

Video and Grammar-Based Learning Material

by *Alan Fisher*

Video today is widely-hailed as an important supplementary resource for the language teacher. Yet its use remains haphazard. Too often it is plugged into lessons without regard to the overall context, curriculum or textbook design. But certain rules have emerged from the extended use of video over the past decade. These rules will be examined below to determine how they effect application of videos to grammar-based material used widely in Japan today.

Choosing a grammar-based textbook model reflects the dominant role that grammar continues to play in the language curricula throughout Japan. However, the criteria presented below should be equally applicable to notional-functional-teaching materials popular in many American textbooks today.

No matter what the approach, the key to optimal use of supplementary video is an awareness of the relationship of the video to the central purpose and direction of the learning activities around which the lesson is built.

Video use can be divided into two large categories: those enhancing the general context and those delimiting it. In the first category are videos used to introduce the lesson or those used as the central focus of the lesson itself. Category two involves amplifications of specific aspects of the lessons including supplementary or tangential exercises and summarizing.

No matter what part of the lesson is involved, understanding the video's relationship to the context remains crucial. Otherwise the teacher risks disrupting the lesson. Even though students may enjoy the video segment, a poorly selected video may actually confuse students and retard achievement of pre-determined educational goals.

Other factors are important in optimal video use. The time scope of the video must be considered. Most videos are used only a single time and can be thus termed

“single-slot”. Others, usable in segments over two or more lessons can be called “multi-slot”. Included in this category are videos of global context around which central learning activities are organized. Such videos involve a majority or sometimes all lessons of a curriculum or textbook.

Most supplementary video selection is based upon similarity or amplification of themes found within the central lesson context. Video use tends to be primarily illustrative of all or part of the core context, though, in some cases, it merely serves as a break in the lesson.

However a much wider range of goals and activities are available to the teacher today. For example, in using video to expand the core lesson with supplementary activities, the teacher can choose from among the following techniques: content-based questions, problem-solving activities, pair-work, dyads, student-generated dialogues, dictation and linguistically-based activities ranging from substitution drills to complex sentence transformations. An introductory video can provide a theme to an otherwise grammatically-based lesson. It can also expose students to natural speech against a variety of background noise.

Generally when we speak of supplementary videos, we are referring not to pre-prepared educational materials, but to films, TV shows and documentaries made for native-speaker audiences. Some of these videos may be subtitled or dubbed in Japanese.

The second part of this article will show how these videos can be used with *American Streamline Departures*, a grammar-based textbook written by Bernard Hartley and Peter Viney. The book is widely-used at universities and language schools throughout Japan.

The use of video in each lesson below will be categorized with a five-point schema. First the grammatical “focus” of the lesson as defined by the authors of the textbook will be given, followed by the title of the “film” and a description of the segment to be shown, Next film “length”, e.g. the total time students will spend viewing the video in class and the specific “relationship” of the video to the lesson context will be stated. Finally the basic classroom activity “will be described.

Lesson 1

Focus: Greetings, I’m a student. Are you a student? Is he from Canada? Where is she from? Yes, you are. No, I’m not.

Film: *The Graduate* Use the scene where Dustin Hoffman accidentally wanders into a wedding and winds up on the reception line.

Length: 30 seconds

Relationship: Model for supplementary exercise

Activity: Divide the class into “hosts” and “guests” Give each their half of the dialogue and have them practice twice in their seats with a partner. Then line the hosts up against the wall, each facing a guest. As each pair finishes the dialogue, have the guest move in front of the host on the left. Continue this until each guest has returned to his/her initial host. Teachers may instruct students to exchange papers and roles at any time.

Lesson 2

Focus: We're American. We aren't English. Are we Japanese? Yes, we are. No, we aren't. Names of countries. Nationalities.

Film: Use a compilation of film clips of movie stars and other public figures. Coming attractions, newsreels, news program, and talk shows are useful sources since they frequently feature more than one celebrity at a time. Note: It is time-consuming but not difficult to make your own compilation. Use two video machines of the same format (two VHS, two Beta etc.) Play the original tape on the master and the blank tape on the second one. Crude but effective editing can be accomplished by pressing the pause or freeze frame on the machine which is recording.

Length: Ten to thirty minutes depending on tape length.

Relationship: Expansion of core lesson activities

Activity: Show the tape clip by clip. Have the students identify the country and/or nationality of each person. Help students as necessary by providing choices, ex. “Is he French or German?” Also use the tape to practice the structures focused on in the first half of the lesson.

Lesson 3

Focus: What is it/ this/ that? Is it a pen? It's a pen. Are they pens?

Film: Use the opening segment of *Footloose* showing the characters at church and driving in the countryside.

Length: Ten minutes

Relationship: Supplementary activity practicing /s/, /z/, /IS/ as used for plural endings. It is difficult for students to distinguish these sounds when they occur in final position which creates further problems since the sounds are used for forming possessives and third person simple present endings. Extended practice in a contextualized format is therefore needed.

Activity: a) As a multi-slot activity: Write a series of sentences about the film segment or transcribe dialogue from the film. Prepare student handouts omitting plural forms wherever they occur in the sentences. Place the phonetic symbol for the correct plural ending at the beginning of each sentence.

Ex. /z/ There aren't many people in their — tonight (omitted word: homes). Show the film, then pass out the handout. After students have received their handouts, read each sentence aloud twice. Have the students fill in the missing word. Check the answers, then have students turn their papers over. Read the words which were previously omitted again, and have the students identify the correct phonetic ending. Continue this activity through subsequent lessons. Use five to fifteen minute segments of the film until you show the entire film, or select segments for further use.

b) As a single-slot activity: Select a 3-10 minute dance sequence, and write sentences about it.

Lesson 4

Focus: What's my/your job? My/ her/ our names is/ are Jones. What are our/ their jobs? What are our/ their names?

Film: a) Select a film which has multiple scenes of people at work. *Saturday Night Fever*, for example, has shots of a cook, a clothing salesman, a paint shop clerk, a paint shop owner, a disco dancer, a dancing teacher and a policeman. View the film before using, and locate distances between scenes on the timer. In class use the fast forward search to move from one scene of men or women at work to the next one.

Length: Two minutes plus an additional two or three minutes needed to locate scenes.

Relationship: Supplementary exercise

Activity: Have the students identify each occupation either individually or in teams.

Help students as needed by providing the first and if necessary subsequent let-

ters of the occupation word.

Ex. 1st clue: e _ _ _ _ _

2nd clue: e n _ _ _ _ _

3rd clue: e n g _ _ _ _

answer: engineer

Film: b) Show all or part of the opening scenes of *Top Gun* ending with Tom Cruise's safe landing on the aircraft carrier.

Length: Five to ten minutes depending on whether the opening credit sequence is included.

Relationship: Introduction to the central lesson

Activity: Ask students if they'd like to be a pilot. If unable to elicit answers, tell about or dictate sentences about a pilot's work.

Ex. He must take off.

He must fly the airplane.

He must see well.

He makes a good salary.

Ask students about other jobs that pay good money.

Lesson 5

Focus: High frequency adjectives, Negation of is, are.

Film: *Flashdance*

Length: a) Single-slot, 20 minutes

b) Multi-slot, 90 minutes

Relationship: a) Single-slot, extension of the main activity

b) Multi-slot, introduction of lesson segment

Activity: a) Single-slot. Select a portion of the film. Pre-select characters and objects. Press pause when they appear, and have the students decide which of a pair of adjectives best describes what is on the screen.

Ex. (Jenniifer Beals is on the screen.) Question: Is she ugly or beautiful? b)

Multi-slot. Show the entire film, Use a subtitled version. This will provide you and the students with a common experience about which you can talk. Use as described above for lesson 5. Then use subsequently in thirty seconds to one-minute segments to introduce all or parts of subsequent lessons.

Ex. To introduce lesson 6 briefly show the converted warehouse where Jennifer Beals lives in the film; then begin the dialogue in the textbook about renting an apartment. For example, in lesson 7 show customers drinking at the bar where she dances before doing the dialogue about ordering a drink from a bartender. Also use the scene where Michael Nor: who plays her boss, unsuccessfully tries to make a date before practicing the dialogue in which a man is having trouble getting a woman's phone number.

Lesson 8

Focus: Who is it/ this? It's Tom/It's me.

Colors/Possessive Adjectives/Possessive Nouns

Film: Disney's *Fantasia*. Show the opening dance of abstract shapes.

Length: Ten minutes

Relationship: Supplementary Identification Exercise

Activity: Use the pause, and have the students identify the colors on screen. Teach the students the structures, "It's a shade of —, It's a kind of —," and "It's sort of —," for identifying colors whose names are unfamiliar.

Lesson 9

Focus: Whose car is it? Whose keys are they?

Film: *Saturday Night Fever* (a disco scene) and *Star Wars I* (a battle scene)

Length: One to five minute segments

Relationship: Supplementary listening activity

Activity: Single-slot. Tell the students they are about to see a scene from a film.

Read two summaries aloud to the class. Make one summary obviously correct, and the second obviously false. Each summary should be about a different film. Show the movie. Then ask the students whether the first or second summary is correct.

Ex.(for a scene from *Saturday Night Fever*) There is a man. He's in a disco.

He is with a woman. They are dancing.

Multi-slot. Use the above procedure, but gradually make the difference between the summaries less obvious. The teacher may also begin to use scenes from a single film.

Lesson 10

Focus: There's some.... Is there any.... There aren't any.... There are....Are there.... There aren't.... How much.... How many.... A lot

Film: *Back to the Future*. Use the opening scene when Michael J. Fox visits Christopher Lloyd's laboratory.

Relationship: Supplementary Grammar Exercise

Activity: Use the pause as the camera passes each new object in the laboratory.

Have the students identify each object with sentences beginning with "There is/ are" and "There isn't/ aren't. After viewing ask questions about the laboratory using "Is there" and "Are there". Then cue the students with the names of objects from the lab and the classroom, and have them ask their own questions.

Ex. Cue: cans

Question: Are there any cans in Doc's room?

Answer: Yes, there are.

Lesson 11

Focus: I'd like ... Which — would you like? Food names

Film: *Places in the Heart*. Use the opening scene as Sally Fields is having Sunday dinner with her family during the mid-1930's.

Length: Five to seven minutes

Relationship: Introduce the lesson with a word game generating the names of food students would eat if they went to America today. Use the film as an example of what foods students would have eaten if they had visited America fifty years ago. Then begin the lesson in the textbook.

Activity: Use the pause to make explanations about the food and American table manners.

Lesson 12

Focus: Imperatives

Film: *Gone with the Wind*. Use the last scenes in which Clark Gable leaves Vivian Leigh. Begin with Olivia DeHavilland's death.

Length: Twelve minutes

Relationship: Supplementary activity extending the central context for further practice with imperatives.

Activity: Distribute a script for the closing scenes of the film composed entirely of imperatives/

Ex. Scarlett: Wave to Rhett.

Rhett: Turn your back.

Scarlett: Run up to Rhett.

Rhett: Turn back to the window.

Assign the roles of Scarlett and Rhett. Have the students act out the script in groups of four to six with the students playing Scarlett in a line facing students playing Rhett. Then after the performances are finished, have individual students carry out the commands in the script.

Next have the students watch the scenes they have just acted out. If time allows divide the students into groups. Ask each group to work as a team to produce ten sentences about the film segment they have just watched.

Lesson 13

Focus: Review of structures and vocabulary

Film: *Trading Places*. Use two segments. Have the first show Dan Ackroyd's comfortable life at the beginning of the film. Also show Eddie Murphy's first scene beginning with his begging in the park up to his encounter with Dan Ackroyd.

Length: Eight minutes

Relationship: Extending the central lesson by providing additional, more-involving characters.

Activity: Write sentences on slips of paper about the two scenes. After showing both segments give the students the slips of paper. Have each student read his or her slip aloud, then ask another student to identify whether it describes Dan Ackroyd or Eddie Murphy.

Ex. 1st student: His house is very big.

2nd student: It's about Don Ackroyd.

1st student: His clothes are very old.

2nd student: It's Eddie Murphy.

If the student makes a mistake, write the sentence on the board. After finishing the remaining sentence, check the sentences on the board again. At this point possibly show the two segments again, if time allows.

Lesson 14

Focus: can, can't

Film: *Splash*. Use the sequence in which Daryl Hannah saves Tom Hanks from drowning and then swims to the sunken ship.

Length: Ten minutes

Relationship: Supplementary grammar activity

Activity: After showing the scene, have the students tell you, based on what they have just watched, what a mermaid can do. If necessary, help the students by using the vocabulary technique described in lesson 4.

Ex. r _ _ Answer: run

w a _ _ Answer: walk

Lesson 15

Focus: Dialogue 3: Sentences and vocabulary used in purchasing shoes

Film: Walt Disney's *Cinderella*. Show the fairy godmother sequence.

Length: Ten minutes

Relationship: Supplementary exercise expanding the context of the dialogue for additional conversation and listening practice.

Activity: After practicing the dialogue ask students what their shoe sizes are. Have the student or students with the smallest shoe size stand, sitting only if a student with a smaller shoe size is discovered. At the end declare the student or students with the smallest shoe size to be Cinderella. and show the scene.

Lesson 16

Focus: Have and has . . . do and does . . . don't and doesn't.

Film: Select a film or films which clearly show the interior of a house or residence such as the early Tara sequences of *Gone with the Wind*, Jack Lemmon's home in *The Apartment*, or Charlie Sheen's apartment in *Wall Street*.

Length: One or two minutes per segment.

Relationship: Supplementary activity for grammar-based conversation practice.

Activity: While showing the film, press pause and indicate same aspect of the house or apartment with your finger or pointer. Ask the students to identify it. If the student cannot, ask another student to help. Then ask the original student if they have the same thing in their house or apartment.

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Ex. Student identifies a wooden dining-room table.

Question: Do you have a wooden dining-room table at home?

Answer: Yes, I do. or No, I don't.

The teacher may also ask the students to use complete sentences.

If students answer in complete sentences, write all or some of the sentences on the board. Then ask the students to provide questions for the answers.

Ex. Answer: I have a stereo.

Question: Do you have a stereo?

Lesson 17

Focus: What do you have? . . . How much? . . . How many?

Film: *Airplane* or other films with a complicated visual structure.

Length: *Airplane* sequence: one or two minutes per segment. Other segments: thirty seconds to a minute.

Relationship: The *Airplane* portion serves as an introductory activity. For the second portion supplementary exercise partially expand the central context providing supplementary structure practice.

Activity: Show the opening scenes of *Airport*. Then show a scene of passengers on the airplane and ask the student to guess who might be smuggling something. Show scenes of rooms or landscapes, and ask students where they might hide illegal substances. Allow phrasal answers.

Ex. I'd put it next to the tree.

Under the bush.

In the closet.

Lesson 18

Focus: Which one/ ones? mine/ yours/ hers/theirs. . . I'd like. . .

Film: Choose three different *James Bond* films, one each with Sean Connery, Rodger Moore and Timothy Dalton. The action in each scene should be clearly different.

Ex. In the Sean Connery scene James Bond is gambling.

In the Rodger Moore sequence, he is skiing.

In the Timothy Dalton scene he is flying a plane.

Length: Approximately two to five minutes per sequence

Relationship: Introductory and Supplementary Activity

Activity: Show the three Bond segments. Then ask the students which film they'd like to watch most (or which activity they'd like to do most).

At the end of the lesson ask the students to recall the three sequences. Ask them which James Bond they liked best.

Lesson 19

Focus: A dialogue on buying a camera

Film: TV advertisements

Length: Five to ten minutes

Relationship: Supplementary activity expanding on central context.

Activity: Show a selection of American TV advertisements. Have the students tell what they think the product is and which one they would be most likely to buy.

Lesson 20

Focus: Letter Format

Film: a) TV report on Mexico City

Length: Five minutes

Relationship: Introductory Activity

Activity: Give the students a handout containing a five to ten sentence summary of the broadcast in simplified English. Present the sentences, and have the students repeat them. Then ask three or four questions. Tell the students to scan the sentences on the handout for the correct answer.

Ex. Mexico City has a big population.

Mexico is hot in summer.

Mexicans often wear big hats.

Question: How is Mexico in the summer?

Film: b) *Under the Volcano* with Albert Finney and Jacqueline Bisset, a British film about the last day of an alcoholic ex-British council in Mexico.

Length: Ten minutes

Relationship: Supplementary Activity

Activity: Tell the students they are going to watch a Mexican festival which is similar to Obon in some ways. Have them watch the beginning of the film in which the main character walks through the festival to a bar. Then give them

handouts with sentences describing what they have just seen. Have them place a check next to correct sentences and an X next to incorrect ones. Then ask the students to say in what ways the festival reminds them of Obon.

Lesson 21

Focus: Present Progressive Tense

Film: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the first Indiana Jones movie. Use the opening sequence in South America.

Length: Fifteen minutes

Relationship: Expanding the core lesson.

Activity: Give students handouts listing each action in the scenes they are about to watch in sequential order.

- Ex. 1. They're walking through the jungle.
2. He's looking back.
3. He's tying a donkey to a tree.

Write or type the same action on an index card or slip of paper using the imperative tense.

- Ex. Card no.1: Walk through the jungle.
Card No.2: Look back.
Card No.3: Tie a donkey to a tree.

Give each card or slip the same number as its corresponding sentence on the handout.

Before showing the film tell the students that for this one day, they are going to be Steven Spielberg, e.g. they will be able to tell the actors what to do, and the actors will listen.

Pass out the handouts and the cards. Then ask the student with card number one to give the first instruction to the actors by reading his or her card. The student should read, "Walk through the jungle." Play the film until you see the actors walking through the jungle, then press pause so that the actors are frozen in this act. Then ask another student, "What are they doing?" The student should answer, using the handout, if necessary, "They're walking through the jungle." Go onto card number 2. Continue until you finish the list of activities and the sequence. After viewing the teacher may ask students to simulate each of the actions in class.

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There are fifty-nine more lessons in *American Kernal Lessons - Departures* plus two additional advanced textbooks in the same series. It is not my contention that video should be used with every lesson. However, I believe and hope to have demonstrated above that it is possible to do so. Thanks to the video revolution of the 1980's a great wealth of supplementary material is available not only for conversational textbooks but to language learning in general. Accessibility to these materials is increasing as is knowlege of their contents. It is inevitable that video use in the language classroom will increase.

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