Improving English skills through Video: A Conversation-Based Curriculum for Chinese EFL Adult Learners

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Improving English Skills through Video: A Conversation-Based Curriculum for Chinese Adult EFL Learners

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by
Xiaojie Wang
December 2014
Improving English Skills through Video: A Conversation-Based Curriculum for Chinese Adult EFL Learners

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A

by
Xiaojie Wang
December 2014

University of San Francisco

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

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Instructor/Chairperson                 Date
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ABSTRACT

In 1980, China opened its door to the outside world and eventually learning English became a tool for the drive for modernization in the country. For the past thirty years, learning English has been a goal of many. However, the overwhelming majority of Chinese students with limited vocabulary are apt to display low confidence when engaged in conversations in English. Specifically, they may fail to apply correct grammar knowledge and syntax during their communication. The purpose of this field was to create video teaching resources, based on U.S. media like television shows, to be used in EFL classes in China to improve the conversational skills of students.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 1980, China opened its door to the outside world and eventually learning English became a tool for the drive for modernization in the country. For the past thirty years, learning English has been a goal of many. Nowadays, there are more than 300 million learners in the country (Liu, 2010). Against the backdrop of its unique history as the longest continuously running history in the world is a philosophical approach to education that is often centered on the teacher as the transmitter of wisdom. As a result, many Chinese teachers offer English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses that are geared toward rote learning and focus on language used on examinations rather than providing practical ways for students to obtain English language skills. Liu (2014) explains this may be as a result of deep-rooted cultural traditions and thoughts about traditional teaching. Historically, traditional education in China is examination-oriented, and learning for exams is still based on memorization (Sit, 2013). However, focusing on rote learning often results in Chinese university-level second language (L2) students obtaining limited English proficiency. Moreover, there are few resources to assist them with learning practical knowledge, irrespective of language-related majors or non-English majors.
The overwhelming majority of Chinese students with limited vocabulary are apt to display low confidence when engaged in conversations in English. Specifically, they may fail to apply correct grammar knowledge and syntax during their communication. These students have few opportunities to voice their opinions during a traditional EFL course, resulting in low self-esteem and language competence. Yashima et al. (2004) state L2 learners who showed communication reticence had a tendency towards unwillingness to communicate in their second language. Chinese EFL institutions currently provide courses for English for Specific Purpose (EAP) and vocational ESL. However, the vast majority of students still find it difficult to pass the exams despite how hard they try. Students with low language competence might be unwilling to voice any opinions during course focused on oral communication. This has an egregious effect on students’ English proficiency. Gan et al. (2004) state L2 students with limited language competence or learning tools are less successful in utilizing their second language in many different situations.

In the article “Understanding Successful and Unsuccessful EFL Students in Chinese Universities,” Gan et al. (2004) note successful L2 students demonstrate greater use of more appropriate application of the learning strategies. On the other hand, less successful or unsuccessful students use a limited or inappropriately applied repertoire of
language learning strategies. According to Peng and Woodrow (2010), “Contemporary second language (L2) pedagogy has attached great importance to communicative interaction in class with a view to developing learners’ communicative competence. Individual learners, however, are not always willing to attempt L2 communication” (p. 834). They also state, “In countries and regions where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL), the language classroom is an essential platform for learners to experience interactive communication using the target language” (p. 835). One method that is less used by EFL teachers is instruction that incorporates visual materials. Chinese EFL teachers could apply visual teaching materials in English classes.

To address the limited language competence of Chinese EFL adult learners is to incorporate creative teaching methods in EFL courses in China by adopting multi-media technology like videos, sitcoms and other television programs. Visual materials can be used to foster the understanding of texts not only printed on paper but also displayed on computers. For EFL language teachers, video is a helpful tool that could support second language teaching. Lin (2011) states video could enhance L2 students’ understanding of the concepts that are difficult to explain verbally. Video, therefore, could bridge the gap between Chinese EFL students’ needs and Chinese EFL teachers’ teaching methods. Also, according to researchers, some studies have indicated the important role of video in L2
learning. For example, researchers have found that video can foster word recognition, vocabulary learning, and listening and reading comprehension (Jones, 2004; Jones & Plass, 2002; Chun & Plass, 1997, 1996).

In a nutshell, using video teaching resources in EFL classes in China can be an effective way to improve the conversational skills of students because they will be exposed to a more naturalistic use of English as reflected in popular media in US. Moreover, by watching how American people speak naturalistic English, Chinese EFL students could create their real-life conversations in terms of different scenarios shown in videos. Therefore, Chinese EFL students could effectively make colloquial interactions and language practices in the real-world communication.

**Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to provide resources to improve Chinese EFL adult learners’ oral language competence. This project focuses on intermediate level Chinese EFL adult learners who want to improve their language competence and oral communication skills. The project provides activities focused on conversations, topics, and academic knowledge necessary for students to maintain English-speaking habits and improve English proficiency.
As an international student from China studying in the US, I have personally observed and experienced there is a significant need for more naturalistic English learning and teaching. In China and the US, Chinese students struggle to find an appropriate way to speak naturalistic English. They find it difficult to speak English or engage in conversations successfully due to a lack of learning tools. Therefore, this project is geared towards this population and provides practical activities in addition to cultural knowledge necessary to help Chinese intermediate level EFL students.

**Theoretical Framework**

The project is rooted in three second-language acquisition theories: the Affective Filter Hypothesis, the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA), and The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Firstly, the Affective Filter Hypothesis highlights the impact of safe environment with second language learners. It focuses on creating a learning environment with low anxiety, allowing students to make mistakes and motivating students to produce more language output. CLTA focuses on instruction, learning and meaning, with a final goal of helping language learners produce authentic English. In terms of TBLT, it focuses on the language assessment based on how students complete the given tasks during the class.
The Affective Filter Hypothesis

One of the salient language barriers of Chinese ESL students is foreign language anxiety. Foreign language anxiety negatively affects foreign language achievement (Proulx, 1991; Young, 1991). It also relates to such variables associated with language learning as confidence and self-esteem (Mak & White, 1997; Clement, Dornyei, & Noels, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), attitudes toward errors and mistakes (Mak & White, 1997), classroom behavior (Jackson, 2002; Hilleson, 1996; Tsui, 1996), attitude and motivation (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Clement et al., 1994), and personality (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995). In order to address this issue, the affective filter hypothesis can be useful.

The overarching idea of the theory is to provide a safe classroom environment where students can release anxieties caused by speaking a second language. Low anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation are the essence of the theory. That is one of the reasons that the author incorporates the theory into the curriculum of this research proposal. Topics in the curriculum such as how to make friends and how to celebrate holidays can be challenging for students. Therefore, applying this theory is necessary for removing that anxiety in the classroom. The author also hopes to remove the students’ anxiety outside of the classroom when engaging in real daily conversations, by providing Chinese ESL adult learners a safe learning environment and the necessary conversational skills.
and tools.

The Communicative Language Teaching Approach

According to Savignon (2000), the definition of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA) can be synthesized in the following six features:

1. Instructions should be based on communicative competence and do not merely focus on grammar or linguistic competence;

2. Attempts by language learners to communicate with each other are encouraged in the period of learning, through negotiation and interaction.

3. Teaching materials are determined by content, function, and meaning;

4. Communication, meaningfulness, and contextualization are the three primary principles, which are inextricably intertwined;

5. Teaching methods are supposed to maintain language learners’ study interests.

6. The overarching essence of the theory is to help language learners speak the target language authentically.

CLTA is an approach that presents a philosophy of language teaching. It is based on communicative language use and competence. Meaningfulness and contextualization are also of primary importance.
The goal of CLTA is to teach a language through interaction and discussion by applying a wide range of learning activities. Second language learners are exposed to real conversation and this will improve language learning. The role of language in this approach is to be meaningful to language learners and support them. Based on this principle, the curriculum is designed to follow the characteristics of the CLTA in the subsequent chapters of this research proposal.

**Task-Based Language Teaching Approach**

The Task-Based Language Teaching Approach (TBLT) is a branch of CLTA. According to Rod (2003), the approach focuses on task-completion. The teaching lesson is based on how students complete a task in certain stages, such as pre-task, task, planning, report, and analysis. TBLT is focused on students’ needs and the level of task completion. It mainly includes three stages as follows: pre-task, task completion, and report.

In each stage, teachers should consider the role of students and class dynamics, inductive and deductive approaches, teachers’ lesson plans, and level of engagement desired. The overarching idea of this approach is to motivate students to replicate the pre-task/model task by watching video or engaging television activities and then they should use the vocabulary they have learnt in closed pairs or groups. Teachers should
monitor rather than intervene, to be specific, facilitate. Moreover, teachers follow each stage and use each stage as an opportunity to assess whether students proficiency is improving. Teachers can then be better prepared to help students refine their language skills and this will lead students to recognize the importance of language accuracy and complexity. In terms of this project, the tasks are the focus for developing colloquial skills, and it is my goal to provide Chinese EFL students with appropriate technology for further developing their English language skills outside of the classroom.

**Significance of the Project**

The project has the potential to have great significance for not only intermediate Chinese EFL students but also for EFL students who hope to improve English proficiency as well. Moreover, it is of great importance for EFL teachers and for language institutions where they teach. By completing activities like the ones proposed in this project, intermediate EFL students will have more opportunities to achieve naturalistic and authentic English speaking skills necessary to help them be better prepared for academic development, interpersonal communication, and job interviews in China. If they are attending a city college for academic purposes and career choices in their communities, these activities will increase their English language knowledge and understanding of American culture.
The project also has benefits for EFL teachers in China, for instance, they could use these activities for their own lesson planning. This is because the activities in this project are not only geared towards intermediate students but also students who hope to improve their English proficiency. By using these activities, EFL teachers could obtain information that could support their own teaching objectives and level of students’ engagement desired. For instance, it could supplement their own designed quizzes, exams, or assessment of students’ level of English achievement. This could help teachers assess to what degree their students are achieving speaking proficiency and what areas they need to improve in. Currently, Chinese EFL courses provided in colleges and language institutions fail to meet students’ real needs, especially, in speaking. Thus, these activities will work to maximum effect according to students’ communication needs. It could vary according to different learning and teaching environments and class dynamics.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Foreign language anxiety and limited communicative competence are significant issues that prevent many Chinese EFL adult learners’ from regularly engaging in conversations in English. Moreover, Chinese EFL institutions often focus on text memorization and rote learning, which does not satisfy Chinese adult learners’ goal of improving their oral competence. Therefore, the solution to the issues should include improving oral competence by decreasing foreign language anxiety and language barriers. Teachers of Chinese EFL adult learners need to decrease foreign language anxiety and improve their communicative competence by creating a safe learning environment as well as focusing on practical conversational skills.

The three second-language acquisition theories applied to this project were Affective Filter Hypothesis, Communicative Language Teaching, and Task-based Language Teaching Approach. This literature review explores the relationship between these language theories within English-speaking classroom settings. Specifically, the review examines nine empirical studies. The first section focuses on the impact of language barriers (Wu & Marek, 2010; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004). The second section focuses on the significance of video-teaching

**Impact of Language Barriers on Second Language Usage**

Liu and Jackson (2008) explored the connection between unwillingness to communicate and anxiety of Chinese English as foreign language (EFL) learners. They administered a 70-item survey to 547 first-year undergraduate non-English majors in Beijing, China. All participants were enrolled in an English listening and speaking course.

The researchers identified four major results. Firstly, the majority of the students were willing to participate in interpersonal conversations. However, many did not like to risk using or speaking English in class. Secondly, more than 30% of the students felt some anxiety in their English language classrooms. They feared being negatively evaluated and were uneasy about public speaking and tests. Thirdly, students’ unwillingness to communicate and their foreign language anxiety correlated significantly with each other, as well with their self-rated English proficiency and access to English. Finally, many of the variables of interest were good predictors of the students'
unwillingness to communicate and the level of foreign language anxiety. These were also powerful predictors for each other.

The results of Liu and Jackson’s study suggested that the students’ unwillingness to produce second language and their foreign language anxiety were closely intertwined. The unwillingness to use the target language (English) might have a negative impact on EFL students’ being able to perform successfully and make them more anxious. Likewise, foreign language anxiety might have a negative effect on their willingness to use the target language (English) in the classroom.

Overall, the study was highly detailed and credible, although it sustained some limitations. The sampling ignored the proportion of English majors compared to the focus on non-English majors. Consistent with the measurement, the researchers continued to add another limitation that the study was only conducted in Beijing owing to some constraints. The students’ real performance in a metropolis might be different from students in middle-sized cities.

While Liu and Jackson (2008) explored the connection between anxiety and willingness to speak English in the classroom, Gan et al. (2004) explored the connection between self-directedness for language learning and English language learning attainment among university students on the Chinese mainland and in Hong Kong. Their
semester-long study was a follow up to a larger quantitative study conducted by Gan in 2003. Gan et al.’s study involved two small groups of tertiary-level EFL learners in China in order to document how they carried out their out-of-class English learning, as well as tissues that may be critical to understanding the variability that had already been observed in their English learning outcomes.

Gan et al. gathered data through interviews, diaries, and follow-up email correspondence with nine successful and nine unsuccessful second-year EFL students at two universities located on mainland China. The researchers constructed categories of qualitative data using grounded theory methodology. Six categories emerged from analysis of gathered data. They were: conceptualizing English language learning; perceptions of the College English Course; learning and practicing strategies; self-management; internal drive; and English proficiency tests. The findings of the study suggested that different levels of EFL student success may be explained by a complex and dynamic intersection of internal incentives like cognition and emotion, as well as external incentives such as social context. In addition, Gan et al.’s study implied the need to embrace a more complete view of language learning outcomes for EFL students and to broaden the scope of teaching in order to improve the learning strategies used with students.
Unlike the Liu and Jackson study, limitations were not outlined in Gan et al’s study. However, how to address language issues and methods to improve students’ confidence and self-motivation were highlighted. The language barriers mentioned were not merely language competence. The researchers highlighted other underlying issues related to learning and teaching. Students with a low-level of English proficiency could engage in a conversation if teachers encouraged and motivated them.

Wu and Marek (2010) also examined the relationship between specific variables and EFL speakers’ success. The researchers looked at confidence, motivation and ability by using video-conferencing interactions between Taiwanese EFL speakers and a native speaker. Wu and Marek describe the study as follows,

six videoconference sessions were held during the fall and the spring semesters in five English conversation classes taught by the Taiwanese researchers. The same students were in the class in both semesters. During each video-conference, the American researcher presented a topic drawn from American culture and American customs, followed by a period of student interaction with the American. The researchers then collected both quantitative and qualitative data from the 227 participating students. (p.103)

Three surveys were administered during the course of the study. Questions addressed learning interests, cultural differences, similarities and differences between target language and native language, learning motivation, English-proficiency levels, and demographic information relevant to gender, age and program type. In terms of methodologies, factor analysis and stepwise multiple regression were used. Relationships
between motivation, ability, and confidence, and critical elements of perceived confidence and motivation predicting perceived English ability (exploratory factor analysis, factor analysis of perceived ability, and factor analysis of perceived confidence) were taken into account in the results of the study.

With regard to the results of this study, Wu and Marek stated the confidence factor dominated an important part of students’ perceptions of their own ability. The confidence shown in conversational skills was more obvious than that in listening, reading and writing. Another noteworthy result was that students argued they could get benefits when engaging a conversation with native speakers because the teachers’ English was all with an accent. The students indicated they appreciated opportunities to talk with native speakers in order to gain exposure to authentic English.

Videoconferences used in this study were effective and useful for students. The use of technology could help students improve their confidence, motivation, and ability when learning a second language.

Similar to the Gan et al.’s study, limitations were not outlined. Wu and Marek did provide highly-detailed discussion section. Most importantly, the researcher revealed the participants appreciated learning American cultural information contained in the presentations and having the ability to hear authentic American English pronunciation.
and usage and found the experience of talking with Americans via the Internet to be less stressful than expected. Use of video holds potential for significant increases in student motivation, confidence, and ability.

The abovementioned studies (Wu & Marek, 2010; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Gan et al., 2004) share some similarities. Firstly, all studies focused on language issues related to Chinese EFL students. Their foreign language anxiety, low confidence, and limited oral competence were the main issues. Secondly, the researchers emphasized that removing foreign language anxiety, improving motivation, and giving more opportunities could enhance EFL students’ English proficiency. Addressing barriers is an important component of this project. Foreign language learning anxiety should not be something that is ignored or considered a problem for the students to deal with. To optimize learning for EFL learners, teachers need to be aware of the impact of anxiety-provoking situations and attempt to minimize their negative impact on students.

**Effectiveness of Video-teaching Strategies**

Liu (2011) focused on the strategies used by second language learners to comprehend visual materials. The sample consisted of 211 participants. They were required to take an English course in a public university in Taiwan. 63 students were involved in the pilot study in the first semester, and the remaining 148 joined the formal
study during the second semester. A pilot study was conducted to ascertain video comprehension (VC) strategies in order to develop a VC strategy questionnaire. There were two dimensions to the VC strategies: verbal and nonverbal. Liu (2011) further divided the two dimensions into three subcategories: compensation, memory, and cognition. In the formal study, each participant viewed three video clips, completed self-reports, and the developed questionnaire.

Liu conducted a quantitative analysis of questionnaire data to identify the most and least frequently employed verbal and nonverbal strategies and the three subcategories. With regard to strategy category, participants employed certain types of learning strategies. Liu discovered there was no significant difference in the application of the two kinds of strategies. Nevertheless, use of the memory category strategies outnumbered that of the compensation and cognitive category strategies. The self-report data were also analyzed qualitatively.

Based on the results of the study, Lin came to certain conclusions. First of all, there was no significant difference between verbal and nonverbal strategy used by the participants. Second of all, with respect to verbal strategies, using video topics and the contextual verbal clues were both ranked as the most frequently used compensation strategies; replaying the video to re-read the captions the most widely favored memory
strategy, and reading the captions carefully was the most prevalent cognitive strategy. Third of all, with respect to nonverbal strategies, using concrete situational referents was considered the most useful compensation strategy; analyzing the video theme was the favorite memory strategy, and catching the main ideas in the clip was the most widespread cognitive strategy. Fourth of all, with respect to verbal strategies separating words into smaller parts was the least used compensation strategy, listening for every word was the least used memory strategy, and looking up words in a dictionary was the least used cognitive strategy. Finally, with respect to nonverbal strategies, observing a speaker’s facial expression and body language was the least used compensation strategy, and using domain knowledge obtained in academic situations was the least utilized memory strategy; suggesting a question related to the clip was the least used cognitive strategy.

Lin listed some limitations of the study. Cultural differences in non-verbal video clips were the main barriers to students’ comprehension. For example, students were required to view video clips from CNN News; however, some students did not know the contextual culture shown in the clip. Another limitation was participants from different countries who used a different phonetic writing system found it difficult to make notes when watching the video.
While Lin (2011) was interested in investigating the types of strategies used by second language learners, Abdurrahman and Pederson (2010) focused on the effects of subtitled similar task videos on language production by non-native speakers. The sample included 20 intermediate-level students in an English language institute in the southern US who were 18 to 29 years old. The participants were recruited from two sections of an intermediate-level composition course, and had taken other intermediate-level English courses. In addition, the sample reflected a variety of first language backgrounds, including Mandarin, Arabic, Korean, Spanish, and Japanese. Similar task group (STG), control group, and non-similar task groups (NSTG) were established to finish four tasks. At the beginning of the study, participants were given four tasks: Compare the Maps, Christmas Break Trip, Gifts for a Family, and Garage Sale. Ten dyads collaboratively completed four communicative tasks, using an online tasked-based language learner (TBLL) environment specifically designed for the study and a chat tool entitled WebCT-Vista. The researchers provided five dyads with subtitled similar task videos and five dyads were not. Language production was investigated in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity, including lexical and syntactic complexity. Abdurrahman and Pederson investigated language production in terms of fluency, accuracy, lexical richness, and syntactic complexity.
Abdurrahman and Pederson outlined several results of their study. Firstly, in terms of fluency, students in the STG produced almost 1.68 times more words than those of in the NSTG. Secondly, regarding lexical complexity, students in the STG groups produced 1.78 times more vocabulary richness than the NSTG. Thirdly, with regard to syntactic structure, students in the STG produced 1.38 times more subordinate clauses than the NSTG. The results indicated students in the STG performed better than those of in the NSTG. Similar tasks therefore helped students enhance fluency, accuracy, vocabulary diversity, and syntactic complexity.

Abdurrahman and Pederson provided some suggestions. First, using task-based language teaching can help students be more productive. Second, subtitled task videos can help students improve their oral ability by exposing them to sensory input. Therefore, video-teaching strategies improved the modern language teaching within the context of Chinese EFL classrooms. Lin (2011) and Abdurrahman and Pederson (2010) have a correlation to the theories used in this field project. Particularly, the second study focused on the task-based language teaching approach.

Similar to Abdurrahman and Pederson, White et al. (2000) conducted a study on video and language learning. However, the researchers focused on tertiary learners of Spanish. Specifically, they were interested in their perceptions of the contribution of
video on learning and the affective evaluations they attributed to video versus print sources. The participants in the study were enrolled in a distance learning program. Data was gathered relating to when and how students’ used video, how they represented video in the development of language skills, and affective responses to video versus print sources.

White et al. discovered video was used primarily to orient students to new material, and to gain background, in order to integrate subsequent material. Video was perceived as aiding participants in their acquisition of listening and speaking skills, pronunciation, as well as assisting in the recall of the language through visual setting and contextual features. The audio could enhance an awareness of rhythm and intonation. In addition, seeing the visual setting helped language learners recall context and content of the language. Consistent with the visual settings, hearing the word produced and reading printed sources on the screen were both of great importance to second language learners.

White et al. concluded providing sensory input to language learners by using visual materials can orient students how to use, value, and respond to video as an integral component for language sources. In particular, duplicates situations that the foreign language classroom cannot produce. The opportunity for students to be exposed to cultural context of a foreign language is significant to their progress.
Based on the three studies, it was interesting that they shared great similarities in some way. First, they all explored the relationship between video-teaching and English proficiency. Visual materials, sensory input, and audio-lingual tools in video-focused teaching could help second language learners improve their language competence. Secondly, the three articles held the consensus that video-teaching strategies had an advantage over traditional learning. Second language learners could recall the settings, contexts and contents on the screen by exposure to sensory facilitation. In a nutshell, the three studies emphasize the importance of the second theme of this review of literature, the significance of video-teaching strategy, on this project.

**Relationship between Vocabulary Richness and Oral Ability**

Tian and Macaro (2012) investigated the effects of lexical focus-on-form instruction teaching mode during vocabulary tests, listening tests, and reading tests. The researchers selected a sample of 80 first-year L2 (English) college students at a Chinese university. The participants were stratified by proficiency and randomly assigned to a code switching condition or English-only condition. Their performance on vocabulary tests was compared to a control group of 37 students who did not receive any Lexical Focus-on-Form treatment.
The researchers established baseline proficiency tests, and the vocabulary pretests were administered. One week later, the instructional intervention began, and this lasted for six weeks. The study spanned a total of nine weeks. In terms of each section of the test, the pretest identified 77 words and aimed for assessing the students’ ability for selection targeted vocabulary. The remaining tests involved listening tests, vocabulary tests, and reading comprehension tests. Particularly, Lexical Focus-on-Form instruction was used throughout the study.

With regard to the results of the study, Tian and Macaro identified two major findings. Firstly, Lexical Focus-on-Form instruction had a positive impact on students’ perception of new vocabulary. The data indicated the participants experienced substantial gains from the Lexical Focus-on-Form instruction. Secondly, the participants who received Lexical Focus-on-Form instruction outperformed students in the control group.

Tian and Macaro argued Lexical Focus-on-Form instruction had a positive impact on vocabulary richness. However, the researchers highlighted some limitations. The normal classroom context failed to make students feel comfortable. Some students were unable to finish the tasks. Another limitation was that some students did not have opportunities for writing the targeted words because they were only required to select
them. This might have affected the learning of new vocabulary for some students. This study provided some suggestions and guidelines for Chinese EFL on vocabulary learning.

Like Tian and Macaro (2012), Yu (2010) also focused on lexicography. The researcher analyzed archived data on the relationship between lexical diversity in speaking and writing tests. The data collection involved two stages. At stage one, 201 compositions were selected. One composition was rejected because of excessive spelling errors. At stage two, all tape-recorded interviews of the 201 who also took the speaking test were grouped by their composition scores. Altogether, Yu selected 26 interviews. One interview proved too difficult to transcribe and was discarded.

Yu clearly outlined the results of the study. The researcher concluded that lexical diversity had a close correlation with speaking and writing. Participants performed similarly irrespective of language outputs in different contexts, time, and even level of pressure. The impact of lexical diversity of candidates’ performance in speaking and writing were twofold. The writing competence failed to affect the real oral ability in the interviews. Instead, the lexical richness in writing might have improved the fluency of speaking. Lexical diversity in writing and speaking were inextricably intertwined to some extent. According to Yu, factors of different genders in writing and speaking should have been taken into account. The researcher stated although both males and females did not
differ dramatically, the data indicated males produced different language outputs than females. Another limitation the researchers identified was first language background could also have had an impact on the results of the study.

Lu (2012) also examined the relationship between lexical richness and the quality of English as second language (ESL) learners' oral narratives. A computational system was designed to automate the measurement of three dimensions of lexical richness. The three dimensions were: lexical density, sophistication, and variation. The system was based on 25 different metrics proposed in language acquisition literature.

The computational system used was geared towards assessing Chinese ESL vocabulary richness. In particular, the focus was on the relationship of lexical richness to the raters’ assessments of the quality of oral narratives produced by Chinese learners of English taking the Test for English Majors (TEM–4). The sample included 408 transcriptions of participants who took the TEM-4 and were required to finish speaking tasks. Speaking tests involved storytelling, talking about a given topic, and role-playing. Participants had been recorded completing the tasks and were independently rated.

According to Yu, the results suggested that lexical richness correlated with ESLs oral narratives. However, lexical diversity had no direct correlation with Chinese students’ academic rankings. Students with a high ranking performed the same as other students.
Lexical diversity did have a close relationship to oral narratives. Students with limited oral competence failed to produce diverse vocabulary. In addition, both lexical complexity and density had an impact on lexical diversity and language output. The three studies (Lu, 2012; Tian & Macaro, 2012; Yu, 2010) shared some similarities. They focused on the relationship between vocabulary richness and oral ability. In some manner, they all focused on the correlation between lexical diversity and real world practice.

**Summary**

The common thread that ran through all the reviewed literature was that the use of video materials is beneficial to Chinese students. Within the first theme of the impact of language barriers on practical communication, Liu and Jackson (2008) conducted a study that reported the results of the unwillingness to communicate with people and foreign language anxiety of Chinese ESL learners. Gan et al. (2004) stated the differences between successful students and unsuccessful students were lack of self-confidence and motivation were the underlying language issues in Chinese ESL language teaching. Wu and Marek (2010) argued that confidence was a dominant factor in students’ perceptions of their own ability.

The articles all focused on the importance of providing a safe environment for ESL or EFL learners. That is also the overarching idea of the Affective Filter Hypothesis.
The three studies reviewed in the first section have a correlation to the theories applied in this project. The similarities among these three studies are removing language anxiety, improving confidence and motivation for students. Therefore, the Affective Filter Hypothesis can be well-applied in the project.

In terms of the second theme, the literature continued to explore the significance of video-teaching strategy as part of a conversational English course. Lin (2011) highlighted various benefits to using video as a TESOL tool. The lack of video facilitation lefts students with limited language input and opportunities to listening skills and sensory exposure. Abdurrahman & Pederson (2010) conducted a study that task-based language learning via video could improve English proficiency. The focus on task performances and learning outcomes were also the goal of this field project. Last but not least, White et al. (2000) highlighted new approaches to teaching TESOL when applying visual materials into real practical second language teaching.

The studies highlighted the importance of the task-based language teaching (TBLT). The overarching idea of TBLT is to provide pre-tasks, tasks, and relevant classroom activities based on how students perform and complete the given tasks. Because many Chinese EFLs lack exposure to class interaction and negotiation, TBLT Teaching meets this need. In addition, the TBLT stresses the given tasks compared to
traditional language teaching. The project is geared towards addressing language issues by using effective teaching methods in Chinese EFL classroom settings. Therefore, TBLT was an appropriate focus of this project.

With respect to the final theme, the relationship between lexical richness and oral competence, Tian and Macaro (2012) argued that lexical richness had a positive impact on students’ oral competence. Lu (2012) explored the relationship between vocabulary richness and L2 learners’ oral narratives. Yu (2010) examined the relationship between lexical diversity in writing and speaking tasks. The results of the studies helped to emphasize that lack of new vocabulary and vocabulary richness among many Chinese EFL students needed to be considered in the design of the project.
CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

**Brief Description of the Project**

This project is an English language curriculum that consists of four units focused on improving conversational skills, especially use of American English idioms. The goal of the curriculum is to provide intermediate level EFL Chinese students with activities to improve their conversational skills, cultural knowledge of the US, and academic resources necessary for specific purposes. Each unit can comprises enough material for two or two and half hour sessions. The four units cover the following:

- **Unit One: At a Restaurant**- This unit begins with a brief introduction to American food, culture, and restaurants. The unit also focuses on how to order, read the menu, and basic knowledge of food culture. In addition, the unit focuses on American culture, within the context of a restaurant.

- **Unit Two: At School**- This unit begins with a brief introduction to American schools, the relationship between students and teachers, as well as students and their peers. The unit also focuses on cultural immersion in class, collaborative learning, group work, and class interaction.

- **Unit Three: Holidays**- This unit begins with a brief introduction to some American holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas. The unit
also focuses on traditional American holidays, how Americans celebrate holidays, and relationships between families and friends.

- Unit Four: Making Friends- This unit covers three sub-topics: making friends, dating, and shopping. The unit also focuses on how American young people celebrate their birthday, social gatherings, anniversaries, graduation, and job promotions, etc.

Development of the Project

I first learned English when I began to attend elementary school. I was eight years old at that time and could not imagine how learning English would change my life. Once I entered secondary school, I started to learn grammar systematically by doing grammar drills, text recitation, and engaging in rote learning activities. I thought this was the only way to learn a language because, unfortunately, this is also the same across much of China. However, I still learned much. My exposure to traditional language teaching methods spanned approximately ten years.

I was not exposed to conversational English until I went to college. I was overjoyed at the mere mention of the college experiences I would have. Unfortunately, it was not a pleasant experience on my first day on campus. I found it difficult to communicate with my foreign teachers who taught American culture. In an English
speaking course, afraid to make mistakes, I felt so anxious when I spoke because I could not find any appropriate words to say what I meant. These embarrassing moments helped me recognize the importance of practical English communication skills and the lack of real communicative opportunities I and many of my peers had. Based on this situation, our foreign teachers often used American TV shows and comedies to help us develop our English speaking skills. Therefore, we could hear how some American people spoke English. This teaching method really impressed me and provided me more opportunities to learn authentic American English.

Before I came to the US, I took the IELTS test and earned a score of 7. Faced with my results from this English proficiency test, I thought I could not fail in communicating when I studied abroad. However, I soon found I could understand American people but could not speak as they did. Therefore, the language barriers hindered me a lot when communicating with American peers. Moreover, many Americans asked me some questions concerning how Chinese students learn English. I have to admit the fact that many students in China still learn English in the way I did. Thus, I decided to focus my project on activities on how to use authentic and naturalistic American English.

**The Project**

The project can be found in the Appendix.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Many Chinese teachers offer English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses that are geared toward rote learning and focus on language used on examinations rather than providing practical ways for students to obtain English language skills because teacher-centered teaching is a unique way of transmitting wisdom based on Chinese traditions. Liu (2014) explains this may be as a result of deep-rooted cultural traditions and thoughts about traditional teaching. Historically, traditional education in China is examination-oriented and learning for exams is still based on memorization (Sit, 2013). However, focusing on rote learning often results in Chinese university-level second language (L2) students obtaining limited English proficiency.

Specifically, students may fail to apply correct grammar knowledge and syntax during their communication. These students have few opportunities to voice their opinions during a traditional EFL course, resulting in low self-esteem and language competence. Yashima et al. (2004) state L2 learners who showed communication reticence had a tendency towards unwillingness to communicate in their second language. Chinese EFL institutions currently provide courses for English for Specific Purpose (EAP) and vocational ESL. However, the vast majority of students still find it difficult to pass
the exams despite how hard they try. Students with low language competence might be unwilling to voice any opinions during course focused on oral communication. This has an egregious effect on students’ English proficiency.

To address the limited language competence of Chinese EFL adult learners is to incorporate creative teaching methods in EFL courses in China by adopting multi-media technology like videos, sitcoms and other television programs. Visual materials can be used to foster the understanding of texts not only printed on paper but also displayed on computers. For EFL language teachers, video is a helpful tool that could support second language teaching. Video, therefore, could bridge the gap between Chinese EFL students’ needs and Chinese EFL teachers’ teaching methods.

The purpose of this project was to provide multi-media resources to improve Chinese EFL adult learners’ oral language competence by designing a four-unit curriculum combined with American TV shows as well as focus on some aspects of American culture, specifically holidays. The project provided activities focused on conversations, topics, and academic knowledge necessary for students to maintain English-speaking habits and improve English proficiency. The materials used in this project meet the students’ demand for improving their English conversational skills because students can watch how American people communicate with each other, how
they solve problems, how to make friends, as well as hearing American people speak naturalistic English.

**Recommendations**

The project included 4 units focusing on at restaurant, at school, and holidays (Halloween and Thanksgiving), and making friends (hanging out, throwing a party, and going to the movies). Each unit can be used 2 hour class session. Each class session can be used two-hour long. Because this curriculum focuses on conversational skills, the evaluation and assessment should be focused on oral fluency and complexity. Students are encouraged to use the language highlights learnt from each unit according to different topics for their own purposes, such as interpersonal communication. Cultural highlights are to measure students’ cultural knowledge. When students engage in a conversation with their partners, teachers should not overtly correct grammar rules. In addition, because oral fluency is a long-term acquisition, teachers should encourage students to communicate in English not only in classrooms but also in real-world practices.
REFERENCES


university students. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 45*(3), 297-319


Appendix

Improving English Skills through Video: A Conversation-Based Curriculum for Chinese Adult EFL Learners
KEEP CALM AND LEARN ENGLISH
Table of Contents

Unit 1: At a Restaurant

Warm-up Activity

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Language & Culture

Role Play Activity

Unit 4: Making Friends

Warm-up Activity

Language & Culture

Role Play Activity

Suggestions of other U.S. holidays and video clips
Unit 1: At a Restaurant

Language Objectives

◎ Students will be able to learn active vocabulary and idioms in the context of restaurants in order to create their own conversations.

◎ Students will be exposed to how people use American English idioms in the context of having dinner at a restaurant.

◎ Students will learn American English idioms.

Content of the unit includes:

◎ Suggestions for American TV show videos

◎ Various scenarios and topics connected to the videos

Cultural focus:

◎ Students will explore and share differences between social etiquette
Students will discuss food culture between the US and China.

Warm-up Activity

Discussion (Have students practice their conversational skills by taking turns answering the following questions.)

1. Is food important to you?

2. What food do you usually eat? American food? Traditional Chinese food?

3. Do you think it’s good to eat at a restaurant? Why?

4. What kind of food do you like? Is there any food you don’t like?
Language & Culture
Part One: Ordering Food

The Big Bang Theory: Season 1 Episode 7

Focus Questions (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)

1. What kind of restaurant did they choose?

   A. They chose a Thai restaurant.
B. They chose a Chinese restaurant.

2. What was the problem when they were ready to order?
   
   A. Howard was not there.
   
   B. The food was not delicious.

3. What did Leonard suggest when they ordered dumplings?
   
   A. They should divide the dumplings up.
   
   B. They should order entrees (main courses).

4. What did Sheldon mean by “Let me walk you through it”?
   
   A. He wanted to explain something more clearly to the group.
   
   B. He wanted help from someone.

5. What did Leonard mean by “We’ll have middle ground?”
   
   A. He wanted to make a compromise.
   
   B. He was talking about somewhere else, a place.

6. What did Raj mean by “There is an Indian boy who is suffering hunger?”
   
   A. He wanted the group to order food quickly
   
   B. He wanted to tell the group about Indian people’s living situation

**Comprehension**

1. Is there a problem when they order? If yes, please give an explanation.
American English Idioms

1. **Fill up on**: To have your stomach filled with food.

   Sentence: Don’t **fill up on** chocolate because we will have dinner soon.
2. **Walk you through** something: To help someone learn or become familiar with something.

   Sentence: Let me walk you through how to use the new computer.

3. **Middle ground**: To make a compromise.

   Sentence: Why don’t we find middle ground to decide where to go for lunch?

**Role Play Activity** (Have the students watch the video again and listen for the idioms before completing this activity.)

1. Create a conversation that takes place in a restaurant.

2. It should include: place, people, and specific activities.

3. Use the three American English idioms or idioms learned in *The Big Bang Theory* video.
Part Two-Hamburger Boy

The Big Bang Theory: Season 1 Episode 5

Focus Questions (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)

Comprehension

1. How many kinds of hamburgers does Penny recommend to Sheldon? Please name each.

2. What did Sheldon mean by “Was that supposed to be a secret?”
3. Why was Raj unhappy?

4. What did Leonard mean by “I don’t think it is going to work out?”

American English Idioms

1. **Run into**: To see someone you know and were not expecting to see.
   
   Sentence: Did you run into them at the concert?

2. **Into something**: To like or be interested in something.
   
   Sentence: I’m really into playing video games.

3. **Turn down**: To say no to something that you have been offered.
   
   Sentence: She turned down a second piece of cake.

4. **Seeing someone**: To have a romantic relationship with someone.
   
   Sentence: Is she seeing anyone at the moment?

5. **How so?**: Used to ask someone to explain what they have said.
   
   Sentence: Rick’s parents are a little strange.

   How so?
6. **I follow**: To state you understand something.

   Sentence: I follow what he is saying.

7. **Work out**: To solve a problem.

   Sentence: Things will work out, you’ll see.

**Summarize the Conversation between the Characters**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**Role Play Activity**

1. Create a conversation that takes place in a restaurant.

2. It should include: place, people, and specific activities.

3. Use the three American English idioms or idioms learned in *The Big Bang Theory* video.
Part Three- Drinks

One mixed drink with
• 1.5 fl oz (44 mL) of 80-proof liquor
  (such as vodka, gin, scotch, bourbon, brandy, or rum)

5 fl oz (148 mL) of wine

12 fl oz (355 mL) of beer or wine cooler

The Big Bang Theory Season 1 Episode 8

Focus Questions (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)

1. What does Penny mean by “I make a mean grasshopper?”

   A. People who are mean, narrow-minded

   B. People who are expert at something
2. What does Sheldon mean in “Bartenders are supposed to have people skills?”

   A. bartender: a person who serves usually alcoholic beverages behind a bar;
   people skills: the ability to communicate effectively with people in a friendly way.

   B. bartenders: people who take public transportation; people skills: people who have skills in sports.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. How many drinks does Penny make for her friends? Please name it.

   ______________________________

   ______________________________

2. What does Sheldon want to drink?

   ______________________________

**Summarize the Conversation between the Characters**

   ______________________________

   ______________________________

   ______________________________

   ______________________________

   ______________________________
American English Idioms

1. People skills: The ability to deal with people in a friendly manner

   Sentence: A doctor needs **people skills** as well as technical knowledge.

2. Conversation starter: A question or topic that begins between two or more people

   Example: Nice weather today, isn't it?

Role Play Activity

1. Create a conversation in a context of dining etiquette in a restaurant.

2. Use the two American English idioms or idioms learned in *The Big Bang Theory* video.
Table manners play an important part in making a favorable impression. They are visible signals of the state of our manners and therefore are essential to professional success. The point of etiquette rules is to make you feel comfortable - not uncomfortable. Restaurant reservations are like any other appointment. If you make a reservation, stick to
Call ahead if you’re going to be more than 15 minutes late, and cancel as far in advance as possible if your plans change so that someone else can get a table.

Some restaurants take credit card numbers to hold reservations and charge no-show fees. As soon as you are seated, remove the napkin from your place setting, unfold it, and put it in your lap. Do not shake it open. At some very formal restaurants, the waiter may do this for the diners, but it is not inappropriate to place your own napkin in your lap, even when this is the case. The napkin rests on the lap till the end of the meal. Don't clean the cutlery or wipe your face with the napkin. Never use it to wipe your nose!

If you excuse yourself from the table, loosely fold the napkin and place it to the left or right of your plate. Do not refold your napkin or wad it up on the table either. Never place your napkin on your chair. At the end of the meal, leave the napkin semi-folded at the left side of the place setting. It should not be crumpled or twisted; nor should it be folded.

The napkin must also not be left on the chair.

The meal begins when the host or hostess unfolds his or her napkin. This is your signal to do the same. Place your napkin on your lap, completely unfolded if it is a small luncheon napkin or in half, lengthwise, if it is a large dinner napkin. Do not shake it open. The napkin rests on the lap till the end of the meal. The host will signal the end of the meal by placing his or her napkin on the table. Once the meal is over, you too should
place your napkin neatly on the table to the left of your dinner plate. (Do not refold your
napkin but don't wad it up, either.)

Adopted from http://whatscookingamerica.net/Menu/DiningEtiquetteGuide.htm

Discussion

1. Talk about the rules in terms of social etiquette in the passage.

2. Compare the differences in social etiquette between China and the US.
Unit Two: At School

Language objectives

◎ Students will be able to learn active vocabulary and idioms in the context of schools in order to create their own conversations.

◎ Students will know how people speak naturalistic American English at schools

◎ Students will learn American English idioms.

Content objectives

◎ Authentic American TV shows

◎ Various scenarios and topics

Cultural focus

◎ Students will explore and share differences between school rules, school discipline, etc.
Students will discuss education, student-teacher relationship, and parent-teacher relationships, etc.

Warm-up Activity

Discussion

1. What do you think of your teachers?

2. Do you like your high school or college professors?

3. Do you think it’s important to like your teachers?

4. Do you think there are any benefits from teachers being strict with students?

5. What qualities should a good teacher have?
Language & Culture
Part One- School Performance

Focus Questions (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)

Bad Teacher Season 1 Episode 3

Comprehension

1. What does Carol mean by “touchy feely?”
   A. To show emotions easily
   B. A person who likes to touch things

2. What does Carol mean by “How to liven things up?”
   A. To focus on living a good life
   B. To make something more interesting

3. What does Carol mean by “I am not gonna beat around the bush?”
   A. To avoid or delay talking about something embarrassing or unpleasant
B. A plant with thin branches

**Bad Teacher Season 1 Episode 6**

**Comprehension**

1. Ginny said, “You think a war that divided our nation and pitted brother against brother is boring.”

2. Ginny said to Meredith, “I don’t like you.” Meredith responded, “Feeling is mutual.”

3. Principal Carol said to Kim, “Your bulletin board design skills are unrivaled”
4. Principal Carol said to Kim, “We’ve been over every subject. You’re gonna be out of from under Ginny’s thumb and running your own classroom in no time.”

5. Kim said to Principal Carol, “I guess I buckled under pressure, you know, I have been racking my brain.”

6. Carol said to Kim, “If you are willing to dig in.”

**Summarize the Conversation between the Characters**
American English Idioms

1. **Touchy feely**: To show emotions easily
   
   Sentence: He is always touchy feely with his friends.

2. **Liven things up**: To make something more interesting
   
   Sentence: Why don’t we invite Jane? She’ll liven things up.

3. **Beat around the bush**: To avoid or delay talking about something embarrassing or unpleasant.
   
   Sentence: I know you are angry but don’t beat around the bush.

Role Play Activity

1. Create a conversation in a context of dining etiquette in a restaurant.

2. Use the three American English idioms or idioms learned in *Bad Teacher* video.
Part Two- Parent-Teacher Conferences

Background information

Give a brief introduction to parent-teacher conference in US elementary schools (After introducing the topic have students discuss differences to their primary school education for 5-10 minutes)

A parent-teacher conference is a short meeting or conference between the parents and teachers of students to discuss children's progress at school and find solutions to academic or behavioral problems. Parent-teacher conferences supplement the information in report cards by focusing on students' specific strengths and weaknesses in individual
subjects and generalizing the level of inter-curricular skills and competences. Conferences are held twice during a school year. Most conferences take place without the presence of the students whose progress is being discussed, although there is evidence that their inclusion increases the productivity of the meetings. The meetings are generally led by teachers who take a more active role in information sharing, with parents relegated mostly to the role of listeners.


**Bad Teacher Season 1 Episode 11**

**Focus Questions** (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)
1. What does Meredith mean by “They’re gonna talk down to me.”

   A. To speak to someone as if they were too young or stupid to understand something
   B. To convince someone to do something

2. What does Meredith mean by, “You gotta have my back on it.”

   A. To support someone
   B. To do something without people knowing

Comprehension

1. Because I knew that your teaching methods were unorthodox but that did get through to the kids.

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

2. Parent groups are scrutinizing my every move

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

3. That’s inappropriate attire.

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________
Summarize the Conversation between Characters

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______________________________________________________________

American English Idioms

1. **Talk down**: To speak to someone as if they were too young or stupid to understand something

   Sentence: The students felt that they were *talked down* to as though they were children.

2. **Have my back**: To support someone

   Sentence: I want to know you will *have my back* when I ask for my promotion.

Role Play Activity

1. Create a conversation in a context of dining etiquette in a restaurant.

2. Use the two American English idioms or idioms learned in *Bad Teacher* video.
Part Three - Parent Engagement & Graduation

Modern Family Season 1 Episode 20

Focus Questions (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)

1. What does Manny mean by, “You’re making it lame again?”
   
   A. Unable to walk properly because your leg or foot is injured or weak
   
   B. Boring or not very good

2. What does Mitchell mean by, “I know how it feels to have him stick his nose where it doesn’t belong?”
   
   A. People who are smart
   
   B. To become involved in something that does not concern you

3. What does Cameron mean by, “I don’t know maybe just to get your dad off your back?”
A. To make someone feel assured and relieved

B. To stop annoying someone with a lot of questions/ make someone stop annoying you in this way

Modern Family Season 2 Episode 23

Comprehension

1. What is the problem between Cameron and Mitchell when Jay talks about finding a job?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

2. What makes Phil think he is a better coach than his father-in-law Jay?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

3. What does Phil mean by “Finishing her first in her class, delivering the
commencement address”?

_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________


_____________________________________________________

5. What does Phil mean by, “She’s the main brain, the cerebellum of the ball?”

_____________________________________________________

6. What does Phil mean by, “Our hubris will be our undoing?”

_____________________________________________________

7. What does Claire mean by “Because it’s great to bounce ideas off someone whose opinion you value?”

_____________________________________________________

Summarize the Conversation between Characters

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_____________________________________________________
American English Idioms

1. **Making it lame**: Boring or not very good

   Sentence: You are making the song lame with the weird lyrics.

2. **Stick his/her nose**: To become involved in something that does not concern you

   Sentence: She always has to stick her nose into matters that do not concern her.

3. **Off your back**: To stop annoying someone with a lot of questions/ make someone stop annoying you in this way

   Sentence: I will get off your back when you finish the project.

Role Play Activity

1. Create a conversation with a classmate that includes the three American English idioms.

2. Record your conversation with a camera or a cellphone.

3. Present your conversation to the class and share your reflections of the conversation.
A graduation or commencement speech, in the US, is a public speech given by a student or by alumnus of a high school or university to a graduating class and their guests. Common themes of the graduation speech include wishing the graduates well in the “real world,” cautioning that the world of academe is a special place where they were taught to think (a common variation contradicts this view). More recently, the trend has been to find a celebrity or a politician to deliver the speech.

Extracted from

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_graduation_by_country#United_States_of_America
The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination

http://www.iqiyi.com/w_19rr9b88j1.html

Discussion

1. Have students separate into small groups.

2. In groups of 3-5 people, they should share opinions, reflections of the speech and present what they talked about to the class.
Unit Three: U.S. Holidays

Language objectives

◎ Students will be able to learn active vocabulary and idioms in the context of schools in order to create their own conversations.

◎ Students will know how people speak naturalistic American English at schools

◎ Students will learn American English idioms.

Content objectives

◎ Suggestions for American TV show videos

◎ Various scenarios and topics connected to the videos
Cultural focus

Students will explore the history of different U.S. holidays.

Warm-up Activity:

Discussion

1. Do you think it’s difficult to choose gifts to give on holidays?
2. Describe a favorite holiday. What do you like to do?
3. Describe a family union, such as a dinner, a festival, a holiday etc.
4. Do you stay with your family during a holiday? What do you usually do?
5. What do you know about American holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, etc.?
Halloween or “All Hallows' Evening,” is a yearly celebration observed in a number of countries on October, the eve of the Western Christian feast of All Hallows' Day. Today's Halloween customs are thought to have been influenced by folk customs and beliefs from the Celtic-speaking countries, some of which have pagan roots, and others which may be rooted in Christianity. Halloween customs are also thought to have been influenced by Christian dogma and practices derived from it. Halloween falls on the evening before the Christian holy days of All Hallows’ Day (also known as All Saints’ or Hallowmas) on 1 November and All Souls’ Day on 2 November, thus giving the holiday on October 31 the full name of All Hallows’ Eve (meaning the evening before All Hallows’ Day).

The annual New York Halloween Parade, initiated in 1974 by puppeteer and mask maker Ralph Lee of the Lower Manhattan neighborhood of Greenwich Village in New York City, is the world's largest Halloween parade and America's only major nighttime parade, attracting more than 60,000 costumed participants, 2 million in-person spectators, and a worldwide television audience of over 100 million.

Trick-or-treating is a customary celebration for children on Halloween. Children go in costume from house to house, asking for treats such as candy or sometimes money,
with the question, “Trick or treat?” The word “trick” refers to “threat” to perform mischief on the homeowners or their property if no treat is given. Halloween costumes are traditionally modeled after supernatural figures such as vampires, monsters, ghosts, skeletons, witches, and devils. In the US, costume selection extended to include popular characters from fiction, celebrities, and generic archetypes such as ninjas and princesses.

Extracted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halloween

Modern Family Season 2 Episode 6

Focus Questions (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)

1. Why does Alex not want to prepare costumes for Halloween?
   
   A. She is too busy with homework.
   
   B. She only has old costumes.

2. What is Luke’s plan for Halloween night?

   A. He plans to make creative costumes with Manny.
B. He does not want to dress up for Halloween.

3. Why is Claire mad at her family?
   A. She feels they rarely care about Halloween night.
   B. She feels they are busy with other things.

4. What makes Gloria leave the party?
   A. Jay laughed her accent.
   B. She did not wear makeup.

5. What does Alex want to do?
   A. She wanted to go upstairs and study.
   B. She wanted to throw herself party.

6. What kind of costume does Sheldon wear to the Halloween party?
   A. A zebra
B. The Doppler effect

7. What kind of costume does Howard wear to the Halloween party?

A. Peter Pan

B. Robin Hood

8. What does Sheldon mean by “How wasted am I?”

A. He is drunk.

B. He looks messy.

9. Why does Leonard feel sad?

A. Penny’s ex-boyfriend mocks him.

B. He is dressed as a dwarf.

10. What does Sheldon do to comfort Leonard?

A. He offers him a hot drink and said, “There, there.”

B. He had a talk with Leonard.

Comprehension

1. How many types of costumes does Sheldon list for the Halloween party?
2. What happened to Mitchell when he dressed as Spiderman at work?

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

3. What does Cameron mean by, “You just knock their socks off?”

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

4. What does Claire want her little daughter Alex do for Halloween night?

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

5. What is the problem with Gloria? What makes Manny and Jay laugh?

____________________________________________________

6. Does Gloria remember to take a Halloween costume for Jay? Does she take coconut cookies for Jay?

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Summarize one of the Conversations

____________________________________________________
American English Idiom

Knock someone’s socks off: To completely surprise or please someone

Sentence: Her beautiful dress will knock their socks off.

Role Play Activity

1. Create a conversation in a context of dining etiquette in a restaurant.

2. Use the American English learned in Modern Family video.

Part Two: Thanksgiving
It is a national holiday celebrated primarily in the US and Canada as a day of giving thanks for the blessing of the harvest and of the preceding year. Several other places around the world observe similar celebrations. It is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November in the US and on the second Monday of October in Canada. Thanksgiving has its historical roots in religious and cultural traditions, and has long been celebrated in a secular manner as well.

Prayers of thanks and special thanksgiving ceremonies are common among almost all religions after harvests and at other times. The Thanksgiving holiday's history in North America is rooted in English traditions dating from the Protestant Reformation. It also has aspects of a harvest festival, even though the harvest in New England occurs well before the late-November date on which the modern Thanksgiving holiday is celebrated. In the US, the modern Thanksgiving holiday tradition is commonly, but not universally, traced to a poorly documented 1621 celebration at Plymouth in present-day Massachusetts. Most of the U.S. aspects of Thanksgiving (such as the turkey), were incorporated when United Empire Loyalists began to flee from the US during the American Revolution and settled in Canada. Thanksgiving is now a statutory holiday in most jurisdictions of Canada, with the exception of the Atlantic provinces of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.
The centerpiece of contemporary Thanksgiving in the US and Canada is a large meal, generally centered on a large roasted turkey. The majority of the dishes in the traditional American version of Thanksgiving dinner are made from foods native to the New World, as according to tradition the Pilgrims received these foods from the Native Americans. However, many of the classic traditions attributed to the first Thanksgiving are actually myths later introduced.

Extracted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving

Focus Questions (Have students watch the video clip and answer the following questions.)

1. What does Bernadette’s dad, Mike, bring for the Thanksgiving dinner?
   A. Beer
   B. Soft drinks

2. Why does Bernadette think cooking a Thanksgiving dinner is a good idea?
A. Howard asked Raj to make the dinner.

B. Howard and Bernadette make the dinner together.

3. What does Penny bring for the Thanksgiving dinner?

A. A bottle of wine and home-made cookies

B. Flowers

4. What does Sheldon mean by, “That’s just off the top of my head?”

A. The idea is an accident.

B. The idea is on purpose.

5. What do they (Mike, Howard, and Sheldon) talk about?

A. A football competition

B. A trip to Arizona

6. What does Mike mean by, “Can I weigh in?”

A. To give advice

B. To calculate something
Friends Season 5 Episode 8

Comprehension

1. What makes Monica upset when she meets Chandler at Ross’s home to have
   Thanksgiving dinner?

   ______________________________________________________________

2. What does Rachel look greater than before when she was invited to Ross’s
   Thanksgiving dinner?

   ______________________________________________________________

3. What happened to Joey when he talked about his worst Thanksgiving?

   ______________________________________________________________

4. What makes Monica upset when she meets Chandler at Ross’s home to have
   Thanksgiving dinner?

   ______________________________________________________________
5. What does Rachel look greater than before when she was invited to Ross’s Thanksgiving dinner?

6. What happened to Joey when he talked about his worst Thanksgiving?

7. What was Phoebe doing when she spoke of her worst Thanksgiving?

8. What happened to Chandler when he was invited to have a dinner with Ross’s family?

Summarize the Conversation between the Characters
**American English Idioms**

**Off the top of your head:**

Sentence: Just off the top of my head, I would say there were fifty.

**Having a moment:** to have periods of being good or interesting.

Sentence: The movie had its moments.

**Role-Play Conversation**

1. Create a conversation of your plan on Thanksgiving Day

2. It should cover: place, people, activities, and reflections.

**Suggestions for other U.S. holidays and video clips**

**Christmas**
The Big Bang Theory Season 7 Episode 11

Modern Family Season 3 Episode 10

Valentine’s Day
Friends Season 6 Episode 17

The Big Bang Theory Season 6 Episode 16