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## Improving the Use of Video in SACs

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**Key words:** Self-access centers, video techniques, language learning

**Summary:** The purpose of the present work is to suggest several techniques to use video more effectively in self-access centers (SAC). First, there is a presentation of the findings about the use of video in a Mexican SAC. Then, there is a rationale of the use of video and the presentation of techniques for video. Finally, there are suggestions for students to learn to exploit these sources and recommendations to train students to use this equipment better and learn more while using it.

### Findings of a study about the use of video at a SAC

I started this talk presenting the findings of a research that was conducted at a SAC at the Autonomous University of Baja California in 2002. In this study I tried to identify the preference of students for the use of the media available at this SAC and their actual use, including video. I found that 51 % of the users preferred computers as their first option. They mentioned that some of the advantages of using computers were interactivity, easiness of use, promptness, good sound, provision of enough practice, especially for pronunciation and the development of

skills. For most of these users, their second option would be the video. 42 % said that because they thought video facilitated their learning. They said that they could relate what they were listening to what they saw. Some other opinions were that video was more accessible, easier to handle and easier to predict what people were saying. Two persons said they liked this medium because it was visual. The third option was the audio- tapes. 53 % said they would use them as a last option. Their comments were that the sound quality was bad. But some others stated that there were some advantages, such as that the audio programs had complementary material to read and listen while working in this area and that they could improve pronunciation. The next tables summarize the findings reported regarding the preference for video.

RANK	CASSETTES	VIDEO	COMPUTERS	% that gave an answer
1	10 7%	60 42%	74 51%	100%
2	33 23	60 42%	29 20	85%
3	77 53%	6 4 %	27 19%	16%

VIDEO
It facilitates my learning =13 I can relate what I listen and what I see, this facilitates my learning=5 More accessible=3 I am visual= 2 Easier to handle= 2 I can watch and listen= 1 It easier to predict=1 To get fun=1 More attractive=1 I feel comfortable=1 30 opinions

VIDEO
Ingles sin Barreras= 67 Movies= 50 Family Album= 29 New Interchange= 22 Documentaries=8 Only in America= 6 Central News= 2 Voc and grammar= 1 True Colors= 1 Reward elementary= 1 187 suggestions

Vocabulary	Grammar	Writing	Pronunciation	Read	Speaking	Listening
93	20	20	107	7	54	103

Students were observed while working at the video room, this allowed the identification of following activities:

- Taking general notes=40 of pronunciation= 1 of new vocabulary=18 and then look up in a dictionary
- Trying to understand=20
- Listening=17
- Watching and listening=15
- Repeating=7 Repeating for pronunciation= 6
- Paying attention=9 to pronunciation=3
- Doing exercises=5
- Nothing=4
- Practicing vocabulary=2
- Analyzing= 2
- Summarizing=1
- Writing words=1
- Visualizing objects=1 images=1
- Relating audio with images= 1
- Rewinding the video as needed=1
- Understanding message paying attention to the known words=1

When they were asked if they thought complimentary printed materials were needed, most of them answered affirmatively and stated their reasons as shown in table 4.

Table 5 Need for complimentary materials	
SI	NO
<b>135</b> Facilitating learning= 20 Things are more comprehensible= 19 Reinforcing= 10 Understanding better= 9 As a complement= 6 Guide= 6 Additional Support= 5 Provides further practice= 4 All senses are activated=3 Practice is needed= 3 For audio they are compulsory= 3 Practice all skills=1 Verify learning= 1 Get familiar with text= 1 I need to see and listen= 1	<b>6</b> REASONS: I get distracted, notes are enough=2

### Reasons for using video in English learning

The following are some of the allowances of using video in English language learning (ELL):

1. Motivation: Ss like the combination of sound and images because the message can get through more effectively in a more realistic way.) Video brings “slices of living language” into the classroom” (Lonergan,1984, p.48)

2. Communication: Prepares students for communication through different types of activities such as role playing, giving one's opinion where students will have the opportunity to talk and communicate more effectively (Loneragan, 1984, p. 4).
3. Non-verbal aspect: Permits students to pay attention to body language people use to communicate.
4. Cultural awareness: Video provides students with the opportunity to look at cultural aspects of the native language speakers as well as look at the differences among cultures (Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990, pp. 3-4)
5. Other reasons that are outstanding are "present, exemplify, consolidate and revise language" (Miro, Dec. 1998, p. 2).

### **Video techniques that can be used with video**

#1

- a) Choose a video with a sequence and mute the sound.
- b) See the sequence and try to predict what is going on (take notes)
- c) Watch the video with sound and confirm your prediction

#2

- a) Choose a video and cover the screen
- b) Listen to the segment and imagine what is going on (Take notes) (part of the story can be given so that students only have to complete it)
- c) Watch the video with sound and images and confirm what you heard.

# 3

- a) Choose a sequence and watch it once
- b) Watch it again without voice and reconstruct the dialogues
- c) Listen to them again and confirm

# 4

- a) Choose a video and listen to the dialogues carefully
- b) When you listen to an expressions or the pronunciation of a word or phrase that you are not familiar with freeze the image and repeat it.
- c) Repeat these steps several times until you can produce the sounds well.

Some of these ideas were taken from Harmer, 1998; Viney and Viney, 1999; Cooper, Lavery, and Rinvolucris, 1991 and Stempleski and Tomalin, 1990.

## **Suggestions to facilitate the use of video and train the students in the SAC**

Finally, I present some suggestions to help users improve the use of the video in SACs. First, I present some suggestions for some problems with the materials and at the end I present some suggestions for training the users at these centers.

### For materials

#### **Problem: It is necessary to improve the quality of the materials.**

Recommendations:

- a) Make an exhaustive and continuous revision of each video to verify that the quality of the sound and image is good and that the episode or sequences are complete.
- b) Make more copies of the media programs that are most frequently used.

#### **Problem: Accessible and helpful complementary materials for video programs have to be obtained to promote the development of skills and the exploitation of the equipment.**

Recommendations:

- a) The available complementary materials have to be displayed together with the video programs. A plastic bag that can be hanged is suggested.
- b) The available complimentary material has to be adapted in different ways.
- c) Divide the books in units to make them more manageable for students and edit video per unit or episode too.
- d) Make recordings directly from the media: music, news reports, movies, documentaries, commercials, TV shows, etc. to expose students to different genres and accents.
- e) If there are not printed materials for the authentic materials such as the ones mentioned in letter d, make worksheets that promote the development of certain language skills. Pay special attention to the development of communication skills and the use of context
- f) To design the worksheets keep in mind the following requirements:
  - ✓ There is a clear objective (To develop one skill)
  - ✓ Instructions are to be clear and simple
  - ✓ Include the name of the video
  - ✓ It should be clearly labeled with a classification code
  - ✓ The task has to be challenging

- ✓ Feedback (Carvalho, 1993)
- ✓ Activities have to be short (Yoke & Brown, 1994)
- ✓ Ss use the functions that the equipment provides: Ask them to freeze the image at a certain point and ask them to write a description of the scene so that they get contextual cues for further understanding of what people are saying.
- ✓ Make sure this procedure or activity can be used later on in another similar situation so that autonomy is promoted in the learners.

#### For training

#### **Problem: Students do not use the functions the equipment offers**

#### Suggestions:

- a) Special workshops to teach students how to exploit the available resources, equipment and materials, can be implemented every week.
- b) Teach students to use the work sheets especially designed to use the different media where special emphasis is given to the use of the functions the technology offers.
- c) Design information booklets to explain how to exploit technology better and acquire more language skills

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