

Here's the first one. It's from Volume One, Issue One.
It was written by Earl Stevick who, though very busy and very famous, wanted to help us out with the launch of the, then, brand-new journal. Asked to tell readers about his latest book, he actually sat down and wrote us a piece that explained his path through ALL his books. Fifteen years later, as we launch our brand-new web site, his books are still an inspiration.

Images and Options in the Language Classroom

by *Earl W. Stevick*
(Cambridge University Press, 1986)

Whenever we use published materials in teaching foreign languages, we have available to us a rich but often under-utilized set of options. We will be better able to see and exploit these options if we understand something about the formation and use of mental imagery.

In the first three chapters, drawing on recent work in cognitive science, I maintain: (1) that what we do—whether with skeletal muscles or with speech muscles or with visceral responses—draws on 'images' that we get from memory; (2) that obtaining an image of anything—whether of an event or a face or a word or a sentence pattern—is primarily a matter of reconstructing it rather than of retrieving it whole; (3) that 'images' are in fact generated afresh time after time by the activity of networks of stored 'items', and that successive images containing the same event or the same word may therefore differ from one another in subtle but important ways; (4) that the stored items represent many dimensions beyond those of the five senses, particularly including purposes and emotions; and (5) that an understanding of how networks are established and images are formed can greatly clarify the learning/teaching process for the teacher.

Similarly, in the remaining five chapters I maintain: (6) that teaching is also generated afresh for each occasion, rather than reproducing whole memorized techniques; (7) that any act of teaching involves choosing among the alternatives provided by many sets of options; (8) that users of the book will profit best if they first generate their own imagery about a practical problem then discuss that imagery with colleagues and only later look to see what I have to say about the problem.

The exercises in the last five chapters are based on actual textbooks on various levels from pre-beginning to advanced, and most of the suggestions in those chapters are based on my own experiences or those of other teachers.

For example, *Transitions* (Linda Ferreira, 1984, Newbury House) contains the following: "Read to the student the following synopsis: Preston Wade is Susan's father. His business headquarters is on Park Avenue. He's a wealthy businessman. Wade owns a construction company. His dream is to build Wade Plaza."

Users of *Images and Options* are asked to think individually about the choices that they would have here. Then they are invited to discuss their thoughts with one another, and finally to look at my comments that follow the exercise. In this way, we arrive together at a set of 33 options, all of which have been developed and practiced with real materials. Some of the options that are valid with this particular exercise are:

- How should the teacher use his or her voice?
- Should the teacher dramatize?
- What register should the teacher use?

Some of the options used in other exercises are:

- How quickly should the students be allowed to respond?
- Who should take the initiative, teacher or student?
- Should the teacher move from harder to easier, or from easier to harder combinations of alternatives?

It has been interesting to look at this book in relation to other books I have written for language teachers. In *Helping People Learn English* (1957), as the title suggests, I was beginning to have some small feeling for what Caleb Gattegno calls "the subordination of teaching to learning". *My Workbook in Language Teaching* (1963) was a recognition that teachers are likely to get more from doing things than from reading about them. In both those books, however, I was assuming that language teaching was pretty much a branch of Applied Linguistics. Then in 1964-70 I had a series of unforgettable and undeniable experiences with the Peace Corps that shattered that assumption. *Adapting and Writing Language Lessons* (1971) was a record of those experiences, which led me to the (nowadays not very surprising) conclusion that learning a new language is a 'total human experience'. This drove me to look at research on the cognitive but also the emotional and social sides of that experience (*Memory, Meaning and Method* 1976).

Then came study of and personal experimentation with a few unconventional approaches (*Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways*, 1980), with special attention to the non-rational aspects of language study. Most recently came *Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages* (1982), the theme of which was that teaching languages should be a matter of informed choice in response to a wide range of factors: rational as well as non-rational, social as well as linguistic.

Now, in *Images and Options*, I still see teaching as subordinate to learning (1957), I again ask my readers to do and not just to read (1963), I have brought the cognitive side of my model (1976) more closely into line with recent experimental and clinical evidence, and I have carried still further the principle of showing teachers where they can make informed, responsible choices (1982) that take into account the student's purposes and emotions (1971, 1980).