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By Brian T. Quinn

Introduction

The 1980's ushered in a virtual audio-visual invasion into the foreign language classroom, and nowhere was this more true than in the state-of-the-art, high-tech oriented Japan. In addition, the 1980's also saw a period in which most students were able, for the first time, to cheaply purchase their own video cassette players and gradually change their free time habits from reading books and comics to watching hour upon hour of videos and TV in their own rooms. Many an observer might say that such developments have been more detrimental than positive on the development of modern youth, yet no one can deny that video has come to play an ever increasing role in all of our lives.

Until recently the vast majority of language teachers have merely used video as some kind of glorified tape recorder, that is, teachers have generally tended to place the primary emphasis of video in language teaching on the verbal component of the video by having the students typically being made to listen to *what*

is being said rather than being allowed to freely watch what is happening. Thus, even today, a large number of video materials are still exploited merely for their verbal content including the associated predictable comprehension questions and cloze dictation passages which are so often utilized by teachers to maximize the development of aural comprehension skills. Such uses of video materials, however, could often just as well be accomplished by using a recorded cassette tape player without any video at all. The purpose of the study, on the other hand, is to show how, when properly used, video materials can greatly enhance the overall teaching of English in the modern foreign language classroom primarily because it offers so many exciting possibilities for both language teaching and learning.

Why Use Video in EFL

There are many reasons to use videos in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom but the most important reason to use them rests in the excellent communicative value that videos possess from the aspect of communicative language learning. The inherent strong point of videos is their ability to present complete communicative situations. In addition, the combination of sound and vision is dynamic and allows for a broad range of communicative tasks to be shown in context which can then be easily perceived by the language learning viewers. In comparison with traditional language learning textbooks, videos are also far more entertaining for the language students to watch. In addition, since the speakers can be seen and heard, there is a great reduction of the ambiguity that often exists when new materials are presented to the class for the first time.

Videos also culturally provide the next best thing to actually going to England or America and can provide a wealth of information about lifestyles, relationships and customs on the target culture that non-native English teachers can especially take advantage of and utilize when teaching their students.

Videos are also something today's young students feel very comfortable with. This can especially be said about Japanese students who have all grown up with TV and frequently spend large portions of their free time nowadays watching TV dramas and rental videos.

There are as always, of course, various benefits and disadvantages included in using videos in language teaching. One advantage is that, in general, video presentations will be more interesting to language learners than a plain black and white written text. Most students with both enjoy and want to watch, even if comprehension is limited. If carefully selected by the teacher, the material should also be motivating, with the learner wanting to see more, to ask questions and to follow up on some of the ideas presented in the video. Thus, by cultivating both interest and motivation, videos can frequently create a climate for more successful language learning since whenever students open up their eyes and ears to something they have a far greater chance to eventually learn something.

On the other hand, one of the great disadvantages is that most students are primarily used to watching TV and video quietly at home, that is, they are mainly used to a staple diet of movies, dramas news, sports and quiz shows that inundate the various broadcast channels. The vast majority of viewers merely watch TV for the purpose of relaxation and entertainment. They are happy that

TV offers them such a large choice of programs to watch, while it makes no demands on them. Thus, the main drawback from TV and video viewing is that students have mostly learned to use the medium passively. However, in the EFL classroom it is the responsibility of the teacher to place video in a language-learning context while, at the same time, exploiting both the familiarity and the entertainment value of the medium. When using video in the EFL classroom the teacher must continually foster an environment of inter-action between the students and the video program in which the students are no longer just passive players. In this sense the role of the teacher is still as important as ever.

Another reason to use video is that over the past twenty years there has been a technological revolution taking place in many schools in which numerous classrooms now have VCR's and TV screens that not so long ago would have been limited to only one or two language laboratories for the entire school. Many schools also now have several portable TVs with VCRs that can be easily wheeled into a classroom without too much difficulty.

It is important to always keep in mind that when using video materials the role of the teacher is in no way lessened. The primary importance of the teacher, as always, remains as Lonergan states: "As in most language teaching situations, the role of the teacher is a key one. It is the teacher who must harness the power of the video films; it is the teacher who has the prime responsibility for creating a successful learning environment." (Lonergan: p. 5) Therefore, the language teacher must keep in mind that video is simply another one of many useful learning aids at his disposal. It is by no means meant to rival or overshadow

ow a teacher. Video requires the skillful use of various techniques that modern technology offers us today and by carefully selecting appropriate materials a teacher can greatly facilitate the process of successful language acquisition.

Video Materials

There is a vast range of video materials available for use by language teachers. Each teacher must decide what kind of materials are best suited to their students learning level, ability and tastes. However, all video materials can broadly be classified into two basic types; authentic videos and non-authentic videos. Authentic videos are video materials made for popular consumption by native speakers including movies, regular TV broadcasts, documentary films and even self-made videos (by natives). Non-authentic videos are materials made exclusively for the purpose of language teaching and have the obvious merits of having been planned and produced for a language learning audience. Both types of materials have numerous advantages and disadvantages which must all be carefully weighed by the teacher when selecting materials.

Non-authentic Materials

Today the vast majority of language teachers utilize non-authentic materials which have been designed specifically for classroom use. The main reason for this is usually the appropriateness of the materials for the students as well as their simplicity in use since most come with accompanying texts and teacher's guides.

The first non-authentic materials developed were the numerous language course made for TV some thirty years ago. Even though most of these early programs were extremely limited in scope, they did have many obvious merits including the fact that they had been planned and produced distinctly for the purpose of language learning. Another major advantage of such video materials is that the language used will always be carefully graded and the presentation of new vocabulary items or structures will be carefully controlled. Each section or unit will generally have an explicit language-learning goal and are usually accompanied by a broad range of written materials for both the students and the teacher in order to guide the classroom discussions on what was presented in a given video. Many of these older language courses can even be attractive for use today, even though they tend to be rather dated, but some of the programs have been made primarily for TV broadcasting (especially those course developed in Europe) which generally assumes that students are using the program for self-study and thus often whole sections are designed to be seen in one sitting for 25 or 30 minutes without any interruptions, no replays and no slow motion. Thus, some video courses present some difficulties when trying to adapt them to the classroom. It should be the goal of language teachers to activate the students' language skills so such passive programs can better be viewed by students in their own free time or in educational language course such as those offered by NHK in Japan. The purpose of this paper is to show how the teacher can instead better exploit video materials in order to gain the maximum benefit from the inter-active utilization of video materials in the classroom. As a result, many of

the video materials made for the classroom can often have many of the same advantages of regular television broadcasts as well as their specific educational uses.

One of the biggest complaints regarding non-authentic videos has been the fact that they are boring and rarely interest the students. While this can be said about many of the materials made in the 1970's and early 1980's it should be noted that there has been a real explosion of integrated video English courses developed over the past few years and there should be no difficulty, especially in Japan, for teachers to now find enjoyable and appropriately designed video course materials for their classes. Today, there is now quite a broad range of non-authentic videos available which have been carefully designed for classroom use. Some video series have been designed to supplement existing courses while others have been developed to be part of an integrated course. These days, the more recent video courses employ professional actors, directors and are made in realistic settings not just in studios. There are even various genres to choose from besides different competency levels such as mysteries, sketches, family dramas, sitcoms, documentaries and even an ever growing array of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses on business, technical topics, traveling and even living abroad.

The big advantage of all these materials lies, in part, with the convenient support materials such as video activity books, teachers's guides and student workbooks. The materials often include pre- and post-listening as well as numerous photos from the video. These supplementary materials are usually very

flexible so that one video segment can easily be covered in either a one hour class or a 90 minute class.

Therefore, it appears that non-authentic video course materials will continue to grow in popularity in the near future especially for students on the basic and intermediate levels.

Authentic Materials

The use of authentic video materials taken from movies or regular television broadcasts, which have not been made specifically for language teaching purposes, can often be used in the classroom much in the same way newspaper articles, magazine pictures, cartoons and comics, or even popular records have been used in the past. Such authentic videos are indeed real and meaningful, while they can also provide a wealth of cultural information as well. These materials often seem quite attractive to teachers and there are occasions when it is legitimate to show entire broadcasts of news, situation comedies (sitcoms) or movies to students in the target language. Such occasions are especially valid in intensive courses or residential language seminars where the teacher wants to let the students relax and experience a "language bath" of total exposure to the language. In general, however, such "raw" materials need quite a lot of preparation and follow up work on the part of both the students and teacher. In addition, authentic materials will almost always need to be broken down into shorter, digestible segments, which should generally be no more than a few minutes in length. Thus, it would take an inordinately long time to properly view a half

hour comedy show or full length movie if it were to be done in a pedagogically sound manner. Native speakers need to remain constantly aware of the fact that movies or TV shows that may frequently appear extremely amusing, enjoyable and interesting to the native speaker are, unfortunately, mostly incomprehensible to most Japanese students unless they are at a most advanced level.

In the early days of video, many language teachers had no choice but to use authentic materials such as the news, old silent films, sporting events and, of course, brief cuts from various famous movies. However, there are numerous pitfalls that teachers face when using such materials. One of the biggest problems is that a language teacher has to spend hours and hours reviewing reviewing various tapes in order to eventually find a few minutes of usable material. Next, the teacher will have to spend many more hours in planning how to effectively use the material in his particular classroom context. It is then usually up to the teacher to design support materials, such as comprehension questions, vocabulary items, cultural background material and accompanying transcripts.

Another problem in using authentic videos is that most of these materials generally best lend themselves to straight forward comprehension tasks and vocabulary usage drills. On the other hand, appropriately designed non-authentic materials can normally better lend themselves to more active participation on the part of students (since they have been designed with the student in mind). Silent movies are one exception with authentic materials since students can comprehend them as well as natives and use the scenes as jumping off points for further discussions. Normally, due to the inherent difficulties of using materials made

for consumption by the general native speaking public, a great amount of classroom time will unavoidably have to be devoted to explaining various vocabulary, phrases and word usage. Even though such exercises can, at times, be extremely interesting, it generally leads to a more passive role on the part of the students and usually leads to a less than dynamic lesson for the students.

News and current affairs are always ripe for class exploitation, especially when they deal with topics of major interest to the students. However, the same problems of preparation, as mentioned above, still remain. In addition, with such materials there is one added drawback, you can only use such materials once. A teacher cannot go back and reteach the day's news next semester or next year.

Another problem with authentic materials is the fact that they will almost always be much too long. As mentioned earlier, a situation comedy lasts some 30 minutes and would require five or six lessons to do properly, while a two hour movie could take months of work, especially at a Japanese university where classes meet only once a week. Thus, it would take an entire semester to do one movie (12 or 13 weeks) during which time the students' interest in the movie will almost certainly have disappeared..

In using authentic materials at the beginning and intermediate level there will practically always be large amounts of extraneous linguistic material which could indeed be explained by the teacher (slang, colloquial usage, cultural comments) but is really not worth the time and effort involved. In addition, there are often large sections of authentic videos that have little, if any, if any linguistic merit such as in the popular genre of adventure and action films (Indiana Jones

series, Terminator and Rambo series) which the students enjoy watching but actually gain very little, if anything, in overall improved language skills.

Therefore, authentic materials are best utilized with very advanced students, yet, 95% of English learners at Japanese colleges and universities are at the false beginner to lower intermediate levels in English. In addition, since the advent of satellite broadcasts in Japan, which offer a broad range of news, culture and documentary programs in English as well as the presence of bilingual television which provides a varied menu of movies, dramas and documentaries in both English and Japanese, and not to forget the abundance of ever growing video outlets handling hundreds of the latest English language movies and programs, it could well be argued that advanced students are best left on their own to explore and take advantage of the abundance of authentic materials available to them.

One more consideration in using authentic materials is the difficulty in effectively integrating such materials into a well balanced syllabus that is appropriate for students at a particular level since authentic materials are constantly filled with the whole gamut of living language ranging from extremely basic and repetitive usage all the way to absolutely incomprehensible street slang.

Language teachers must also realize that it is, in fact, frequently quite illegal to use off-air broadcasted materials, or to show feature full-length films in the classroom. In the strictly legal sense, a teacher may be abusing the use of copy-right material.

Finally, teachers must beware of the dangerous tendency to use materials because they just happen to love a particular program or movie themselves.

Some popular comedy programs or humorous movies can be wonderful for a native speaker yet the majority of humor contained therein is often untranslatable, while the verbal jokes that can be explained usually require an excessive amount of time before the students can eventually comprehend them.

Therefore, on the whole, EFL teachers in Japan should concentrate on using non-authentic materials as much as possible. Students will also feel better when they have their own text book from a video course compared to a simple hand-out from the teacher and, most importantly, the time teachers will need to prepare each lesson will be greatly reduced while the effectiveness of the language learning will almost always be greatly increased.

Using Captioned Video Materials

One recent and exciting development that is helping to make authentic materials more accessible to English language student is the appearance of "closed-captioned" programming in the United States. The US has developed a closed-captioned broadcast system by which any standard television set that is equipped with a small, inexpensive decoder can receive, not only standard audio and video signals, but also special signals which make the spoken portion of the program visible on the screen as videotext, or captions. Captions are much like subtitles which appear on many foreign films, since they are simply a printed version of the spoken text. The main difference, however, is that they appear in the same language as that of the original speech.

The closed-captioned system was originally developed for the millions of

hearing-impaired individuals in the US so that they, too, could enjoy the information and entertainment of selected programs (currently such broadcasts constitute about 100 hours per week or regular broadcasts). Today the majority of all commercially produced videotapes on the American market including feature-length motion pictures, educational programs and animated cartoons are also close-captioned.

The hearing-impaired were the original target audience of these broadcasts but recently such programing has also been shown to be a great learning aid for English learners as well. The potential of utilizing such materials in the future in the classroom are almost limitless and with close-captioned English materials just starting to be used in Japan it will be interesting to see what kind of impact such materials will have on the use of authentic materials in the EFL curriculum. It is likely that news broadcasts will be the first to be heavily utilized with movies also gradually being presented to upper intermediate and above level students.

Using Video at Japanese Universities

When teaching at Japanese universities, except for those few cases when teaching small class advance English majors, there are numerous restrictions teachers face when using video in the classroom. Several courses can be effectively taught in the language laboratory but today more and more regular classrooms are alsobecoming video capable thanks to the ever growing affordability of video cassette hardware.

One of the most successful and effective types of authentic video materials for use in Japan are that of TV commercials since most students watch numerous hours of TV and have a good sense for TV commercials. The advantages of using commercials are many. First of all they are short, usually lasting from 30 seconds to one minute. Students can usually relate to the products being advertised and, best of all, many commercials are often quite funny and entertaining. Commercials usually have a limited amount of text and even when word games are used they are brief enough for the teacher to be able to readily explain them to the class. Yet, the real power of commercials is that they readily lend themselves to various expansion exercises for students to discuss their own responses to the characters presented in the commercials, to the nature of the text: soft sell versus hard sell, to the actual products being advertised, to the type of humor used and finally to the overall effectiveness. Since TV commercials consist of a genre that most Japanese students have already mastered, using such commercials from English programming can be a very enjoyable experience in the Japanese classroom.

Future Directions for Video in Language Learning

Until quite recently the use of video in the EFL classroom was decidedly a supplementary activity, usually employed for some extended listening comprehension practice. However, in the 1990's video has now become a potential integral part of any English course from the most basic up to advanced levels. Some educators believe that by the year 2000, video may well have even replaced the

audio cassette in language teaching. With the number of excellent integrated English video course growing by leaps and bounds, it will soon become pointless for teachers to patch together an English video course from bits and pieces of various authentic materials. In the future, due to the ever increasing quality and diversity of new course materials, it is likely that specifically designed materials will dominate the EFL field even more than today.

There will, however, always be a limited use for authentic materials as well as for comprehension based activities. This is because of the inherent interest in timely and major news events such as the break-up of the Soviet Union or the opening of the Berlin Wall. Yet, such video footage can best be utilized more as points of departures for further discussions and active expansion exercises in using English rather than for tiresome listening comprehension drills and complicated lexical explanations of difficult vocabulary items.

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