

Special Certificate – How to teach Audio and Video lessons

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I. Why we use audio and video in the classroom

This module aims to show you how to effectively use video and audio in your lessons.

You'll find out:

- why video and audio are such effective tools.
- how to make use of authentic material such as documentaries, news reports, dramas, sitcoms, films and adverts.
- some activities you can do involving audio and video.
- where to find authentic material for your classes.

Unlike in the past, today the amount of you can access is limitless, especially in countries where you have easy internet access.

There are very few places that have not been invaded by the television. One way or another in most countries you can access English-Language television programmes and films. If you have access to the internet you can watch news programmes, documentaries, sports and even advertisements as well as reality television. We are increasingly becoming a technology driven world and to be fluent in English now means also being able to watch 'real' television, real news and to be able to talk about it afterwards.

Bringing this technology into lessons is no longer a choice but a necessity. It also gives variety to lessons and can help maintain student interest and motivation. It can also encourage student autonomy. Moreover, the use of authentic video and audio brings students one step closer to the real world in which English is spoken. Watching people in different situations and being able to connect the actions that go with the words, gives students an added ability to 'feel' the language while watching it in a cultural context. Students can then put it to practical use later on.

In short, video and audio help bring the real world into the classroom and help us show the students '*how*', '*when*' and '*where*' real language is spoken.

I. Using video in the classroom

1. Types of video material

With many schools now investing in Interactive White Boards (IWB), using video in the classroom is not only easier and less time consuming, but also the variety of videos available are numerous. There are many types of video material that you can find both online and offline. The ways in which we use these materials are also numerous.

In the classroom we can use:

- Dramas such as films, soap operas and sitcoms
- Documentaries – [Youtube](#) , [Discovery channel](#), [National Geographic Channel](#) and [PBS online](#) or even are great online resources. On many DVD's you can now find a special section where the producers talk about how the film was made and some specific problems they faced, you might also find interviews with actors and actresses which would be great to use in the classroom.
- TV news and weather reports
- Talk shows and celebrity interviews
- Sports programs
- Game shows
- Educational films
- Cartoons
- Reality programs

We can use these:

- as they are in full or in short extracts (depending on the length)
- with or without sound
- for listening skills development
- for exposure to different accents
- to show the culture of a different country
- as a lead in for another activity such as a debate, a conversation lesson or a writing task.

2. Activities

Videos shown in their entirety are hard work and difficult to concentrate on unless your students are high level. Here are some ideas of ways in which you can use parts of videos in your class:

Sound only

Students predict the context (where it is, what the people look like etc).

Silent video viewing

Students watch the video with no sound and guess what they are talking about. This can be done to help students create role-plays using a target language.

Describe with the sound off

One student sits with their back to the TV and the other has to describe the action to their partner.

What happens next?

Stop the video and students have to guess what happens next. This can also be linked into a writing task – students have to write the ending.

What happened before?

Show an opportune part of a video and students have to guess what came before/led up to the incident. For example, show a scene where a woman is crying and students have to discuss why. Then play a scene that explains why and students can see if their guessed correctly.

Pause the video

Students have to make predictions based on a 'still' .

Critics

Students make notes and have to write a review of what they have just seen.

Questions

Students can watch and answer questions either by themselves, in pairs or as a team. The questions could be given before or after watching (if it is after you would need to know what type of questions they will be asked. Alternatively, you could get students to work in teams and make questions for another team.

When choosing what type of activity to do, take into consideration the level, age, size (large classes may not be able to see the screen), the aim(s) of the lesson and how long the class is.

II. Why we use audio in the classroom

Where access to video is not possible, using real authentic audio material like the news, dramas and talk shows can provide 'real-life' English context for students who may have no access to any native speaker other than their teachers. Teachers have a tendency to speak with English that is in most cases clear, well paced and English where the vocabulary is carefully selected to make the dialogue more comprehensible. With real audio, students are exposed to English as it is spoken naturally in the world today.

In many developing countries teachers will most probably not have access to video material. In such cases it may be possible to use shortwave transistor radios or tape players to provide authentic audio material that will pump life into your classes. Using authentic material is generally more interesting and 'fun' for students.

There are many types of programmes available on the radio today. These programs can help you in your theme or content-based lessons. It is very important when using audio material that students don't just listen passively, but are given specific tasks that help them keep their focus on the spoken language.

For example, you can use the [Voice of America](#) radio programs for a lesson directed toward Intermediate and above level students which is a good choice for students because the guests discuss very motivating current event issues. Voice of America even has a [Special English](#) section online.

You can use these talks as stimulus for a debate as well as for specific language focus. You could set the task of researching the person being interviewed before students actually listen to the interview, so that during the interview you can pause the tape after each question and allow students to 'guess' what the answer will be.

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II. Planning a Video or Audio Lesson

The nature of audio or video activities should progress from overall (global) understanding to detailed understanding. This means that a teacher has to do a great deal of preparation before the activity begins. Small excerpts can be used as warmers; however a teacher must keep 'passive' listening, where students must simply 'listen' and 'watch', to a minimum.

Any other use of passive listening and viewing will be a waste of time because students will have a very difficult time keeping their attention on the language as:

- words may seem to blend into one another
- students may struggle to separate the words, then put them back together in a meaningful way and then understand what was said
- students may try to translate the dialogue automatically in their minds

This whole process can be very tiring both physically and mentally and you will lose most of your students in a very short time. Therefore, giving students a focus and a purpose for listening is very, very important. When students have a task at hand then they not only comprehend better, but have a means of measuring their own comprehension at the end.

1. Preparation

There are many things to take into consideration when planning your video or audio lesson. When selecting your material you must consider what you want to achieve and based on this select the type of video you will use as well as the method with which you will use it. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind:

Choosing materials

When choosing materials, you will need to think about:

- what will capture your students' interest.
- if it is appropriate for their age and cultural background, etc.
- if the language structures and vocabulary are appropriate for the level.
- if there is bad language in the video.
- if it will help your students focus on what it is you want to teach them in that lesson.

Note: Don't try to use the video or audio in whole, remember that you can break up the video and use parts that fit your needs.

Set up

Make sure you have checked the equipment you will be using and that you know how to stop, pause, rewind or fast-forward the video or audio you are going to use. Make sure students throughout the room will be able to hear, that the seats are positioned for clear viewing of the screen and that the sound is not scratchy, foggy or too low. In the setup you must make sure if you are using the internet that you have a connection working and that the computer you will be using supports the program you need to use. Some online videos use Windows Media while others use Realplayer or Quicktime, all of which should be loaded on your computer and ready to use. Also make sure you have backup material in case the equipment fails or there is a power shortage.

Breaks

Make sure you have planned where you will pause the video to draw students attention to something or for a short task as well as where you take breaks to do other longer activities. The longer breaks should be spaced further apart.

Taking notes, writing

As you want to keep passive viewing or listening to a minimum it is a good idea to have students take notes, or answer questions while viewing or listening. It is difficult for students to read questions and write long answers when they are trying to view or listen at the same time so make sure your questions require short answers, are true/false or listing and 'checking off' type of questions. Also, make sure that the students have read all the questions 'before' viewing or listening. It is a good idea with advanced students to teach them note taking skills before you move into longer videos and audios.

Explaining

Often teachers will feel they need to explain the video to the students before they view it to help comprehension which will rob the students of the excitement and surprise of the video and sometimes they will hold back too much and this leave students lost and confused. So make sure you give just enough information to help them view comfortably. This might be pre-teaching vocabulary, it might be a short summary without giving up the ending or the surprise.

Audio from Video

Sometimes you might want students to 'listen' before they 'see' what is happening so make sure you have something to cover the television with, that you know how to blacken the screen or that you can actually turn the screen toward a wall.

2. Stages in a Video or Audio Lesson

I. Pre-viewing/listening Stage

The skills people use for listening and viewing in their own native language can also be used in the ESL/EFL classroom. The purpose of previewing tasks is to:

- generate interest
- to help develop their ability to grasp what they will be seeing and hearing
- to help them feel comfortable and less confused when viewing or listening

The previewing stage is perhaps the most important stage because if this is not done, or not done properly, students will be left confused and unable to follow as well as they could otherwise. Therefore this is not a stage to rush through in order to get to the 'real thing'. Think about how you will use the board, photos, vocabulary etc.

Also, it's important to note that some students may not see watching a film/T.V clip as 'learning', so you will need to stress in this stage why you are doing it.

Activities you might use:

- Inform the students of the type of video or audio they will be watching or listening to. Give them a title and ask them what they expect to see or hear.
- Have a brief discussion on the video topic.
- Briefly brainstorm vocabulary that might appear in the video or audio.
- Show part of the video with the sound off to allow them to guess the topic and the content
- Give students a short news article or story related to the topic of the video to generate conversation
- You might also give students a jumbled list of the stages the story goes through without revealing the end (this way students will be able to put the list in the correct order and become familiar with what they will be watching).
- Provide a list of true/false questions, fill in the blanks, or a check list and review each item in preparation for the viewing.

II. While viewing

It's usually a good idea to show the video more than once. Remember that your students are still learning the skills you are trying to teach. They will need repetition for certain things to set in. You can set different learning goals for each viewing. For example, in the first viewing, you could give students tasks that will help develop their listening skills and mainly allow them to catch the 'gist' of the video. Then in the second and third viewings you can give tasks that require them to provide more detailed information on content, grammar and vocabulary.

Activities you might use

- Students can watch to verify the predictions they made in the previewing tasks.
- Students answer comprehension questions.
- Teacher can stop the video at predetermined places and ask students what they think will happen next.
- The teacher can pause the video/audio to give information that might help make certain parts clear
- Students can take notes as they were taught in a previous note-taking lesson.
- Students can respond by selecting True / False answers, multiple choice answers or listing by checking off items.
- Students can fill in the blanks with vocabulary they heard in the pre-viewing tasks.
- Students can hold up flashcards with the words written on the cards when they hear that word in the video or audio.
- Students can listen for examples of grammatical structures and note them down.
- After the video has been watched a few times, you might also pause at certain spots and ask students what will happen next. You can turn off the volume and get students to say what the speaker is saying, or you can blacken the screen and get students to tell you what is happening on the screen

III. Post viewing

In the post viewing section the activities you select will depend on the purpose of the video. If the video was used as a stimulus then it's highly likely that the tasks you will have students do will not be connected to the language in the video. Otherwise, post viewing tasks can help students start a discussion, a debate or a role play. They can get students to see how much they have understood and reinforce what they have just learned.

Activities you might use

Language use

- Students read a story related to the topic and compare this with the video.
- Students can role play what they watched or listened to.
- Students can reorder scrambled dialogue from what they have just watched.

Projects

- Students can create posters, newspapers, flyers based on what they watched.
- Students can be given a project to find more information on the topic using the internet.

Production

- Students can be asked to draw characters from the video
- Students can be asked and guided to make a book based on what they watched.

Other activities.

- Students can run debates
- Students can describe what people were wearing and doing on the video
- They can write a summary of what they watched or listened to by using their notes.

3. A lesson sequence

1. Choose a video or audio that you think will capture your students' interest. Also make sure it is appropriate for their level, age, cultural background, etc. and that it helps your students focus on what it is you want to teach them in that lesson.
2. Think of a way to generate an interest in the text (consider how you would use the board, photos, headlines, vocabulary etc.).
3. Make sure you review all possible 'difficult' vocabulary. Pre-teach vocabulary that would make the viewing smoother.
4. Set the first viewing task.
5. Stop the video and get feedback on the answers students have given.
6. Set a second more detailed viewing task and allow students to watch a second time. You may use some of the more complex tasks mentioned above.
7. Feedback on responses
8. Do a post viewing task.
9. Give students a follow-up activity and homework.