THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract. Audio-visual materials — videos, pictures with sound, animations, slide presentations and short films — are now common in English lessons. This article explains why these materials can make English teaching more effective. It describes the main types of audio-visual materials, the theories that explain their value (dual coding, multimedia learning and comprehensible input), and how they support vocabulary, listening, speaking and motivation. It also discusses typical mistakes, such as using too much material or using it without clear tasks, and gives simple criteria for judging whether a material is effective. The article is based on the literature and the authors’ teaching experience; no experiment was conducted.

Keywords: audio-visual materials, English language teaching, multimedia, motivation, vocabulary, dual coding.

INTRODUCTION

For many years English was taught mainly through a textbook, a blackboard and the teacher’s voice. Today a teacher can show a video, play a song, use pictures on a screen or ask students to watch a short film at home. These audio-visual materials are attractive, but an important question remains: do they really make learning more effective, or do they only make lessons more entertaining?

This article tries to answer this question in a simple way. Its aim is to explain why audio-visual materials can improve English learning, in which areas they help most, and what a teacher should do to use them effectively.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article is a review and methodological analysis. We studied well-known theories of learning with words and images [1; 2], the idea of comprehensible input [3], general works on English teaching methodology [4] and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [5]. We combined these ideas with our own experience of teaching English to university students. No experiment was carried out, and the conclusions are practical recommendations rather than measured results.

RESULTS

1. Types of audio-visual materials. In English teaching the most common types are: short videos and film scenes; pictures, photos and flashcards combined with spoken explanation; slide presentations with audio; songs with video clips; animations and cartoons; and interactive online materials. Each type combines something the student hears with something the student sees.

2. Why they work. The dual coding theory says that people remember information better when it is stored in two forms, as words and as images [1]. When a student hears the word “umbrella” and sees a picture of an umbrella, the word is easier to remember. The theory of multimedia learning adds that well-designed combinations of words and pictures lead to deeper learning than words alone [2]. Krashen’s idea of comprehensible input explains another benefit: pictures and context make difficult language easier to understand, and understandable input helps language acquisition [3].

3. Where they help most. Table 1 shows the main language areas and how audio-visual materials support them.

Table 1. How audio-visual materials support different areas of English learning

Area	How audio-visual materials help	Example activity
Vocabulary	A word is linked to an image and a sound, so it is easier to remember	Flashcards with pictures and pronunciation; labelling objects in a video scene
Listening	Faces, gestures and context help to understand speech	Watch a short clip and answer questions
Speaking	Videos and pictures give ideas and models of real conversation	Describe a picture; role-play a film scene
Pronunciation	Students hear and see how native speakers produce sounds	Repeat lines from a video; shadowing
Culture	Students see everyday life in English-speaking countries	Compare a video about a holiday with Uzbek traditions

Source: prepared by the authors.

4. Motivation. Many students find audio-visual lessons more interesting. Interest is important because a motivated student pays more attention and practises more. Videos about real life, music and stories also show students that English is a living language used for communication, which is one of the main ideas of the CEFR's action-oriented approach [5].

5. How to judge whether a material is effective. A teacher can use four simple questions: (1) Does the material match the lesson aim? (2) Is the language level suitable for the students? (3) Is there a clear task for students before, during and after using it? (4) Can I check what students have learned from it? If the answer to any of these questions is "no", the material may entertain students but will not teach them much.

DISCUSSION

Audio-visual materials are effective only when they are used with a clear purpose. A common mistake is to show a long video without tasks; students watch passively and forget most of it. Another mistake is to put too much text, sound and animation on one slide, which overloads attention; multimedia research recommends removing unnecessary decorations and keeping pictures and words closely connected [2]. A third problem is technical: equipment or the internet may not work, so the teacher should always have a backup plan.

The teacher's role does not disappear. Harmer notes that the teacher must choose materials, prepare tasks and organise the class [4]; audio-visual materials are tools in the teacher's hands, not a replacement for teaching.

This article has limitations. It does not present experimental data, and the effect of audio-visual materials may differ for different ages, levels and topics. Future research could measure vocabulary or listening scores of students before and after a course that uses audio-visual materials systematically.

CONCLUSION

Audio-visual materials can make English teaching more effective because they combine sound and image, make language more understandable and increase students' interest. They are especially useful for learning vocabulary, developing listening skills and giving students ideas for speaking. However, their effectiveness depends on how they are used: the material must match the

lesson aim and the students' level, and it must be supported by clear tasks. Used in this way, audio-visual materials are a valuable part of modern English lessons.

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