

# Teaching with Video: Tips, Tricks, and Techniques

## ***Before watching***

1. **Vocabulary:** Preview the important words/expressions you think the students will not know and are necessary to understand the video.
  - Give students the phrases/collocations the words appear in.
  - Discuss the connotations of the words. (+/–, formal/informal, technical, etc.)
  - Point out a couple of items (e.g., idioms) that are easy to guess from context and have students listen for them.
2. **Previewing/Predicting:** Discuss the topic in general terms or ask specific questions that deal with some of the information the students will see in the video. This can be done as a class or in pairs/small groups. (“activating schema”) E.g.,
  - This report is about how neat or messy people are. How neat are you? How organized is your desk? How often do you clean it up? Can you find something when you need to find it? Which of the adjectives in the vocabulary list describe you or your apartment?
  - This story is about an earthquake. What kind of information do you think will be included? Make three predictions about what will be in the report. or Write three questions you think the report will answer. Write the predictions/questions on the board.
  - This scene takes place at a wedding. Who are the people who usually attend a wedding? What do they say to each other? How do they usually feel? What could go wrong?

## ***While watching***

3. **Answer the prediction questions:** Follow-up to #2
  - Correct the mistakes or answer the questions they wrote.
4. **General comprehension questions:** Who, what, where, when, why, how, how many, ... ?
  - Give students specific questions about the information or actions in the video to focus their attention.
  - Harder video or lower-level students – use phrases directly from the video in the questions.
  - Easier video or higher-level students – use paraphrases of the ideas.
5. **Clozes:** Transcribed passages from the video with selected words blanked out.
  - Typically, blanks are content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) not function words (articles, prepositions).
  - Often works well with the introduction to a news report.
  - Good for important points, complex ideas you want to emphasize.
  - Good for hard-to-understand speakers, for focusing on informal pronunciation, accent, etc.

- 6. True/False questions:** Can be adjusted in difficulty to the level of the students.
- Statements can include more of the language in the video for lower level students to help them understand, especially more complicated or hard to understand sections.
  - Statements can use more paraphrases of the information for higher levels.
  - If a statement is false, students should correct it.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> time viewing, simply mark T/F. Correct the answers without saying why the false statements are wrong; 2<sup>nd</sup> viewing becomes a “correct the mistakes” exercise. (See below.)
- 7. Correct the mistakes in the sentences:** Similar to true/false, except all the statements have a mistake in them. Students listen and correct them.
- Also adaptable to the level of students: direct quotes or paraphrases.
- 8. Numbers and statistics:** Dates, time, percentages, ages, amounts of money, etc.
- Give a number of statements (direct quotes or paraphrases) from the video with blanks for the numbers, dates, etc. Students fill them in as they listen. A good way to handle lots of statistics in a news report.
  - You can also have students try to predict some of the answers for topics they might have some knowledge of or experience with.
- 9. Guided answers:** Good for lower levels and/or more complicated information, e.g.,
- Listen for the 3 reasons why ...
  - The police arrested a suspect because ...
  - Complete an outline of the main ideas. (Some info is given in outline, some is missing)
  - Here are the main points; what *example* is given for each one?
  - Here are three examples given in the report. What is the *main point* each one is illustrating?
- 10. Charts/grid:** Fill in the missing information (some of the boxes can be filled in with the harder info and as a guide to help them understand the activity), e.g.,

Person	What happened?	What did he/she do?
<i>Susan</i>		
	<i>lost his wallet</i>	
		<i>called the police</i>

**11. Ordering: What happened first, second, etc.?**

- Give students a few statements about the clip, mixing up the time order. Students number them 1, 2, 3, ... as they listen.
- This can be a more complicated – and higher level – activity in a news report in which the events are not given in order (e.g., we learn that someone was arrested first; we find out the sequence of events that led up to it later in the report).
- Can also be done with other types of information – e.g., steps in a process, order of sights characters see in a video, historical events, size, importance, rank, etc.

**12. Different groups, different tasks:** Divide the class into groups; each one listens for the answers to different questions, e.g.,

- Assign odd/even questions to different students in pairs; divide the class into three groups and assign every third question to a group.
- Have different students of groups of students focus on different aspects of a video – e.g., different characters in a conversation, two sides of a dispute, pros & cons of a proposal, etc.
- Group 1 – odd numbered questions, group 2 – even numbered questions.
- Group 1 – T/F; group 2 – statistics; group 3 – general comprehension questions.
- For charts, tables, etc. (e.g., #10) assign different boxes or rows to different groups
- This works well when there's a lot of information in a short segment; helps not to overwhelm students. Also works with different levels in the same class. The easier questions can be handled by the students with lower listening skills. Let the better listeners tackle something more challenging.

**13. Video on/Sound off:** Play a segment with only the video and have students try to infer what is happening. Works best with comedies or dramas, and maybe reality TV. [Maximum time: just watching – 1 minute; discussing the events while the video is playing – 3 minutes]

- Try to figure out what is happening from the age, sex, facial expressions, gestures, movements, clothing, etc. of the people you see. For example:
  - What's the relationship between the two women? (sisters? co-workers? clerk & customer?) How do you know? What is the 1<sup>st</sup> man's job?
  - What does this gesture mean?
  - How is the man feeling? How do you know?
    - Higher levels: He *must be*, *might be*, *must have been*, *could have been*
    - Lower levels: *Maybe* he's ... *I think* she's ... He *must be* angry *because* ... She *must be* the boss *because* ...
    - Give students a list of adjectives. Have them check the ones that apply to the people they see and then explain their choices.
- Have students narrate the events: "First he \_\_\_\_\_ed. Then she \_\_\_\_\_ed. ... While the man was \_\_\_\_\_ing, the woman \_\_\_\_\_ed."
- Write a dialogue with what you think the characters might be saying. See how close your imagined conversation comes to the real thing.
- After watching the scene, give students several quotes from the video; have them match the quotes with the people who say them and explain their choices. Then play with the sound to check their answers.

**14. Sound on/Video off:** With only the audio, students try to figure out what's going on. Depending on the level of the class and the complexity of the video, you could give these questions to them as they are or give them multiple choice or T/F versions.

- Who's talking? How many people are there?
- What are their ages? sex? relation to the other people?
- How do you picture them? (What do you think they look like?)
- Give students pictures of the actors (take screen shots or 'Google' their images) and have them match the speakers to the pictures.
- Where are they? How do you know?
- What are they doing/talking about? What's wrong? Why are they there? What are they worried about? etc.
- How do they feel? (confused, happy, angry, ...) How do you know?

**15. Half listen/Half watch:** This works well with two classes and two teachers who want to collaborate.

- Divide the students into two groups in two rooms and do "sound off" with one and "video off" with the other. Then pair up students in one group with students in the other, and have them write a description of the video.
- Follow up by playing it with both sound & video; have students confirm or correct their descriptions.

**16. What did they mean?** After watching the clip once or twice, give students quotes from different characters/speakers that might be too hard for them to understand.

- When did he say it? What does she mean by it?
- You can focus on the ideas of the speaker as well as accent or pronunciation issues (British vs. American; southern vs. northern US) or fast speech (*gonna* for going to), idioms, etc.

**17. Who said what?** Similar to "what did he/she mean?" (#16) After watching a scene the first time, give students several quotes from the video plus the names or roles of the characters. Match each with the person who said it.

- Good for difficult to understand speakers, fast speech, idioms, figuring out vocabulary from context.
- Can be done with the "video on/sound off" exercise. (See 4<sup>th</sup> main bullet in #13.)

**18. What's going to happen?** Stop the video before the end point and ask students to predict what will happen next. Then play the ending.

- What will the characters do/say? Why?
- Write the rest of the dialogue between the characters.
- In a typical Hollywood movie or TV show, how would the characters react? How would someone react in real life? In your country?
- If you were one of the characters, what would you do/say in this situation?

## **Final viewing**

**19. Vocabulary from context:** Once students have a good understanding of what's happening in the video, present a couple of words or idiomatic expressions that are possible to guess from the context of the clip. Have students listen and try to figure out their meaning.

**20. Tone:** Before they watch for the final time, tell students focus on *how* things are said:

- What words tell you the speaker is joking/sarcastic/upset/relieved/happy ... ?
- What tone of voice does he/she use? (loud, soft, laughing, tense, rising intonation, emphasizing certain words, etc.)
- What's the overall attitude of the report towards the subject? Critical, approving, neutral? How do you know?
- It usually helps to supply students with at least some of the words they will need to describe what is happening. Mix in some good answers with some obviously wrong ones.

## **Post-viewing activities**

**21. Discussion questions:**

- Did anything you saw or heard surprise you? Why?
- Complete the sentences (lower levels):
  - I was surprised by ... I was upset when ... I laughed when ... I don't understand why...
- Do you think the people did the right thing? Why?
- If you were this person (or this person's boss/parents/friend), what would you do?
- What kind of person is X? Give three adjectives that describe him/her. Would you like to be this person's friend/classmate/brother/sister/co-worker? Why?
- Is this a particularly American problem or do people in your country have similar problems?
- Good opportunity for conditionals: "I would have ..." And modals: "She shouldn't have ..."

**22. Vocabulary review:** One more reinforcement of important vocabulary

- Fill in the blank sentences, opposites, complete the sentences, etc.
- What words in the video refer to people's jobs or positions?
- Choose two of the vocabulary words that you think describe you. Why?

**23. Writing follow-up:**

**News reports:**

- Write a letter to a newspaper or news site giving your opinion about the issues discussed in the video.
- Write a short summary of what you saw, describing the main issues and what you think should be done.

**Drama/comedy/reality TV:**

- Write a dialogue with the characters discussing later what happened in the scene you saw. What would each one say?
- Write a dialogue in which one of the characters tells someone who was not in the scene what happened. Variation: Divide the class in half. Each half takes the point of view of a different character.
- Write a description of one of the characters, both physically and in terms of his/her personality.
- Write an e-mail or a text to one of the characters, giving him/her your advice about what you think he/she should do.

**All:**

- Write a “what if” description of the events, e.g., “What would have happened if someone had said \_\_\_\_\_?” or “How might things have turned out if \_\_\_\_\_ had not happened?”
- Use at least three of the vocabulary words or expressions from the video in your writing.

**24. Suggestions for longer videos – e.g., full television episodes, movies:**

- Show selected scenes, working on vocabulary, comprehension, who the main characters are, etc. Then show the entire program/movie without interruption.
- Play section by section, working on understanding each one before moving onto the next. If time, or perhaps in the next class, show the entire program without interruption.
- Feel free to skip scenes that are too hard or that complicate your use of a video for classroom purposes. For a video shown on a laptop or DVD, write down the times for the scenes you want and jump to them.

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**Notes:**

- ◆ It’s a good idea to have different tasks each time you watch a segment of a video. For example, 1<sup>st</sup> – T/F or listening for statistics; 2<sup>nd</sup> – a cloze + general comprehension questions; 3<sup>rd</sup> – vocabulary from context or listening for a speaker’s tone.
- ◆ New organizations often have web pages dedicated to individual news stories, which can be a valuable source for understanding the report, and for getting some of the more difficult vocabulary, spellings of the names of people involved in the story, etc. Going to the web site of the news provider and performing a search will usually find what you want.
- ◆ The episode of *Friends* is available on the U.S. iTunes store for \$1.99 – Season 5, Episode 1 (“The One After Ross Says Rachel”)
- ◆ Downloadable files of the podcasts and a pdf version of the handout will be available on my Wiki for the next two months: <http://joepettigrew.pbworks.com/TESOL2011>

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