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TEACHING VOCABULARY AND THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE WITH VIDEO

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the use of an Information Technology resource in the English Language classroom. Specifically, it focuses on the use of *video* as a stimulus for language learning. Underlying principles behind the practice are discussed and online resources suggested. The write-up also includes a demonstration lesson based on a clip from the movie, *The Curse of the Pink Panther*. It focuses on the teaching of the simple past tense and related vocabulary.

WHY VIDEO?

Although there have only been a few empirical studies with strong rationale in support of the positive use of authentic video material in language education (Garza, 1986; Kongable, 1987), this has not deterred many educators from advocating its use. Stempleski and Tomalin (1989) indicate that there is an ongoing trend to use the medium to stimulate oral and written communication among students. Stempleski (1992) further states that since 1986, the annual convention programme of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has included the use of authentic video on a regular basis. Clearly, there are many advantages of using video. The following points offer a few advantages:

- It is a very *versatile* medium. There is a multitude of ways in which it may be used to achieve various goals in the English Language classroom.

- It presents *real* language, not so much in the sense that it is unscripted but that it is intended for native speakers. It is ungraded, unsimplified and spoken at a normal pace in typical accents. Such language is also real in the sense that it is current, exposing learners to idioms and expressions that are common in contemporary English-speaking environments.

- It allows language to be learnt in *context*. Learning becomes easier because it is presented in a more complete visual context (e.g. *body language*) - unlike other media - and supplies additional clues to meaning. As Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) point out, "contextualising" lesson presentations has become a widely accepted rule of good teaching.

- It offers the advantage of *repeatability*. Children, upon liking a particular video, are capable of watching it over and over again. As much learning is done by absorption and imitation, lesson points connected with it will soon be ingrained in their minds with constant viewing.

- It provides an authentic look at *culture*. Lonergan (1983) and Geddes (1982) suggest that it brings "an air of reality into the classroom". On a similar note, Maxwell (1983), and McGroarty and Galvan (1985) contend that it exposes students to speakers, socio-cultural issues, and uses of the language representative of the target language and culture. Stempleski (1992) adds that in doing so, it also facilitates cross-cultural understanding. In addition to the language input, it offers them something that they can also talk and write about. Furthermore, they get to take a good look at themselves through comparison with others living in a different cultural setting.

- It gives *practice* in dealing with the medium. In this 'video age', it makes sense to incorporate video-based media into teaching so that students can become more effective and critical viewers. Teachers can help make students' everyday viewing a learning experience.

- It *motivates* and hence enhances language learning. When learners successfully deal with the 'real' thing in a classroom situation, they may be motivated to seek out and try to understand other authentic

materials on their own. Richards and Rodgers (1986), in quoting Krashen, concur, saying that indeed, learners with high motivation generally do better.

- It takes language learning *out of the abstract*. Many of today's popular movies have been made into novels. Those that follow closely to the plots provide golden opportunities for students to link the language with the action. By watching a section of the movie and reading the relevant chapter in the book, learners are able to see how a particular situation may be described. By the same token, certain abstract concepts (e.g. adverbs like *"stealthily"*, *"groggily"* etc.) may also be best learnt by watching a video that illustrates such qualities.

- Last but not least, it creates a *non-threatening*, fun learning environment: it presents language as it entertains. In such a situation, there can only be low personal and classroom anxiety, circumstances which, according to Richards and Rodgers (1986), are truly conducive to second language acquisition.

MODEL LESSON INCORPORATING 'THE CURSE OF THE PINK PANTHER'

Materials

- Worksheet – *Curse of the Pink Panther* (1983, MGM) complete with the hard copy of crossword puzzle (see Appendix 9.1)

- Video clip – scenes involving Clifton Sleigh at the airport in New York prior to his departure, his arrival at the airport in Paris and his eventual meeting with Chief Inspector Dreyfus at the latter's office (25th – 30th minute of the movie, *approximately*)

- Dictionaries – at least *one* per group

- Computer, complete with the following software – Windows Media Player (or similar, *to play the video*), Expert Crossword (or similar) to facilitate timed, live crossword play)

- Projector and daylight screen

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

1. The class is organised into groups of *six* or *less* for *maximum* interaction.

2. The teacher explains the focus of the lesson, being the *simple past tense* and *vocabulary expansion* (*action* words). Participants get to associate each action as seen on video with the relevant word in the appropriate tense.

3. The class is given *three to five* minutes to read the given worksheet so as to ascertain task requirements.

4. The video clip is played *once* or even *twice* through – this is possible as the clip is a *short* one.

5. Pupils may wish to work on their worksheets during the screening of the video.

6. A *group* discussion within predetermined set time is next. Within 20 minutes, pupils try to fit their responses into the blanks and then the crossword puzzle. Dictionaries may prove most useful here.

7. The teacher shuttles around to ensure that the pupils are on-task.

8. Should the class find the exercise a bit too difficult, the teacher may choose to disclose the third and/or even the fourth letters of each answer; first letters are almost always total giveaways. The amount of help may vary from class to class, depending on the level of language proficiency there. Note that pupils are unlikely to be enthusiastic about work that is impossible to achieve; conversely, nothing *motivates* more than success.

9. The next stage involves *live, timed crossword play*. The teacher, after keying in the data comprising words (answers) and clues (based on the close passage in the worksheet), is set to use this game platform to maximum effect.

10. The teacher explains the rules of the game. Primarily, the first group that completes the crossword puzzle within *three* minutes wins. Secondly, each team's turn ends once the team registers an *incorrect* response. The next team begins the game anew and the process repeats itself until there is a winning team. Each time play is restarted, participants will have to key in the same words all over

again. The spelling of each word gradually becomes ingrained in their collective memory as a result of all this repetition.

11. Group leaders are instructed to come forward to draw lots to decide which group gets to play first (a possible alternative is to allow groups to come forward as soon as they are ready; a second try is only possible once all the other teams have had their first go).

12. Prizes (e.g. candy, trinkets etc.) always inject further excitement into the activity.

13. A possible *follow-up* is to get the class to write an essay (not necessarily related to the movie) using the *high-value* words learnt.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Teachers may be pleased to note that quite a number of websites have dedicated themselves to the use of video in the teaching of the English Language. The following are some of them:

- Teach with Movies
  http://www.teachwithmovies.org/

- Teaching Global Issues through English Movies
  http://www.jalt.org/global/30Mov.htm

- E.L. Easton English Online
  http://eleaston.com/movies.html

- Movies in the English classroom
  http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/misctry/misc_tips.shtml

- Ideas on Using Videos
  http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Tatsuki-Video.html

- Dave Kees - Teach English in China
  http://www.davekees.com/

- Video in ELT
  http://www.angelfire.com/wizard/douglas_macarthur/videoin.htm

General movie-sites worth looking at are:

- Internet Movie Database
  http://us.imdb.com/

- Movieweb
  http://www.movieweb.com/index_ie.html

- Hollywood Online
  http://www.hollywood.com/netshow/

- Drew's Script-O-Rama
  http://www.script-o-rama.com/

- Simply Scripts
  http://www.simplyscripts.com/movie.html

- Movie Page
  http://www.movie-page.com/movie_scripts.htm

- Classic Movie Scripts
  http://geocities.com/classicmoviescripts/

- Scriptcrawler
  http://www.scriptcrawler.net/

They provide technical details, trivia and other relevant information about movies and how to get them. Of particular interest are the last five addresses that are chockfull with movie and television scripts and transcripts which may be useful in helping one to design video-related ELT material.

CONCLUSION

A video-based lesson has always been able to capture the attention of its audience. This is particularly true when it is centred on an exciting or even comical scene. At best, the clip should be about ten minutes long. In this way, given the time constraints of each lesson, it may be repeated at least once so as to enable the class to capture as many of the pertinent details as possible. In the context of the model lesson, each pupil could observe the action first before he or she is able to put a label on it. What better way to learn the meaning of a word than to see the action associated with it? From my experience, video-based English Language lessons provide for an engaging, stimulating and enjoyable learning experience for students.

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APPENDIX **9**.1

Worksheet

<u>Curse of the Pink Panther (1983)</u>

- Actors: Ted Wass, David Niven, Robert Wagner, Herbert Lom, Capucine
- Director: Blake Edwards
- Format: Closed-captioned, Colour, Dubbed, Subtitled, Widescreen, NTSC
- Language: English
- Region: Region 1 (U.S. and Canada only. Read more about DVD formats.)
- Aspect Ratio: 2.35:1
- Number of discs: 1
- Rating PG
- Studio: MGM (Video and DVD)
- DVD Release Date: January 31, 2006
- Run Time: 110 minutes

Language Learning Points

Grammar - Simple Past Tense (*active*)
Vocabulary Expansion - Action Words

Directions:

- Complete the following passage by filling in each blank with a verb in its appropriate form.

- Your responses must correspond with what is seen in the video-clip.

- The words used must also fit into the given word puzzle.

Detective Sergeant Clifton Sleigh of the New York Police Department **arrived** at the airport close to flight time. He **was** on his way to France where he would be investigating the disappearance of the country's most celebrated policeman, Chief Inspector Jacques Clouseau.

Meanwhile, it **rained** cats and dogs. Strong winds **blew** as he **got** off the yellow cab at the entrance to the departure hall. With some difficulty, he **(1)** _____ a huge suitcase out of the vehicle. Having placed it on

the pavement, he then **(2)** _____ a smaller one. The deluge **continued**, showing no signs of abating. He then **(3)** _____ to open his umbrella. That **was** when he was suddenly propelled away by the wind.

In the background, a voice (4) _____ on the public address system announcing the impending departure of Trans World Airlines Star Stream Flight 24 for Chicago and Dayton.

With supreme effort, Officer Sleigh made his way to where his luggage lay. He (5) _____ his bags and struggled into the chilly departure hall, now somewhat vacant. He appeared to have some problems with his umbrella: its spring mechanism had initially refused to cooperate but later (6) _____.

Suddenly, a hired killer (7) _____ at the balcony overlooking the ticketing counters. He wore dark leather gloves and had a thick overcoat and hat on. He had been hired by the mob to get rid of Sleigh before he could discover the whereabouts of the Chief Inspector.

Then, out of nowhere, a little old lady (8) _____ Officer Sleigh. "Excuse me, please. But where I check in?"

For a moment, the officer appeared to have lost his bearings. He then tersely (9) _____, "Right over there." That was when his umbrella (10) _____ up. It sprung open at its own accord. Coincidentally, the glass doors had also opened. The blast of cold air (11) _____ the officer off his feet. In the blink of an eye, he discovered himself at the check-in counter, in spite of himself. The air stream, having been deflected off the umbrella (12) _____ the hit man upstairs by surprise. He lost his balance and with a crash, (13) _____ heavily onto the cold stone floor below.

At Charles de Gaulle International Airport, a hired thug was already in position at the arrival hall. Armed with a stiletto, he waited patiently for his quarry to arrive. For entertainment, he had with his bare hands tried to crush a little boy's remote controlled toy car that had bumped into him by accident. Upon noticing the arrival of the detective, he stood up and blade at the ready, (14) _____ towards the unsuspecting Sleigh who was at that time exchanging niceties with his French counterpart, both making their way to the exit.

The little boy decided that he would have his revenge. Just as the grizzled assassin (15) _____ the policemen, the child (16)

_____ his car after him. Soon, the man unwittingly stepped onto it and went sprawling painfully onto the ground. The seemingly harmless toy had triumphed over its deadly adversary. But it did not stop there. It (17) _____ ahead, its circuitry damaged from excessive wear. It was totally out of control and (18) _____ in the direction of the policemen. Sleigh (19) _____ on it and (20) _____ into a bystander in front of him. At that particular moment, another assassin who was waiting outside (21) _____ loose a few shots at the stumbling detective. It seemed the man led a charmed life as none of the bullets found their mark. Instead, the commotion got the attention of a couple of uniformed police officers who immediately (22) _____ the perpetrator. The latter, realising that the officers were almost upon him, (23) _____ the scene in a hurry. In a panic, he (24) _____ into a thick pane of glass that was carried by some workmen. Like all the other assassins before him, he was floored and destined to live many years behind bars.

All in all, it was a fine day for Detective Sleigh. He had finally arrived at Police Headquarters. The buzzer rang at Chief Inspector Dreyfus's office. A voice (25) _____ through, "Detective Sleigh has arrived."

"Show him in."

The Chief Inspector was half fearful that this American might just be able to solve the mystery which had dogged him for the past couple of weeks. Yet at the same time, he was curious who this person who had survived three assassination attempts in the last 24 hours was.

The door to the office opened. In walked his personal assistant with the introduction, "Detective Sergeant Clifton Sleigh."

The clumsy American (26) _____ on the carpet and (27) _____ headlong towards the man's desk. The impact was so great that it sent the Chief Inspector and his furniture bursting through the French window. The man, totally bewildered, subsequently (28) _____ into the fish-pond directly below.
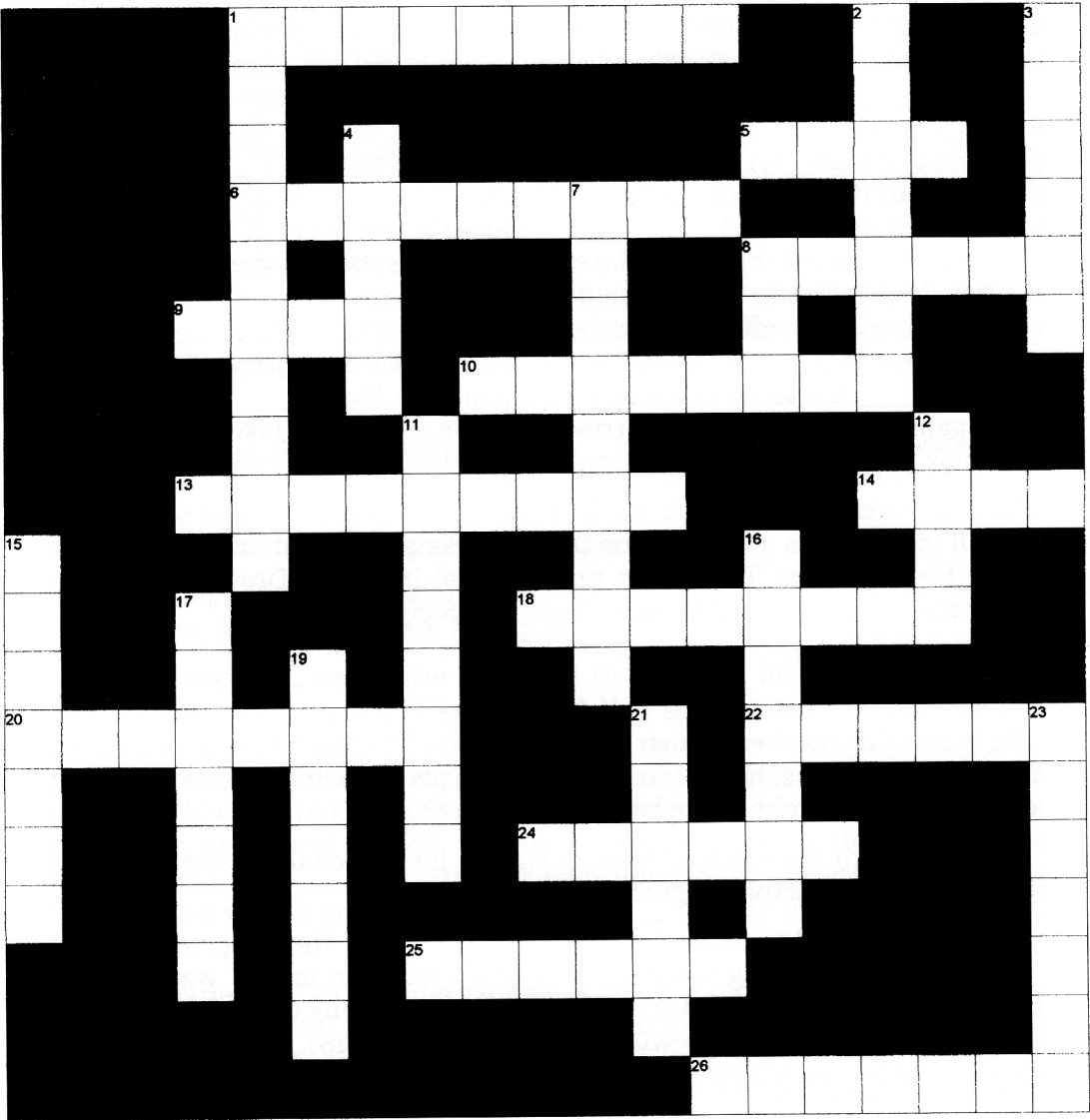
Figure 9.1: The Crossword: *Curse of the Pink Panther*

Across

1. 3. he then ____ to open his umbrella
5. 18. it ... ____ in the direction of the policemen
6. 5. he ____ his bags
8. 1. he ____ a huge suitcase out of the vehicle
9. 25. a voice ____ through
10. 16. the child ____ his car after him
13. 9. he then tersely ____
14. 19. Sleigh ____ on it
18. 6. initially refused to cooperate but later ____
20. 27. the clumsy American ... ____ headlong towards the man's desk
22. 12. the air stream ... ____ the hitman upstairs by surprise
24. 4. a voice ____ on the public address system
25. 13. with a crash, ____ heavily onto the cold stone floor
26. 26. the clumsy American ____ on the carpet

Down

1. 8. a little old lady ____ Officer Sleigh
2. 7. a hired killer ____ at the balcony
3. 14. he ... ____ towards the unsuspecting Sleigh
4. 10. his umbrella ____ up
7. 2. he then ____ a smaller one
8. 21. another assassin ... ____ loose a few shots
11. 20. Sleigh ... ____ into a bystander
12. 23. the latter ... ____ the scene in a hurry
15. 22. police officers who immediately ____ the perpetrator
16. 11. the blast of cold air ____ the officer off his feet
17. 28. the man ... ____ into the fish pond
19. 24. he ____ into a thick pane of glass
21. 17. it ____ ahead
23. 15. the grizzled assassin ____ the policemen

Figure 9.2:   The Crossword: Clues

Note

The answer to Across (1) is item (3) of the close passage. Likewise, the answer to Down (1) is item (8) of the close passage.
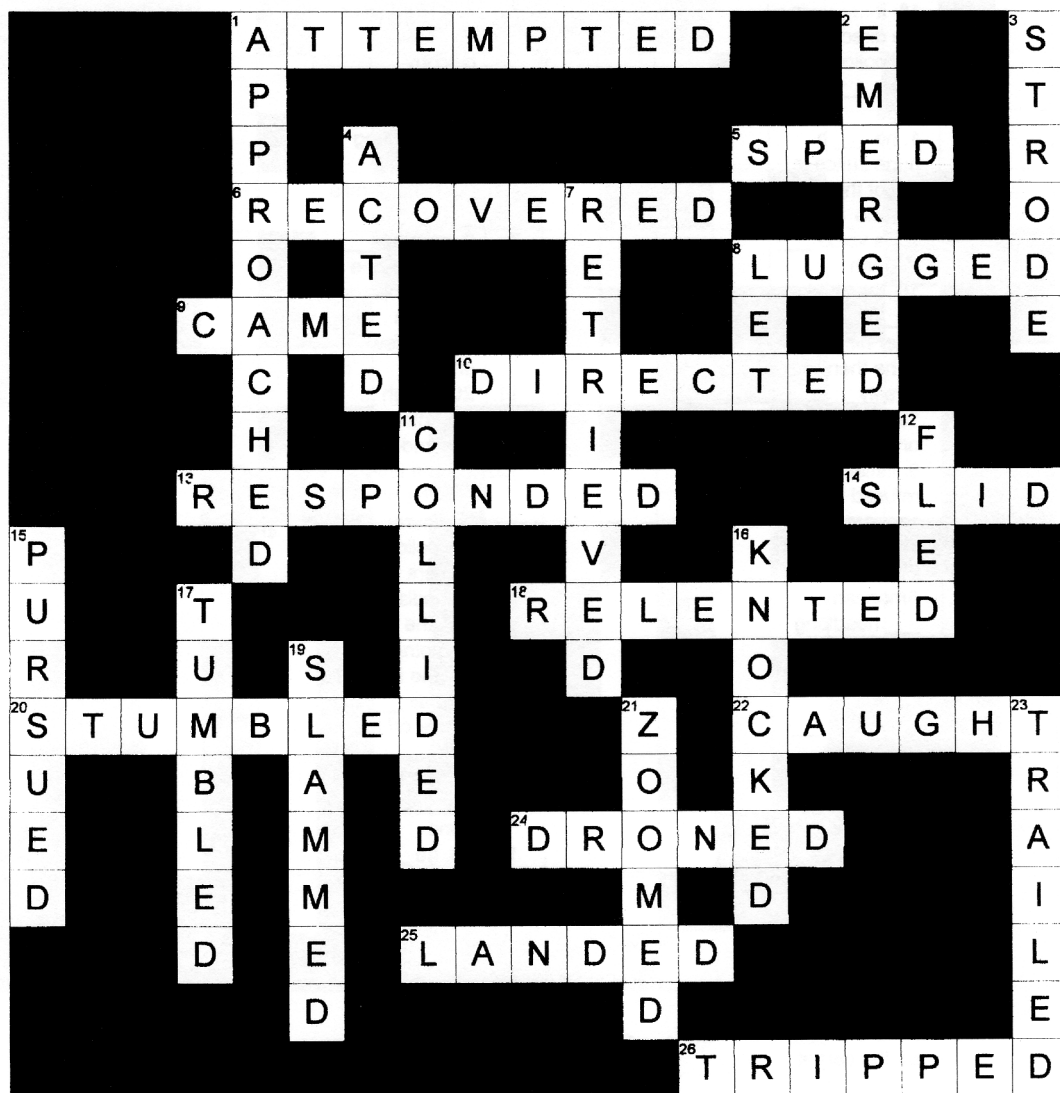
Figure 9.3: Key to the Crossword

Notes on 'Expert Crossword: