
Video in the Language Class

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Abstract

This paper mentions several reasons for using video in English language teaching. It gives the steps in preparation of a lesson using video. Furthermore, it explains a few methods of video use in the language class, as well as gives examples of supplementary materials for each method. Nonetheless, the article not only gives the arguments for the use of video in language teaching but also points out some of its shortcomings. Lastly, the article makes comments about a few video programs for language teaching currently available.

Like the tape recorder, the overhead projector and the blackboard, the video is a teaching aid, and is, therefore, used to enhance a language lesson. The video is perhaps the most complete teaching aid in that it offers both the aural element and the visual element to a lesson simultaneously. This visual factor can be called the fifth skill, or as Haines calls it, the "viewing" skill (1984: 96).

The "viewing" skill can reinforce a language lesson in many ways:

1. Video shows the use of language in its total context--the environment. Students can see the speakers, see their expressions, and gestures. It gives visual clues to meaning, as well as to the language itself.

2. Students can see how a person reacts, and hear the words and intonation used. It can be used to teach attitude and register, and the appropriacy of a particular language item.

3. A close-up video can show in detail a social sign, an expression, or, in ESP, a specific detail of a piece of equipment, etc. being discussed.

4. Students can see how things happen in another country. In other words, it is useful in cross-cultural studies. (Tomalin 1984: 84)

To further emphasize this point, Haines said, "...if students can see as well as hear an exchange, comprehension and, to a lesser extent, production are that much easier. Expressions, eye contact, gesture, attitude and setting are all part of communication and it is this realistic and natural use of language that we want to develop in our students" (Haines 1984: 97)

Lesson Planning and Its Use

There are four steps in preparing a lesson using video. First, is the selection of the video and choosing the video extract. Assuming that the video is the basis of the

Figure 2

Silent viewing

Stage one : Prepare for silent viewing

Tell the class they will see the sequence without sound and ask them to think about specific questions while they view. The questions could be :

(i) for a dialogue :

Who are the people you see?

Where are they?

Why are they there?

What are they doing?

(ii) for documentary material :

Where is this place?

What objects are shown?

What is the programme about?

What can you work out about what you see?

These first questions deliberately focus students on the situation and not the language.

Stage Two : First silent viewing

Play the sequence without sound.

Stage Three : Discussion

Class works in groups, comparing notes on their answers, followed by general round-up on group views.

AT THIS POINT YOU HAVE A CHOICE....

Stage Four A : Second silent viewing to focus on language

This time your preview question will be : 'What are they saying? After viewing, the group task is to predict the language they will hear. They could be asked to roleplay a dialogue or to write a commentary, depending what kind of sequence it is.

OR GO STRAIGHT ON TO....

Stage Four B : View with sound

Play the sequence with sound. Students check their predictions about the situation, content or language, depending on the preview task they have had.

2. Starting with sound only

This is the opposite of silent viewing. That is, blacking out the picture. There are a number of ways to do this.

1. Copy the soundtrack onto a tape cassette.

2. Cover the screen with a piece of thick card or cloth.

3. Ask students to turn their backs to the screen or close their eyes.

4. Turn the monitor round with its back to the class.

5. Turn the brightness control on the monitor all the way down.

Possible reasons to start with sound only are :

1. To interest and stimulate discussions among students as to what they have heard on the screen.

2. To focus on the differences between the kinds of information carried verbally and visually.

3. To generate the language of description by setting students the task of describing a character or a place they are going to see.

One way of proceeding with this technique is to give students prelistening questions. This focuses students' attention on the video sequence. The students listen to the sound only and they try to guess where the sequence is taking place, who is speaking and what is happening. (See figure 3)

Figure 3

Starting with sound only (Using a Cartoon)

Choose a section without dialogue, preferably with a mixture of music and sound effects. Look out for places where the music is linked to a particular character, indicates a chase and so on.

Stage one : Preparation

1A. If the cartoon features well-known characters, show students pictures of the main characters in the cartoon. Discuss what they know about them, what personalities they have, what kind of adventures they have, what usually happens when they meet etc.

1B. If your students won't recognise the characters, establish the names, show pictures of them if you have them, discuss in general terms what happens in the kind of cartoon you're going to show.

2. Arrange students and set so that they cannot see the screen and tell them they are going to use their imaginations to guess what is on the screen. Include questions related to the sounds they'll hear. For example:

Which character appears first?

What are they doing?

What noises can you hear? (Ask this if there are strong sound effects for things like water, sawing wood etc.)

What do you think the characters look like? (If they haven't pictures of them.)

Stage Two : Play the section—sound only

Stage Three : Discuss

Discuss in groups, comparing notes on answers. Try to tell the story and to predict what they will see on the screen.

Stage Four : Replay the section—picture and sound

Class looks at the section to check what really happened.

Stage Five : Preparation for continued viewing

Set preview questions for continuation of viewing, using whatever technique you choose. You could do some silent viewing with the next section, to compare the information your students can get from that.

Another way is to ask students to draw what they think they hear or else teacher devises worksheets. For example, after listening to the soundtrack, students are asked to tick or circle the description they think fits the people's voice.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old | <input type="checkbox"/> Young |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fat | <input type="checkbox"/> Thin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tall | <input type="checkbox"/> Short |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty | <input type="checkbox"/> Ugly |

Afterwards, play the video sequence with sound and picture. Students watch the sequence and compare their guesses with what they have seen.

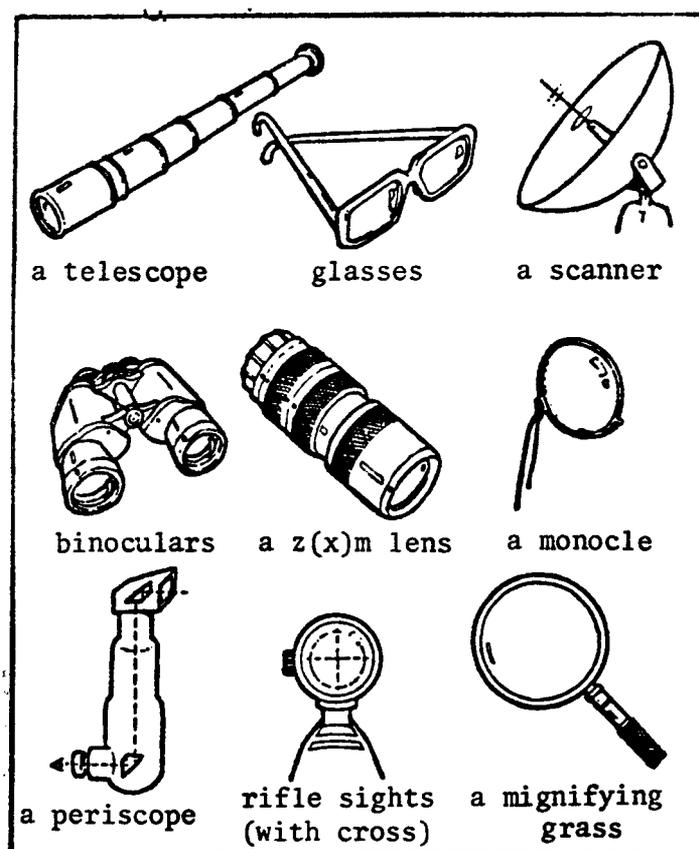
3. Focus on words.

Focus on words is a basic part of language work in the classroom. Most

teachers have had experience teaching vocabulary using printed texts and spending a long time explaining the object, especially of technical or semitechnical terms. However, pictures give the meaning faster and video can help to show the object. It has the potential to bring into the classroom a wide range of objects, places and even concepts.

Freeze the frame to focus on an object and to introduce the new words. Or, the teacher can play the video tape in slow motion and name the objects or actions as they appear on the screen. After the teacher has named the objects or actions, turn it into a game or quiz. That is, ask students to name as many items as possible. (see figure 4)

Figure 4



From *Television English* (British Council/BBC)

4. Sequencing

Another activity students can do after completion of the active viewing tasks is the sequencing tasks. This activity helps students consolidate what they have seen. The teacher's task is to prepare a list of sentences with important information and action based on a particular video segment. Put the sentences in the wrong order. The sentences can be written on the blackboard, overhead projector or typed on sheets of paper and distributed to the students in class.

First, the students read the sentences to make sure they understand them. The

teacher can explain any vocabulary the students do not understand. The video segment can be replayed before the sequencing activity. Students can work either in pairs or in groups to sequence the sentences and number the sentences in the order they appear on the video. Next, let students compare their sequencing with each other or with the teacher. Lastly, if there is a disagreement among the students about the order of the sentences, the teacher replays the video to check the order of the events. (see figure 5)

Figure 5 Example of sentences for sequencing :

Put these sentences in the right order.

- a. She refuses to stop eating.
- b. She puts pepper on her food.
- c. She sits down opposite a man.
- d. He leaves in a hurry.
- e. A girl is looking for a book.
- f. He coughs.
- g. She starts eating her lunch.
- h. People complain about the noise.
- i. He tries to take her food away.
- j. He starts studying again.

After the viewing stage, detailed questions or work on the language can start. Teachers can teach the new language pattern or elicit the new patterns and language practice exercises can be done. Moreover, at this stage, follow-up or extension activities can begin, such as mini-situations, role-play or acting out. In mini situations, students are given situations and are asked to give a one or two sentence response (see figure 6 A). In a role-play students are given

situations and certain facts about themselves (roles) but the language they use and how they interpret the situation is up to them (see figure 6 B). Students can transfer the language they have learned from the video into use while, in acting out exercises, students can act out a pre-existing script. It can be a dialogue that students have written themselves or part of a script they have watched on the video.

Figure 6 : Examples of extension activities :**Example A : Mini situation**

What would you say?

- a) Someone lights a cigarette in the non-smoking compartment of a train. What would you say?
- b) Someone has parked a car and blocked your own car. What do you say?
- c) You are on a bus. A person next to you is playing a 'Walkman' personal stereo. You can hear the sound in spite of the fact that the person is wearing earphones. The noise disturbs you. What do you say?

Example B : Role-play

You live downstairs.
You can't sleep.
You want the people upstairs to turn down the music and make less noise.

You live upstairs.
It's your birthday.
You think you have a right to celebrate.
Invite the person downstairs in for a drink.

You are a policeman.
You have been called in by the person downstairs.
Find out the situation.
Remind the person upstairs that other tenants have a right to complain after 11 pm.

You are at the party.
Talk to the person downstairs.
Try to persuade him to come and join the party.

Shortcomings

Unlike the other medias, video shows communication in action. It can also be misused, underused or overused like all teaching aids. Since video is a fairly new medium for language teachers, it is natural it would create excitement among them. Therefore, language teachers must try to avoid misusing it.

People associate video with cinema and television so it has a motivational value over other medias, However, we can get bored watching television. Watching television is a passive activity and many teachers may

use it as such. Teachers must remember that video is a teaching aid. It should not take the place fo the teacher. It should not induce laziness in the teacher or students. It should not create panic to the teacher since it is a new technology; however, it demands a lot from the teacher. As Haines said, "Too many teachers use video as a soft option : at worst, everyone goes to sleep; at best, linguistic objectives are lost and whatever enjoyment or motivation there may have been, is killed by the teacher giving a few general comprehension questions in an attempt to justify using the material" (1984 : 97).

APPENDIX

FOLLOW ME TO SAN FRANCISCO

Publisher : Longman/BBC, ELT Division

Authors : Video -- Jeffrey Caden and
Suzanne Griffin

Course components :

- a. Video tape cassette
- b. Student's Book
- c. Teacher's Manual

Intended audience : Unspecified: presumable beginners and low intermediates.

FOLLOW ME TO SAN FRANCISCO is a video-based course in American English which includes 10 five-minute video-tape segments, a student's book with corresponding units, and a teacher's manual. Each segment includes a recap of the previous episode, a new episode, questions which anticipate the next segment. The student book's units include pre-viewing exercises, a verbatim transcript of the episode with a glossary, and numerous follow-up and extension exercises and activities. The teacher's manual contains an introduction to the course, recommended procedures for handling video-tape equipment, and suggested teaching techniques. (Silva 1985 : 121-123)

LIVING IN WASHINGTON

Publisher : Heinte & Heinle Publishing Company

Authors : Video--Students from the University of Washington, Seattle
Student's Workbook--Frank G. Steele
Viewing Guide/Teacher's Manual--Jack Lonergan

Course Components :

- a. 80-minute video tape cassette (VHS, Beta or U-matic)
- b. Audio cassette, transcript and teacher's manual, student workbook

Intended Audience : Intermediate

Contrary to the watcher's expectations, **WASHINGTON** refers to Washington State rather than Washington D.C. Most of the action takes place at the University of Washington in Seattle. The tapes provide

listening comprehension and materials and show the American culture which foreign students of English living in the United States might encounter.

Three college freshmen--a spoiled rich girl from the suburbs, a student of Philippine descent who must work her way through school and a young man from a rural logging community are the characters. They meet at the college bookstore. Their life styles and values are compared and contrasted as the three interact on campus and go home for vacations. There are accurate observations of a cross-section of American life and a rich basis for language-generating post-viewing discussion. The Viewing Guide contains notes for the teacher--terms to discuss, and things to notice while watching the tape. (Gillespie 1985 : 120-123).

SPEAK EASY : ENGLISH THROUGH VIDEO MIME SKETCHES

Publisher : Longman Inc.

Authors : Sarah K. Silverson, Mark Landa
and Jan Smith

Course components :

- a. A one-hour video cassette containing 14 short (three - to five - minute) sketches
- b. Student's Book
- c. Audio cassette : three 60 minute tapes containing dialogues and comprehension exercises
- d. Teacher's manual

Intended audience : Intermediate

With **SPEAK EASY**, students watch a mime situation on the video cassette tape and then "discover" the most appropriate language to use in that situation. There are between 10 and 20 different language functions introduced through each mime, and nine are focused on. In short, **SPEAK EASY** would be an appropriate supplement to an intermediate language program (Hann 1985 : 123-125).

The Author

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