Procedures for Successful Video-Viewing in the Classroom

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Video is an extremely useful resource in modern language teaching. Therefore, it is essential for the student to take an active role in viewing video materials. However, many students do not consider video a valuable teaching aid. This is due to the strong connotation of entertainment that domestic TV has. It is necessary then, that learners be introduced gradually to video in the classroom so that they understand how valuable and profitable for their learning video can be. The use of video entails not only the activities to be developed during the class period, but also good management of the available technical resources such as video cassette recorders, monitors, video cassettes (of good quality) and sometimes a video camera. This is a general worry of teachers who do not know how to use the equipment or who have had previous frustrating experiences with video.

Active viewing can focus the student's attention on a wide variety of language aspects which can be exploited through video activities. It is up to the teacher to decide which of these to exploit according to the type of video sequence chosen. A video sequence can be used to focus students' attention on linguistic or paralinguistic features of interaction. It can serve as a stimulus for classroom activities involving different types of tasks such as: discussion of the characters' roles and their relationships, problem-solving, prediction of what is going to happen in the video (or what has just happened), comparison of cultures, development of follow-up activities based on the topic of the sequence, etc. The use of video in class exposes students to contextualized genuine communication (verbal and non-verbal). The combination of sound and vision is dynamic and immediate and besides being highly motivating, video represents a challenge to students of all levels. Therefore, it is necessary to grade the tasks according to the students' level. One of the keys for the successful development of viewing skills is that in addition to having a clear purpose, the sequence should serve as a stimulus for the development of activities which the viewing guide should include, such as preview, viewing and follow-up activities. It is necessary to

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consider the fact that the design of all these activities is time consuming, and the teacher must have a very clear idea of what objective or objectives he/she is pursuing.

In order to explain some procedures for active viewing, it will be necessary to mention some of the techniques that can be employed:

1. Technique: *Sound and Vision.* This technique involves listening and viewing comprehension.

Procedure:

a) Do a warm-up to prepare students for the sequence. This can be done with oral questions, a short discussion, a vocabulary list, etc.

b) Depending of the sequence and on the activity already designed, decide if students will watch it straight through or in small sections. here, exercise formats may vary (true/false, multiple choice, matching, completion, etc.) and the procedure itself may vary too. Students may answer the exercise first and then watch the sequence and compare answers or the teacher may provide students with a paraphrased script or an incomplete one and ask students to write the actual one. Here is where creativity and initiative come in. It is important to remember while designing the exercise that students should not write too much as they are watching and listening at the same time.

c) Depending on the students' level, decide how many times it will be necessary to repeat the sequence (2 or 3 should be enough), but in the case of commercials, for example, they are so short that they might need to be shown more times).

d) Have a follow-up activity ready to round up the session. It can be an activity based on language, functions or related to reading, listening or even a writing activity.

2. Technique: *Silent Viewing.* This technique can be used to stimulate oral production (discussion about what is seen, predictions about what is said). The key for this technique to be successful is to choose scenes with short dialogues where the action, emotions, setting and situation provide clues as to what is being said.

Procedure:

a) Do a preview activity (introduce the topic or language function).

b) Show the whole sequence two or three times.

c) Have students predict the topic; lead them, if necessary, to the language function you want them to practise.

d) Use the pause/freeze frame control at the initial point of exchange for students to predict language. Allow enough time if you are asking students to write the exchanges.

e) Repeat the sequence with the sound on so that students can compare their exchanges with the actual conversation.

f) Have students perform their exchanges and the actual conversation in a role-play activity.

3. Technique: *Sound on/Sound off.* This technique stimulates hypothesis formation and discussion. It also highlights the differences between verbal and visual communication as it starts with sound only.

Procedure:

a) Start with a warm-up asking some pre-listening questions.

b) Have students guess from the sound track as many things as you may think of: the setting, the number of different voices, the physical appearance of the characters, their relationship, the action, etc.

c) It might be convenient to have students listen to the complete sequence first and then divide it into chunks (line by line or by exchange).

d) Have the students discuss their guesses in small groups.

e) Show students the sequence with both sound and vision.

f) Have them discuss their guesses with the real image, giving their reasons for why they imagined this or that in a particular way. This could be part of the follow-up activity.

4. Technique: *Jigsaw viewing.* This technique can be used to stimulate oral discussion in different ways. Preferably sequences that show a logical story should be selected. (For example, a restaurant sequence.)

Procedure:

a) Do a warm-up activity with the whole group.

b) Divide the class into three groups of 5 or 6 students each.

c) Have each group watch a different sequence.

d) Have each group make their guesses of what happened before or what will happen after their particular sequence.

e) Put the group together again.

f) Make new groups of three (one students from each of the three original groups) and have them orally exchange the information in their sequence and ask them to decide which sequence is first, second and third. Do not provide the students with the answers.

g) Show the complete sequence so that students can check their predictions.

h) Discuss how accurate the previous information exchanges were.

5. Technique: *Split viewing*. This technique creates an information gap as some students will just hear the sequence and others will just watch it.

Procedure:

a) After doing a warm-up, divide the class into two groups.

b) Have one group listen to the sequence.

c) Have the other half watch it.

d) Organize pair work with one student from each group.

e) Tell students to exchange the information about what they heard or saw.

f) Tell students to go back to their original group.

g) Ask them to discuss the exchanges in the sequence (place, action, characters).

h) Ask one person from each group to give an account of the events.

i) Show the complete sequence with both sound and vision on.

j) Have students discuss the differences between their versions and the sequence.

As it is easily possible to realize, these are only a few ideas of how video can be exploited in the language class. There is a wide range of possible activities that can be developed with video. It is a pity that only a few schools in Mexico have complete video equipment and materials, but hopefully in the near future, if budgets allow it, more and more language teachers will be able to profit from this valuable aid.

References

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