Integrating Authentic Video into Junior College English: An Empirical Study for Situation Comedy

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Abstract

The study was to focus on the incorporation of television situation comedies into the general English course of junior college. After one-semester learning in the video-integrated curriculum, the students confirmed its positive effects on their English acquisition in the evaluation. Instructional methodology and implications were also included for discussion about the integrated course design.

Key words: English language teaching, junior college, curriculum design, sitcom, video

English language teaching (ELT) has been considerably changed by the introduction of modern technology in the past two decades. Literature on the ELT use of video prepares the ground of the notional and principal guidance for teachers. The study was an attempt to provide empirical evidence for the effect of integrating authentic video materials into the one-semester general English curriculum in a five-year junior college of commerce.

Video Applications in EFL Classroom

According to the newly revised curriculum standard by the Department of Education, English courses have been diminished from originally more credits to 20 out of 220 degree-required credits for five-year junior colleges since 1995. Most schools offer English courses at 3-hour bases on weekly schedule in the students' first three years of study. Some departments may arrange extra one- or two-hour language lab courses proceeding one school year or two. However, many junior college teachers have expressed their concern of the inadequate time allocated for English class which may impose more constraint on the students' language input and output opportunities. And, due to the curriculum change, the teachers are encountering new pedagogical challenges in their class. Questions centering the study in the context are: How can we teach more effectively for students to acquire four language skills within the limited time? What authentic resources are available for communication-oriented English class? How can we integrate the authentic materials into the general teaching schedule? In the study, authentic video materials were applied to the English curriculum in the hope of answering part of the questions. First, the attributes and potentials of video are examined as follows.

Video distinguishes itself from other traditional types of teaching materials such as printed texts and audio tapes. With the strength of the consecutive moving images on the screen, video presents the conversational process as a whole without missing the simultaneous picture and sound. The visual element in discourse thus is able to be observed by the learners in the classroom of a foreign country. Visual element provides information on setting, context, or background knowledge in which the dialogue as well as the physical interaction between
the interlocutors are embedded. People usually exchange messages verbally and non-verbally, however, non-verbal communication (NVC) is too often neglected by language teachers or learners in spite of its importance in face-to-face communicative process (Huang, 1992). For example, the posture and gesture of the speaker may imply his or her intention or attitude during the speech act. The proxemics or the distance at which interlocutors stand from each other can be interpreted as sign of relationship, formality, or simply the personal space recognized in a culture. The facial expression and eye contacts also denote emotion, attitude, feeling, attention, undertone of the spoken text, etc. These paralinguistic features are integrated into the linguistic codes to fulfill communicative functions in our everyday life (Willis, 1983). The unawareness of the visual signals in interactional conversation may result in communicative difficulties of the foreign language learners as they try to converse with the members of the target language community (TLC). These learners were reported to have the tendency to miss or misunderstand the cues for taking turns, keeping floor, changing topic, and initiating or ending conversation, which may cause communication barrier or breakdown. (Rogers, 1977; Johns & Johns, 1978).

With the visual components, video is a rich resource particularly for foreign language teaching and learning since ample language input required by language acquisition is not likely to be provided by the learners' native language environment. The advantages include: 1) Video contextualizes the language input efficiently. The integration of verbal and non-verbal factors in discourse enables the language itemsto be presented in a "natural setting." (Huang, 1986) where the situational, functional, and pragmatic aspects can be illustrated together with the linguistic forms for learning. 2) Video helps learners familiarize the culture of the TLC. It brings the site, authentic discourse, native speakers' lives, and their social behaviors to the viewers. In Schumann's (1978) "acculturation model," language acquisition depends on the degree that the learner acculturates, or becomes accustomed to, a culture. Video materials can be selected to demonstrate different facets of the TLC culture and to enhance the learners' cultural awareness in communication. 3) Students' listening comprehension is also very likely to be enhanced with the support of video. About this issue, researchers like Su (1994) reported that in listening comprehension tests, students achieved better performance with video than with audio channel. It was believed that because non-linguistic communication such as body language has supplied information for better understanding of the spoken text. 4) With authentic video recordings, foreign language learners have the opportunity to receive "genuine" and abundant language input. In Krashen's (1982) language acquisition hypothesis, a great deal of "comprehensible input" (i.e. the input level is slightly above the learner's language level) is crucial to acquire a language. Video, if used extensively, can become a diverse resource of the desired input other than the language teachers and textbooks. 5) The attention and interests of learners are raised. The visual support considerably sustains the learners' attention to the learning material, and, if the topic of the material is of their interests, it could revive the class atmosphere and motivate them to get involved in a variety of class activities. 6) Another effect is that the language or behavior perceived through the video recordings generally has longer retention in the viewers' memory than other forms of media (Chen, 1997a; Gunter, 1980; Knight, 1975). It was assumed that the gained perception through image and sound in the short-term memory (STM) has more access to transfer to the long-term memory (LTM) of the language system for later retrieval or production. So, besides using video for contextualizing new language input in class, it can also serve for reinforcement in a review session for the purpose of memory retention.

The Use of Sitcom in Communicative Class

The television situation comedy (sitcom) is the target genre in this study. The camera takes us into people's lives, homes, and working places and also lays before us evidence of what life is like in TLC
Sitcom is considered as a substantial resource for ELT because of its suitable characteristics of language, culture, authenticity, storyline, characters, length and humor. As sitcoms deal with daily situations of ordinary people, a lot of cultural information can be elicited from different aspects of the people's lives. Teachers can not only make use of sitcoms to "teach culture" of the target language but to spark off various communicative activities in class through the comparison with the learners' home culture. It is believed that as language is bound with culture, language acquisition can not be accomplished without the cultural understanding. About the language in sitcoms, it is usually colloquial and frequently used in everyday conversation. Although the program has been scripted, acted, directed, and edited, it is still considered as authentic language material since the learners are put in the same position as the native speaking audience and are required the same exercise of language skills (Allan, 1985). So, learners are exposed to different speaking speed, tempo, accent, intonation, or slang which occur in various context. The dialogue may not be as easily comprehended as the standard English that students are used to. But, it is more realistic in terms of how language is actually used among the native speakers. With this regard, language teachers who are non-native speakers may find sitcoms especially helpful for presenting the teaching materials in a more convincing and genuine way.

When teachers look for the suitable sitcoms for EFL class, it is advised that the episode consisting of the storyline or characters that the viewers can identify with would be a better choice (Ketchen, 1996). For instance, the school life and social circle, the interrelationship among the family members, or the problems encountered in the youth stage are likely to be more appealing to the teenage learners since the learners share similar experiences with the characters in the story. With this layer of connection, students are in a better position to assimilate the language in use and participate in the viewing and follow-up communicative activities. Another aspect is about the nature of the sitcom genre. Sitcom generally has a humorous touch in dialogue and finishes the story by a happy ending. Viewers may have a sense of entertainment and satisfaction after viewing the show. However, as students bring the enjoyable expectation of viewing to the classroom, which is a positive effect on their motivation development and anxiety relief for language learning (Timothy, 1997), teachers are also warned of the careful management of the video class.

One consideration is the purposefulness of viewing. Students should be made aware of the difference between the video viewing in a language classroom and their domestic television watching. Otherwise, students are very likely to bring the passive viewing habit at home into the class and pay little attention to the language learning. To engage students in active viewing, Ketchen (1996) recommended that the whole sequence of the sitcom episode (about 20-24 minutes without the commercials) be broken up to several shorter segments by the scenes (usually 3-5 scenes). So, each segment will be running 5 minutes or so, allowing viewers to concentrate on the learning points more easily. Besides, teachers have to design viewing tasks to accompany the video materials for giving students an objective to watch. After all, video is just another form of text for teaching which also requires well-organized class presentation, well-designed activities, and well-defined objectives as much as other traditional types of instruction do (Mount, 1988). The other concern is that video viewing is not a reciprocal experience in terms of language learning. Willis (1983) pointed out that watching and analyzing an interaction on video is useful, but students still need to get involved in the communicative tasks after viewing. Students may attain receptive skills as observers but only as active participants will they gain productive skills. It is essential to bear in mind that "video is a means to an end, not an end in itself" (p. 41).

The following study was conducted in line with these guidelines in the aspects of the curriculum design, video selection, class objective definition, and communicative task arrangement.
The Study

Subjects

Fifty-three students (16 males, 37 females) majoring in international trade were enrolled in the third-year general English course at Tak-Ming Junior College of Commerce in the fall semester of 1997. After two-year English courses at the junior college plus three-year English studies in junior high school, the subjects’ English proficiency was at about low intermediate or intermediate level.

General Classroom Procedures

The class meets three hours on weekly schedule. The textbook designated by school for reading material is "Issues for Today" along with the supplementary reading texts in the book "Short Stories for Comprehension, C3." The articles in the first book, usually one and a half pages for each article, are about the trends in modern life and the current issues in American society. The writing style is clear and comprehensible for the intermediate English learners. In the short story series, humor and sometimes absurdity is embedded in the storyline in the hope of fostering students' interests in reading process. Basically, each article in "Issues for Today" and its related tasks are finished in two weeks (6 hours totally) as one lesson unit. In this study, one episode of sitcom was incorporated into each lesson unit (1-2 hours out of 6-hour unit package). The video viewing activity was either conducted before the reading session to contextualize the reading material or after the reading session to elicit the learning points and bring out the communicative activities. Mid-term examination was given after finishing the first four lesson units, and final examination followed another four. The tests, based on the reading materials only, were joint examinations for all the students taking the same courses in the school. Nevertheless, students were informed by the researcher as the instructor that their work regarding the video materials were to make up 10 percent of their course grading.

Among the four language skills, reading sessions took up more class time than others due to the school requirements; composition writing was mostly assigned as homework followed by a review and feedback session in the class (for detail, see Chen, 1997b); video viewing, communicative tasks, or small projects were carried out for listening and speaking practice.

Instruments

To assess the subjects’ attitude toward the video-integrated course, an attitude questionnaire was conducted at the end of the semester together with the informal interviews or conversations with the subjects throughout the whole semester. The instructor's observation, insights, and ongoing ideas about the teaching methods were also included in the field log.

Target sitcoms

Among the off-air video recordings, four sitcom programs from Disney or NBC channel were selected for the course. Each sitcom series had two episodes chosen (see Table 1), which made up eight sets of video materials for eight lesson units in the semester. The central characters ranged from elementary school children to teenagers. Most of the settings were at school and home. Each episode presented a problem or conflict to be solved by the characters and usually implied a lesson in it. For example, one show in "Punky Brewster" depicted that Punky was prohibited to touch her father's costly video cassette recorder, but after a boost by her playmates and also out of her own curiosity, she broke the promise and used the equipment to make an aerobic homevideo. While they were having fun, the machine was broken and all the friends involved chickened out. Between the scenes, the instructor checked the students' comprehension, asked them to go through the exercises on their worksheet, and also carried out class discussion about cultural comparison in the characters' behaviors, dresses, social roles, or issues about parents-children relationship, peer pressure and influence, violation and regulation, covering up and facing up, physical fitness, or even how to shoot a video clip.

The link between the video program and reading material was to establish the cohesion within
one lesson unit. They might link through topics, language items, detail information, class activities, or sometimes video was presented as an independent text to focus (Allan, 1985), such as a Halloween theme-based episode showing around October. For instance (see Table 1), the reading text in unit 3 about dreams in one's sleep shares the same language forms of "perfect tense" and "perfect continuous tense" with the selected video show. In unit 6, the passage about care of the elderly was incorporated with an episode of "Dinosaur" which portrayed how the family members dealt with the grandmother's health problem. In unit 8, transcribing exercises involving listening and writing skills were the same additional activities in both reading and video class. The role of the video in a lesson unit could be a context organizer for language input, a stimulus for creative thinking, reinforcement of previous language learning, the visual support to the written text, a collection for cultural elements, a practical and discourse version of the print, and above all, a resource leading to the language production of the learners in the communicative activities.

**Syllabus Design**

The curriculum was structured in the framework of the learner-centered curriculum model, in which learners' needs underlie the objectives, content selection, and methodology of the course (Nunan, 1988a, 1988b). The syllabus development started from the initial planning procedure for collecting the factual and subjective information about the learners' needs, to the teacher-student discussion stage about content selection, gradation, and teaching methods, till the students' and teacher's evaluation on the course. During the process of syllabus design, one necessary stage was the compromise between teacher and students. The researcher discussed and interviewed with the subjects and tried to view the course from their perspectives. In order to reach a consensus between two sides, the researcher also expressed to them her concern about this course from the perspective of a language teacher, and briefly introduced the possible class plans, video materials available, and potential class activities. After fervent exchange of ideas in the first class, the course syllabus was generated as a result of the adjustment and negotiation (Table 1). In addition, this kind of conference was informally carried out during the semester as an on-going monitoring process of the curriculum.

The consensus about the goal of the curriculum was to enhance the students' communicative efficiency and their four language skills. So, the communicative approach was applied as the main methodology, especially in the video session where a primary focus on communication in the class activities was put beyond the grammatical errors.

**Teaching Procedures and Tasks in Video Sessions**

Each sitcom episode was usually subdivided by scenes into shorter segments. One segment was about 4 to 5 minutes long. To check viewer's comprehension, the researcher stopped the tape at least in the first two scenes and played the other half of the show to the end. And, in the video session, the overall lesson plan was developed through three gradations: from familiarization of the video episode, to the language study and language forms, and to the language use and culture comparison (Tomalin, 1990). The typical framework of a video session in the study was:

1. Previewing activity (approx. 5 min.): Main characters, background information, and the occurrence of the story were introduced. Then, I raised students' concern and interest by relating some points of the opening remarks to their personal experiences. Then, I indicated certain questions for the students to focus for the first sequence viewing.

2. First sequence viewing (approx. 5 min.)

3. Follow-up activity (approx. 5 min.): General comprehension questions were brought up to make sure that the viewers got the idea of the beginning part. The comprehension check could be done through tasks like multiple choice, true or false statement, or open-ended questions initiating who, when, where, what, and why. Before playing the next segment, the instructor always proposed a couple of questions for purposeful viewing.

4. Second sequence viewing (approx. 5 min.)

5. Follow-up activity (approx. 5 min.): Besides comprehension check, I motivated the class to be
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of evidence</th>
<th>Hang Time</th>
<th>Homelife: How can we overcome it?</th>
<th>Hang Time</th>
<th>Homelife: How can we overcome it?</th>
<th>Hang Time</th>
<th>Hang Time</th>
<th>Hang Time</th>
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<td>Literature class</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
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<td>Story writing creation</td>
<td>Compound words</td>
<td>Discussion plans</td>
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<td>Discussion plans</td>
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<td>Individual interview</td>
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<td>Writing assignment</td>
<td>Meaningful sentences</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>Writing assignment</td>
<td>Meaningful sentences</td>
<td>Writing assignment</td>
<td>Meaningful sentences</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
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<td>Compound words</td>
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<td>Plot development</td>
<td>Meaningful sentences</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>Compound words</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
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<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>Compound words</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
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<td>Table 1: Video-Integrated Syllabus for One Semester</td>
<td>Issue: Reading texts</td>
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<td>Issue: Reading texts</td>
<td>Individual interview</td>
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more attentive to specific information in the following sequences of the show. Or, more variety of communicative tasks could be joined at this point such as prediction for story development, character emotion, and language lexicon or other activities like silent viewing, jigsaw viewing, freeze frame, and role play.

6. Straight viewing to the end (approx. 10 min.)
7. Postviewing activities (approx. 15 min. or more): Whole-class communicative activities were designed for the language output of the learners or for the behavior study between the target language culture and the learners’ home culture.

**Variations**

For variation, sometimes only part of the story, instead of the whole show, was presented in the class to accommodate different communicative activities. For example, in lesson unit 5, the teacher stopped the videotape at the climax of the story and asked the students to provide their own endings of the story either in oral or written composition (Katchen, 1996). The procedure is shown in Table 2 by the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>PREVIEWING</th>
<th>VIEWING</th>
<th>POSTVIEWING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Span</strong></td>
<td>5 min.</td>
<td>15 min.</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group Size</strong></td>
<td>whole class</td>
<td>whole class</td>
<td>pair work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Media/Text</strong></td>
<td>handouts, pictures, OHP</td>
<td>videotape, worksheet</td>
<td>worksheet</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Audio(on/off)</strong></td>
<td>on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Visual(on/off)</strong></td>
<td>on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attentive Skills</strong></td>
<td>listening, note-taking</td>
<td>listening, viewing</td>
<td>speaking, writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
<td>(T)bring up the characters, key vocabulary, focus points &amp; the links with the reading materials or with SS' own experience</td>
<td>(SS) purposeful viewing</td>
<td>(SS) discussion, summary writing, oral presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Notes)</strong></td>
<td>(T) offer background information for topic association</td>
<td>(T) elicit SS' creative thinking</td>
<td>(T) circulate, assist the SS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: original)

**An Illustration for a Video Session**

For a closer look at how a video session was actually carried out and merged into the reading text of the curriculum, unit 2 was taken as an example for demonstration. (Some of the activities in the lesson plan were adopted from Tomalin's "Video in the English Class", 1990)

a. Reading text: "Changing Lifestyle & New Eating Habits"

b. Video: one episode from the TV sitcom "Boy Meets World"

c. Lesson plan:
   1. Previewing (approx. 8 min.): -Character familiarization:
      To warm up the viewing session, I first refreshed the students' memory about the main characters in the show since they had already watched another episode of the same sitcom for unit 1. I asked a couple of students to write the names of the char-
acters on the board and give a brief description about each one. It was the first step to engage the students in the video session and intended to put them in a better position to enjoy the show.

-Prediction:
After the character familiarization phase, I encouraged the class to guess what might be in the sitcom for today by giving them a hint that the theme had something to do with that of the article, "Changing Lifestyle & New Eating Habits," studied in the previous reading session. Then, I allowed a couple of minutes for the students to work in pairs and generate the ideas. I followed up with eliciting part of their prediction and guiding the students' attention to the main points of the show. This was meant to create the link between the reading and the video materials in order to give the students a sense of continuum within the whole unit agenda. And, it was to cultivate their expectation based on the background information, which was believed to be helpful for their listening and viewing comprehension.

-Vocabulary development:
And, to facilitate the students' listening comprehension, I introduced new items of vocabulary in the episode before the viewing. They appeared on the students' handouts as following:

debate: In the beginning of the show, Mr. Finny carried out a debate in the class on some topic. People in the debate have different ideas and fight against each other over the ideas.

cafeteria: Many students and teachers go to the restaurant in our school to collect their own food and drink for meals. It is on the first floor of the building, "Student Activity Center." Where in the show do you see a cafeteria?

get injured: Have you ever injured yourself because of your carelessness? If you get injured seriously, you may need to see a doctor. Who got injured in the episode?

loophole: Cory and his brother found a way to get out of the situation. They called it a "loophole." What was it?

expiration date: You had better check the expiration date whenever you buy any food product. If the expiration date is due, the food may not be fresh.

Students might guess the meanings either correctly or closely to the right answers. I left the judgment to them without telling them the exact meanings these words convey because they usually could discover the true meanings on their own through out the episode viewing.

2. First sequence viewing (approx. 3 min.):

-Scene I

-Freeze frame:
I freeze a picture in the beginning part of scene I and asked students to identify the location (e.g., classroom), event (e.g., pledging their allegiance to their country), characters (e.g., Cory, Shaun, Tepanga, Mincus, etc.), and objects (chalks, globe, the national flag, bottled water, model airplane, etc.).

-Purposeful viewing tasks:
Before the video started, I initiated three general questions for the students to focus attention. The questions appeared on students' handouts as following.

Scene I:
Where was the show taking place in the scene?
What was the debate about in the beginning of the show? (Choose one)
a) Whether to follow the tradition or not
b) Bowing to their teacher to show their respect
c) Being obedient to what the teacher told them to do

Cory's opinion about pledging the allegiance was against Tepanga's. (True or false?)

-Viewing

3. Follow-up activities (approx. 5 min.):

-Comprehension check:
Students responded to the three general comprehension questions proposed before the first viewing. I first asked the students to work in pairs or groups to figure out the answers. Then, to save time, I just inquired the whole class to give me answers by going through these questions.

-Language study:
Then, I pointed out the same language forms or functions which were learned in the previous reading session and also appeared in the video segment. For example, "be supposed to" was used to show one's obligation in Cory's and Tepanga's debate:

Tepanga: Just because it's tradition doesn't mean you have to do it.
Cory: I do it because I'm forced to do it.
Tepanga: You talk to a flag every day and you don’t even know what you are saying.
Cory: I do it because I’m supposed to do it.
I showed the class these lines on the transparency through an overhead projector. In order to contextualize the language function, I included part of the discourse in the sitcom segment, instead of single sentence. After brief explanation, I told the students to keep the sentence pattern in mind for later activities.

4. Second sequence viewing (approx. 10 min.):

Scene II
-Silent viewing:
For the first minute of this segment, silent viewing technique was applied to make students observe more closely the characters’ non-verbal communication signals. As purposeful viewing tasks, three questions appeared on students’ handouts as following:

(Scene II)
Where were they? (Choose one) a) School’s cafeteria  b) Kitchen at home  c) In a party
How did Cory look when he talked to Shaun? (Choose more than one) Why do you think so?
 a) angry  b) happy  c) sad  d) upset  e) tired  f) bored  g) in a good mood
Do you think who is the closest friend of Cory? Shaun, Mincus, or Tepanga? How do you know?
-Guessing and speaking out:
Before moving on, the VCR was paused and the students were encouraged to discuss these visual clues with their group members to guess the characters’ emotion, attitude, relationship, and even to predict what would be the possible lines in the dialogue. Then, each group provided the answers regarding the three general comprehension questions mentioned earlier along with the supporting evidence from their observation. As the ideas were presented and shared by the students, I also made comparison about the answers among groups. Students might find that there was more information embedded in the visual image through the peer learning.

-Listening and watching:
Next, my main concern was to enhance the students’ listening comprehension since they had already got some visual cues about the context. The segment was reset to the starting point of scene II and before viewing again with sound, some questions were indicated on the students’ handouts for active listening.
What was Cory’s complaint? (Name two things at least)
What did Cory want to do on weekends? (Circle the ones)
read comic books play video games sleep in play the father-son softball game
What trick was Shaun playing on Mincus?

5. Follow-up activities (approx. 8 min.):

-Comprehension check:
Check students’ responses to the questions above.
-Language study:
In this sequence, to express stress or complaint was the center of the conversation. To reinforce students’ input process and memory, I recorded part of the soundtrack in scene II for listening task (diction).

Scene II:
Cory: I can’t take the pressure of the father-son softball game.
Shaun: Yeah, I know.
Cory: They take it so serious.
Shaun: My Dad always screams and yells like it’s the most important thing in the world.
Cory: And, they always get injured.
Shaun: And, there’s always an ambulance.
(Cory’s lines were wiped out for the students to fill in on their handouts.)

6. Straight viewing to the end (approx. 15 min.):
I had spent about 35 minutes of the video session on the warm-up and first two scenes viewing together with some tasks in each phase. It took longer than other parts of the episode as far as time was concerned. The purpose was to build up a schema on the viewers at the beginning of their viewing experience. The schema might include the aspects of linguistic acquisition, storyline understanding, as well as culture awareness. The following 15 minutes of the class hour was allocated for the students to enjoy viewing straight to the end of the episode. However, I still asked them to pay attention to:
What was the loophole discovered by Cory and his brother?
What lesson do you think Cory has learned?
Why were there two events interwoven in the story,
i.e. pledging allegiance to one's country and playing father-son softball game? What do they have in common?

7. Postviewing activities (another class hour):
In this hour, extended communicative activities were carried out to give students opportunities for language production and culture comparison.

-Culture comparison:
Each group prepared a piece of paper and drew a line down the middle of the page. They wrote "Here" (the home culture) and "There" (the target language culture) on each side of the line. Then, the group members brainstormed and found three similarities or differences between their own culture and the culture illustrated in the video. After the group discussion, I made a big chart on the board for every group to fill in their findings. Each group sent a representative to tell the class the reasons supporting their findings. In this activity, students had chances to experience the output process of the target language as well as to pay more attention to the behaviors and costume of the native speakers.

-Role play:
To develop students' fluency and self-confidence in speaking, acting out a simulated situation was the task to wrap up the video session. I told the students: "Imagine that the setting of the story were in Taiwan, particularly in scene III of the show. Act out the scene from the video but show how it would be different when Cory talked with his father about his feelings toward the father-son softball game. You have 20 minutes to rehearse with your group. And, I will ask three groups to perform for the whole class."

Course Evaluation

At the end of the first semester, the course was evaluated by the students in the form of Chinese questionnaire. The results are shown in Table 3.

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<th>Questions</th>
<th>SA*</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>----- About the course &amp; learning outcomes -----</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The integration of video into the course was effective for learning.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The sequencing of the curriculum was suitable.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I enjoyed this course.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My reading ability has been improved in the course.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My writing ability has been improved in the course.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My listening ability has been improved in the course.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My speaking ability has been improved in the course.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Video use enhances my interests in English.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Now I pay more attention to other English resources out of the class.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Now I understand more about American culture.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>----- About the video session in the course -----</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Video materials</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The sitcoms selected were appropriate in most of the units.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I enjoyed most of the shows.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The language in use was practical to me.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The characters talked too fast for me to follow.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up communicative tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I enjoyed most of the tasks.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I could handle the load of the task and accomplish it.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The activities were helpful to improve my spoken English proficiency.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The previewing activity was helpful for comprehending the show.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The comprehension checks for the first two scenes of the show were necessary.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. The worksheet of video fostered learning.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

SA*: strongly agree, A: agree, N: no opinion, D: disagree, SD: strongly disagree
Discussion & Implications

The Overall Effects of the Course

The evaluation results show that over 50% students in the course agree or strongly agree the positive effect of the video-integrated course in terms of the learning outcomes, video materials, communicative tasks, and teaching methods. The goal of the course, to improve four language skills and spoken proficiency, is also achieved as more students hold positive opinions on their improvement of English language skills than those who have negative ones. For the affective and subsequent effects, over 70% students think their interests in English (no. 8), attention to other English resources (no. 9), and understanding of the American culture (no. 10) are increased after the course. Generally, the value of integrating situation comedies into the English course is confirmed by the students at junior college of commerce. Besides the positive recognition from the students, however, some aspects are worth noting. Among the improvement of four language skills, the receptive skills in reading (74% agree or strongly agree) and listening (78%) gain higher percentage than the productive skills in writing (47%) and speaking (55%). Also from the observation of the class by the researcher, it is found that the students were more comfortable and confident with the input process than the output performance. For instance, in reading session, they often paid attention to the instructor, engaged in taking notes, and memorizing the language items, but in writing activity, they showed uncertainty and anxiety about what to write and how to compose it. The situation might partly result from the relatively insufficient time allocated to the productive skills in this teaching experiment as well as the lack of training in this respect in the students' previous learning experience at junior high schools. In the study, due to the pedagogical restriction by the school authority, the course was originally aimed at the reading skills which took 4-5 hours in the lesson unit while other language skills were developed experimentally in only 1-2 hours per week. And, in relation to the students' previous English learning, lecture-guided instruction was dominant in teaching the grammatical knowledge and reading skills which were the major testing focus of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). Opportunities for language creative process in speaking and writing were rare in the English class of junior high schools. Although reading, lexeme, and grammar are also important support for understanding spoken language and producing grammatically acceptable utterances, communicative competence indeed requires more time and practice for proficiency. As a result of little practice in writing and speaking (listening as well), students appeared to be unfamiliar with the tasks and possessed few strategies and skills to fulfill them. The phenomenon was reflected on entry no. 16 that 20% students disagree or strongly disagree and 11% hold no opinion that they could handle the load of the communicative task and accomplish it. In addition, students often habitually attached to the passive learning style in class after getting into junior college. They might expect the teacher to make their English better and did not take enough responsibilities in their own learning. It caused their inactive participation in the communicative activities which were thought to be essential for better conversational competence. However, changing one's learning style and improving one's language performance are not likely to happen in a short period of time. Teachers are advised to set feasible goal by first making students conscious about the importance of being responsible learners and involving in the communicative tasks for language acquisition.

The Audio Effects of Sitcoms

In entry no. 14, 58% students agree or strongly agree that the characters in the sitcoms talked too fast to follow. Since sitcoms are authentic materials made for native speakers, some students were found to have difficulties in catching up with the dialogue, particularly in the first few sessions of video. Probably because they were used to the standard American accent and slowly spoken speech in ELT materials. Thus, it is necessary to assist the students' listening deficiency in the video.
viewing process. The consideration has been justified by the students' approval. The arrangement for the previewing activity (no. 18), the instructor's comprehension checks in the first two scenes of the show (no. 19), and the worksheet for viewing focus and guideline (no. 20) are supported by 76%, 63%, 99% students respectively at the "agree" or "strongly agree" level. And, entry no. 6 shows that 78% students think that their listening abilities have been improved at the end of the semester.

Besides, listening skills were also reinforced by working on the audiotape after the video viewing. The instructor sometimes had the selected soundtrack recorded on audiotape in advance and carried out listening tasks in class such as vocabulary recognition, word frequency, gap filling, script completion, dictation, recappping, or even report writing (Hill, 1989). Allan (1986) distinguished the function between audio and video tapes in language class, which was applied in the study. She suggested that for intensive listening, an audio tape be most useful in the language classroom while for extensive listening, the same range of video material serve better. This is because of the nature of the machine. Videocassette recorders, unlike videodisk players, do not respond promptly and accurately to the stop, rewind, replay sequence for the listeners to identify every spoken word. Also, it is irritating when the picture on the screen takes a moment to settle down after a restart. The other reason to use audiotape for intensive listening training in the study was due to the presence of the Chinese subtitles on the screen.

So far, most of the sitcoms broadcast on (cable) television in Taiwan are accompanied with the Chinese subtitles, which can not be eliminated. When the television monitor is deployed for video, teacher usually can cover the Chinese subtitles by a bar of object whereas part of the picture will also be blocked. However, if shown on the large screen along the wall in a lab, there would be no way to avoid them. It was suspected that some students might make no efforts in listening to English and lapse to just picture watching and Chinese reading. The "interlingual" subtitles (term used by Jung, 1990) were also likely to interfere the students’ input process of the target language. To minimize the undesirable learning condition, the viewing tasks should be well-designed to compel students to be attentive to the transmission of the target language, and, each sequence length was advised to be shorter than 5 minutes for concentrating on the spoken word (Katchen, 1991, 1996). Besides the dark side of the Chinese subtitles, there may be some positive aspects to look at. The students who have high anxiety or low listening proficiency may resort to the subtitles for getting the main idea, checking the incomprehensible part of the dialogue, learning new words or phrases by conferring the English pronunciation heard to the Chinese equivalent read, or for recognizing the language items they know but unable to catch when the characters talk too fast. Another possibility is to use the Chinese subtitles as a prompt for role play, language prediction, or oral practice when the sound was turned down.

The Visual Effects of Sitcoms

In the video session, one of the primary teaching points was paralinguistic features. To fulfill the objective, silent viewing activity was often applied to accompany with the audio-viewing. The arrangement allowed students to focus on the paralinguistic features and how they affected or interacted with the spoken language in communication. For a deeper understanding, the characteristics of these non-verbal elements were categorized and discussed by many scholars (e.g., Abercrombie, 1968; Huang, 1992). For example, students were sometimes asked to examine whether the paralinguistic factors were dependent or independent of the linguistic forms, idiosyncratic or systematic, and cultural or cross-cultural in relation to the situation and the persons participated in the discourse. It was attempted that their awareness of visual elements in face-to-face interaction may contribute to the "viewing comprehension" (term coined by Riley, 1979) for better communication. However, to make students understand non-verbal elements in conversation does not mean to teach these aspects separately from other linguistic features. As Willis (1983) stated, "It would be impossible to study each visual element as a discrete item, out of context; it is, after all, the network of interrelated aural and visual lines that make up 'communication'" (p.41).

Other Concerns
While the off-air recordings are widely used at school setting, a dilemma emerges, i.e., the copyright. The programs recorded from (cable) television have all rights reserved by their copyright agents. The right way to do would be to ask written permission from the copyright agents. The fee of usage for education is usually lower than others. However, it takes time and efforts to go through all the request procedure, especially for the programs released from foreign countries. On the other hand, Brumfit (1983) argued the free publicity for those commercial materials used by the teachers. Yet, no publisher has ever offered a fee to teachers for this publicity. Take this study for example, after the sitcom experience, students are very likely to be more willing and experienced to watch the English speaking TV programs at home as implied by item no. 9 of the survey result. Nevertheless, perhaps under the practical tolerance of the agents, the remark by Katchen (1996) could be optimistic condition, "...laws differ from country to country and those governing educational use are not too clear. Generally, using excerpts for specific teaching activities (rather than showing whole movies just for entertainment purposes) is permitted" (p.19). In Taiwan, Copyright Law is quite strict even for educational purpose. Teachers should consult the law authority before any extensive use although in realistic situation, the agents usually tend to turn a blind eye to the infringement of copyright at school since the video exploitation is not after commercial interests.

Conclusion

It is believed that English teaching would be more effective with the integration of authentic video materials in general at various levels, not just the situation comedies for junior college students. However, for profitable viewing experience, teachers still need to commit considerable time and energy to preparation of the teaching schema. If the teachers are willing to devote themselves into the exploration, it would open a window for the students to expand their view of the language learning by making use of what is available around them. It is the ultimate expectation that EFL students become self-directed language learners in the future. Thus, life-long learning is likely to occur after school education. Not until then can we teachers claim the complete success of the language teaching.

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電視情境短劇在五專英語教學上之實證研究

陳一菁
私立德明商業專科學校

本實證研究在探討如何運用生活化的錄影帶教材，如電視情境短劇，提供英語學習所需之情境、語料、文化背景及視覺輔助，並配合目前五專英語新課程及教材，設計達
到符合學生學習需求的整合性課程。

關鍵字：五專課程、英語文教學、情境短劇、錄影帶