

Comptes-Rendus de Lecture

Jill Forbes and Nick Hewlett, with François Nectoux & Anne Reymond

Contemporary France:**essays and texts on politics, economics and society**

London and New York: Longman, 1994

584 pp; ISBN 0 582 07376-6

reviewed by Frédéric Royall, University of Limerick

This book is based on a series of courses developed for an undergraduate degree in Modern Languages and International Studies at South Bank Polytechnic (South Bank University). It is pitched at two levels with undergraduate students in mind. At the first level, the authors of the book endeavour to review and analyse major changes and events in post-war France. In this way the authors target the requirements of students from the various areas of the social sciences. At a second level, the authors strive to address the pedagogical requirements of French language learners by providing a series of authentic texts which highlight the events and developments described by the authors. The authors succeed admirably well at both levels. The book is divided in three parts, each part focusing in depth on the political, economic or social markers of contemporary France. The authors provide a lengthy analysis of the events through essays in English and, in all, 95 relevant authentic texts in French. For seasoned observers of the political, economic and societal developments of France, the book breaks no new ground, but in fairness to the authors this is not their main object. The authors seek to guide the prospective undergraduate students through the major areas of debate, discussion and analysis of post-war France. The authors also strive to encourage the inquisitive student to deepen his/her understanding of contemporary France by providing interesting, informative and up-to-date sections of suggestions for further reading. However important these two aspects may be, I do not feel that herein lies the strength of the book. In truth there are a number of serious academic books which detail and review comprehensively the various aspects of modern France touched on

here. The book's strength lies more directly in the use that it makes of finely selected authentic texts which it provides to accompany the analytical essays. The authors make a skilful use of a varied number of exercises (*lexique, grammaire et stylistique, compréhension, questions orales ou écrites*) which again guide the language and specialist learner. I am sure that, given the explosion in the numbers of non-literary students of French in Higher Education these past five to ten years, this book will be a welcome addition to the libraries of the many language and specialist teachers who have undoubtedly sifted through hundreds of books, journal articles and newspaper clippings in order to provide their students with readable, enjoyable, relevant and pedagogically useful texts. The authors of the book have done just so and it is to their credit that the texts which are presented are so well chosen. A small qualm I have is with the full historical and pedagogical value of a few of the texts. Are the various presidential addresses, discourses and essays truly useful as analytical tools? They are undoubtedly useful as a reflection of the men and times in question. However, as a pedagogical tool for language learners the selection is very useful. A few typo errors have also drifted in (i.e. *qual effet*, p. 162), but these are truly minor objections. There may be more comprehensive books available analysing contemporary France as there may be other serious books presenting authentic texts and suggesting pedagogical uses of the texts for the languages learner. I doubt though if there is a better book combining both aspects and, at under £20, it is truly a bargain.

Claude Le Ninan

Le français des affaires par la vidéo

Examples of video sequences and livre de l'étudiant
Paris: les Éditions Didier, 1993
190 pages; ISBN 2-278-04272-6
reviewed by Margaret Geake, UMIST (retired)

This course is designed to be used either in class or by business people on an individual, « teach yourself » basis and the introduction in the book explains clearly how it works. The recordings are all made by professional business people speaking about their own area of expertise and the result is one of reasonable authenticity: students therefore need un « niveau intermédiaire ou avancé en français langue étrangère ». There are eight films, each one depicting an existing industrial, commercial or service-oriented firm, with varying numbers of *Séquences* illustrating different aspects of the work. Most are in the form of *Interviews* (with or without the actual participation of the interviewer) or *Simulations*, where a member of the firm explains how something is done or presents a new model. The book gives explicit instructions as to how the course should be used and includes exercises based on each *Séquence* ranging from the very simple *Repérages* to the rather more difficult *Compréhension*, usually in multiple choice form. *Exploitation* asks students to find and use specific sections of dialogue that have already occurred in the film and *Communication* asks them to use the information they have gleaned, to give a presentation about the company or take part in a role-play as between members of the firm. To help them with these later activities, (but preferably NOT before!), students may consult the full transcript of the *Séquence*. A *lexique* contains difficult words used in the film as well as some other technical terms used in the *Exploitation* phase, and there are *Corrigés* at the back of the book for those working on their own. NB: NO English is used in this course and there is no attempt to teach any grammar. The book is a very useful aid to the study of the videos but it is the videos themselves that are the essential element of the course. This being the case, I was disappointed to receive so little videoed material (less than 10 minutes' worth out of a total of 100 minutes and only five *Séquences*, one of which consisted of examples of visual advertisements with no speech at all). Three of the four recordings

including speech were very clear and distinct, particularly as each of these showed only one person, speaking directly to camera. The fourth, involving some semi-spontaneous conversation, was slightly less clear, but this is how it would be in real life and students need to be able to cope in such situations. It would have been interesting to see whether the technical and commercial discussion involving four people at COBRA, in which problems are examined and solutions arrived at, would be comprehensible to the students or business people for whom the course is intended. I would also like to have seen all the *Séquences* relating to one company, so that I could have experienced the « progression, soit au niveau des contenus, soit au niveau de l'intrigue » spoken of in the book's introduction, and it would have been nice to have seen one of the few women used on this course! I can well understand the reluctance of the publishers to hand out, for review, enough material to be of use to pirates, but if they want a valid judgement of the quality of their product they need to provide more than this. As it is, I feel I can give a qualified welcome to this course, based on the very small amount of film that I have seen. If the rest is as good, it could be quite a useful introductory aid to those expecting to work in business in a French-speaking country though some more examples of business technicalities would have been welcome. Information about specific companies is more useful if it can become the basis of transferable skills.

Paul A. Gaeng

Le Monde de l'entreprise française:

initiation au langage des affaires

Wilhelmsfeld: Egert, 3rd edition 1993

340pp; ISBN 3-926972-28-9

reviewed by Mairi Maclean, Royal Holloway, University of London.

Already in its third edition, this versatile book serves to introduce the reader both to the French business world and to its language. Although not an *official* text, *Le Monde de l'entreprise française* is specifically designed to prepare the student — presumed to be non-francophone — for the French business language examinations held annually in more than fifty countries

under the aegis of the Parisian Chamber of Commerce: namely the *Certificat pratique de français commercial et économique* and its more exacting companion, the *Diplôme supérieur de français des affaires*. The usefulness of this book nevertheless extends beyond this rather narrow purpose. Its target audience embraces tutors of French language and literature wishing to reorient, or simply to familiarise themselves with the French business environment. The lists of questions on the various chapters provide good seminar material, suitable for both language and content courses. And it would make excellent preparation for a *stage*. The book divides into two parts. The first half focuses on the internal workings of the French firm, treated as a self-contained and autonomous entity: its organisation, structure, functions and economic role. The second examines the firm in terms of its external relationships with other economic actors and institutions: the banks, the *Bourse*, customs and excise, transport etc. Given that the book is aimed at the uninitiated, much of the information contained in its pages is necessarily fundamental, its nuts-and-bolts explanatory style reminiscent of Albertini's classic introduction to the French economy, *Les Rouages de l'économie nationale*. But the initiated should *not* be put off. The book incorporates most of the recent legislation impacting on the firm and its environment; its historical approach to the subject adds depth; and its painstaking categorisation of all aspects of the firm and of the bodies which interact with it, minutely dissected and explained, is commendable in its precision. This particular reader was surprised to find in *Le Monde de l'économie française* not only a mine of information (the correct terminology for a « call » and a « put », for example, more straightforward in French: *option d'achat* and *option de vente*) but also a very worthwhile reference book. Students and teachers alike of the French business environment and its language are likely to find in this book an excellent aid to teaching and study.

Terry Lacassin (ed.)

Champs-Élysées, novembre 1994

cassette, transcript, study guide

Nashville TN, USA

reviewed by Aidan Coveney, University of the West of England, Bristol

This material consists of an hour-long audio magazine presented in radio programme style, accompanied by a complete transcript and a study supplement. It is produced in America, published monthly and sold by subscription. The same company also produces similar material in German, Spanish and Italian. The French material seems to be aimed at intermediate level learners, up to perhaps second year level undergraduates. There are eighteen different items on the cassette reviewed here (November 1994), and these include two pieces on political news, five songs (by Dany Brillant, Patrick Bruel, Alain Souchon, Kent, and David Koven) and ten items on various aspects of culture and gastronomy. This cassette may not be typical, but several of the cultural items are obituaries of recently deceased personalities: Cardinal Decourtray (of Lyon and *Lyon à la Une*), the actress Madeleine Renaud and Alain Bernardin (of the *Crazy Horse Saloon*). These pieces are scripted, as is the bulk of the two political items: one an update of the main presidential candidates at six months before the actual election, and the other a review of François Mitterrand's celebrated interview with Jean-Pierre Elkabbach on *France 2*. The political update, or overview feature, could be one of the most useful features of a monthly cassette such as this. The main item of spontaneous spoken language is an interview with Robert Courtine, the writer on French cuisine. The full transcript of the cassette is followed by an item-by-item glossary (in English) of selected vocabulary, proper names and other cultural references. The glossary for the Mitterrand item provides helpful background information on, for example, *la Francisque*, *la rafle du Vél d'Hiv* and *René Bousquet*. The study supplement provides prelistening and listening exercises on three of the items on the cassette and also one postlistening exercise for each of the items — the latter are mostly grammatical exercises, and the answers are provided at the end of the

leaflet. As there is no copyright waiver on the material, it is probably intended for individual private-study rather than classwork.¹

¹Further information on *Champs-Élysées* can be obtained from Champs-Élysées UK Limited, 119 Altenburg Gardens, 16 The Bakehouse, Bakery Place, London, sw11 1JQ.