

Viewing Video and DVD in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

In this essay, video and DVD are compared and contrasted in technical aspects, and the case for their use as pedagogical aids for second language learning is argued. This includes discussions on the role of visual stimuli in learning, the issue over whether to use coursework or 'authentic' material, and the role of narrative in EFL learning.

The availability of new technologies such as digitalized video, together with its compatibility with computers, appears to compliment recent innovative approaches to language teaching such as constructivism, in which the emphasis is on collaborative discovery and construction of knowledge. The loss of face-to-face contact between learners during viewing can be compensated for by interaction within a collaborative learning environment. Within such a classroom, the teacher facilitates learning by selecting input material, and designing appropriate tasks that act to modify and enhance it, and thereby ensure that sufficient focus on form occurs alongside focus on meaning. The same tasks can help to put in place interactive viewing.

Key Words: video; digitalized video; interactive viewing; constructivism; 'authentic' material.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

"... learning is a process of discovery, information processing and expression."

(Pachler, & Field, 2001 : 251).

The current prominence of DVD players in the electronics stores in downtown Tokyo is surely indicative that video, at least in Japan, is in the process of being replaced by DVD. Viney (2003), in answer to the question: "How will English be taught in 10 years time?"

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during an interview comments: “I’d expect to see video (whether delivered by TV, video, DVD, or the Internet) as the basic teaching tool. But I said that ten years ago.” (p.2). As a writer of video coursework material, his continuing optimism is perhaps not surprising, but implied in his comments is that to date, video is not used to the extent it should be. This is despite the presence of these media in the homes of many teachers and learners, and that many associated with language teaching support their pedagogical use as aids to second language learning (for example: Lonergan 1984; Altman 1989 (in Fawkes, 1999); Stempleski & Tomalin 1990; Swaffar & Vlatten 1997). Viney (2003) further comments on the use of technological devices in language classrooms: “It’s insane that audio-cassettes and CDs are used so much more widely than video. There are all sorts of listening comprehension, pronunciation and mechanical activities that require the use of audio, but for providing a context and embracing communication skills work, video is unbeatable” (p.1). The provision of context for language and the need for communicative skills to be taught are particularly important in my teaching context in colleges within Japan, as they no doubt are within other EFL contexts. Video and DVD share characteristics as media for recording and viewing audiovisual moving images, however, DVD brings with it technological improvements and consequently, the potential for language learning far exceeds what video can offer. It is argued in this essay that DVD allows ‘authentic’ film to be tailored for use as suitable pedagogical material for language learners, and consequently, it is possible that using such media can lead to increased learner motivation, which is important for successful learning.

In this essay, video and DVD are compared and contrasted in technical aspects, and the case for their use as pedagogical aids for second language learning (SLL) is argued. Reference is made to theories on SLL and SLA (second language acquisition) and the role of visual stimuli in learning is examined. It is argued that selective video-film in the hands of an instructor can become an oasis of target language material, which is particularly useful in an EFL context such as Japan. The constructivist approach is briefly discussed with reference to creating collaborative environments within which learners can generate learner output and build hypotheses. The importance of learner motivation raises the issue over whether to use coursework or ‘authentic’ material, and the role of narrative in learning is also discussed. I relate my experiences in the classroom using both media with different types of material, including the use of subtitles. DVD is shown to have technical advantages over its predecessor. Not least are the implications of the compatibility of DVD format with computer technology.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Storage media

The ability to store data in a stable and efficient manner is of importance if something as sophisticated as recorded high quality audio-visual moving images are to be shown at convenience. The two main options available for storing media such as film are analogue or digital. Hard drives first appeared as a way to store digitalised memory temporarily on computers, but now the latest DVD players also contain them. As DVD players are sold, digital data storage replaces its predecessor, which is an indication that the customer has been convinced that the newer technology has more to offer at an affordable price.

Optical disks such as CD-ROMs store data more compactly than their analogue predecessors. Production costs of blank DVDs are less than that of blank videotapes. Most new computers with DVD-ROM drives can also play DVD-Videos, and some can also 'write' DVDs. Improved quality of audio-video recording is possible on hard drives, due to the considerable memory space—a DVD machine with an 80 GB hard drive allows between 17 to 102 hours of recording time. Hard drives make locating particular recordings a much simpler matter, and moreover, as with computers, editing is also possible. From these comparisons it can be seen that digital storage of data is more efficient than analogue, particularly with reference to DVD.

Practical use

Fawkes (1999) comments on other practical issues of using videotapes: "the opportunities for things to go wrong are considerable" (p.51). One problem he lists is that copies produced are of inferior quality to the original. In addition videotapes lose quality slowly with age and use. Overusing the pause button, something that is inevitable in a language classroom, can damage the tape by causing it to stretch. Less common, but possible is technical breakdown. With DVD, quality is maintained with copies and there are less moving parts to jam up. Different recording systems mean that British produced video material (PAL system) won't play in Japan (NTSC system) for instance. DVDs have similar restrictions relating to regions. Familiarity with a particular machine is as important as with the material for the lesson, particularly if the controls are labelled in another language. Finding the correct scene or frame on a film is getting easier, DVDs allow 'random access', which means play can begin at different 'chapters' (prearranged divisions of the recording), and in addition a choice of speeds for forwarding or playing

backwards, including increments from 1/2 to 1/16 of normal playing speed are available. (Unfortunately, on my machine, this does not apply to audio.) Many videotapes seem to start at a slightly different position after rewinding or even pausing, and therefore it can be a problem when trying to replay specific dialogue for listening. This does not occur with freeze frame in the case of DVD.

The increased storage capacity of DVDs means not only are some portable players much smaller than video players, but the visual quality is superior: “DVD delivers 540 horizontal lines of resolution making for much sharper images than the standard VCR format, which has 210 lines” Haddad (1999), and so is the audio quality. To sum up, not only is the quality superior, DVD recordings can also be accessed more conveniently and with greater flexibility for practical use. But surely the biggest implication of storing data in digital form relates to the traditional way of learning in the classroom, since digitalized data can be sent across networking systems, and via the Internet. This opens up opportunities for new ways of learning to be explored both within the classroom and outside in the form of distance learning.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Input and interaction

In order to understand how media such as video or DVD can be fully exploited as pedagogical tools, we must first examine some of the relevant theories on second language learning (SLL) and second language acquisition (SLA). Some of the terms relevant to language learning used in SLA theory are ‘input’ (exposure to target language); ‘comprehensible input’ (exposure of an appropriate level for the learner’s needs i. e. just above her present knowledge); ‘noticing’ (when language form is consciously registered); ‘intake’ (internalized data in short-term memory); ‘comprehension’ (understanding of the intended meaning); ‘interlanguage’ (the learner’s current knowledge of the target language); ‘output’ (learner produced target language); productive language skills (the ability to produce language as in speaking or writing); and receptive language skills (listening or reading).

Krashen (1985) argues the need for ‘comprehensible input’ as the primary requisite for acquisition. The need for such exposure is generally accepted, but his views are contested in so far that it is not generally accepted that productive language skills improve as a result of purely using receptive skills (for example Swain, 1985). Schmidt (1990) notes that

although noticing — ‘apperception’ in the model below — is crucial for input to become intake, it is not a sufficient condition (in Skehan : 48). One remedy for this is to make the input salient — “input enhancement” (Sharwood Smith, 1991, in Chapelle, 1998). However, Swain (1985) points out that comprehension of semantic meaning is possible without complete understanding of the linguistic features by recourse to using comprehension strategies, such as guessing with the aid of context or background knowledge of the topic in question. Whereas in language production, efforts made to communicate meaning (‘pushing output’) require greater attention on syntax to ensure being understood, and moreover, deficiencies in knowledge are brought to the learners’ focus (Swain, 1985). Consequently, Swain (1985), Swain and Lapkin (1995) state the need for ‘comprehensible output’ (output of an appropriate level). Furthermore, Long’s ‘Interaction Hypothesis’ (e. g. 1996) claims that during interaction, learners modify the language in their attempts to communicate (‘negotiation for meaning’), which results in ‘comprehensible input’.

However, Skehan (1998) comments: “... language use in itself, does not lead to the development of an analytical knowledge system since meaning distracts attention from form.” (p.27). He refers to the uses of both comprehension and production strategies when communicating in L1 (our first language) such as using context and elliptical language. Since some attention to form is necessary for intake, the remedy to this is by suggesting “modification” of input (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, in Chapelle, 1998).

Interaction is seen by many associated with language teaching as an important part of the learning process, as is some awareness of the form of the language. A useful model for understanding interactionist theory is provided by Chapelle (1998) [see Figure 1 below]. Chapelle comments that this model “summarizes a consensus view among interactionist SLA researchers”:

In order to facilitate the ideal conditions for learning to take place, there is a need to expose learners to input that is both ‘enhanced’ to make it ‘noticed’ and modified in some

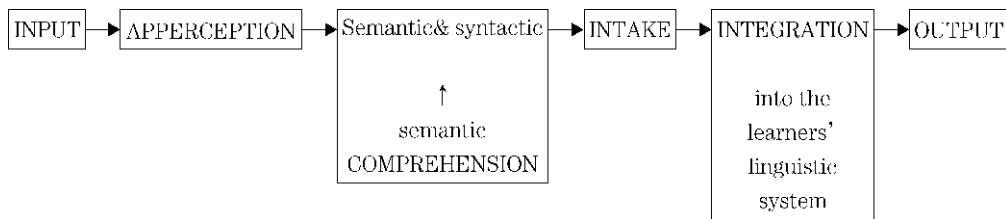


Figure 1 Basic components in the SLA process in interactionist research (Chapelle, 1998 : 23).

way in order to make it 'comprehensible'. Furthermore, the input should be stimulating enough as to be a resource for learners to 'push output' with the aim of achieving 'comprehensible output'.

The role of visual stimuli: moving images as enhanced input

There is evidence to support the case for using visual stimuli in learning, (for example, Altman 1989, in Fawkes, 1999 : 8). This is also true of the use of the moving images of video and DVD media, and as stated above, many argue the case for using video as a pedagogical aid. Swaffar and Vlatten (1997) comment: "... reading what is seen as well as what is heard enhances learning. ... When compared with students who have only print or auditory texts, learners supplied with video materials understand and remember more." (p.175). White et al. (2000) comment in support of video: "The visual channel can be seen as having a supportive and contextualizing function. It also provides a range of retrieval paths (visual, aural, contextual) to enhance learning effectiveness." (p.168). White et al. (2000) conclude that video particularly aided the "development of listening and speaking skills, including pronunciation," and portrayed examples of appropriate cultural use and sociolinguistic use of language. In addition, "students outlined the advantages of video, not the least of which were the affective aspects, reflecting high enjoyment levels and low anxiety, which contribute to language uptake and a positive orientation to the course." (p. 174).

A resource to generate output

The constructivist approach "emphasizes that social interaction and collaboration with others, where some form of scaffolding is provided, is central to the learning process" (Morley and Truscot, 2003 : 53). (Scaffolding is guidance and support that can come from those with a higher ability such as other learners, the teacher, or native speakers.) Furthermore Pachler and Field (2001) comment that within this approach "learning is a process of discovery, information processing and expression." (p.251). In the case of viewing video material, there is a need to process different modes of communication: a visual mode, a verbal one, and sound also conveys meaning in film, plus a written mode in the case of subtitles. Such texts can offer much as the subject of collaborative investigation by learners with set tasks aimed at revealing the form of language while exploring the meanings of the texts, and further activities aimed at promoting 'expression' (generating 'output') during social interaction.

Summary

With regard to the need for input, media such as video and DVD can provide audio-visual moving images, which are a rich source of material. As such they have the potential to enhance learning, since with the right application that is in combination with comprehensible input, they can: expose learners to appropriate use of language; aid memory recall; aid comprehension; support and contextualize. In addition this material can be used as a focus for learner interaction, and thus productive skills can be practiced alongside receptive ones in a multi-skills lesson. Furthermore, the active construction of knowledge by learners collaborating over tasks supports a constructivist approach to learning. Within this approach the role of the teacher is changed to that of a facilitator of the learning process rather than a dispenser of knowledge. This new role is crucial for selecting input material, and for designing tasks that act to modify and enhance it, and thereby ensure that sufficient focus on form occurs alongside focus on meaning.

PEDAGOGICAL USES

Motivation, attention, and passive learning

From my personal experience of teaching EFL in Japanese college classes, generally speaking, the first two obstacles to learning to be overcome are how to increase learner motivation, and how to shift the learner's role from a predominantly passive one towards a more active one. The latter obstacle is important since "... there is convincing evidence that ... pro-active learners ... learn more things and learn better, than ... reactive learners" (Knowles 1975 : 14, in Hedge, p.83). With reference to motivation, Berwick and Ross (1989) refer to the 'motivational wasteland' of the Japanese tertiary education system (p. 206). Ryan (1998) comments: "curriculum demands which fail to recognize the reality of communicative competence" result in many learners lacking motivation to study in the EFL classroom, (p.1). Their lack of communicative practice may, due to affective factors (relating to level of confidence for example), be a contributory cause of low motivation. Encouraging pro-active learning in these conditions is a challenge for the teacher. A problem relating to video and DVD media use as a pedagogical tool is that this same technology is mainly used in the learners' home for entertainment, escapism, and relaxation, all of which encourage a passive form of viewing. Consequently, interactive viewing has to be facilitated. Here face-to-face contact between the teacher and the students together with task design both play pivotal roles in bringing about a more active interplay

between the learners and the text being viewed. The teacher needs to both define learner roles within the classroom and put in place activities for them to do.

Coursework versus ‘authentic’ material

There are advantages for both the use of coursework video material (designed for second language learners) and ‘authentic’ material (aimed primarily at native speakers). Coursework video or DVD material has the advantage of being written for specific learners relating to ability, age and so on, and has the advantage of containing enhanced and modified input. Such material saves on preparation time for designing activities since there is accompanying material for tasks, and can be as rich in input as authentic material. However, from my experience with college students in Japan, once it is known to be coursework, and therefore in a sense contrived, interest often wanes. ‘Authentic’ material, on the other hand can be rather daunting with its denseness of input, much of which is unlikely to be ‘comprehensible input’ for all learners in a class. However, focus on discrete elements within tasks aimed at enhancing and modifying input has the potential to make it more comprehensible to learners. In this way chapters or smaller sections of the material can be examined repeatedly thus discovering the parts that make up the whole. It can be argued, of course, that the way of viewing is inauthentic as a result of the context it is being shown in i. e. an EFL classroom and the tasks learners are expected to perform, however this is inevitable in a language classroom where the priority is on learning. Furthermore a sense of purpose and achievement are surely important to learners — particularly with adults at college level — therefore, comprehending and discussing a film aimed at a native audience, surely feels more rewarding and worthwhile than the familiar type of coursework.

Analysis of past use of video

Evaluation of past pedagogical use of video is limited to observations made by myself while teaching in my own classrooms when using video as a supplement to coursework. On reflection, my previous approach to using video followed similar lines to Brian Hill’s (1999) three-phase approach to using video:

- First playing with or without previewing activities.
- Second playing, with pauses for work on activities.
- Third playing for reinforcement and to check activities.

One example of a previewing activity used was an information gap exchange done in small groups. This acted as an ‘advance organiser’ in that background knowledge (known

as ‘schemata’) was activated: the learners discovered personal details about the main characters of the coursework video, *A Weekend Away* (Viney, 1986). This material follows a short narrative in episodic form, and the strong characterization, from my observations, plays an important role in sustaining interest in this video. After doing previewing activities, interest and attention appeared to be noticeably higher. An initial brief, silent viewing enabled them to discover the genre. (Genre signals to viewers the type of narrative structure, and to a degree the kind of language that can be expected.) Moreover, an interactive kind of viewing was put in place. Activities to be done during the first viewing of the video with sound were kept to a few gist questions, since writing answers or checking worksheets can disrupt viewing if done simultaneously. On the other hand, without any activities there is a danger of passive viewing being adopted, as this is the usual way of viewing at home. In fact in previous classes, some of the students have put their heads on the desks, while others have started doing homework from other classes. Although this was not a significant number of them, it reveals that watching video can sometimes be perceived as somehow extracurricular and consequently unimportant.

Other activities used for further viewings focused mainly on comprehension of the narrative and included many activities familiar to coursework such as multiple-choice gist questions and listening for specific information. This combined questions relying upon listening skills with those relying upon what was understood from the visual imagery. For example, the visual mode was utilised in activities such as matching actions to characters names. The material was also a plentiful resource for discussion, and for writing tasks.

True Voices 1 (1998) is a different type of ‘coursework’ material, containing short skits designed around language functions, plus seemingly naturalistic conversations, interviews on topics and documentary material, and as such the video is more overtly coursework. Pausing the video did not appear to be disruptive to viewing this material, whereas in the case of *A Weekend Away* it noticeably disrupted the focus on the story. However, Hill (1999) claims that there is a need to pause in order to distract attention from often highly attractive visual images and maintain more focus on the actual language itself (p.6). Therefore, a balance has to be ascertained not only between the focus on meaning and on form, but at the same time maintaining sufficient learner interest and motivation. Furthermore, I observed with a third viewing of material, particularly with longer narratives such as this, that if the outcome was already known, interest and consequently attention both wane. This points to the importance of narrative as a motivational factor.

The most popular material used in my former classes was an adaptation of ‘authentic’ film. *The Wrong Trousers* (Viney, 1998) was taken from the Wallace and Gromit series

of animated films that first became popular in the UK. The adaptation divides the film into six five-minute episodes and includes an extended narration. The popularity of *The Wrong Trousers* comes with a caveat. High interest was most likely due to several factors: the style of the animation, the characterization, and an action-packed, humorous, and easy to follow plot, much of which can be deduced from the action contained in the visual images. Although, humour certainly plays an important part in this story, plot is surely an essential component. The fact that there was less need to focus on spoken language in order to understand this video implies that much of the input was not necessarily being noticed by the learners during the viewing. Here Hill's suggestion above can be put to use since after an uninterrupted viewing of the whole video lasting around thirty minutes, on subsequent viewings, pausing can be used to shift more focus to the actual language. An alternative is to place the focus of activities on learners producing their own target language as they comment on actions observed by them, characterisation, or recount the plot. In addition, such high interest material can be used as an introduction to prepare a class for different material in further video lessons. My main conclusion from the above discussion is that narrative appears to provide increased interest and consequently increase learner motivation.

Pros and cons of narrative

The role of narrative is not therefore simply aesthetic, it is central to our cognition from earliest childhood. (Plowman, 1996 : 96).

Consequently, narrative has an important role for education in general: "Narrative shapes our knowledge and experience and is central to the processes of teaching and learning because it aids reconstruction, retrospection, prediction and memory as well as motivation" (Plowman, 1996b, in Plowman 1998). Others back this position, with relation to language learning. For example Secules et al. (1992) argue, "An anticipatory mindset may contribute to the enhanced contextualization of new material ... as well as to the development of predictory strategies in relation to new material" (in White et al., 2000 : 168). Therefore the creation of a positive approach to learning can at the same time both aid recall and comprehension.

Topic, like genre, plays an important part in learner expectations and initial approaches to the material. When previously using another coursework video material with a group of students, the lower level material on the topic of news media was greeted with grunts and groans since it was perceived as too difficult by the learners, while later material shown to them — actually graded as more difficult by the writers — on the topic of dance

was accepted warmly without a complaint to be heard. Unsurprisingly, they interacted better with the latter. Surely this implies that the learners found or created more coherence in the latter narrative. Plowman (1996) puts forward this question: “Whether learners find narrative coherence which is already there or generate it for themselves is uncertain” (ibid, p.103). Whichever is true, it appears that the negative and positive attitudes in the case of my former students demonstrate the importance of an active and willing role in constructing coherence in text. Since a central pedagogical aim is to encourage interaction, and differing ‘narratives’ (interpretations) produced by learners surely have the potential to increase discussion. Moreover the teacher’s role extends beyond selection of the material to an active one in the classroom guiding and encouraging learners to participate both as viewers and communicators.

A framework for using film

On the question of copyrights, which vary in different countries, Jack Valenti, (2004), President of the Motion Picture Association of America comments that a teacher showing a movie in class is fair use. This is fortunate since ‘authentic’ film contains a wealth of material from which tasks can be designed. Eken (2003) makes this apparent in his framework, which examines film from four perspectives:

- Literary aspects— narrative, characters, setting, theme, signs, genre.
- Dramatic aspects— acting, costumes, make-up.
- Cinematic aspects— camera angles, movements, positions, sound and vision, lighting.
- Language work— vocabulary, skills. (P.53-54).

Eken concludes that feature films can help promote critical thinking skills, enhance speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. Dramatic aspects of the film on the one hand could invite a cultural focus regarding costumes, and the roles played and so on. Alternatively, evaluation of acting or the film may be possible using a more critical approach. Cinematic aspects also rely on a critical perspective of visual observation of the film. These perhaps would need comparative judgements to be made across a number of films.

With respect to language work, film as input can be used to develop language in general by designing activities to focus on specific skills such as those outlined above relating to video. Swaffar and Vlatten (1997) suggest that segments of under two or three minutes are useful for focusing on specific language. Spoken language can be observed for semantic, pragmatic (regarding turn-taking, formal and informal usage, and so on), phonological, syntactical analysis, and with a specific aim of learning lexical items.

Both language and images can be used as a focus for generating learner 'output', through description, prediction, and discussion. There is a wealth of material for role-play, or discussion such as over comparisons of cultural differences. The opportunity to examine differences between the spoken-grammar (conversational use) and the written-grammar that learners have often been prescribed is open since the context surrounding the use of language is provided by film.

Analysis of past use of DVD film

DVDs are more flexible since they can offer a choice of spoken languages and sub-titles in different languages. With English subtitles, comprehension can be made easier by changing the focus from listening supported by visual context to primarily reading supported by both visual context and listening. The written words can be examined with a focus on meaning or the form of the language, depending on the activity. DVDs also often contain various supplementary materials. Since animated film is a popular genre in Japan across a wide age group, and comic magazines are also popular and are widely read by commuters of varying ages on trains in the mornings and evenings, I chose to exploit an authentic animated sci-fi film *The Iron Giant* (1999) in order to put some of these ideas to practical use in the classroom and to gather further empirical data. This version, unlike the other three was on DVD.

An example of a class outline previously used by myself is as follows. I selected literary aspects as the best starting point, and the focus was placed primarily on narrative as a cognitive stimulus for discussion. Swaffar, J. and Vlatten, A. (1997) suggest that segments of film over two or three minutes result in learners producing their target language as they generalize about what they have seen and understood. Since the primary aim was that learners produce their own target language, as opposed to reiterating the language of the film, viewing with target language sub-titles was chosen. The focus was therefore primarily on reading and speaking activities with the focus on narrative aspects of film. Swaffar and Vlatten (1997) refer to this in their framework for video watching as: "Information as the basis for student perspectives". (p.181).

In a typical class, an introductory commercial with accompanying music was used as an 'advance organiser'. The aim was to discover the genre and make predictions about the characters and story based on the visual images. Once genre is determined, learners can develop some idea of expectations of the story, and even about language that may be used. Worksheets were shared between two or three learners to promote collaboration as interactive viewing was put in place. There was no pressure at this stage that they should

communicate only in English, but the answers were to be written in English and later related back to the whole class in English. The procedure explained was that the questions should be kept in mind while viewing, and answering was to be done when the film stopped. The eighty-seven-minute film was shown over six lessons and the film was divided into viewings of around twenty minutes each. Additional time was allowed for the completion of activities, discussion, viewing supplementary materials, and some overlap in showing the film. The aim was to avoid overtaxing the learners since focusing on spoken and written text in L2 (second language) can be very demanding.

The second lesson began with a recap by way of the documentary of the making of the film, which was viewed with interest. As far as the subsequent reading was concerned, the learners appeared diligent working at this and the questions they answered showed general understanding of what was happening. The subtitles, presumably for practical reasons, were sometimes shortened versions of the spoken dialogue. Since the film is aimed at not only adults but also at children, the language used was generally of a suitable level for the learners in question. On the final viewing, I observed that on average only one or two students in classes of twenty or more did not appear to be following attentively, which is a positive beginning in my teaching context. After the first segment had been shown, learners were asked to predict what was going to follow. Predictions were offered but were quite brief and simple. In future classes, I will give more lexical support by way of matching relevant key words to definitions and so on. One point about using either video or DVD is that the preparation required should not be underestimated.

The Iron Giant (1999) includes commercials for the film, which are good introductions or recaps of the gist of the story, and a thirty-minute documentary on the making of the film which was watched with interest by learners in some of my previous classes. Since in this particular material the language is of a higher level than that in the actual film, I selected Japanese subtitles to support the commentary in English. This opens up the opportunity for learners to simultaneously read translations in L1 (first language) as they listen to the words spoken. I cannot comment as to whether this actively took place or not. However, students had the opportunity to learn about the making of the film, while at the same time they were given access to some information from within the film in their own language — particularly useful for lower level students.

The final lesson began with a cloze activity of the plot to date, followed by a discussion of the predicted outcome of the film. One of the key phrases concerning a major theme in the plot was brought to attention. This key phrase occurs again at the end of the film. The question of its meaning and significance was posed, to provoke discussion. This was

aimed at leading into a discussion of the themes of the film and some of the symbols within it. After viewing the end of the film, learners were observed to be discussing and collaborating over different aspects of the film in small groups as preparation for individual members presenting their ideas to other groups. In this way the pressure of performing to the class as a whole was avoided, which enabled the less extrovert speakers to perform. Evaluation could be made on the degree of success in communicating ideas to other groups.

Further options for DVD

With DVD there are more options open than with video. It is possible to juxtapose different chapters (or scenes) in order to show a non-linear sequence to the film, and thereby highlight certain themes in the film. This could be done in relation to the key phrase that I highlighted for discussion (see above). Showing DVD on computers opens up more pedagogical options. Computer networking within the classroom allows individuals or groups (depending on the approach chosen) to view a film in a linear manner together as a class, or in a non-linear manner focusing on different parts of the narrative (as in a 'jigsaw' activity), or on different aspects of the film. In this way, different information can be processed by each group and later used to reconstruct the story through interaction across groups. Furthermore, the Internet allows such collaborative activities to take place across vast distances, thus making distance learning more viable. In addition, computer software available allows access to electronic reference tools (such as dictionaries). With computers, there is the potential for editing material. This allows greater flexibility since variable versions of the material can be tailored to suit different pedagogical purposes. Using DVD together with computers in this way can encourage more learner autonomy and further supports pedagogical approaches such as the constructivist one.

Drawbacks and challenges

The first major challenge is perhaps to change the habits of learners from their familiar passive way of viewing to a more interactive one. Task design is an obvious way to do this, and over a period of time the transition to a more pro-active role should occur. Even so, the use of multimodal media such as video and DVD can result in learners developing and overusing strategies to get the information required of them. For example, some may rely too heavily on the visual mode and consequently fail to use their listening skills, or reading skills (when subtitles are in use). Alternatively, they may rely heavily on reading

over listening. Therefore there is a particular need to ensure to sufficiently focus attention on the form with selective tasks at appropriate times — without disrupting the viewing to the degree that overall interest is lost. Since failing to focus sufficiently on form will result in little change to the learner's 'interlanguage'.

One of the obvious drawbacks to using video in class is the loss of face-to-face contact between learners, and between the teacher and them during viewing. However, this can be balanced, between viewings, with the need to work on tasks within a collaborative learning environment of the kind that supports a constructivist approach to learning. Here the teacher can have an impact on this.

The teacher's role as a facilitator

The teacher's sufficient presence in the classroom remains important to ensure face-to-face contact between learners continues, and to ensure that rapport between the teacher and learners is not hindered because of the continued focus on the media. Other roles include:

- Preparation including the selection of material to be viewed and the design of learner tasks.
- Presentation of the material and guidance for doing the taskwork, which are both crucial for maximizing learner interest and pro-active participation.
- Monitoring of activities includes observation of learner performance in class and correction of taskwork aimed at providing feedback to the learners and as research for future class planning.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, the only qualitative data I have quoted in this essay is based on my own observations of learners while I was teaching within my own classes. Whereas this is far from conclusive, I would like to add that attendance in these classes was marginally better than in similar classes that I taught without using video as supplementary material. There is however a need to ascertain the degree to which learner skills improved as a result of viewing video material in the classroom in comparison with a more traditional class based around the study of a text supplemented with audio material. I intend to do this at a later date.

The conclusions drawn are that there are important roles to play for both video and DVD

within EFL classrooms. However, there are clear advantages to using DVD in a traditional classroom approach to watching film. These include improved audio and visual quality, increased convenience, and more flexibility of use. As a result, language can be examined more precisely for analysis from both the perspective of listening and reading. There are many pedagogical options for use, as with video-film. One recommended use is to view 'authentic' film with a focus on narrative — within my own teaching context, this appeared to provide more interest than following video coursework. Moreover narrative clearly provides a framework from which new knowledge can be constructed. Thus in addition to providing a rich source of exposure, film can be used as a focus for generating learner 'output' during interaction, and in this way make up for the inevitable loss of face-to-face contact during viewing. The availability of related supplementary materials on DVDs are added resources to exploit. Together this media appears to be well suited to a constructivist approach of learning with the emphasis on collaborative discovery and construction of knowledge.

The flexibility of digitalised video allows non-linear sequencing, repetitive sequencing, and variable speeds of sequencing. Images can be viewed more than once and at slower speeds in order to observe details relating to narrative or relating to the socio-cultural behaviour of the characters. Furthermore, since the same applies to the audio mode (although not on all DVD players), in this way it is possible to enhance input from spoken language thus facilitating noticing. Thus digitalised video has the potential to allow more focus on form.

With the availability of multimedia technology, learners can access the material on their own or in groups via computer networking or the Internet and thereby study whichever segments appeal, and spend out of class time self-studying projects, and therefore can be a means of shifting towards greater learner autonomy. DVD provides new exciting opportunities for revitalising EFL classrooms. It is therefore, to use Viney's word 'insane' that technologies freely available in many homes are not being put to greater use in institutions of education, but no doubt, thanks to the development of DVD, sanity will soon prevail. One final problem worth mentioning is that learners may become reluctant to return to traditional ways of study. After the excitement of watching a major feature film with a larger than life plot, superheroes played by glamorous actors, special effects and popular music in the soundtrack, they may understandably become averse to opening the textbook. Unfortunately at present, I have no answer to this problem.

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