

<i>Working with Images: A Resource Book for the Language Classroom</i>		
<b>Author:</b>	Ben Goldstein (2008)	
<b>Publisher:</b>	Cambridge: Cambridge UP	
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The Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers series celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2008, and this latest addition continues the tradition of original, accessible and useful material. Ben Goldstein has put together a thoroughly modern collection of activities using pictures, art, photographs, images and symbols from a variety of sources.

The book is divided into two sections, the first dealing with activity types such as describing, creating and interpreting images, and the second focusing on image types: symbols and icons, as well as images found in art and advertising. As the author points out, there is some overlap of examples in the two sections but when this occurs, a cross-reference is provided. Each activity is also marked with an estimated timing, suggested level and function/language targets. Goldstein offers the reader URL links to other useful sources, and many images are stored on the accompanying CD-ROM. Like the rest of the series, this book is aimed at classroom teachers looking for new teaching ideas, or new ways of implementing old techniques.

As the author himself mentions Andrew Wright's 1989 *Pictures for Language Learning*, a much earlier book in this series, it seems appropriate to compare the two guides. The years have been kind to Wright's book: It still provides the language teacher with many excellent and stimulating classroom activities. However, when set alongside the new book we can see how the approaches are quite different, and how Goldstein's book brings something fresh and important to the series.

The first difference is a very practical one; in the last twenty years the development of computer technology and the internet has irrevocably altered the ways in which we source and store information. This innovation is very much reflected in Goldstein's

book. While Wright focused on magazines, hand-drawn pictures and card-filing systems, Goldstein refers us, often specifically, to web sources. Of course, specific web links can quickly go out of date, but if the reader looks at the book as a snapshot in time and a springboard for personal exploration, I don't think potential datedness need be an issue.

The second difference is theoretical. To my mind, there seems to be a significant distinction between pictures and images: direct representations or those more open to interpretation. Pictures are seen on a wall or a screen, or visualized in the mind's eye. Images are viewed through a lens or some other distorting filter, or are projected to others as impressions. While Wright, for example, gives us a chapter on mechanical practice (pp. 22-40), focusing on timelines and the like to visually clarify grammatical meanings, Goldstein invokes multiple intelligence theory in chapter 4 (pp. 120-141) to have students "look inwards . . . and expand [their] horizons" (p. 120). Wright uses pictures for clarification to help students come to a correct, shared answer, whereas Goldstein uses images to open up students' thinking and has no pre-defined outcome in mind.

That is not to say that Wright's book is without interpretive activities, or that Goldstein doesn't include any tasks with clear goals or solutions. However, the newer book pays greater attention to more abstract fields such as semiotics and art criticism. In his introduction, Goldstein touches on visual literacy and the power of images, and also makes a very relevant point about the under-use of images in textbooks for anything other than marketing. Looking through a number of mainstream textbooks, I see the splash pages at the opening of each chapter using large, commercially produced images. Goldstein complains that not only are *such* images inauthentic—"superficial . . . safe, cleaned-up" (p. 4)— but, a different point, even such images are underexploited by teachers. His argument is that, as visuals have entered "domains where written language was once the sole . . . mode" (p. 1), we should be "granting the image the space it deserves in our classrooms" (p. 2). His approach is also indicated in the "further reading" section at the back of the book, which lists a number of primers in visual design, art and culture—and very few about language teaching. This in itself implies a more content-based, holistic view of language teaching than can be found in previous works such as Wright's, which focuses on language teaching resources in his "further reading" section. My citing such a difference is not to denigrate Wright's excellent book.

The book re-presents a number of "classic" activities, but what makes it innovative is Goldstein's approach. Looking at well-worn activities through a new perspective invigorates. For example, activity 2.4 (p. 54) is the old stand-by, spot the difference, an activity which most language teachers will be familiar with, maybe even tediously so. Goldstein revives the activity in a couple of ways; first, through software such as Photoshop he encourages us to create our own images to suit our direct purposes. But he also encourages deeper-level image interpretation and critical thinking by looking at images doctored for political reasons or drafted for advertising. Such enlivening

forces, calling forth higher-level thinking in both students and teachers, run throughout the book: what really makes it worthwhile.

The book is not perfect, but my quibbles are minor. While the images contained on the CD-ROM are in themselves very useful, I was a little disappointed with their packaging. The files are simply stored in folders by chapter, as each image is linked directly to one or more of the book's activities, when a searchable and/or thematic disc may have been more helpful. The PDF files are far less malleable than simple jpegs. Though the more technically adept will be able to adapt the images in Photoshop, others will be limited to printing the visuals just as they are. I suspect the publishers may have been tied by some copyright issues which dictate that the images can be used only in certain ways; each of the files, when printed, is clearly credited to its original creator and Cambridge University Press.

The file format chosen raises a second issue, a legal one not really given any attention in the book. Many of the images used come from flickr.com, a site which I am an avid user of myself. Flickr users can upload their own images (it should be their own work) to their own "photostream," which others can then label "favourite" or tag with notes. The majority of the images posted there fall under a user-specified "creative commons licence" (<http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>), which enable artists or educators (for example) to use the images for free within certain specified limitations. One of these limitations, set by the creator from a number of options, might be that the image is not to be used for profit, another that it is not to be used without permission. It is unlikely that there would be legal ramifications for the average classroom teacher using these images "inappropriately", or without the express permission of their originator. However, old copyright laws are currently reeling from the effects of the web on the way content (including audio and video) is distributed, shared and accessed. So while I didn't expect any clear answers to ethical and legal questions, I would have at least liked to have seen them addressed.

Access to and familiarity with technology, including interactive whiteboards, colour printers and copiers, digital cameras, high-speed internet connections and the like, will certainly enhance what the practitioner can get from this book. That said, this is also an excellent book for *anyone* interested in encouraging students to think and communicate about what they see.

## Reference

Wright, A. (1989). Pictures for language learning. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

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