

THE USE OF VIDEO IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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AUTHENTICITY

"Many educators have chosen to use videos solely for viewing comprehension - that is the process of comprehending visual and verbal messages."¹

Although video cassettes are not quite common as audio cassettes in the classroom, they are generally very popular with students and can add variety and a welcome change of focus in a lesson. Reley² makes out a powerful case for the use of authentic documents. He says that authenticity is variously defined, but a common theme in many definitions concerns textual materials which have not been prepared for language teaching. Reley notes that authenticity makes it possible to meet learner's needs accurately and economically since, by choosing documents of the type that the learner encounters, she/he will be helped to develop study techniques which can be applied to any document. We as teachers can use authentic TV material such as, news bulletins, sports, drama, plays, films, commercials, documentaries, humor, TV series and quiz shows. However we do not have to forget that broadcast is ephemeral and we have to renew material.

ADVANTAGES

"... [Videos] Materials containing native speaker's voices should be exploited as much as possible, and schools should be equipped with such materials."³

- a. It is important, therefore, to encourage teachers to use video material in the classroom because video can do what teachers cannot: It can bring the real world into the classroom. The Video is a powerful medium but it is not an end in itself. It can never fully replace the teacher. It is a teaching aid and can add a further dimension -that of sight and sound- to a teacher's existing repertoire of aids and materials.
- b. The introduction of video adds a visual dimension to aural work which is very appealing to learners, as it provides not only visual clues to the meaning of spoken language but register and appropriacy.
- c. Video also gives prominence to all the non-verbal or "paralinguistic" features of face-to-face communication, such as: gestures, posture, eye-contact, closeness of one speaker to another and facial expression, which are much easier to understand than the audio cassettes because they all give additional information.
- d. Video presents the culture behind language, particularly if learners have had little or no contact with English speaking countries. The students can see, as well as hear, what is being said since the recording is much closer to "real life". The visual element is attractive and gives a natural context for practicing listening skills.
- e. Video may be used for communicate activities in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

PROCEDURES

The obvious way: sit students in front of TV/Video. Switch it on. Let them watch the programme through. This is the classic 'lazy' teacher's lesson. It works fine and most teachers who have access to the equipment will have done this at some time. But there must be more to video than this! By simple playing around with this basic scenario a little we can create some excellent lessons.⁴

Or we can use some techniques such as:

- I. Bearing in mind this range of activities, the video can theoretically be used at any point in a learning sequence. This flexibility is ideally suited to the teacher who has a video permanently installed in the classroom. The length of video sequence for the activities is difficult to recommend, but my own experience had showed me that it is better to exploit a short segment of video thoroughly and systematically rather than to play a long sequence.
- II. Before you use the video set the scene: where the dialogue takes place, who speaks, occupation, age, appearance, and so on.

Locating the place on the tape. You may wish to record the counter number (or time reference in minutes and seconds on newer video machines) for the beginning of each video on the contents page. If your machine has Memory Rewind (or repeat), you can reset the counter at various points in the lesson. These facilities can be used to remind students of parts of the story.

- III. Silent viewing activities. It means turning off the sound on the TV or monitor and making use of the visual on their own. Silent viewing will be a prediction technique when students are viewing for the first time, and a reproduction technique when they have already seen and heard the section being used for silent viewing.

For example,

- a. Prediction. Students can talk about EVENTS (What is happening on the screen?) or a DIALOGUE (What are they saying?) they will be able to predict the dialogue, e.g. guess what people are saying.
- b. Reproduction. Reproduction can also be divided into reproduction of dialogue and reproduction of events. Reproduction of dialogue might be most effective where there are useful formulas, fixed expressions and points of intonation or pronunciation. Reproduction of events tends to focus on narrative tenses, and on sequences.
- IV. Random sound down (cloze listening). This may be done at any time, but is particularly suitable when viewing the whole episode again. Turn the sound down at random intervals and ask the students to fill in the missing dialogue.
- V. Sound only activities. You can play a section of one of the videos with the picture turned off so that they hear the dialogue but are unable to see the action. This can be done by using the brightness controls on the television, by unplugging the picture lead on the sets where sound and picture have separate leads, or most simply by placing something in front of the screen, such as a jacket or a sheet or cardboard. Students can be asked either to predict what is happening visually, or to use the dialogue as a memory spur to recall what happened visually.
- VI. Freeze framing (still picture) activities. Freeze framing means stopping the picture, using the freeze frame, still or pause control. This will not harm the videotape. For example:
 - a. Prediction (what next?) Prediction occurs when freeze framing is used during the initial viewing of a section. You can freeze frame and ask about the following EVENTS (what is going to happen?)
 - b. DIALOGUES (what are they saying?/ what are they going to say next?)
 - c. Using the background. Videos contain 25 pictures per second, and there is a wealth of detail in the background of the pictures, which can be exploited by freeze framing. I usually find something new even when I have done a particular lesson many times. The background also gives access to material about British/American/Canadian life and culture.
 - d. Thoughts and emotions. Video gives us an additional dimension of information about the characters' body language, facial expressions, gesture, stance, reaction and response. This information can be exploited in the classroom. Freeze frame and ask them about the characters' feelings and emotions. This can also involve judgment on whether characters are telling the truth or not. In some activities I ask my students to deduce further information about the characters, based on what they have picked up from video, but requiring the use of their imagination.
- VII. Paired viewing activities. They take more effort in setting up, but the results justify the trouble. Examples:
 - a. Description. In this activity one student in each pair turns their back to the screen. The other student faces the screen, and the video is played silently. The student who can see the screen describes what he/she can see to his/her partner. Both students will wish to hear the dialogue

later. The "passive" student in each pair will be motivated to see what they have missed as well! It is worth making sure that the partners swap roles, or that the activity is done twice, with a different section so that each partner gets a chance to perform the "active" role.

- b. Narration. This is more difficult to organise, as it involves sending half the class out of the room while the remaining half watch a section of a video. When they return they are told about the video in pairs by those who saw it.
- c. Split class: Description/Narration. Half the class is sent out. The remainers watch a section silently. Then the two halves swap places. The ones that were outside now listen to the same section with the picture covered. The students are then paired off. One student in each pair has seen the video, but hasn't heard the dialogue. The other student has only heard the dialogue. They work together to piece the story together. The tell the story section in the video activity book can be used as a basis for this.

VIII. Role Plays. Students can be asked to role play sequences they have seen in the videos. I have found it more interesting sometimes to get them to role play things which are not seen in the video. Students participation can be integrated into classroom activities and the knowledge that the result will keep with videos is highly motivating.

FINAL COMMENTS

The selection of videos is very important too, because it can help the student's learning, and they can use videos for revision and further practice. I believe that all video activities may be adapted to most classes. What we have to do is to adapt instructions and difficulty levels. I also feel that it might be a good idea to rely heavily on demonstration and examples. Videos are often intrinsically more interesting since many people are more familiarized with watching television than listening to music and songs, and this situation can be beneficial to our teaching.

NOTAS

1. Kelly, Linton. "Teacher talk" in Exploiting Recorded Radio Programs for Teaching Conversational English , E.U.A., 1980, p.10, citado en Ndomba Benda, p.15.
2. Reley, Philip. "Learner's Lib. Experimental Autonomous Learning Scheme", Modern English Publications, London, 1982.
3. Benda, Ndomba. Exploiting English in Forum, E.U.A: vol. XX. No 2, 1982. p. 9.
4. Scriverner, J. Learning Teaching, Heinemann, Great Britain, 1994, p. 117.

