Authentic Video Clips and Film Excerpts in EFL Classes

(Kurz DVPP s akreditací MŠMT v rámci projektu ESF)

Moderní učitel – pedagogické kurzy pro učitele základních a středních škol
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Tento projekt je spolufinancován z Evropského sociálního fondu a státního rozpočtu České republiky
Rationale

Authentic materials (in general)
- More complex, but natural language
- Can be motivating if properly chosen and used
- Reflect current issues (textbooks cannot do this)
- Reflect the target culture (Moran 2001, Tomalin & Stempleski 1993)
- Students are expected to understand simple messages in the foreign language (CEFR, RVP)

Videoclips (specifically)
- Can provide a more complex view of the target language and culture than texts or audio recordings alone
- Can make the understanding easier for learners (see below)

Authentic Video Clips and Film Excerpts

→ Easier understanding (we can hear it and see it)
→ Real-life relevance
→ Students with learning difficulties – easier than mere listening

Basic principles of multimedia learning

**Multimedia principle:** people learn better from words and pictures than from words alone

**Split-attention principle:** people learn better when words and pictures are physically and temporally integrated.

**Modality principle:** people learn better from graphics and narration than graphics and printed text.

**Redundancy principle:** people learn better when the same information is not presented in more than one format (→ subtitles?)

**Segmenting, pretraining, and modality principles:** people learn better when a multimedia message
is presented in learned-paced segments rather than as a continuous unit, people learn better from a multimedia message when they know the names and characteristics of the main concepts, and people learn better from a multimedia message when the words are spoken rather than written.

**Coherence, signaling, spatial contiguity, temporal contiguity, and redundancy principles:** people learn better when extraneous material is excluded rather than included, when cues are added that highlight the organization of the essential material, when corresponding words and pictures are presented near rather than far from each other on the screen or page or in time, and people learn better from graphics and narration than from graphics, narration, and on-screen text (→ subtitles?)

**Personalization, voice and image principles:** people learn better when the words of a multimedia presentation are in conversational style rather than formal style and when the words are spoken in a standard-accented human voice rather than a machine voice or foreign-accented human voice; but people do not necessarily learn better when the speaker’s image is on the screen.

(taken from Mayer 2005, pp 6-7)

**Things to consider when choosing videoclips / films excerpts:**

- Length and learners’ concentration span (5-10 minutes)
- Relevance to student needs and interests (needs analysis, questionnaire, discussion – favourite films, music)
- Students’ background knowledge (→ pre-task?)
- Link to what has been discussed in classes
- Quality
- Availability
- Technical equipment at school / the language classroom
- Copyright issues

**Tasks**

- Task before watching
- General understanding x Detailed understanding
- Writing while watching can be confusing → simple questions, simple answers
- Tasks can be related to the auditory channel (verbal/non-verbal), visual channel or both
Working with clips

1) Before watching

The topic should be introduced as well as the context and background. Key phrases can be pre-taught. Generally, this can be done through discussion, showing pictures or the first frame(s) of the clip (asking “What is this?”, “Where is this from?”…), brainstorming (e. g. “What kinds of music do you know?”) etc.

2) While watching

General comprehension tasks should precede tasks that require detailed understanding. Tasks can be related to:

- The visual channel (useful for beginners – in fact they do not have to understand, the video can serve as a stimulus for subsequent discussion; also useful for teaching culture)
- The audio channel (in fact, this is listening)
- Both visual channel and audio channel (makes understanding easier)

The clip can be played several times, each time with a different task.

3) After watching

Having watched the clip, students can be asked to work productively with the content of the clip. Personalized questions and answers can be effective at this stage (“Did you like the clip? Why? Why not?”) as well as more in-depth discussion of the matter (“What do you think of the story/news/scenes…? Do you think it’s good or bad? Why?”). Cultural aspects can be discussed – many clips include some cultural information (“Do you think it could happen in our country? What did the people wear/eat/do…? What do we wear/eat/do… in our country? What places did you see in the clip? Have you ever been there? …”).

Some clips can stimulate subsequent language work, especially if some phrases or structures are repeated. Teachers can work with the signs (e. g. names of shops), comments, subtitles, song lyrics, etc. The clip can also serve as a stimulus for eliciting various grammar structure (e.g. “freeze” – there is/are, present continuous (what is he doing?), past tense for narrating the story etc.)

If the clip is available on the Internet, teachers can share the link with students – some of them may want to watch the clip (or similar clips) from home. This may well encourage students to work with English outside school.
While-watching tasks

Techniques and tasks related to the visual information
- talking about the scene – students have to focus on the visual information, they can discuss / recognize / identify / … the places or objects they can see (e. g. the clip from Prague)
- “freeze” – the clip is paused and the frame that students can see is discussed. Possible questions:
  - What can you see? What are they doing?
  - What happened before? What has just happened?
  - What do you think is going to happen?
Then the following part of the clip can be played and it can be checked whether students were able to predict the next part correctly.
- turn off the sound (mute) – students watch the music clip (the sound is turned off) and try to identify the type of music (rock, pop, classical music…) and support this with some evidence (e. g. singers with long hair, guitars and drums → rock)

Techniques and tasks related to the visual and audio information
- discussing the main points of the clip – students are required to watch the clip for general understanding, the visual information can help a lot
- focusing on specific vocabulary – students can watch the clip in order to identify what a new word is (the word is used and/or demonstrated in the clip – e. g. “filo pastry”, “filling” – Jamie Oliver)
- putting parts of the story to the correct order – the frames from the story can be used instead of textual descriptions (e. g. Tom and Jerry – see the following page)
- watching news – like listening comprehension, but the visual information can help students understand

Techniques and tasks related to culture
- video guides – London
- music video clips (e. g. The Beach Boys → The Beatles)

Other techniques
- dubbing – students can listen to a part of a film (first with the sound on) and then again, but with the sound off. Their task is to dub the scene.

Clips can be played:
- using a projector / interactive board in class
- in a computer laboratory (frontally or individually)
- by students at home

Sources of clips: DVDs, the Internet (youtube, BBC etc.), TV

Make sure you do not violate the copyright law by reproducing the video.
Additional reading – other uses of videos

(Taken from ESL Base 2012a, 2012b)

1 No picture

Choose a short video extract (2 or 3 minutes) with a lot of sound effects. Play it with the screen turned away from the students, or cover the screen. If two of the sound effects are birds singing and a baby crying, your linguistic focus (either as presentation or practice) could be:

Present continuous: Some birds are singing / A baby is crying
Past simple: Some birds sang / A baby cried
Past continuous: Some birds were singing / A baby was crying
Making deductions: It must / might / can’t be birds singing or It must / might / can’t have been birds singing

After playing, elicit the language from your students, then show them the extract with the picture and sound.

2 No sound

Show a short extract (again, 2 or 3 minutes is enough) with a lot going on, or where characters convey a lot of emotion in their expressions, without sound. Students can then do many things without having to worry about understanding dialogue.

They can describe what happened using narrative tenses; describe the scene; anticipate dialogue or reactions; arrange the cut up dialogue which you have given them.

Finally, play the extract again with sound, and your students will be able to fit what they hear into a context much more effectively than viewing the extract cold.

3 Jigsaw viewing

You may have done jigsaw reading activities in your class, where students have half the information and have to share what they have read to recreate the whole story. You can also do this with short video sequences:

Half the class watches with no picture, then the other half with no sound (you’ll have to take half the students out of the class in each case). In pairs they question each other to recreate the scene.
Half the class have picture and sound, the other half just sound. You can do this by sitting students in two rows, back to back, so that only one row can see the screen. The half who only had sound question the other half.

One student listens with headphones, the others view without sound. The student with headphones questions the others.

4 Backwards viewing

Choose a short sequence with a lot of action. For example, a woman enters an apartment, picks up the telephone, speaks, looks terrified, runs out of her apartment and down the stairs, and runs off down the street. Movies are a good source for this sort of material. Play the sequence backwards to the students, then have the students reconstruct the story in chronological order, using narrative tenses, or future tenses, or whatever you want the linguistic focus to be. Play the sequence normally so students can compare it with their version.

5 Freeze frame

Do you use pictures in your classroom for introducing new vocabulary, describing people and scenes? You can add a new dimension to this with the freeze frame button of your video or DVD player. Hit freeze frame when a character has an interesting expression on his / her face, is about to react to something or answer a question, or when there is a lot of colourful new vocabulary on the screen! Have students describe the character/scene, or anticipate what the character will say or do next. Release freeze frame to compare with what actually happens.

Video is a motivating and effective way to bring variety in to your ESL classes. Using short, sharp sequences with a clear linguistic focus, your students will go away from your class with more than if you sit them down in front of the screen and hit "play"!

6 Vocabulary in context

Choose an extract of about two or thee minutes which is rich in vocabulary (drama and documentary films work well for this). Make a sheet with ten to twenty words that are used in the extract. Give one sheet to each pair of students and go through it discussing meanings and possible contexts. (Giving them the context of the movie/documentary as a whole can make it easier to guess possible contexts of individual words within this.) Play the extract through once, asking students to listen for the contexts in which the words are used. Students can then pool their information and produce a list of contextualised vocabulary on the board.

7 Subtitles

A big advantage of DVD over video is the subtitle feature.
A good exercise for building confidence is to play an extract with subtitles in the students' own language. Play it first with the sound down and let them read the titles, then with the sound up, again reading the titles, and finally, with the sound up and the titles covered.

As reading practice for higher level students, use an extract with subtitles in English.

8 The news
Record the TV news and choose an item with a lot of visual footage. Make a list of vocabulary essential to the understanding of the item. Play the item with the sound down and have your students discuss in groups what they think the item was about. Next, hand out the vocabulary list and have the groups use it to reconstruct the story. Finally, play the item with the sound up for students to compare their version with the original.

9 Cultural differences
Here's an activity to fit in with a topic on cultures. Find a short extract which shows a typical aspect of British or American culture. In groups, have students discuss the differences between what they saw and their own culture. Students do not necessarily need to understand the dialogue for this - the visual aspect of the cultural scene is usually enough.

10 Voices in my head
Choose a short extract with some interesting and expressive dialogue between two or more characters. Show the scene and check students' comprehension. Put your students into groups, one group for each character - if there are 4 characters in the scene, you will need four groups. It is the groups' task to imagine what is going on in the head of their assigned character! Play the scene again several times if necessary, for students to familiarise themselves with the character, and allow them to work together to imagine the character's thoughts. Finally, play the scene again, pausing after each character has spoken, at which point the groups add what they think he/she is thinking.

Video is a motivating and effective way to bring variety in to your ESL classes. Using short, sharp sequences with a clear linguistic focus, your students will go away from your class with more than if you sit them down in front of the screen and hit 'play'...!
Tom and Jerry
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbSwPgWuRRk)

1) Look at the pictures. What’s happening in each picture? What can you see? What happened in the story, do you think?

a) _____  
b) _____  
c) _____  
d) _____  
e) _____  
f) _____  
g) _____  
h) _____  
i) _____

2) Watch the video and put the pictures in order.

3) Can you retell the story?

key: 4a 1b 7c 9d 5e 3f 2g 8h 6i
Useful resources


Clips/videos used in the seminar

(accessed on 31st March 2012)

Music clips:

Kaiser Chiefs – Ruby (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qObzgUfCI28)

Gentleman – Intoxication (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRXgZQEi-S4&ob=av2e)

Duke Ellington – “Concert video”, 1933 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJT8Vlul_Hg)

The Beach Boys – Wouldn’t it be nice? (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L--cqAI3IUI)

- Barbara Ann (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E68YU6FnP2g&feature=related)

Cooking:

Jamie Oliver: Filo Pastry (http://www.jamieoliver.com/videos/how_to%27s/jamie_does/gxajAxMzoIwxWtVdniGhM7dSZUPzsg4/v)

News:


Video guides:
London (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56GbUFV_4ys)
New York (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q990tflL6RI)

Cartoon:
Tom and Jerry (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRE86n4Yhbo)