

A Layman's Guide to Slide-taking  
with a view to teaching English.\*

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## Introduction

The past two decades have seen a notable increase in the use of the slide-projector as a teaching aid. Its popularity with both teachers and administrators is due to a number of factors. Compared with other teaching aids, it is a relatively inexpensive piece of equipment, which requires a minimum of maintenance. It is easy to handle, it can be used for a variety of subjects, such as geography, history and biology, to mention but a few. With the aid of a camera, teachers can make their own material and exercise their creativity. The same set of slides can be used for a number of different purposes and with different levels of students, simply by changing the tasks required of the students. Cost-effectiveness and versatility, then, would seem to account for at least part of the slide-projector's success.

### Original purpose of the material

In this article, the original purpose of a particular teaching aid based on slides will be explained. There will be a brief account of the planned and actual procedure for collecting the raw data and a description of the exercises to accompany the material. Guidelines for classroom procedure are given and the results of a trial-run of the material are discussed. Finally, there are suggestions for possible improvements and conclusions.

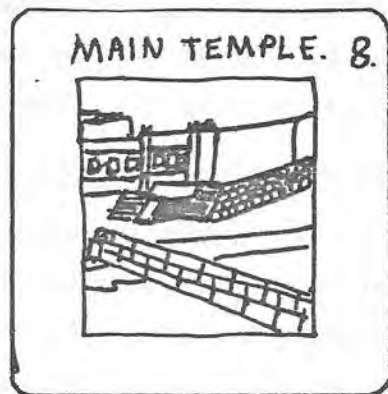
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The material, which will be described below, was to be evaluated according to two basic criteria; one pedagogical, one practical. The first was the degree to which the material fulfilled its own objectives and the second would be its feasibility as a teaching aid. This meant that the material would have to be both durable and easy to use for both teacher and student. The original package contained a tape, a set of slides of Mexico City, teacher's notes, a set of question sheets and answers and an additional package with sets of slides of Mexican Tourist resorts, each with an information sheet.

The material was designed to help intermediate students improve their listening skills and also their oral production. These two skills were selected as it was thought that the students, who study Tourist Business Administration at a school in Mexico City, needed practice in these and that they would probably use them in their future work. The material was also intended as a bridge between their General English Course and other subjects taught in the school, such as national and international geography and the theory of Travel Agencies. The material was designed so that the students could apply the knowledge which they had acquired in these subjects. It was thought that the raw material (photographs and a tape recording) would be easy to obtain and that the use of slides of Mexico City in an English class would help to make English seem less remote and confined to text-books. The slides were chosen partly for their novelty and partly for their aesthetic value.

#### Procedure

The original plan was to tape an English-speaking tourist guide on a tour of Mexico City and to take slides of the places mentioned. The next stage would be to edit the original tape



and use parts of it for listening comprehension. Question sheets, based on the final tape, would be prepared.

The first step, then, was to book a tour and record the guide. The guide, however, perhaps unnerved by the sight of the tape-recorder and realising that all the passengers on the bus spoke Spanish, refused to speak a word of English. The next four hours, therefore, were spent writing down all the places visited and making detailed notes on the guide's comments and anecdotes. A second city tour was almost as unfruitful. The guide spoke English, but the tape proved to be too long and to have too much interference to be comprehensible, let alone useful for the classroom. The solution then, was to use the notes from the first tour to make a script and to have it read by a colleague. The resulting tape lasted about ten minutes. (See Appendix A for extract.)

#### Listening Comprehension Exercises and Classroom Procedure

The next stage was to write the comprehension questions. Three exercises were designed, including one in which students would have to recognise place names mentioned; another in which they would have to decide whether statements were true or false and a third in which students would have to extract specific information. (See Appendix B) students would listen to the tape, see the slides and answer the questions.

As for the oral production stage, students would be divided into groups of four and given a set of slides each of different tourist resorts in Mexico. In case their background knowledge proved insufficient, students would be given a sheet of basic information about the resort, identifying each of the slides. The students would then make brief notes on the slides. Next they would show the slides and give a guided tour of that particular city, whilst another student recorded them. This recording would

later be discussed by the whole class. Students would be allowed to use their notes for reference but would not be permitted to read aloud from them.

### Results of trial-run of material

The material was piloted with two groups of students and the following results were observed. The tape proved to be too long for two reasons. Students tended to get lost and "switch off". Also the tape was too long for it to be repeated enough times for the students to understand and yet not get bored. The tape had a slightly unnatural quality, due, probably, to the fact that the text had been read and not spoken spontaneously. The open-ended questions in Exercise Three proved to be too difficult for the students.

### Suggested Improvements

To help concentrate students' attention, it was thought that the first exercise of recognition could be changed so that instead the students followed a map, marking all the places mentioned by the guide. Hotels often give away clear, large scale maps for tourists which can be adapted by writing in the relevant place-names or letters or numbers which can be explained in a key, e.g. a = Zocalo, b = National Palace, etc. The tape might sound more natural if it were semi-scripted rather than read. The teacher, or whoever is going to record the tour, could elaborate on brief notes made on the places of interest to be included in the tour. The total recording should not last more than three minutes. Exercise Three could be altered so that the questions were multiple choice, thus making them easier to answer.

In the oral production activity, students could be given guidelines to follow. For example, each talk could include an

introduction with, for example, geographical and historical data, an explanation of each slide and a conclusion.

### Conclusions

For those teachers who do not necessarily have the time to create their own materials, there is always the possibility of adapting existing material. The Mexican Board of Tourism sells cassettes of City Tours in Spanish with accompanying slides. It is relatively easy to make notes from the cassettes and then create a "tour" of the required length and level for the students in question.

The experience of recording the tour guide and creating the material was at times frustrating. However, by creating one's own material, it is possible to develop a sense of what is both practical and feasible. Piloting the material in the classroom and altering it according to the students' reactions makes it possible to create material which is probably more finely tuned to students' needs than anything which can be found commercially. It may also be less expensive. Finally, there is the satisfaction which comes from being a language materials producer and not just a consumer and knowing that you have the ability to create material to suit your particular needs exactly.

### Check-list for materials production and exercises

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Materials production

Camera  
Portable tape-recorder  
Notebook

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Listening Tasks	Slide projector Slides of Mexico City Tape recorder and prepared tape Question sheets
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Oral production activity	Tape recorder and blank tape Slides of various tourist resorts 1 information sheet per resort
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References

Widdowson, H.G. 1979. Explorations in Applied Linguistics.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix A

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm going to be your guide for today. Before we start, I'll give you a brief run-down of the places we're going to see. We'll be visiting the Zócalo, the National Palace, the Main Temple, the Metropolitan Cathedral and a handicrafts centre where you'll have half an hour to look round. We'll also be visiting the Western part of the city, including Chapultepec Park.

Well, now we're in the old part of the city, which was built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This part is sinking at a rate of two centimetre per year because, as you may already know, Mexico City was built on a lake. It was founded by the Aztecs. In 1519, the Spaniards arrived and began building on top of the existing Aztec constructions...

Appendix B

Exercise I. Listen to the tape and underline the places you hear mentioned.

Zocalo    Residential Zone    Polanco    Winston Churchill's Statue  
Polo fields    Main Temple    Main Post Office    5 Continents  
Fountain    President Hotel    Chapultepec Castle    Three  
Cultures Square    Diego Rivera's murals    Inner Circuit  
Handicrafts Centre    Museum of Anthropology    National Bank  
House of the Tiles    Museum of Modern Art    Lebanese Embassy  
Chapultepec Hills



Exercise II Listen to the tape again and decide whether the following sentences are true or false.

1. The city is sinking at a rate of 3 centimetres per year. T F
2. The Spaniards arrived in 1519. T F
3. The Metropolitan Cathedral was built in 100 years. T F
4. There were cows and sheep in America before the Spaniards arrived. T F
5. The Black Christ was imported from Spain. T F
6. The House of Tiles was built by a rich men. T F
7. You have to pay for the coffee at Peralvillo Market. T F
8. Chapultepec Park is the oldest park in America. T F
9. The National Museum of Anthropology was designed by several architects. T F
10. It is not usual to leave the driver a tip. T F

Exercise III Listen to the tape and answer the questions.

1. What year did the Spaniards arrive in Mexico?
2. When was the Metropolitan Cathedral finished?
3. How many styles of architecture does the Cathedral have?
4. When did Diego Rivera paint his last mural?
5. What country did the marble for the Palace of Fine Arts come from?
6. How many maricahis are there in Garibaldi Square?
7. Name two kinds of handicrafts sold at Peralvillo Market?
8. How old is the ahuehuete tree in Chapultepec Park?
9. Who designed the National Museum of Anthropology?
10. What statue marks the beginning of Chapultepec Hills?