

## **Promoting Vocabulary Knowledge of Law Students Through Video: A Sample Lesson**

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In recent years in line with identifying needs and wants of those groups of students who learn English for either academic purposes (EAP) or job-related purposes (EOP) different scholars in the field of ESP have felt an onerous responsibility for fostering appropriate materials and methodologies for these students to maximize their learning. This article is aimed at developing an effective lesson for law students through the use of a video to increase their awareness of the specific vocabulary used in their domain. In the first part, a brief historical overview of using videos in classes will be presented. This is followed by a sample lesson. It is to be concluded that if general English language teachers cooperate with content teachers in the process of materials development, the product will enjoy a higher quality for the target students.

**Key words:** authentic materials, EAP, EOP, ESP

## **A brief historical overview of technology and language learning**

Usually any act of language learning and teaching involves the use of a particular type of technology (Warschaur & Meskill, 2000). For instance, language teachers who followed the grammar translation method in which the teacher elaborated on grammatical minutiae and the learners translated sentences from the L2 into their L1 relied on the earliest type of technology, i.e. blackboard. Later on, the use of overhead projectors, as well as early software computer programs, was responsible for provision of mechanical drilling. During the 1970s, when the audio-lingual method was at its best, practitioners embarked on the use of audio-taped materials, which required obligatory trips to audio labs where students had to repeat monotonous pattern drills. By the late 1970s, due to incapability of language learners in responding to unrehearsed situations, the audio-lingual method fell out of favor. Seen in another light, this method waned in popularity due to its lack of focus on communicative aspects of language use. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, due to the emergence of cognitive and sociolinguistic approaches to language teaching along with an emphasis on student engagement with authentic, meaningful and contextualized discourse, there was a full-scale shift in the use of technology in the classrooms.

Cognitive approaches tend to view learning as a psychological process through which learners strive for making a mental model of language system through active interactions of cognitive structures and comprehensible input (Chastain, 1988). Therefore, errors are not seen as signs of bad habits which must be avoided but rather as natural by-products of this construction process. Technologies which are resonant with cognitive approaches are those which allow learners to have maximum opportunity of interaction within meaning-rich contexts so that learners can foster competence. Some of these technologies are text-reconstruction, concordancing, telecommunications and multimedia simulation software.

Sociolinguistic approaches, on the other hand, see socialization and working with people as indispensable aspects of any act of language learning and teaching. Hence, learning a language is viewed as a process of apprenticeship or socialization into particular discourse communities (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). From this perspective students need to be given opportunities to practice social aspects not only to

understand comprehensible input but also to be engaged in activities that are focused on developing output (Mackey, 2007). This can be achieved through student collaboration on authentic tasks and projects (Prabhu, 1987; Willis & Willis, 2007) while simultaneously learning both content and language (Flowerdew, 1993; Snow, 1991). From this perspective the Internet is a type of technology which can be used in a myriad of ways in any act of teaching/learning. This, for example, can be achieved through computer-mediated communication for long-distance exchange by means of e-mail and web-based conferencing systems (Warschaur & Meskill, 2000), which is particularly useful in settings where students have limited opportunities for authentic target language use.

### **Authentic materials**

Many writers in the field of Teaching English for Specific Purposes argue that it is important that learners be exposed to authentic materials. Nunan (1999), for example, has defined authentic as samples of spoken and written language that have not been produced for language teaching. Thus, according to Gebhard (2006), authentic materials include a wide range of sources such as TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news, comedy shows, soap operas, news, dramas, etc. However, Hutchinson & Waters (1987) have claimed that materials are only authentic in their original contexts and that texts lose their authenticity as soon as they are taken into a language classroom. This suggests that authentic texts should be used according to their original use in language classes. For example, a poem used for the sake of grammatical analysis or vocabulary development, will lose its authenticity. However, like most commercial materials, authentic materials suffer from a range of problems. First, they are a burden on teachers in terms of time and effort to locate. Second, some students might be resistant to using authentic materials, because they may find them challenging and beyond their linguistic capacity to process. Nevertheless, despite these disadvantages, authentic materials offer a number of advantages, too. For example, they are intrinsically motivating (Peacock, 1997) and promote contextualized language learning (Gebhard, 2006).

Therefore, it is suggested that videos, as one of the main types of authentic materials, be constantly used in order to contextualize language for students. Likewise, in ESP teaching settings, one of the main advantages of using authentic texts taken from the learner's own subject area is that they alter the balance of power within the classroom. As Gebhard (2006) has rightly observed, in ESP classes the teacher is no longer the sole authority on the text and must acknowledge the student's expertise in it. Obviously, this can lead to interesting and stimulating discussions in the classroom while the learners assist the teacher in the act of comprehension. One of the drawbacks of this happening in ESP classes, however, might be the fact that teachers may experience a feeling of inferiority with regard to their state of knowledge to that of their students and might therefore lose their confidence in teaching ESP students.

According to Harmer (2001, 2007), there are a number of reasons why videos should be used:

- **Seeing language-in-use:** one of the advantages is that by watching and hearing input simultaneously general meanings and moods are often conveyed through expressions, gestures and other visual clues.
- **Cross-cultural awareness:** watching videos help students see the situations beyond their language classroom. For instance, they learn the typical British "body language" or they see how an American talks to a waitress.
- **The power of creation:** when students use video cameras themselves they can create a more memorable and enjoyable learning environment.
- **Motivation:** students definitely get more pumped up when they have a chance of not only hearing language input but also using it.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that video making can lead to creative and communicative uses of language to the extent that students may remember those exciting moments for quite a long time. Moreover, as Brown (2007) has argued, students who are right brain dominant rely on images to remember and think, by which one of the sources he surely meant were videos.

According to Harmer (2001) there are three types of video programs:

- **Off-air programs:** these are programs which have been recorded from TV. He underscores that these programs are sometimes really daunting for students due to the use of a particular accent, dialect or even particular vocabulary items. So the first task of teachers is to simplify them for students in some ways.
- **Real-world videos:** there is generally no reason why we as teachers cannot make use of the comedies, documentaries or even feature films while we do not have any sort of copyright limitations of them. But caution should be exercised to choose those types of programs that are both comprehensible and have multidimensional uses (that is they can be used in practicing different aspects of language use)
- **Language learning videos:** a great number of teachers nowadays use many types of language learning videos accompanied by coursebooks or workbooks solely for instructional purposes.

### **Techniques for viewing videos**

Harmer (2001, pp. 286-287) has provided some instances of techniques used for watching videos:

- **Fast forward:** the teacher presses the “play” button and then fast forwards the video so that the sequence shoots pass silently and at great speed, taking only a few seconds. When it is over the teacher can ask students what the extract was all about and whether they can guess what the characters are saying.
- **Silent viewing (for language):** the teacher plays the tape at normal speed, but without the sound. Students have to guess what the characters are saying. When they have done this, the teacher plays the tape with sound so that they can check to see if they guessed correctly.
- **Freeze frame:** at any stage during the sequence we can “freeze” the picture, stopping the participants dead in their tracks. This is extremely useful for asking students of what will happen next or what the character will say next.
- **Partial viewing:** one way of provoking students' curiosity is to allow them only a partial view of the pictures on the screen. We can then use pieces of

card to cover most of the screen, only leaving the edges on view; we can put little squares of paper all over the screen and remove them one-by-one so that what is happening is only gradually revealed.

Elsewhere, Scrivener (1994, p.179) has stated that there are a number of preview activities that can be used before watching a video:

- A language focus on vocabulary, function or grammar that will come up on the tape;
- Students prognosticate what will happen from some given information or pictures;
- Students discuss a topic that leads into or is connected with the subject on the tape;
- Students study a worksheet that they will use when watching the tape.

He suggests a number of other techniques which can be used as follow-up activities to viewing a video:

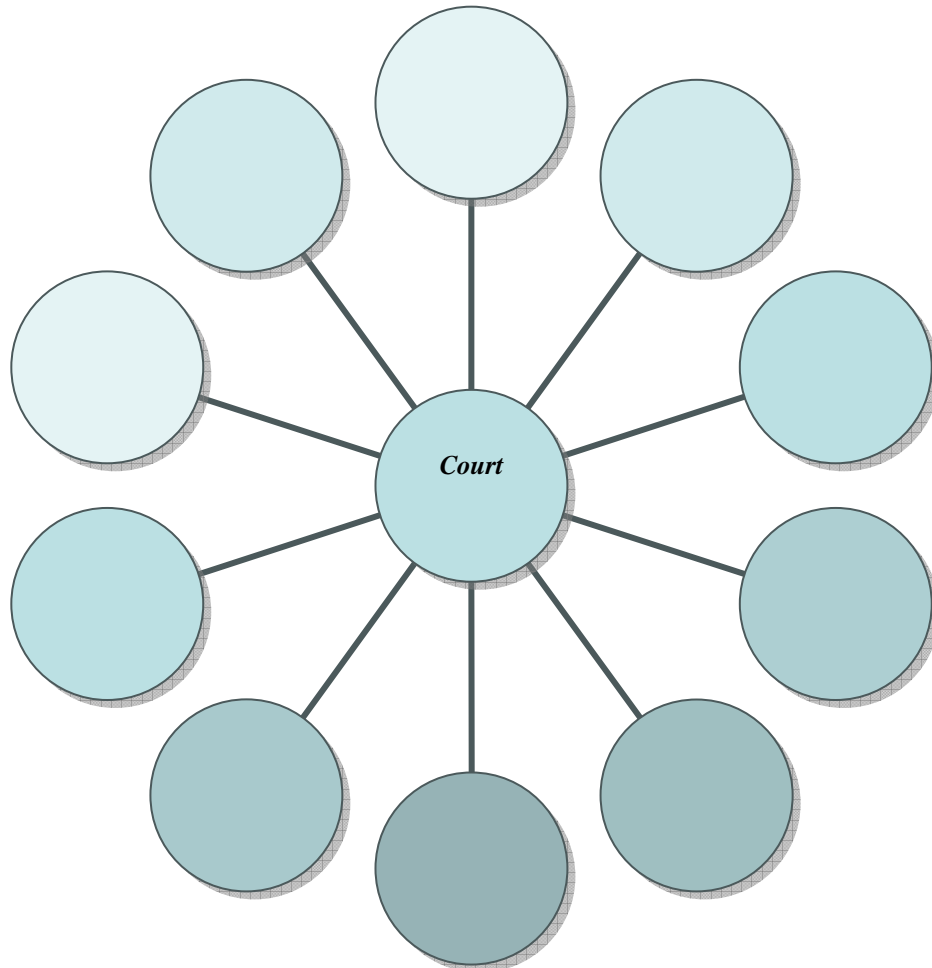
- Discussion, interpretation, personalization (*e.g. what would you have done? or Has this ever happened to you?*);
- Study of new language;
- Role play the scene (or its continuation);
- Inspiration for other work: *what did the newspaper say the next day? Design the front page*;
- Write a letter from one character to another;
- Plan what they should do next.

### **The proposed ESP Lesson**

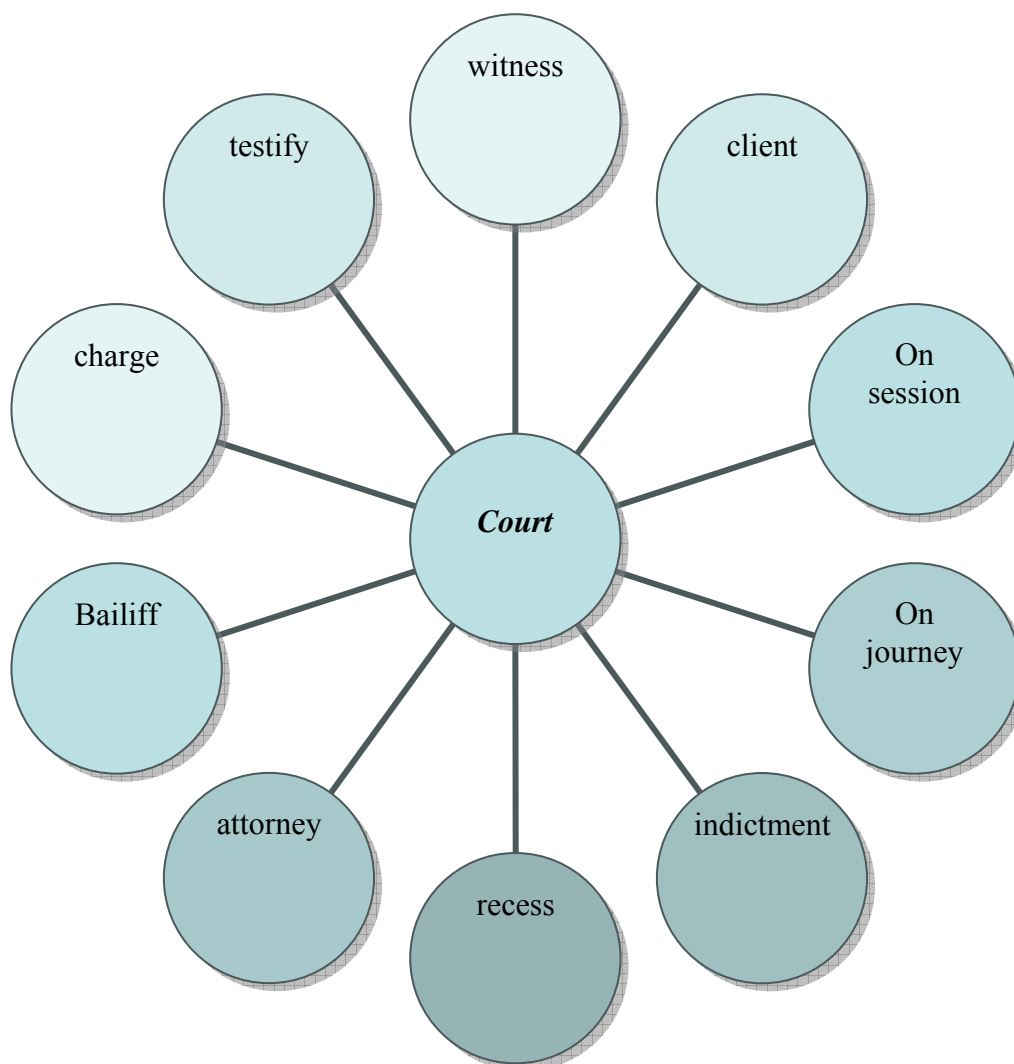
On the basis of what has been posited before, we have tried to develop a lesson for students of law at the academic level with the use of video to help them learn appropriate vocabulary items that are related to their own subject area. It is hoped that this sample lesson provides an opportunity for teachers to embark on developing more useful lessons with ESP students with particular needs and wants.

## Activity 1

A. Try, with a partner, to write as many words as you think are related to a court session around the circle below. You can also benefit from the picture below to help you refresh your memory of the court.



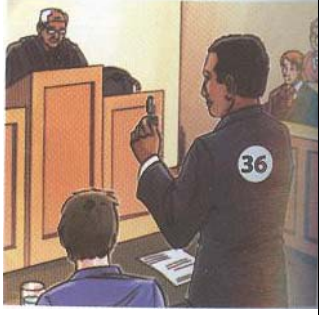
B. Now look at the sample below. These words are taken from part of a movie that you are going to watch. Compare the circle that you have prepared in with this one.



## Activity 2

Look at the table below. Try to check two of the words in the previous part in your dictionary and fill in the blanks like the example below.



Lexicalization	Pronunciation	Synonym	Part of speech	Example	
attorney	/ətɔːrni/	lawyer	noun	The attorney defended the case as best as he could.	

### Activity 3

Think carefully and try to relate some of the jobs or some of the other words that you have learned either to some of the members of your family or some of your friends.

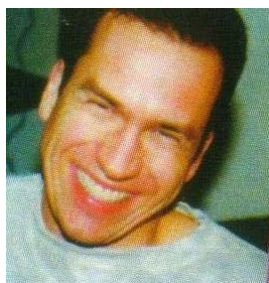
### Activity 4

You are going to watch an extract taken from *Godfather 2*. You need to be divided into two groups. One group is "screen" group and the other is the "wall" group. After watching the extract, the screen group should describe to the wall group the events that happened.



### Activity 5

Take out a piece of paper and write two numbers, two adjectives, and one verb. Then place the verbs that you have jotted down in the following cloze passage. How do you feel?!

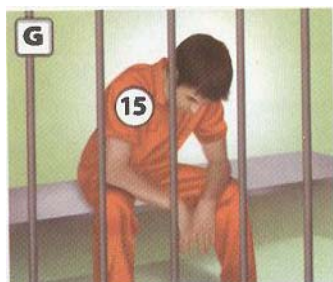


When I was...1... years old, I was charged for committing a crime. About...2..... witnesses appeared in the court to testify that I was guilty. In fact it was a(n)....3.... indictment. I was so....4...., because I was the client of a stupid attorney. Finally, during recess when the court was on journey, I...5..... .

### Activity 6

A. Imagine that one of your friends is now in prison accused of committing a crime and you want to write a letter to an attorney to accept your friend's case. You need to

be divided into groups of three. Try to write persuasively. Below you are provided with a sample.



Dear Mr. Smith,

About two months ago, my friend was convicted of killing his brother, but the real fact is that at the time of the crime he was in his work place. It was surprising that five witnesses were in the court to testify his guilt. Now my friend is in prison and is really depressed. I know that you are a very skillful attorney. By means of this letter I beg you to accept his case to prove that this indictment is not true at all.

Yours faithfully,

B. Now exchange your letters with your friends. Try to read each others' letters carefully and correct each others' mistakes.



### Activity 7

One of your friends sits on a chair with his back to the board. Your teacher writes one of the words that you have learned on the board. You should try to explain each word in a way that your friend can guess it.

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