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En Scene I (Nouvelle Edition)

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Step 3: Create an alternative communication method for students without smartphones. Students may send a cell-phone email or fill-out a feedback worksheet.

Step 4: Brainstorm 2-3 questions that you want the students to answer in their LINE messages. Possible questions include:

- What is one thing you learned in class this week?
- What was your favorite activity? Why?
- What is one thing you could improve on for future group discussions?
- What grade do you think you deserve for the presentation? Why?
- Please ask me a question or tell me about any difficulties you are having in class.
- Please send me a sticker to show me how you feel right now.

Procedure

Step 1: Write your questions on the white board / chalkboard (or PowerPoint).

Step 2: Ask students to search for your ID and add you to their friend list.

Step 3: Have students send you LINE messages responding to the questions. Allow students 10 minutes to send the messages, preferably at the end of class.

Step 4: Read through the student messages. Answer any questions and give advice on their difficulties.

Step 5: Repeat every 1-2 weeks or after major assignments.

Conclusion

Many students have difficulty asking questions and sharing their difficulties with their teachers. In response, LINE is a tool that has the potential to increase student-teacher communication and create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere.



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En Scene I (Nouvelle Edition)

[Nicolas Jégonday and Momoyo Takahashi. Tokyo: Sanshusha, 2013. (Included: Audio CD) pp. 132. ¥2,940. ISBN: 978-4-384-22050-6.]

Reviewed by David Taquet, Hakodate National College of Technology

Japanese learners often perceive France's language as they do its cuisine: exotic, sophisticated and inaccessible. In order to overcome students' apprehensions, a good textbook should provide basic communicative tools, ample opportunities for oral practice, and disprove the stereotype of a grammatically and phonetically hermetic language. This latest edition of *En Scène I*'s attempt to present and teach French in a friendly, approachable manner is commendable, thanks notably to appropriate pacing and clear com-

This month's column features David Taquet's review of *En Scene I*.



municative activities. It does, however, fall short in several ways. As such, it is a functional yet incomplete fit for absolute beginners who are curious about French.

The introduction, in Japanese, offers a quick and concise overview of the book's activities and practical exercises (which are in a detachable workbook included at the end of the textbook). A short booklet is provided in place of a teacher guide, which shows the answers to the activities.

Culture is one aspect where the book disappoints as only a few topics are introduced. For example, while the Arc de Triomphe and paid holidays in France are mentioned, the textbook barely touches on other important cultural items such as the education system or the French speaking world (i.e., *francophonie*). Just as the textbook has few pictures, the omission of important cultural items may stem from the very same reason: to keep the publishing costs down and the book compact. In other words, the teacher will need to add supplementary materials to complete the learning experience.

The textbook was clearly designed with oral communication and syntax in mind, rather than traditional grammar and conjugation. It also offers many short conversations, pair activities, and role-playing situations. As students get familiar with more vocabulary and sentences, the textbook encourages them to recycle what they have acquired, and create new dialogues in various situations (e.g., shopping at the mall, making plans according to the weather). On the other hand, the workbook gives some balance to oral activities by offering basic writing and quick grammar fill-in-the-blanks activities, which never feel obtrusive.

Indeed, it stays away from complex tenses such as *imparfait* or *futur*, choosing to teach past and future notions through the jack-of-all-trades *passé composé* and *future proche*. I was also thankful for the early introduction and implementation of the informal *tu* in conversation where most textbooks first put the emphasis on the polite *vous*, whose conjugation may confuse beginners.

What is more, unlike many introductory French methods published in Japan, *En Scène I* should be praised for the absence of systematic translations and *furigana* to translate French words. Instead, a compact phonetic diagram and CD guide students to the right pronunciation. While rather imposing at first for beginners, it stimulates students' learning process and the

use of correct French sounds rather than their Japanese approximation. However, since using L1 to guide students through delicate points is one essential way to ensure they will become successful language users (Bonnah, 2011); the judiciously placed commentaries in Japanese will alleviate some of the stress and difficulties. Indeed, during my classroom experience using the textbook, students had immediate and clear access to grammatical explanations and quick reviews giving them some relief and confidence in a class where I try to use L2 when possible.

The CD offers many short dialogues and task-based listening activities divided into 97 tracks. They are slowly and clearly read by several speakers of standard French. Each conversation is only read once, a minor annoyance for listening comprehension. It is, however, more regrettable that the CD lacks the stylistic and geographical diversity of regional and international French. Whereas most comprehensive EFL textbooks now includes diatopic variations (from Ireland and Australia among others), conventional French textbooks seem to shy away from regional French varieties. As a consequence, the instructor should add such audio and video materials to familiarize students with the linguistic richness of *Francophonie*, thus optimizing oral and written comprehension (Merlo, 2011).

Overall, with its clear communicative method and effective approach to French phonetics, this textbook is a valuable tool for the French teacher of motivated beginners willing to overlook the unattractive textbook design. Students will acquire solid communicative bases and be well prepared for the lower levels of the French language test in Japan. However, lacking general culture of French speaking countries, authentic material and short cultural introductions will be required to offer a more comprehensive, interesting, and enjoyable class to Japanese learners.

References

- Bonnah, T. (2011). My dream: Towards a methodology for using Japanese in the ESL classroom. *The Language Teacher*, 35(1), 57-59.
- Merlo, J. O. (2011). Vers une didactique du FLE français international en Italie: Quelques réflexions à partir du cas québécois. *SILTA, Studi Italiani di Linguistica Teorica e Applicata*, 40, 64-82.