

Teachers' and learners' use of aids and visuals in the English as an FL classroom

D Nasriddinov, D Normamatova

Gulistan State University, Uzbekistan

In the modern era of language teaching, different initiatives are taken to provide best possible language input to the learners. In every language institute, language laboratory is an essential part. It provides the learners with maximum language exposure outside the classroom. Learners can practice all the language skills using the resources of the language lab for developing their language proficiency.

These advantages are especially important in foreign Language Instruction because the language deficiencies of the learners are compensated by the visuals.

'Videos, like other theme-based materials, are effective springboards for other content-based classroom activities. They provide background information and proper stimuli for subsequent reading, writing, speaking and listening activities' Myer observes, the use of video in the classroom is highly motivational for young students. They are stimulated to acquire new words and phrases, while they are learning about the target culture and they are receiving renewed input of the target language.

Moving pictures carry even more information. The combination of sound and vision is dynamic, immediate, and accessible. This means that communication can be displayed in a sensorial context, and the many factors in communication can be perceived easily by viewers as well as the language learners. A video's images, speech, movement, and music provide a rich mix of meaning-building cues. The outstanding feature of video films is their capability to present complete communication situations.

Videos can be used for many phases of teaching: presenting information, giving background to a topic, playing various forms of dialogues and interactions, lectures, and any output from TV channels. For example, there is a whole range of documentaries, news programs, dramas, comedies, and shows. The power of television as a medium

is duly acknowledged, even if its benefits and disadvantages are a matter of controversy. As a result, videos lose their impact if they are over-used and teachers tend to find that students lose their cognitive focus if they watch too much. It would be just like the soporific television watcher, the famous "couch potato".

Video provides this environment, and this helps learners to understand a particular discourse and improve their long-term listening comprehension, as well as their "confidence in speech". A study by Canning-Wilson (2000) notes that in order to make the listening input easily comprehensible the scenes with utterances should be back up by body language. It is important too that the students who were in sound-only conditions were less successful maintaining the interest and concentration in listening. For Canning what is more important is that video provides visual stimuli that can help students generate predictions and speculations activating their background schemata.

The purpose of the pre-viewing activities should be focus on the comprehension of the video and the idea of enhancing the thematic unit. With the viewing activities, the teachers should help students to focus on important features, and avoid passive attitude that students usually take when watching a video. The post-viewing activities, the use of new knowledge should be stimulated (Stoller, 1993). Another important point to highlight when selecting the video for the lesson is that it should be motivating and between 30 seconds and 4 minutes, with complete information, telling a whole story (a trailer) or a section of a story (scene).

Thanks to YouTube special features, teachers can collect several related videos together in a playlist in order to illustrate the concepts of a lesson or spark discussions about a topic. In YouTube the possibilities are almost infinite; teachers can find from videos of real life to trailers or movie scenes.

References

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