

Silence, Camera, English!

We were all students once; we all know how boring and monotonous classes can be if our resources are limited to textbooks. What if we could make our classes educational and enjoyable? As an English teacher in South Korea, I tackle this education/entertainment issue on a daily basis. In doing so, I have come up with a way in which to enhance English classes, ultimately making them more enjoyable for both English teachers and students.

Silence, Camera, English!

This is my way of keeping my classes interesting—by incorporating short videos into lessons. Videos illustrating everyday practical situations provide students with real-life scenarios. Amato (2003) and Larimer and Schleicher (1999) discuss and illustrate the value of using this medium in classrooms. They state that videos have an enormous impact on students' communicative ability. Moreover, students find video-based classes to be useful in developing their English proficiency because they get to see what they have learned in practice (Amato, 2003). Having seen the applicability of what they have studied, students become more motivated to learn English, hence my use of short videos in my classrooms.

The first step in *Silence, Camera, English!* is to choose an appropriate video. Videos of 3 to 5 minutes in length work best, as they are long enough from which to create meaningful dialogue in the classroom and short enough as to not lose students' attention. Teachers can easily access short videos online for free from Internet sites such as YouTube (www.youtube.com), Google (www.video.google.com), CNN (www.cnn.com), BBC (www.bbc.com), and MSN Video (www.video.msn.com).

After selecting the site from which to view the videos, it is important to prescreen them in order to make sure they are appropriate for your classroom context. The following are guidelines I have created and follow in determining what is appropriate for the classroom:

- ✓ The video should be no greater than 5 minutes in length
- ✓ The speech should be clear and easy to hear
- ✓ The video should be slow in both speaking and pace (i.e. not so quick as to lose the audience)
- ✓ The content should be appealing to the audience
- ✓ The content should be appropriate for age and maturity level of students

Then, have students take out a pencil, an eraser, and a sheet of paper and explain to them that they will be watching a short video clip. Students view the video twice: the first time to internalize the information and the second time to take notes on what was viewed.

During the first viewing, students simply watch and listen to the video. Writing is not to take place during this time, as listening comprehension is the focus of the activity at this time. Afterwards, the students discuss what they have just seen. In roughly 6-10 minutes, they should be able to answer basic questions such as who, what, when, where, and why.

Following the discussion, the students view the video clip once more. During the second viewing, the students write down as many details as they can about what they just watched. Once the video has finished, they organize their ideas by writing a few sentences. This whole process should take roughly 10 minutes to complete (give or take depending on how many students are in the class). When the students are finished writing, they each share what they have written by standing up and orally presenting their sentences to the class.

At this time, the teacher now becomes a moderator. He facilitates the discussion by prompting the class with questions such as “do you agree with what was said? Why or why not? What would you do if you were in that situation?” Essentially, the main goal is to get the students talking; get them involved in the communication process. Amato (2003) states, “output plays a substantial part in the acquisition process. It not only aids in receiving comprehensible input, it offers opportunities for practice and appears to be an important means for students to test hypotheses and to notice gaps between the learner’s output and the native speaker’s output” (pg. 67).

Finally, this video clip session concludes and the class moves on to the next video or another activity.

I have used this English teaching method several times. On each occasion, the students really enjoyed it. If you have the technology available in your class, why not use it for the benefit of the students? After all, *Silence, Camera, English!* is easy to do, requires minimal preparation time, and offers tremendous benefits for students. In closing, I leave you with a breakdown for this activity.

- ✓ Get the class settled and have them get their materials ready – 5 minutes
- ✓ View the video once – 2 to 5 minutes
- ✓ Discuss what was just viewed – 6 to 10 minutes
- ✓ View the video clip once more, this time taking notes – 4 to 8 minutes (extra time allotted for pauses in the video, allowing students to write down what they see and hear)
- ✓ Organize observations into sentences (10 minutes)
- ✓ Present what they observed and discuss each accordingly (approximately 10 minutes depending on the class size)

Total Time for the activity = approximately 45 to 50 minutes

References

Amato, P. (2003). *Making It Happen – From Interactive to Participatory Language Teaching*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education

Larimer, R.E. and Leigh Schleicher, L. (Editors) (1999). *New Ways in Using Authentic Materials in the Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

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