

VIDEO MATERIALS AND FILMS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Nowadays videos, films and TV are not only part of people's daily activities, but they also have become an important part in our education both inside and outside the classroom.

A great advantage of video materials and films is that they provide authentic language input, as films and TV programmes are usually made for native speakers.

Students in Armenia have traditionally been taught mainly grammar rules and vocabulary through classroom exercises or classroom activities. English courses formally remain insufficient in the ability to use the language and to understand its use in normal active communication, both in the spoken or the written form. We still evaluate student knowledge according to the sentence structure and situational settings. One of the main shortcomings is that the real spoken language is not found in typical teaching materials or even in the oral models provided by the teachers in the classroom. That's why we think that the use of videos and films gives the students a chance to access authentic language.

According to W. Rivers many media and many styles of visual presentation are useful for the language learner. That is to say "all audio-visual materials have positive contributions to language learning as long as they are used at the right time, in the right place. In language learning and teaching process, learners use their eyes as well as their ears; but their eyes are basic in learning" /Rivers, 1981: 12/.

Video materials and films greatly contribute to understanding of another culture and mentality. Video materials show the students how people behave in the culture whose language they are learning by bringing into the classroom various communicative situations.

Watching films in class should not just be a passive activity. The tasks in which the teacher should involve her students should include the four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Along with more typical exercises around vocabulary and grammar usage, students may be asked to write, present, or debate in English on themes, plot details, or characters. They may develop their own scripts borrowing from language employed in the films, which then should be presented in the class and evaluated by their fellow-students.

Two minutes of video material (news release or an ad) can provide an hour of classroom work, or it can be used to introduce a range of activities and exercises. We know that deficiencies in vocabulary can make even a simple task very difficult for students. Another important factor for teachers that makes video materials more interesting and enjoyable is that they help to promote comprehension. Video makes meaning clearer by illustrating everything in a way that is not possible with words, which proves the well-known saying “a picture is worth thousand words”.

It is obvious that non-native speakers of a language rely on visual clues to support their understanding and there is no doubt that video is an obvious medium for helping learners to interpret the visual clues effectively. “According to a research, language teachers like video because it motivates learners, brings the real world into the classroom, contextualizes language naturally and enables learners to experience authentic language. Students like it because video presentations are interesting, challenging, and stimulating to watch” /Tomalin, 1981/.

Students also like the activities after the film watching, when they go beyond the film – discuss the issues, reimagine the characters in new scenarios created by them. In this process the teacher is a participant because s/he participates in the activities while teaching a foreign language through video/ film. S/he should know the materials and all the details about them. This helps the students feel comfortable and facilitates learning. Taking into consideration all these, the teacher should prepare to promote active viewing and successful language learning. This means that s/he must be familiar with the video materials before they are used in class, then s/he should develop a plan for each video unit and encourage active viewing. To promote comprehension, s/he should prepare viewing guides which are easy and related to the language level of the students. In class the teacher can step in the process whenever s/he wishes; s/he can stop, start and rewind to repeat it for several times where necessary. Any

selected short passage from the programme/film can be used for intensive study.

To invite a special attention to a particular point in the programme/film the teacher can run it in slow motion or at half speed or without sound.

The teacher can also stop the programme/film when s/he wants to teach words and expressions regarding mood and emotions, to ask questions about a particular scene, or to call students' attention to some important points. Stopping the scene the teacher can ask what is going to happen next. So the students will have to speculate on what will happen in the next act. This activity activates the imagination of the students by leading them predicting and deducing further information about the characters, events. Besides, the learners can concentrate on the language in detail and interpret what has been said, repeat it, predict the reply and so on. The learners can also concentrate in detail on visual clues to meaning such as facial expression, dress, gesture, posture and on details of the environment. Even without hearing the language (spoken clues to the meaning) it can be understood from the vision alone. Using visual clues to the meaning in order to enhance learning is an important part of video methodology. Moreover, the students get a general idea of the culture of the learning language. It is enjoyable for the learners to have something different for language learning apart from the course books and DVD-s for listening.

It is also important that a video/film presentation lead to follow-up activities as the basis for further active oral practice. For example discussions make students communicate and express their own ideas and attitudes among students, and it helps to achieve communicative practice. With this activity students also have an opportunity to develop sharing and cooperative skills.

The teacher should be very careful while choosing the video material for the language class, especially concerning the length and content of the material. A five-minute sequence from a film may contain more than enough language material for the students to cope with, and thus it is better to show students several short sequences from the film or TV programme, each followed by activities which practice and activate

the target language, than to show a half-hour sequence and then give students exercises which rely more on memory than understanding.

Regarding the content, when choosing teaching materials of any kind, the needs and proficiency of the students should be of greatest importance. It is possible to take a scene from a popular film and through a series of activities and lots of repetition, have a class of intermediate students more or less completely understand it. However, the benefits of this will be questionable: as understanding a particular scene won't help them significantly to understand the film as a whole, and the dense, idiomatic language of the film won't provide them with much language they can easily use outside the classroom. So, the biggest challenge is to find films that are suitable to the certain group of students. The film not only needs to be appropriate to the teaching goals, but also needs to lend itself well to viewing over many class sessions. With a carefully planned lesson the teacher can ensure that her students gain confidence and that the chosen material is comprehensible for the students. This comprehensibility doesn't only refer to the degree of the film or video, it is also determined by the accompanying tasks prepared by the teacher. A film/video related activities can be considered appropriate even when they only deal with a small passage or some scenes from the video or film.

As we see using a film or video materials in EFL classroom is a complex process which involves the following steps – deriving the script, creating vocabulary lists, making grammar and culture notes, formulating grammar exercises, homework activities, and quizzes. The process takes a lot of time and it can be a challenge to find related materials. Even after all these efforts some films have “expiration dates,” when the appropriateness of using the film is gone because of changes in the society, attitudes, trends, etc.

Thus, choosing to teach with films may be one of the most difficult and time-taking decisions a language teacher can make, and the reward is the greater motivation to learn and involvement with the language that they will see in their students.

REFERENCES

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Ն. ԹՈՎՄԱՍՅԱՆ – Տեսանյութերն ու ֆիլմերը՝ անգլերենը որպես օտար լեզու դասընթացում. – Հոդվածում քննարկվում է ֆիլմերի և տեսանյութերի կիրառման կարևորությունը անգլերեն լեզվի դասավանդման ընթացքում: Այսօր ֆիլմերը, հեռուստահաղորդումները, տեսանյութերը ոչ միայն մեր առօրյայի մասն են կազմում, այլև դարձել են մեր կրթության անբաժան մասը լսարանում և լսարանից դուրս: Ֆիլմերի և մյուս տեսանյութերի առավելությունն այն է, որ դրանք հնարավորություն են տալիս լսել, տեսնել և աստիճանաբար ըմբռնել կենդանի անգլերենը՝ իրական կյանքի տարբեր իրավիճակներում: Լեզվի դասավանդման ծրագրին համապատասխանող նյութերի /տեսանյութ, ֆիլմ, հեռուստահաղորդում/ հաջող ընտրության, դրանց դիտմանը նախորդող և հաջորդող համապատասխան վարժությունների մշակման դեպքում, ուսուցիչը կարող է հասնել ցանկալի արդյունքների՝ զարգացնելով ուսանողների լսելով՝ կենդանի լեզուն ընկալելու հմտությունը և ընդարձակելով նրանց բառապաշարը:

Н. ТОВМАСЯН – Фильмы и другие видеоматериалы в процессе преподавания английского языка. – В статье рассматривается целесообразность применения фильмов и видеоматериалов в качестве аутентичного материала для развития навыков восприятия устной речи. Сегодня фильмы, телепередачи и другие видеоматериалы являются необходимой частью нашего образования. Правильно отобранный материал и соответственно разработанные упражнения можно с успехом использовать с целью развития у студентов навыков восприятия иностранного текста на слух и расширения их словарного запаса.