

Teaching English using Video

'A picture is worth thousand words.' Just imagine the worth of a moving picture.

It enhances both teaching and learning, it increases motivation, interest and active involvement. It may be a solution to the eternal discipline problem in our classrooms. Students are given opportunities for hands-on activities which is the essence of the student-centered approach. It adds an element of authenticity and genuineness to the tasks. What's more, it supports communicative competence training.

All this is about using video in class. I absolutely agree that this is a positive item to encourage students to learn the language. Not only do they listen to different people talking which helps to ear training, they do learn new vocabulary which is used in a contextualized way and they also follow a story. They are well motivated without realizing they are learning English. Then, it's a good topic for conversation and discussion.

With the growth of availability of English language video through Internet and satellite TV, this has become an increasingly useful classroom tool, which can enhance the listening experience for our students. We very rarely hear a disembodied voice in real life but as teachers we constantly ask our students to work with recorded conversations of people they never see. However, we can add a whole new dimension to aural practice in the classroom by using video. The setting, action, emotions, gestures, etc, that our students can observe in a video clip, provide an important visual stimulus for language production and practice.

When we use Video in class all the exercises are divided into three groups:

1. The 'Before You Watch' section, which aims to prepare students for the video (introducing the vocabulary, grammar, speech patterns).

2. The 'While You Watch' section, which offers a global viewing task. This may be answering questions, completing dialogues, putting dialogues in the correct order, True/False tasks, matching....
3. The 'After You Watch' section, which offers optional activities in the form of role-plays, tasks and reading texts and aims to develop listening and speaking skills.

Let's take "Freedom Writers" film as an example, not the whole film, but the very beginning of it where Eva tells her story (until the words *War has been declared.*) The students watch this four minutes video. Before you watch you may ask your students the questions like: *Have you ever heard the true story of Freedom Writers? What do you think is the reason of interracial gang warfare?* While you watch activities may include dividing the class into two groups, one group will watch and listen to the scene; the other will only listen. Those who watch must observe what happens, making notes if necessary, and be ready to explain to the others what happened; the others listen to the action and write a few questions about what they can hear but cannot see. After you watch you may give the students role-play cards, they will need some time to complete the task. After they have finished they are ready to do the role-play. A good follow-up to this exercise is a writing exercise which involves all the students writing a letter to their families telling of the horrific events.

There are many other activities, like:

1. Students view a scene with the sound turned off. They then predict the content of the scene, write their own script and perform it while standing next to the television. After the performances students watch the scene with the sound on and decide which group was the funniest or the nearest to the original. This is a good fun exercise, especially for intermediate levels.
2. Students view a scene (this always works better if there is a lot happening) then write a newspaper article on what they have witnessed.

3. Students watch the scene a few times and write the main words and short phrases that a particular character says. Each group is given a character and is encouraged to listen and exchange information, this usually works better if there are two characters in the scene. Working with someone from a different group, they then write the script for the scene, incorporating both characters. As they will not have managed to write down the whole script from the listening exercises they will have to use their imagination and fill in the gaps. This gives them an excellent opportunity to work on grammar.
4. Students watch a scene from a film which has lots of things that they can see and therefore write in their vocabulary books. You can teach and test your students' vocabulary by asking a series of true/ false questions and asking them to put a series of events in order.

Using video in the classroom breaks monotony and brings a positive change into the class. It provides motivating material and challenging tasks, up-to-date stimulating topics get students talking and exchanging opinions. But, the teacher's responsibility is to adapt video to the curriculum, students' level and age and to use tasks to enhance active viewing. The tasks are supposed to be achievable but with an increasing level of challenge. Watching video combined with well prepared 'before watching' and "after watching" tasks - including vocabulary building and making a grammar review encourages students to learn languages and develop the ability to communicate with people from other countries and cultures.

1. McKinnon Mark, Teaching technologies.
2. www.onestopenglish.com. – Resources for teaching English.