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SEEL

Sounds and Audios in e-Learning

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SEEL – Sounds and Audios in e-Learning

LIP DUBS

Lip dubbing is an activity where you overlap the sound of a video with your own sound. During lessons students work both collaboratively and individually to create a video in which they lip synch to a song that is audio dubbed. Key to the success of this activity is the motivation to learn that it generates with the target group. I have used lip dubs in two ways during my English lessons, both of them producing results that demonstrate improvement in skills of language acquisition, pronunciation, listening, and creativity.

During lessons, the target group works collaboratively reading the text and dividing up different lines/ parts among themselves. We go through the text together so that they understand what they are going to be lip synching. Then, the students practice pronunciation of their various parts, and they work together to create choreography. When they have practiced sufficiently, we record their parts while students perform, often with the help of a computer, a smart phone or a video camera. Finally, we edit our recorded video with the original audio of the song, usually using a program Movie Maker. Because there is something permanent being made the students want to do their best. The process engages the target group in learning these skills without realizing they are learning. Often, because the students need to do several takes, they must repeat the pronunciation, movement and phrases, just as if they were doing a more traditional drilling exercise; however, with this activity, they are engaged mind and body, and are not aware of the skills practiced and attained until the end product—the video—is produced.

Lip dubs can also be assigned as an optional homework. In such cases, I have allowed students to choose their own music and style, and create their own videos.



Their creativity shines through just as much as in the more guided collaborative activity.

I also have experience using music in math lessons in addition to English lessons. On some days when they must work on math problems that are sometimes long and complex, I allow students to bring in headphones to listen to the type of music they want while they work on these problems. Surprisingly, their concentration and focus remains steady, and in some cases, improves in terms of being able to stay on task and practice successfully.

In conclusion, then, the advantages of using lip dubs to enhance learning are manifold: first and most importantly, students are motivated because the activity is fun. At this age, (middle school), music is one of the most important ways that students relate to each other and the world around them, and using music to enhance academic learning makes it relevant and engaging. In effect, when they lip dub, they want to know what they are singing about. Secondly, they improve their creativity and feel a sense of individual accomplishment as they see themselves singing in English. In addition, they improve both pronunciation and language acquisition because they must repeat the process while doing several takes. Finally, this activity engages several types of learning —audial, visual, kinaesthetic—and in the end, it is quite simply a lot of fun.

READERS' THEATRE

Readers' theatre is one of the teaching strategies we use in our secondary history which is based on sounds. We use it anytime we want children to go deeper in understanding of some dramatic situation in history.

The only thing we need for this strategy is a good text. It can be a story or a short part of a novel, or the part of a personal diary for example. There should be several characters in the text – the more characters, the better for the success of a strategy. The class is divided in groups and each group obtain photocopies of just one part of the story (not whole). The number of groups and the length of the text parts depend on the teacher experience with the class. Each group now has to transform the text into a radio drama. Wikipedia describes radio drama as “a dramatized,



purely acoustic performance (...). With no visual component, radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the characters and story”.

Every group member must be involved in a performance: some of them can read, some of them can make sounds and noises to improve the emotional effect of the text. Echoes, repeating and choruses are other possible things the group members can use. The teacher should underline that the performance must be all about the sound, it is not important what can people see: it is not the theatre play but the readers’ theatre or a radio drama. Every group needs enough time to practise their performance. When every group is ready the show can start. The group with the beginning part of the story starts and others groups follow until the whole text is presented.

There can be lots of competencies trained in this strategy we think; children can experience a lot of fun. It can be also the way to let them experience thrilling, exciting or burdensome atmosphere or the seriousness of some situation. We have a good exemplar of using this strategy in the Great War theme. We use the diary of a soldier from our hometown for it.

Children use their mouth, hands, feet, knees and some simple equipment they can see around them for making sounds and noises. We wonder if there is a chance to involve some singles, music, sounds etc. to improve this teaching strategy, or to expand the possibilities of it in some ways.

LISTENING TO TEXTS

Before a lesson we have to prepare a worksheet with tasks to do while listening and an audio sample. Chosen audio samples are used to support various topics pupils go through. We usually use audios with native speakers. Sometimes we choose a video sample that includes the audio. Pupils prefer that and can also deduce some answers according to the video if they don’t understand a part they need to.

Listening skills are very important. The ability to understand well must be trained and practised very often, which is especially true for Czech students because unlike



Czech, the English language sounds very different from the written form. It requires plenty of time to improve these skills.

The lesson starts with a pre-listening phase. The goal of this phase is to help pupils prepare themselves and to activate them. We always acquaint pupils with the topic and the goal. It is necessary to motivate listeners as well. We try to find out what pupils know about the topic. We ask them various questions and we talk to each other about it in English, of course.

After that pupils already know that the main activity is listening. First we put some new vocabulary on the board. These are words that often appear in the audio sample and we call them key words. We try together to remember their Czech meanings and how to pronounce and spell them. We write the words in the English language in one column and the Czech meanings beside. Pupils read them and repeat them again and again. After a while we start to delete English words one after another and pupils keep repeating the words. At the end of the activity they only see the Czech meanings and repeat them in English a few times. At this moment they are prepared to listen to a new audio sample because they know the words occurring more frequently.

The pupils acquaint themselves with the tasks and questions before listening and it is necessary to make sure everybody understands exactly what to do. Sometimes children try to predict the right answers. It is used for better motivation. It is quite important to tell pupils how many times they will hear the text.

The audio sample is usually divided into some sequences and there are tasks to do for each of them. We always play each sequence of the sample at least twice. It is not necessary for children to understand everything they hear. Pupils try to do the tasks. After the first listening the pupils should understand the general meaning of the text. During the second listening they get a more detailed understanding.

Finally pupils get a written tapescript and can follow it while listening for the last time. At the same time they correct and complete their answers. Then we check the answers together with pupils.

The post-listening phase serves to utilize the knowledge gained from listening. We do various activities to revise what pupils have learned during the lesson with a focus on the vocabulary and important phrases. We use exercises like answering



questions, multiple choice questions or gap-filling. We like using the method of reconstruction, which is when pupils work in small groups and reconstruct the text they listened to and try to retell it or mime.

LISTENING TO SONGS

During English lessons it is very common to use different songs and music as a listening practice. For younger pupils this activity is prepared by the teacher but older ones often prepare it by themselves.

First there is a problem to find a right song. Its English should be understandable and due to the pupils' skills with the minimum level of used slang language. As a very good source of various songs and music styles we can mention Spotify (www.spotify.com) or YouTube (www.youtube.com). There are also many websites focused on lyrics, e. g. AZLyrics (www.azlyrics.com) or MetroLyrics (www.metrolyrics.com).

The lesson usually starts with a short discussion about the music style of the chosen song. Then the pupils get a worksheet with lyrics. The problem is that there are some empty gaps where pupils have to fill in the missing words during the listening. We listen to the song once or twice depending on its difficulty. After checking the completed lyrics there is again a discussion about the meaning of the song – what pupils think its composer wrote about. During the last part of the activity we listen to the song once more. Some students sing concurrently with the singer while the others, who are shy or not sure about their language skills, follow the text and lip-dubbing (as described above).

This kind of activity has several benefits:

- All the pupils listen to some kind of music and nowadays the most of the teenagers listen mainly to songs in English. So it is the natural way of improving language skills done through something they like.
- In songs there is mainly common spoken language used. That means it is often very different from English which pupils meet in school textbooks. Of course it is necessary to point out the differences between literary and non-literary language.



- It is usually easier to memorize and rehearse words and sounds when they rhyme and are connected with a melody.

THE SOUND ON LESSONS OF YOUNG LEARNERS

The project was focused on the using of the sound on English lessons. In this project there were fifteen children of the age from ten to eleven years old. They worked with the poem it had eight verses and two levels of difficulty.

The group of students was divided into two parts – A and B. Team A had the poem in audio recording. They could only listen to the poem. Team B got the written poem including the pronunciation of unknown words. Students could sit or walk in the corridor. Both groups should learn the poem in twenty-five minutes by heart. I was surprised the children were able to learn reliably only two verses. There were not any differences between the groups caused by their learning conditions.

In the other part of the project both groups got the written poem together with the possibility of listening to the audio recording too. The second poem was from children's point of view less difficult for them to remember. Four pupils learnt the whole poem by heart, next six pupils knew from four to six verses, remaining children managed at least two verses. These results were significantly better than in the first experiment. But on the other hand pupils elevated reading before listening here too. They perceived listening as a complementary part and they would not choose it as a self-contained source of their learning.

I was really surprised with the end result of this research. I thought the listening would constitute the important function for children's learning. But I think these outcomes are related to the age of pupils. The older students the more inclined towards the sound and listening against reading they would be.