on "On through the Night." Rick is married to Stacey and currently lives in California. He doesn't inspire pity but envy, and is completely alone in his field - standing head and shoulders above most drummers.

(Adapted from: *The Def Leppard Cyber Centre*, WWW)

Biographical Notes
Full name: Richard John Cyril Allen
Birthday: November 1, 1963
School: Dronfield Henry Fanshaw
Favourite artists: Aerosmith, GnR, Thin Lizzy, Marc Bolan, INXS,…
Favourite film: Raiders of the Lost Ark
Favourite car: Jeep
Favourite food: Indian, vegetarian

Love Bites

If you've got love in your sights
Watch out, love bites

When you make love, do you look in the mirror?

Who do you think of, does he look like me?

Do you tell lies and say that it's forever?

Do you think twice, or just touch and see?

Oooh babe

When you're alone, do you let go?

Are you wild and willing or is it just for show?

Oooh come on

I don't wanna touch you too much baby

Cause making love to you might drive me crazy

I know you think that love is the way you make it

So I don't wanna be there when you decide to break it

Love bites, love bleeds

It's bringing me to my knees

Love lives, love dies

It's no surprise

Love begs, love pleads

It's what I need

When I'm with you, are you somewhere else?

Am I getting' through or do you please yourself?

When you wake up, will you walk out?

It can 't be love if you throw it about

I don't wanna touch you too much baby

Because making love to you might drive me crazy

Love bites, love bleeds

It's bringing me to my knees

Love lives, love dies

It's no surprise

Love begs, love pleads

It's what I need

I don't wanna touch you too much baby

Because making love to you might drive me crazy

I know you think that love is the way you make it

So I don't wanna be there when you decide to break it

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Love bites, love bleeds

It's bringing me to my knees

Love lives, love dies

It's no surprise

Love begs, love pleads

It's what I need

If you've got love in your sights

Watch out, love bites

(Released in 1987 by Bludgeon Riffola.)

Activity:
Read the facts on Rick Allen, listen to the song and answer the following questions.

1. When did the accident involving Rick Allen occur?

2. How does Rick Allen play the drums now?

3. What does the writer mean by 'love bites'?

4. Is the writer optimistic about love? Use lyrics from the song to justify your answer.

Music can be very useful in the second-language classroom, particularly in the teaching of vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structures.

Activity 4:
Idiomatic Expressions
Idiomatic expressions play an important role in any language. In fact, the use of idioms is so wide-spread that an understanding of these expressions is essential to successful communication, whether in listening, speaking, reading, or writing (Dixson, 1994). Songs are an excellent medium for presenting idiomatic expressions in the second language classroom. For instance, Marvin Gaye's song "I Heard it Through the Grapevine" is not only a great interest sparker, it is also an original way of introducing students to idiomatic expressions.

Activity 5:
Bilingual Songs:
Linguistic and Cultural Bridges
Bonjour mon ami!

How are you my friend?

Ça va très bien thank you! Bonjour my friend!

How are you mon ami? Dites-moi d'où venez-vous?

(Angèle Arsenault, 1979).

According to Stern, it is essential to introduce the learner to the second culture, that is the socio-cultural context of the language studied.

It is nowadays a commonplace in language pedagogy to stress the importance of culture teaching and to say that language and culture are intertwined, that it is not possible to teach a language without culture, and that culture is the necessary context for language use (Stern, 1992: 205).

Songs are cultural elements of society; every song is a culture capsule (Seelye, 1993). As such, music and lyrics can be used as a means of addressing culture in the second language classroom. Seen in this light, bilingual songs can serve to bridge

linguistic and cultural gaps between the learners' first and second languages. Angèle Arsenault's song (cited above) exemplifies the concept of a bilingual song, as it was written to solidify the bridges between two linguistic cultures in a bilingual Canada. Several more popular songs, though not as balanced in their inclusion of two languages, can also be counted as bilingual:

"Tears Are Not Enough," from Northern Lights (the Canadian version of the world-famous "We Are the World"):

[...] C'est l'amour qui nous rassemble

d'ici à l'autre bout du monde

Let's show them Canada still cares

[...]

"Michelle," from The Beatles:

[...] Michelle, ma belle

Are two words that go together well,

My Michelle

Michelle, ma belle,

Sont des mots qui vont très bien ensemble, très bien ensemble

I love you [...]

> *Songs are an excellent medium for presenting idiomatic expressions in the second language classroom.*

Besides songs in which the lyrics are bilingual, many popular songs exist in more than one language, from the famous "Are you sleeping?" ("Frère Jacques") to Paul Anka's internationally known "My Way" ("Comme d'habitude"). Other pop music which has been performed in more than one language includes:

- "The Sound of Silence," Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel ("Chanson d'innocence," Gérard Lenorman)
- "Helen," Roch Voisine ("Hélène," Roch Voisine)
- "Until Death Do us Part," Roch Voisine ("Je l'aime à mourir," Francis Cabrel)
- "The World is Stone," Cindy Lauper ("Le monde est stone," Starmania)
- "Hymn to Love," Corey Hart ("Hymne à l'amour," Édith Piaf)

A number of singers also perform in more than one language.

- Peter Gabriel sings in both German and English;
- Gloria Estefan and Jon Secada sing in English and Spanish;
- Jacques Brel (1929-1978) sang in Dutch and French;
- Eros Ramazzotti sings in Italian and Spanish;
- Julio Iglesias sings in Spanish and French;
- Annie Lennox, Céline Dion and Roch Voisine sing in English and French;
- the bands Roxette and Abba perform in English and Swedish.

Student in Teacher's Role

When students come to class, they already identify with a type of music; they have a favourite singer or band, and they relate to certain songs. It is therefore quite useful to promote student interest by allowing the learners to speak of what they know and like, by allowing them to become teachers. In this activity, each student chooses a song, presents the lyrics to the class, gives information about the artist or group, and explains why this particular song is of interest. Also, in this student presentation, types of music can be defined, and their historical and geographic origins outlined.

Activity 6:
Song Module

This module can be carried out with second-language students at any level. While the steps are presented in a chronological order, they can be regrouped or adapted to suit time constraints, needs and interests. Most of the steps of this activity will be illustrated with the song lyrics presented below, but it should be noted that the Song Module can be used with any song.

I

There is unrest in the forest

There is trouble with the trees

For the maples want more sunlight

 And the oaks ignore their pleas...

II

The trouble with the maples

And they're quite convinced they're right

They say the oaks are just too lofty

And they grab up all the light

But the oaks can't help their feelings

If they like the way they're made

And they wonder why the maples

Can't be happy in their shade

III

There is trouble in the forest

And the creatures all have fled

As the maples scream "Oppression!"

And the oaks just shake their heads

IV

So the maples formed a union

And demanded equal rights

"The oaks are just too greedy,

We will make them give us light!"

Now there's no more oak oppression

For they passed a noble law

And the trees are all kept equal

By hatchet,

Axe,

And saw.

1. Select a song.

Find the lyrics of a song and write them out without revealing the title or the name of the author. Read the lyrics to the class.

2. Place students in groups of three or four.

Each group receives a copy of the lyrics. One at a time, two students in each group must read the lyrics to the rest of their group. The students are asked to circle the line that they find most interesting, funny, or strange. Then, students must explain to the other members of their group why they chose that particular line. For example, a student may choose the line "As the maples scream "Oppression!" because of its rebellious connotation.

Following this, all students are asked to read out loud the line they selected and explain their choice to the class. When this is done, each group is asked to give the lyrics a title:

Group	Title
Group A	Oppression
Group B	The Forest
Group C	The Maples and the Oaks
Group D	Unrest in the Forest
Group E	Rebellion

The members of each group must, once again, be ready to explain their choice. Each group's title is written on the blackboard and the students vote on the title they like best (a group cannot vote for its own

title). All titles but the winning one are then erased from the blackboard.

3. Have the students predict

Each group is asked to discuss the lyrics of the song to predict its style. To do so, the students must make a list of the instruments they think will play an important role in the song. They must also discuss the tempo of the song, that is, if it is a slow song or a fast one. As well, the group may want to think about whether the singer is male or female. Each group must be prepared to explain its predictions regarding the style of the song. Perhaps some words are clues as to the style of the song, and the students may want to list these. All groups present their predictions to the rest of the class. In the given example, a group may think that this is a slow song because it is happening in the forest. Others may think it is a fast song because it can easily be interpreted as a poem about worker's rights and the nature of class conflict in society. Also, a group may suggest that the acoustic guitar and the saxophone are the dominant instruments because the song expresses feelings.

4. Have the students listen to the song.

All students listen to the song. Then the class is asked to make comparisons between what the various groups predicted and the actual song. As well, the class is asked if the title chosen earlier is still appropriate. Finally, the actual title is revealed, as well as the artist or group and the year in which the song was written. It may also be interesting for teachers to present further information about the singer or the band such as artistic profile and personal background. The song presented earlier is called "The Trees," and is performed by the Canadian group *Rush*. The music was composed by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, and the lyrics were written by Neil Peart. They are the three members of *Rush*. "The Trees" first appeared on the album Hemispheres, in 1978. *Rush* has been putting out masterful driving rock since 1974. The intellectual lyrics of drummer Neil Peart make the band's music an excellent way to reach the inner workings of young people, even those who are not familiar with the band's work. More information on Rush can be obtained at www.fred.net/nhhs/html/rushidea or at http://syrinx.umd.edu/rush

> *Songs can serve to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps between the learners' first and second languages.*

5. Explain the Elements of a Song

Several elements are essential to the analysis of a song. Though these elements may have been brought up explicitly or implicitly in the earlier class discussions, they should be presented more formally at this stage.

Contextual Elements

First, the contextual elements situate the listener as to the general framework of the song.

Setting:

> *Time*
>
> when the events of the song occur.
>
> *Place*
>
> where the events of the song occur.
>
> *Voice Active*
>
> the author/singer/character is involved in the action.
>
> *Passive*
>
> the author/singer/character is not involved in the action.

Characters:

> *The people, animals or objects that play a role in the song.*

Intent:

> The reason or purpose the author had for writing the song.

Musical Elements:

The students should also be brought to reflect upon certain musical elements which have a direct effect on the message of the song.

Instruments:

> The choice of instruments used in a song definitely alters the mood of the song.

Volume:

> The song may have sound contrasts (softer, louder) to follow the lyrics.

Tempo:

The global speed of the song (fast or slow) and the variations in rhythm throughout the song characterize it and affect the listener's perception of the lyrics.

Literary Elements:

Finally, students' attention should be drawn to the literary elements of the song, that is those aspects of the text which, as in literature, create an ambience.

Similes:

> Comparisons including "like" or "as". "It's burning like fire on the water" (Fire on the Water, Chris De Burgh, 1986)

Metaphor:

> Comparisons which do not include "like" or "as". "You're a star in the face of the sky" ("Daniel," Elton John, 1978)

Hyperbole:

> An exaggerated statement or comparison "She's got the world on a string" ("The Big L.," Roxette, 1991)

Personification:

> Inanimate objects are brought to life; they are given human characteristics or qualities, making the impossible or unnatural seem conceivable and real. "As the maples scream 'Oppression' and the oaks just shake their heads" ("The Trees," Rush, 1986)

Alliteration:

Repetitive consonant sounds at the beginning of consecutive (or almost consecutive) words. "Goodness Gracious Great balls of fire" ("Great Balls of Fire," Jerry Lee Lewis, 1957)

6. Have the students write a critique of the song.

A critique is a good way of getting students to express their opinion in the second language. The critique could be done orally or in written form, individually or in groups. The length and complexity of the critique obviously depends on the level of the students in the second language, but a few essential areas should be covered in all cases:

summary:

> A general outline of the song's content.

positives:

> A description of the aspects of the song that pleased the listeners

(students may refer to the contextual, musical and literary elements discussed above).

negatives:

A description of the aspects of the song that displeased the listeners, or that left them indifferent (students may refer to the contextual, musical and literary elements discussed above).

evaluation:

An evaluation of the song as a whole (there could be a picture code, like a gold CD if the song is considered excellent, a silver CD if the song is considered good, and so on).

This module could be repeated with any number of songs, and the students could keep their work in a song portfolio. Perhaps a section of this portfolio could be reserved for the definition of new words or expressions. The students may even compose new sentences using these words or expressions.

Copyright

Any teacher using songs in the second-language classroom must be aware of the Copyright Law. In Quebec, an agreement between the ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) and la Société canadienne des auteurs compositeurs et éditeurs de musique (SOCAN), concerning the public use or performance of music, has been renewed to run from January 1, 1996 to December 31, 1999. It stipulates that any music can be used or performed by students and school personnel only, inside the school, for either educational or recreational purposes, without having to seek authorization or pay licensing fees. Article 27(3) of the Copyright Law also allows public performances of any musical work worldwide, for educational purposes, without having to seek authorization or pay licensing fees. This agreement therefore covers the use of any song in the second-language classroom.

How Can Teachers Get the Lyrics to Songs?

Second-anguage educators planning to use a song in the classroom must have the exact and complete lyrics. The unknown word or phrase is usually the one students will happen to ask about.

There are many ways to acquire song lyrics. The best and more obvious way is to buy the tapes or CDs that have the lyrics printed inside. However, teachers should be aware that lyrics thus acquired may contain spelling mistakes. It is therefore important to carefully verify them.

There are also many magazines and paperback books which feature song lyrics. Some are not very expensive and contain interesting facts about singers or bands. As well, the new improved web site *The Lyrics Page* (http://archive.uwp.edu/pub/music/lyrics/) will allow teachers to acquire the lyrics of most songs for free. This site is quite appealing because the information is presented in an accessible and teacher-friendly way. Lyrics can be found using the title of the song, the artist's name, or some words that appear in the song. This web site is definitely a must-see for language educators planning to use songs in their classroom. There are also many other resources on the *internet* such as the MTV music site (www.mtv.com) from which a song and its video can be downloaded.

Final Note

While music is often perceived as having a purely recreational goal, this article hopefully illustrates how songs also offer many educational advantages. Not only do they create a positive climate in the classroom which is essential to learning a second language, they also transport the students to familiar territory where they are more at ease to accumulate new knowledge in the second language. As culture capsules, songs offer insights into the second culture and contextualize new language information. Activities based on songs are not simply light relief for tired learners and educators; rather, they are an excellent means of increasing the students' vocabulary, and of developing their listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. Whether pop or folk, heavy metal or blues, fast or slow, short or long, songs are a motivating, effective and enjoyable aid to language teaching.*

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Mnemonics for Mastering the Imperfect and Irregular Future in French, Italian and Spanish

Keith Mason

Mnemonic devices serve to summarize and simplify grammar rules, especially when applied to the many verb tenses and forms found in the Romance languages. This article presents two mnemonic devices helpful in summarizing the uses of the imperfect and the irregular future tense forms, respectively.

Students of French, Italian, and Spanish are challenged by the abundance of verb forms in the Romance languages and their uses. Teachers of Romance languages are equally challenged to come up with methods that simplify the mastery of verbs for their students. Two areas particularly troublesome for students are the imperfect/preterite distinction and the irregular future verb forms. In order to simplify these two points of grammar, the author developed two mnemonic devices, outlined in the following sections.

Imperfect: C-H-E-A-T-E-D

Dialects of French, Italian, and Spanish use either a simple verb tense (the preterite) or a compound tense (the present perfect) for those actions in the past showing a definite beginning or end. However, the distinction between the imperfect and preterite/present perfect is problematic for English-speaking students acquiring the Romance languages.

Castilian speakers of Spanish, much like the French and the Italians, tend to use the present perfect tense in cases when New World speakers of Spanish would use the preterite. For example, consider the phrase "I read the book." A New World speaker of Spanish would express that phrase as "Leí el libro." However, a Castilian speaker of Spanish would likely express the same phrase as "He leído el libro."

Students have difficulty identifying which form corresponds to a particular aspect of the past action. This difficulty in selection is mainly attributable to the fact that both the imperfect and preterite/present perfect of the target language may be translated with the English preterite (e.g. Spanish *hablé* and *hablaba* = "I spoke." Furthermore, teachers and textbooks often confuse students by claiming that a clearcut distinction exists between the two forms; in reality, some cases allow for either, depending upon how the speaker wishes to represent the past action. Nevertheless, those unambiguous usages of the imperfect aspect may be conveniently summarized using the mnemonic device C-H-E-A-T-E-D. The letters stand for the following uses of the imperfect when narrating in the past:

Continuous Actions
Habitual Actions
Emotions
Age
Time
Endless Actions
Descriptions

Examples of each use are illustrated below:

Continuous Actions

English:
Mary *was singing* while Charles was reading the newspaper.

French:
Marie *chantait* pendant que Charles lisait le journal.

Italian:
Maria *cantava* mentre Carlo leggeva il giornale.

Spanish:
María *cantaba* mientras Carlos leía el periódico.

Habitual Actions

English:
We always *used to go* to the movies on Fridays.

French:
Nous *allions* toujours au cinéma le vendredi.

Italian:
Venerdì *andavamo* sempre al cinema.

Spanish:
Siempre *íbamos* al cine los viernes.

Emotions

English:
He *was* very happy because he had received a present for his birthday.

French:
Il *était* très content parce qu'il avait reçu un cadeau pour son anniversaire.

Italian:
Era molto contento perché aveva ricevuto un regalo per il suo compleanno.

Spanish:
Él *estaba* muy contento porque había recibido un regalo para su cumpleaños.

Age

English:
The man *was* 34 years old.

French:
L'homme *avait* 34 ans.

Italian:
L'uomo *aveva* 34 anni.

Spanish:
El hombre *tenía* 34 años.

Time

English:
It *was* 3 o'clock.

French:
Il *était* trois heures.

Italian:
Erano le tre.

Spanish:
Eran las tres.

Endless Actions

English:
Thomas *was walking* in the park when I saw him.

French:
Thomas *marchait* dans le parc quand je l'ai vu.

Italian:
Tommaso *passeggiava* nel parco quando l'ho visto.

Spanish:
Tomás *caminaba* en el parque cuando lo vi.

Descriptions

English:
It was a lovely spring day.

French:
Il faisait très beau.

Italian:
Era una bella giornata di primavera.

Spanish:
La mujer era *joven* y bonita.

C-H-E-A-T-E-D neatly summarizes the uses of the imperfect for both students and teachers. One may deduce that the preterite (or present perfect) should be used when the past action is not among the seven categories covered in C-H-E-A-T-E-D. See Miller (1956) for the ideal number of items the brain can process.

The Irregular Future: The Mexican Hat Dance

Romance languages are indeed rich in verb forms and tenses. It is a challenge for our students to memorize all the verb forms, especially the irregular ones. For this reason, I devised a mnemonic device to aid

students with the irregular future tense verb forms. Twelve frequently occurring irregular future verbs exist in Spanish and many of these same verbs share irregularities in French and Italian: *caber, decir, haber, poder, poner, querer, saber, salir, tener, valer,* and *venir.* The irregularity lies in the verbal stem; students generally have less trouble with the future endings (e.g. Spanish *-é, -ás, -á, -emos, -éis, -án*) since they are the same for both regular and irregular verbs and for verbs of all three conjugations (*-ar, -er, -ir*). One commonality of the Spanish irregular future forms is that the singular forms and third person plural have one less syllable than the regular verbs (except for monosyl-

labic verb stems such as Spanish *ser* or *ir*). To represent the two syllable for these forms in a rhythmic, singable way, one may use the tune "El jarabe tapatío" also known as "The Mexican Hat Dance" (Use the part that goes duh dúh duh dúh duh dúh duh dúh duh duh dúh duh dúh). Match the future forms with the tune as shown:

For Spanish,

dir*é* dir*ás* dir*á* dir*emos* dir*éis* dir*án*.

For French,

dir*ai* dir*as* dir*a* dir*ons* dir*ez* dir*ont*.

The Italian forms fit the rhythm similarly to French and Spanish except for the *loro* form in which you must add an additional beat:

dir*ò* dir*ai* dir*à* dir*emo* dir*ete* di*ranno*.

I usually project on a transparency a *sombrero* with the irregular future forms of the irregular verbs or draw one on the chalkboard as shown below. Another idea especially for younger learners is to bring in an actual "sombrero" and have

students pull out slips of paper with one of each of the infinitives written on them. Students would then conjugate the correct future forms. Incidentally, many students enjoy singing the forms instead of just repeating them.

Conclusion

Two previous articles (Mason 1990, 1992) outlined mnemonic devices to help students with *ser/estar, por/para,* and affirmative commands with clitic pronouns in Spanish. Tuttle (1981) also presented several mnemonic devices in his article, including the shoe verb diagram for stem-changing verbs and a time line for pictorially expressing different

verb tenses. The two mnemonic devices described in this article have been used successfully in basic level courses. Properly integrated into the grammar curriculum, these new mnemonics should greatly facilitate your students' mastery of the imperfect versus preterite/present perfect distinction and the irregular future verb forms in the Romance languages.*

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UNESCO Report Favours Preservation of Languages

Roseann Runte

Pérez de Cuéllar, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, recently headed the World Commission on Culture and Development for UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization). The Commission published its report, entitled *Our Creative Diversity*, early this year.

The report links development and culture from the outset:

> Development divorced from its human or cultural context is growth without a soul (p. 15).

Development is thus not simply access to more goods and better services, but the opportunity to choose a full, satisfying human existence which includes intellectual and creative expressions in many and varied forms. Development and the economy are parts of a people's culture.

This is significant in North America today where the current trend is to identify culture as an industry which promotes economic growth. The UNESCO report effectively turns the equation around.

The section on language begins with a quotation from a poem, "Lingua e Dialetu," by Ignazio Buttitta, a Sicilian poet, born in 1899. It is translated as follows:

> Put a people
>
> in chains,
>
> strip them,
>
> plug up their mouths,
>
> they are still free.
>
> Take away their job
>
> their passport
>
> the table they eat on
>
> the bed they sleep in
>
> they are still rich.
>
> A people
>
> become poor and enslaved
>
> when they are robbed of the tongue
>
> left them by their ancestors:
>
> they are lost forever (p. 178).

De Cuéllar argues cogently that while the world has done much to preserve the visible remains of cultural heritage through the restoration of monuments such as Borabodur or Abu Simbel, little has been done to preserve languages. He estimates that perhaps ninety percent of the languages spoken today will become extinct in the next century.

This is as much a depletion of the world's resources as the extinction of a plant or animal species. He states,

> Languages are wholly both instruments for and results of the societies in which they are used, or abandoned. The fate of all languages is the result of the social and political environment, above all power relations (p. 179).

> *The "observable advantage of bilingual or multilinguals" is that they are "more used to switching thought patterns and have more flexible minds." Their knowledge of language(s) makes them more familiar with "different, often contradictory concepts" and this, in turn, makes bilinguals or multilinguals more "tolerant than monolinguals, and more capable of understanding sides of an argument" (p. 179).*

He argues that languages will not survive due to decree or law but rather, because of the respect we have for them and because of the milieu in which they are (or are not) used. He notes, for example, that a forbidden language may survive while one which is permitted but not used by those in power, may disappear. He writes,

> Language policy, like other policies, has been used as an instrument of domination, fragmentation and reintegration into the ruling political structure (p. 179).

The loss of language may result in the loss of important knowledge for society in general. Recently in northern Australia, indigenous Aboriginal groups showed scientists plants which have been remarkably effective in curing skin ulcers. These people preserved this knowledge in their oral language and the practical impact on science is measurable.

> *Languages will not survive due to decree or law but rather, because of the respect we have for them and because of the milieu in which they are (or are not) used.*

The "observable advantage of bilingual or multilinguals" is that they are "more used to switching thought patterns and have more flexible minds." Their knowledge of language(s) makes them more familiar with "different, often contradictory concepts" and this, in turn, makes bilinguals or multilinguals more "tolerant than monolinguals, and more capable of understanding sides of an argument" (p. 179).

Recommending the adoption of enlightened language policies, the report notes that such policies require the creation of learning materials in the target languages and the imparting of elementary education in the mother tongue of encysted (isolated) linguistic minorities.

The report concludes, "Language is an essential ingredient of culture. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre called languages `our antennae, our spectacles'" (p. 182).

The publication is available from UNESCO publishing in Paris. In Canada, it is distributed by

Roseann Runte, professor, author and poet, is President of Victoria University, University of Toronto. She is currently President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

Traduttore, traditore!: Beware of Communicative Incompetence!

Anthony Mollica

Traduttore, traditore, states an old Italian maxim. The dictum emphasizes the fact that words or phrases cannot be easily transferred from one language to another. In some cases, the translation "betrays" the original language by not being able to convey in the target language the spirit, the nuances, or the cultural connotation of words and phrases of the original language. As we travel throughout the world, we are often amused – and, more often, confused and perplexed – by instructions, directions or warnings English-speaking travellers are given in order to make their sojourn more pleasant, more enjoyable in the country they visit. Along with listening, speaking, reading, and writing, translation is a language skill. It is not surprising, then, to see "Schools of translation" or "translation courses" being offered at university and college level. Translation is undoubtedly the most difficult of language skills as well as the most stressing. Simultaneous translators at the Canadian Parliament or, for that matter, at other institutions or events where this service is required, work only for a period of ten to fifteen minutes before being relieved by a colleague and then resuming the task. Simultaneous translators must be able to concentrate and within split seconds interpret accurately not only topics in which they may be only marginally interested but also feelings of joy, anger, frustration, and even insults!

Incorrect translations have been a source of embarrassment.

Linguistic and cultural gaffes made by translators or by non-native speakers have often been a source of chagrin. One recalls the embarrassment President Carter faced when the interpreter stated that the President "lusted" for Polish women.

Incorrect translations have been an urge for incitement.

The Canadian Press reported that the former mayor of Montreal, Jean Drapeau, at the end of a speech during a tour of China, had urged his audience "to beat up your brother when he is drunk." A glance at M. Drapeau's text, however, showed that he never advocated such violence! What he had said in French was "Il faut battre le fer pendant qu'il est chaud."

Incorrect translations have been a reason for lack of sales.

The Wall Street Journal reported that General Motors was puzzled by the lack of enthusiasm the introduction of its Chevrolet Nova automobile aroused among Puerto Ricans. The reason was very simple. Nova means star in Spanish, but when spoken, it sounds like *no va* which means "it doesn't go." GM quickly changed the name to Caribe and the car sold nicely.

Incorrect translations have been a cause for destruction of human lives.

The incorrect translation of a word may have very well been responsible for the death of over 200,000 people. Towards the end of the Second World War, the United States had offered Japan an opportunity to surender. The Japanese reply contained the word *mokusatsu* which means "withholding comment pending decision." Through mistranslation, the verb *mokusatsu* was redered as "ignore." As a result, the allies believed that the ultimatum had been flatly rejected and President Truman ordered the use of the atomic bomb. I don't know whether the story is true or not, but it sure makes a good language anecdote...

Richard Lederer's "Lost in Translation" List

In a rare attempt to clear my desk the other day, I came across a "fifth generation" photocopy of incorrect translations. The page contained no reference to the source. I decided to share this badly-photocopied list with **Mosaic**'s readers and write a short introduction to it. As customary, I circulated the short article to colleagues for reactions/comments. I quickly found out from a colleague, Frances Koltowski of the University of Toronto, that the list was "lifted" from Richard Lederer's book, *Anguished English*, published by Dell Publishing, New York. We are grateful to Connie Wyrick, Wyrick &Company, Charleston, South Carolina (who holds the original copyright!), for permission to reprint the section "Lost in Translation". Thanks to Miss Wyrick, we are able to share with our readers these examples of communicative... incompetence!

Teachers wishing to turn these mistranslations into a language activity can ask students to re-write them to convey the meaning intended.

In a Tokyo hotel:
It is forbidden to steal towels please. If you are not person to do such thing is please not to read this notis.

In another Japanese hotel room:
Please to bathe inside the tub.

In a Bucharest hotel lobby:
The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time, we regret that you will be unbearable.

In a Leipzig elevator:
Do not enter lift backwards, and only when lit up.

Posted on a Belgrade hotel elevator:
To move the cabin, push button for wishing floor. If the cabin should enter more persons, each person should press a number of wishing floor. Driving is then going alphabetically by national order.

In a Paris hotel elevator:
Please leave your values at the front desk.

In a hotel in Athens:
Visitors are expected to complain at the office between the hours of 9 and 11 a.m. daily.

In a Yugoslavian hotel:
The flattening of underwear with pleasure is a job of the chambermaid.

In a Japanese hotel:
You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid.

In a lobby of a Moscow hotel across from a Russian Orthodox monastery:
You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian and Soviet composers, artists, and writers are buried daily except Thursday.

In an Austrian hotel catering to skiers:
Not to perambulate the corridors in the hours of repose in boots of ascension.

On a menu of a Swiss restaurant:
Our wines leave you nothing to hope for.

On the menu of a Polish hotel:
Salad a firm's own make: limpid reed beet soup with cheesy dumplings in form of a finger' roasted duck let loose' beef rashers beaten up in the country people's fashion.

In a Hong Kong supermarket:
For your convenience, we recommend courteous, efficient, self-service.

Outside a Hong Kong tailor shop:
Ladies may have a fit upstairs.

In Bangkok dry cleaner's:
Drop your trousers here for best results.

Outside a Paris dress shop:
Dresses for street walking.

In a Rhodes tailor shop:
Order your summers suits. Because is big rush, we will execute customers in strict rotation.

From the *Soviet Weekly*:
There will be a Moscow Exhibition of Arts by 15,000 Soviet Republic painters and sculptors. They were executed over the past two years.

In an East African newspaper:
A new swimming pool is rapidly taking shape since the contractors have thrown in the bulk of their workers.

In a Vienna hotel:
In case of fire, do your utmost to alarm the hotel porter.

A sign posted in Germany's Black Forest:
It is strictly forbidden on our black forest camping site that people of different sex, for instance, men and women, live together in one tent unless they are married with each other for that purpose.

In a Zurich hotel:
Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for that purpose.

In an advertisement by a Hong Kong dentist:
Teeth will be extracted by the latest Methodists.

A translation sentence from a Russian chess book:
A lot of water has been passed under the bridge since this variation has been played.

In a Rome laundry:
Ladies, leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time.

In a Czechoslovakian tourist agency:
Take one of our horse-driven city tours – we guarantee no miscarriages.

Advertisement for donkey rides in Thailand:
Would you like to ride on your own ass?

On the faucet in a Finnish washroom:
To stop the drip, turn cock to the right.

In the window of a Swedish furrier:
Fur coats made for ladies from their own skin.

On the box of a clockwork toy made in Hong Kong:
Guaranteed to work throughout its useful life.

Detour sign in Kyushi, Japan:
Stop: Drive Sideways.

In a Swiss mountain inn:
Special today – no ice cream.

In a Bangkok temple:
It is forbidden to enter a woman even a foreigner if dressed as a man.

In a Tokyo bar:
Special cocktails for ladies with nuts.

In a Copenhagen airline ticket office:
We take your bags and send them in all directions.

On the door of a Moscow hotel room:
If this is the first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it.

In a Norwegian cocktail lounge:
Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.

At a Budapest zoo:
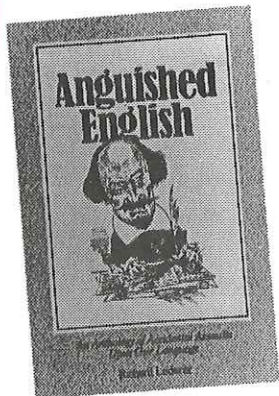*Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food, give it to the guard on duty.*

In the office of a Roman doctor:
Specialist in women and other diseases.

In an Acapulco hotel:
The Manager has personally passed all the water served here.

In a Tokyo shop:
Our nylons cost more than common, but you'll find they are best in the long run.

From a Japanese information booklet about using a hotel air conditioner:
Cooles and Heates: If you want just condition of warm in your room, please control yourself.

From a brochure of a car rental in Tokyo:
When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet horn melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigour.

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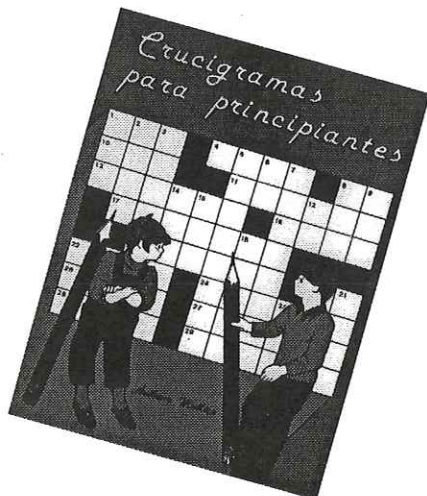
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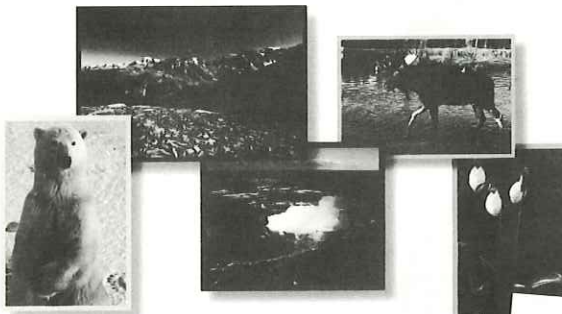At the Farm • At the Zoo • In the Kitchen • Fruit • Vegetables
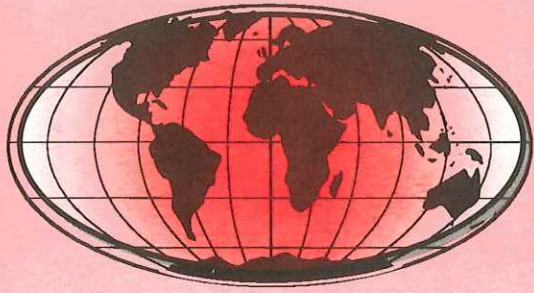
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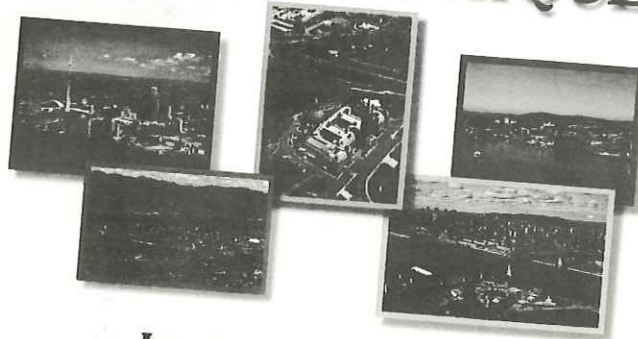## ATLAS PHOTOGRAPHIQUE

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Les villes canadiennes

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