

# On the Use of Video Clips in College English Teaching

## UTILISATION DU VIDEOCLIP DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT DE L'ANGLAIS UNIVERSTAIRE

Wang Xiaoning<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The use of video clips in college English teaching is of great significance and necessity and it has its own utilizing principle, yet not every college English teacher knows it, nor can they use them well. Combining the experience of my utilizing it and the students' feedback., this paper studies its advantages and using principles.

**Key Words:** the use of video clips, college English teaching, utilizing principle

**Résumé:** L'utilisation du vidéoclip dans l'enseignement de l'anglais à l'université est d'une grande signification et nécessité. D'ailleurs, elle a son propre principe d'utilisation. Mais tous les enseignants d'anglais ne le savent pas, ni l'emploient bien. En combinant ma propre expérience et le feedback des étudiants, l'auteur étudie les avantages de l'utilisation du vidéoclip et son principes d'emploi.

**Mots-Clés:** utilisation du vidéoclip, enseignement de l'anglais universitaire, principe d'emploi

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many universities and colleges in China have invested a large amount of money to set up multimedia equipment in classrooms to improve teaching and learning condition and effect. As a College English teacher, I found it has many advantages to use Multi-media technology in language teaching and learning, especially, we can play video-clips in class. It is quite necessary and important to do so and it is feasible to use it. Yet, not every college English teacher know it nor can they use them properly in their teaching. Some conservative teachers even think that it is a lazy way to play video clips in class or it's just to pursue fashion to satisfy the psychological need of the students, for students only like to watch the fun. I have utilized it for the past a few years, I would like to share the experience of using it with other college English teachers.

### 2. THE FEASIBILITY OF USING VIDEO CLIPS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

Video clips can refer to clips from films in the original language: English. They can also refer to other

videotape materials in English. To a certain degree, movies usually have plots which can attract students most. To use video clips in college English teaching, besides other necessary conditions, such as power, the following three aspects should be satisfied: multimedia equipment in classroom, video clips and creative teachers or teachers who like challenges.

As for the first one, it's well-known that nowadays, in China, many universities or colleges have set up multimedia equipment in classrooms, so it's convenient for teachers to use multimedia courseware in classes. As regards to video clips, there are some multimedia coursewares to accompany the several popular textbooks used in China now, such as College English (new) published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, New Horizon College English published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press etc. In these coursewares, there are some brilliant video clips taken from some famous movies and other videotape materials in the original Language.

As to the last one, not all college English teachers like challenges or new things. Some conservative teachers think that it's a lazy way to play video clips in classes. I don't think so. Firstly, even if the ready-made courseware provides the proper clip, it will take teachers some time to watch it again and again before class to have a good understanding of it. Secondly, if the video clip given by the ready-made courseware is too difficult, or not so interesting, it is necessary for teachers to prepare other material. In order to select the better one,

<sup>1</sup> School of Foreign Languages, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China.

\*Received 21 December 2006; accepted 11 February 2007

sometimes, we have to see several relevant movies or other videotape materials to compare them, and to choose the most thrilling, relatively complete part. Of course, it's a great challenge for teachers to know the technique of clipping. While to be creative, to use new methods and new technology in teaching are just the qualities we college English teachers should have.

### **3. THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF USING VIDEO CLIPS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING**

#### **3.1 Exposing students to authentic language environment**

While watching video clips, students are exposed to authentic language environment. In the clips, students can appreciate vivid pictures, thrilling plot, fantastic music, colorful background, living characters and especially their standard English. While watching and listening, the students smile, laugh and sometimes even cry. They feel nervous, happy or excited with the actors or actresses as if they were in the real circumstances.

#### **3.2 Arousing students' interest in learning English**

It is really a fashion to use video clips in college English teaching compared with the traditional language teaching method in China: chalk +blackboard + teacher's introduction and explanation. It also satisfies the psychological need of the students. They want to know something by themselves about the westerners' living style, living habits, thinking model, their food, their clothes, and above all, they want to know what and how the native speakers speak in different language context. I think watching video clips is a good way, if not the best. Students not only watch the fun, but also learn something consciously or unconsciously. After watching the clips, they are often attracted and excited and they would like to talk about the given questions or express their opinion about the story happened in the clip.

For example: While teaching Unit Seven Emergency, of College English (new) Book I, I played the video clip from Movie "Virtual Limit". It is a ready-made material from the Multimedia Disc of College English (new) Integrated Book I produced by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. The clip shows us a very gripping plot: while climbing mountain, because of an accident, father, his son and his daughter were hung by the same rope, but the rope couldn't hold them three for too long. At the emergent moment, father ordered his son Peter to cut the rope to let him drop. As a result, father himself dropped down dead and his son and daughter were saved. This video clip lasts about six minutes, only a part of the movie, but it is relatively

complete. Moved by the thrilling plot, the students are eager to say something about what they've seen. Then I asked some questions for discussion and talk. "what do you want to say most after watching the clip?" "If you were Peter, what would you do?" "What qualities are necessary when one handles an emergency?" The last question is closely connected to Test A of this unit: "How could Anthony save the two kids? What qualities does he have in handling an emergency?" Many students try to get the first word in. Someone said: "If I were Peter, I would not do such kind of dangerous things and I would not let my family members do it." Others said: "It is very great of the father to lose his life and save his children" "The father was very calm in the face of danger" "Calmness, bravery, decisiveness and kind-heartedness are necessary qualities when one handles an emergency" "If I were Peter, I would not cut the rope. If live, live together. If die, die together. Otherwise, even if I survived, I would blame myself for it for the rest of my life." "If I cut the rope, I would be guilty all my life and can't live well." "Peter has no choice but to cut the rope in such a kind of circumstance or three of them would die." . . . From the students' performance, I know that their desire, their enthusiasm and their passion to express themselves in English are stimulated and evoked after watching the very clip.

#### **3.3 Letting students learn something about the living style and culture of the English speaking countries**

From the video clips, students can not only learn standard English, they can also learn something about the living style and culture of the English speaking countries. For Example, while teaching unit nine Text A Premarital Agreements (New Horizon College English, Reading and Writing Book III), I showed a video clip about Wedding Ceremony in an English speaking country. In the clip, students saw the whole process of the wedding ceremony, including what the bride and bridegroom wore on that day, what the priest said in the ceremony, how they exchanged rings, when the bridegroom kissed the bride and so on. From the clip students can learn one cultural aspect of the English speaking countries.

### **4. THE PRINCIPLES IN USING VIDEO CLIPS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING**

#### **4.1 The Materials should be relevant to the topic or theme of a certain unit**

In college English textbooks, each unit has a certain topic or theme. By conducting a series of reading, listening, speaking, writing and translating activities related to the theme, students know more information

about the theme and improve their English practical utilizing ability. While the purpose of showing the video clip is to arouse the students' interest in the theme so that they can learn better. So it is important that the material should be relevant to the theme of the unit. For instance, when teaching College English (new) Book I, for unit two Friendship, I showed them a video clip taken from the film Forrest Gump. For unit six Animal Intelligence, I played the video clip from the movie King Kong.

#### 4.2 The chosen video Clips can't be too long or too short

The video clips can't be too long or too short. The appropriate lasting time may be five to ten minutes. If it is too long, it will take a lot of time, which may influence the study of other content, such as the analysis of the text, the language point study or other practice activities. If too short, it is difficult to have a relatively complete plot. It's a fact that students would like to see the whole movie or program and they would make such request. This just shows their interest in it. Why not make full use of their interest by showing just a little part of the material in class? Class time is quite limited. If they like, they can watch more after class.

#### 4.3 Some work should be done after watching the video clips

After watching the video clips, it is quite necessary to have a talk or short discussion about it. After input, that's after watching, listening, it's the students' turn to

speak, or to create English sentences by themselves. To train or to improve student listening and speaking skills and competence is just what we have to achieve. Teachers can prepare some questions before class for students to answer promptly. They can also ask students to have a discussion in groups first and then ask them to give their report. If possible, they can also let students first do some preparation and then perform a debate on a certain problem. After seeing the clip, teachers can also ask students to collect more information about the related topic after class and show it to the class next time.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The above is just my introduction and analysis of using video clips in college English teaching. In classes, I mainly use clips from movies. In fact, if necessary and possible, we can use clips from any other videotapes related to the theme of a unit. The purpose of using it is to arouse students' interest in English especially their enthusiasm to listen and speak English. It's well-known, college English teaching used to conduct on the principle of reading-oriented training rather than listening and speaking tasks. The result turns out that learner's examination capability outweighs their linguistic competence. One of the main reasons is the lack of proper teaching equipment and technology to expose students to authentic language environment. Now that we can use multimedia technology in teaching, why not make full use of it, why not using the most attracting teaching material — video clips in college English teaching.

### REFERENCES

- Li Yinghua, Wang Deming, Xiao Guozhuo & Yu Jianzhong, *New Horizon College English (Reading and Writing) Book III*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2003.
- Zheng Shutang, *College English (new) Integrated Book I*, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2002.

### THE AUTHOR

**Wang Xiaoning**, female, M.A., associate professor of Foreign Languages School, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law.

Research field: English Language Teaching.

Address: School of Foreign Languages, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Wuhan, 430073, P.R. China.

E-mail: wxnok@126.com