

Video Materials in ELT

Video is a valuable and possibly underused classroom tool. It 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.

Nowadays inter-cultural awareness becomes an integral part of teaching foreign languages, including acquaintance with peculiarities of the culture and spiritual culture of native speakers, knowing their national psychology, traditions, customs and ways of behaviour. That's why it is really important to use modern information technologies, which allow unlimited access to the sources of knowledge through Internet reference-books, encyclopedias, paintings and films.

Work with Video Courses and Films is considered to be very useful. I've been practicing it for several years already. In my view, this kind of activity allows not only to attract and keep students attention, but contributes to the improvement of listening and speaking skills. The picture that you see on the screen provides visual support and that makes understanding of the sound track more profound and precise. Practice shows that students remember what they see and hear five times better than what they just hear.

New Headway Video Course is a vivid and exciting illustration of the English everyday speech and different communicative situations. It consists of 5 levels: from Beginner to Upper-Intermediate. Each level combines light-hearted drama within six units to provide rich and varied learning material. One of the advantages of this video is that it can be used as supplementary material alongside other course books at same levels.

When we use Video care should be taken to organize all the exercises into three groups:

1. The 'Before You Watch' section, which aims to prepare students for the video.
2. The 'While You Watch' section, which offers a global viewing task and then exploits the video sequence by sequence.
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. The activities draw on students' own experience and help them to gain insights into aspects of British culture.

Alongside Language teaching video courses Feature Films are also used, which deal with the topics studied at lessons, for example, Freedom Writers or Dead Poets' Society can be effectively used while studying such themes as, Education, Teacher's Profession, Difficult Children...Such kind of work provides motivating material and challenging tasks, up-to-date stimulating topics get students talking and exchanging opinions. The films may be watched with or without English subtitles. In preparing video materials and activities care should be taken in the selection of the videos, in particular regarding the areas of length and content. A five-minute episode from a movie is likely to contain more than enough language for the students to cope with, and so it is better to show students several short episodes, each followed by activities, than to show a half-hour video and then give students exercises which rely more on memory than understanding. Students' concentration will wane if they watch for too long, so they do not need to see a whole film, nor even a whole scene if it is not relevant.

There is always the temptation to simply put a video on at the end of term and let our students watch a film without even challenging them to be actively involved. However, simply watching TV does not account for too good a means to teach English. There are many things we can do with these clips. Here I would like to demonstrate some of them.

I. Split viewing

Some students see and hear a sequence; others only hear it. A variety of activities can then follow based on an information-gap procedure.

II. Vision on/ Sound off

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. Good for intermediate levels.

III. Observe and write

Students view a scene (this always works better if there is a lot happening) then write a newspaper article on what they have witnessed. Pre-viewing and while-viewing tasks allow them to work on new vocabulary, while the post-viewing task gives them plenty of practice on past tenses. Good for intermediate levels.

IV. Video dictogloss

This follows the dictogloss method of dictation and can easily be adapted to video. 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. This is best suited to higher levels. The pre-viewing and while-viewing tasks give plenty of practice with new vocabulary.

V. Watch and observe

This is a good lesson for lower levels because students only have to focus on a minimum of spoken dialogue. 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.

Video allows to use student's and teacher's time effectively, provides optimal conditions for language learning, gives the possibility of context learning, it allows students to hear the speech of native speakers and not-native speakers, it demonstrates the language of the body, which allows to explain the elements of culture difficult to explain with words, it can be used on any level.

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.

Bibliography

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