

Video in the Language Lab: Teaching Vocabulary

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Most well equipped language labs have video as a technical resource. It is possible to incorporate video into many different aspects of language teaching and learning. The following paragraphs offer suggestions for exploiting non-captioned video in a language lab setting to teach vocabulary. The examples that are provided are based on the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Research Support

A series of studies by Gildea, Miller and Wurtenberg (1990) provides both support and methodology for video use in a language lab setting. A scene from a movie was selected (in this case, the opening action sequence in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) and a series of narrative paragraphs describing the scene or action were created. The narratives included familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary items. The learners who saw video pictures were able to produce a higher percentage of acceptable sentences using the most difficult target words than were the learners who read only the narratives or those who read both the narratives and definitions. In the words of the researchers, "Pictures [video] improve sentence production for many words" (Gildea, et. al., 1990, p.25).

Interestingly, learners who read illustrative sentences (sentences capturing a scene in the movie and model the correct usage of a target vocabulary item) scored better on a multiple choice test than did those who read the narrative only or read the narrative and watched the video. This would indicate that if vocabulary learning is going to be measured by productive use, video is certainly facilitative. If, on the other hand, vocabulary gain is going to be measured via multiple choice testing, video will be most efficient if learners are provided with contextualized sentence models. Either way, video is a useful part of vocabulary learning.

How to Use Video

1. Use Video to Contextualize Target Vocabulary.

The instructor can write narratives for selected video passages making a conscious effort to use target vocabulary. These narrative passages can be used in several ways:

Guided Cloze Exercise

Have the students (in pairs, groups or individually) watch the video segment, then ask them to fill in the blanks of a guided cloze passage that is based on a narrative description of the segment. For an example from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* see [handout #1](#). The target vocabulary items in this exercise are from Nation's (1990) list of commonly unknown words from West's (1953) General Service List.

Definition Match.

Highlight the target vocabulary words in a narrative passage that complements a video segment. Have the learners read the passage (reading aloud to each other in pairs is good for pronunciation and listening practice), and then view the segment. Then, ask the learners (in pairs, groups or individually) to decide which definitions best match the way the word is used in the passage. For an example, see [handout #2](#). The target vocabulary items in this exercise are from Nation's (1990) list of commonly unknown words from West's (1953) General Service List.

Dictogloss.

Write a narrative summary of an action scene that includes target vocabulary items. Have the learners watch the segment (video only, no sound track) while you narrate the events using the prepared text. Repeat this twice. Give the students a list of the target vocabulary and have them (in pairs, groups or individually) recreate their version of your narration. They do not have to reproduce the exact narration - just their best approximation. After they have finished, the learners should compare their versions and make lists of all of the different sentence structures they used to incorporate the vocabulary. The teacher can then comment on the acceptability of the various sentences. For an example, see [handout #3](#).

2. Use Video to Stimulate the Production of Target Vocabulary.

Making an Oral Summary/Description.

Select a video segment that contains a series of actions or visual detail. Provide the learners with a list of target vocabulary words. Ask the learners to form pairs (or groups of three) and get one of the pair/group members to be the "watcher" while the other(s) cover their eyes and do not watch the video. Play the video once with no sound and then have the "watcher" describe to the group or partner the scene using as many vocabulary words as possible in the description. The listeners can then be called upon one by one to tell the class what they heard. After they have shared their version, the whole class sees the segment with the sound turned on. It is good to have more than one video segment ready so that the first "watcher" has a chance to be a listener.

Writing Descriptive Paragraphs.

Select a video segment that contains a series of actions or visual detail. Provide the learners with a list of target vocabulary words and ask them to construct a paragraph that incorporates as many of the words as possible. This activity is best done after the learners have done the dictogloss procedure since the follow up sentence structure comparison activity is the same.

Narrating Action Segments.

Select a video segment that contains a series of actions or visual detail. Provide the learners with a list of target vocabulary words and ask them to construct a narrator's script that incorporates as many of the target words as possible. The trick here is to be sure that the script, when read at a normal speech rate will synchronize with the images so the video segment will need to be play (with no sound) several times so that the learners can time the images and rehearse. Individuals then record their narration and the instructor can randomly select individual versions to play back for the class.

References

- Gildea, P., Miller, G.A., & Wurtenberg, C.L. (1990). Contextual enrichment by videodisc. In Don Nix & Rand Spiro (eds.). Cognition, education, multimedia: Exploring ideas in high technology.
- Nation, I.S.P. (1990). Teaching and learning vocabulary. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- West, M. (1953). A general service list of English words. London: Longman, Green and Company.

Appendix

Handout #1

Guided Cloze Passage (Scene 4, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*)

Marcus drove up to Indy's bungalow and excitedly rang the doorbell. He was there to s_____ the news that the army intelligent officers had decided to a_____ their plan to find the lost ark. As a part of the agreement, they would provide Indy with a cash a_____ of several thousand dollars and a healthy deposit in his bank a_____ to cover the expenses that were b_____ to occur. Indy was r_____ to hear that Marcus had won the a_____ of the government men. It was a p_____ end to an exhilarating day.

Being a good h_____, Indy p_____ offered Marcus a glass of celebratory wine. Marcus loosened his necktie, undid the button of his c_____, and made himself comfortable in Indy's living room. Marcus made a c_____ to Indy that he felt a bit e_____ of Indy's good fortune. He claimed that if he were younger, he would go after the ark himself. Marcus was not a c_____ or lazy but to his great r_____ he was not as young as he used to be. How u_____ it was that such a great discovery was going to be made without his presence.

During this conversation, Indy was not i_____. He moved frantically around the room packing his luggage for the trip. He paused for a moment and made the r_____ "I wonder if she'll still be with him?" Marcus replied that Marion should not c_____ Indy that she was the least of his worries. His expression became serious as he talked about the ark. Marcus was c_____ that this ancient relic was different from the others they had collected in the past. The ark was a s_____ object that had contained the words of God. He knew that he would u_____ Indy by mentioning the religious aspect of the ark. Indy tried to a_____ discussing anything to do with religion. He called it superstitious "hocus pocus" and told Marcus not to worry about him. Marcus felt the need to r_____ that Indy should take steps to protect himself. To satisfy Marcus and to e_____ him to stop worrying, Indy packed his handgun along with his

bullwhip.

Word Bank

Bound to
Conscious
Convenient
Envious
Idle
Perfect
Promptly
Relieved
Sacred
Unfair Account
Allowance
Approval
Collar
Confession
Coward
Host
Order
Outline
Passage
Approve
Avoid
Concern
Confuse
Encourage
Recommend
Regret
Remark
Share
Upset

Handout #2

The Drinking Duel (scene 5 *Raiders of the Lost Ark*)

The scene opens in a grungy old BAR in Nepal. The drunken crowd waited breathlessly for a large man to SWALLOW a shot glass full of a clear liquid. When he lowered his glass, his supporters began to BOAST about the strength of their hero. The attention then turned to a woman who was the TOUGH man's challenger and the noise lowered to a FAINT buzz. She drank the dangerous SUBSTANCE and closed her eyes briefly because the room seemed to SPIN. A nearby female WITNESS expressed worry about the woman's condition and the crowd began to exchange bets of money. Suddenly the woman opened her eyes, spoke sharply to the crowd and FIRMLY slammed her glass down on the table. The crowd of gamblers was RELIEVED to know that she was still willing to continue. When the man passed out under the table the DISGUSTING game was over.

The words written in large letters have more than one meaning. Choose the meaning that best matches the way the word is used in the paragraph.

FAINT

___(adj.) weak and about to lose consciousness. She felt faint from the heat.

___(adj.) lacking clearness, brightness or strength. We heard a faint sound in the distance.

___(adj.) very small or slight. Our hope of winning is very faint.

DISGUSTING

___ (adj.) causing a feeling of disgust. What a disgusting smell.

___ (adj.) very unpleasant or bad. Awful. It is disgusting the way those children act.

FIRMLY

___(adv.) solidly fixed in place. The apartment is firmly anchored on the hillside.

___(adv.) unchanging, unlikely to change. We firmly believe in human rights.

___(adv.) determined in purpose. Resolute. Parents should firmly discipline their children.

BAR

___(n) a length of metal or wood across a window or door. The prison windows had bars.

___(n) a place with a counter where alcoholic drinks are served. We drank cocktails at the bar.

___(n) a group of notes and rests in music. She sang the first bar alone before the piano joined her.

RELIEVED

___(v) to lessen (pain, anxiety or trouble). The aspirin relieved her headache.

___(v) to be dismissed or let go. The soldier was relieved of his duty.

___(adj.) no longer worried. She was relieved to hear that her children were safe.

TOUGH

___(adj.) strong, not easily weakened. A tough vehicle is needed to travel this road.

___(adj.) difficult to cut or to eat. This cheap steak meat is tough.

___(adj.) not easy, difficult to deal with. The negotiations for the contract were tough.

WITNESS

___(n) someone who saw a crime, accident or important event. The witness told her story to the police.

___(n) someone who speaks in a law court about a person or event. I was a character witness.

___(n) someone who watches a person sign an important document. She was a witness at the wedding.

BOAST

___(v) to talk with too much pride. All mothers boast about their children.

___(v) to have something unusual. Our stores boast rapid, polite and thorough service.

SWALLOW

___(v) to move food or drink down the throat to the stomach. Swallow your medicine.

___(v) to hold back feelings - not to show or express them. He swallowed his pride and asked for help.

___(v) to accept something patiently or without question. He swallowed their lies.

SUBSTANCE

___(n) a material or a type of matter. Glue is a sticky substance.

___(n) the truth. There is no substance in your accusation.

___(n) with detail, lacking in importance. His essay was long but lacked in substance.

SPIN

___(v) to cause to turn round and round quickly.

___(v) to make thread. It takes many hours to spin one spool of thread.

___(v) to make something last too long. Try not to spin out your speech too much.

Handout #3

Dictogloss (Scene 11, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*)

Indy CAUTIOUSLY lowered himself into the map room on a rope that Sallah anchored from above. He approached the miniature map of the city. He opened his note PAD to refresh his memory about the PECULIAR symbols to be on the look out for. Once he located the appropriate PATTERN, he WIPED the dust from a section of the stone tablet and then blew the area clean. He put the end of the staff into the hole and stood it upright. The BRASS colored headpiece to the Staff of Ra was at the top. He TWISTED it so that the sun could shine through the crystal and form a BEAM of light. The BEAM came to rest at the spot on the map that REPRESENTED the Well of Souls. In an INSTANT, he noted the location, broke the staff in two and WHISPERED up to Sallah to throw him a rope. He felt RELIEVED when Sallah threw down a flag with the PATTERN of a swastika on it SINCE he would be able to climb out of the map room.

BEAM (Used twice)

BRASS

CAUTIOUSLY

INSTANT

PAD

PATTERN (Used twice)

PECULIAR

RELIEVED

REPRESENTED

SINCE

TWISTED

WHISPERED

WIPED

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<http://iteslj.org/>

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Tatsuki-VideoinLL.html>