

INCORPORATING MASS MEDIA TO BUILD LEARNERS' LANGUAGE SKILLS IN AN AUTHENTIC AND ENGAGING MANNER

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Abstract: This paper explores the pedagogical benefits of utilizing authentic television series for English language acquisition. We present a methodology emphasizing active viewing strategies, including the strategic use of subtitles for enhanced listening comprehension, mimicry and repetition for improved pronunciation, and mindful engagement with cultural nuances embedded within the narrative. The approach advocates for targeted vocabulary acquisition, focusing on contextual understanding and regular review to ensure retention. Furthermore, the paper highlights the importance of creating an engaging classroom environment that mirrors the enjoyable experience of watching series independently, emphasizing the iterative process of analyzing teaching methods and adapting strategies for optimal learning outcomes.

Key words: authentic materials, films, learners, benefits

INTRODUCTION

The effective integration of diverse media resources into foreign language instruction significantly enhances the learning process and contributes to improved student outcomes. The use of authentic materials, readily accessible through mass media, is particularly valuable in English language teaching. This approach leverages a wide range of resources, spanning traditional print materials—textbooks, coursebooks, workbooks, pamphlets, newspapers, journals, magazines, and literary works of both fiction and non-fiction to more contemporary digital media.

The spectrum of available resources extends beyond purely textual formats to encompass a wealth of supplementary materials. Realia kits, comprising everyday objects such as coins, bills, tickets, and culturally relevant artifacts, offer tangible connections to the target language and culture. Traditional classroom tools, including blackboards, chalk, paper, pencils, pens, and ink, remain essential, providing a foundation for interactive learning. The evolution of technology has introduced a vast array of audio-visual resources, beginning with earlier technologies like disc reels, cassette recordings, gramophones, tape recorders, and overhead projectors, and progressing to the current prevalence of films, slides, filmstrips, videotapes, DVDs, digital media players, EVR tapes, radio and television broadcasts, video monitors, and sophisticated computer-based learning

programs.

This comprehensive approach ensures that the learning environment is dynamic and engaging, catering to diverse learning styles and maximizing opportunities for meaningful interaction with the target language. The use of authentic materials provides learners with exposure to real-world language use, enhancing comprehension and fluency. The progressive integration of technology ensures access to up-to-date materials and interactive learning experiences, creating a rich and stimulating learning environment that ultimately leads to greater student achievement. The careful selection and strategic utilization of these diverse media resources are crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of the educational process.

Mass media offers a wealth of opportunities for students to develop and refine their language skills in all four modalities: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The diverse content available provides extensive language practice, fostering fluency and accuracy. Furthermore, by incorporating both indoor and outdoor learning experiences, we can create a more engaging and holistic learning environment. These experiences promote comprehensive reading, boost student motivation, and encourage continued self-directed learning beyond the classroom. Let's now consider television as a particularly valuable example of authentic language learning material.

Films and television shows have been used for language learning and teaching since the 1930s and for some twenty years in the ELT.

“The eye is more powerful than the ear”

Effective teaching necessitates a student-centered approach, beginning by understanding and leveraging students' attitudes and motivations. Teachers must actively identify students' desires and preferences to maintain engagement, ensure the relevance of tasks, and foster a sense of accomplishment and progress. By aligning instructional strategies with students' interests, educators can create a more dynamic and successful learning experience.

The utilization of authentic films in language instruction presents a compelling pedagogical approach, offering a multitude of benefits that significantly enhance the learning experience. Firstly, the inherent entertainment value of films fosters a more enjoyable and engaging learning environment. Unlike traditional, often dry, educational materials, films capture learners' attention through captivating narratives, compelling characters, and visually stimulating scenes. This inherent entertainment factor directly translates to increased learner interest and motivation, a crucial element in successful language acquisition.

Secondly, authentic films empower learners with a degree of autonomy rarely found in more structured learning materials. Learners gain control over the pace and depth of their engagement. They can choose films that align with their

interests and proficiency levels, selecting viewing sessions of appropriate length. This self-directed learning fosters independence and encourages learners to take ownership of their educational journey. This personalized approach caters to diverse learning styles and paces, accommodating individual needs more effectively than a standardized, one-size-fits-all approach.

Furthermore, the immersive nature of film significantly enhances memorability. The combination of audio and visual elements creates a richer, more multi-sensory learning experience compared to listening to tapes or watching explicitly "educational" videos. The contextual embedding of language within a compelling narrative makes it inherently more memorable and facilitates deeper processing and retention.

Moreover, authentic films serve as invaluable catalysts for meaningful communication. The realistic depiction of characters, situations, and cultural contexts in films provides rich fodder for stimulating classroom discussions. These conversations extend beyond simple linguistic exercises, allowing learners to explore real-life topics, share personal experiences, and engage in critical thinking about the themes and issues portrayed in the film. This fosters collaborative learning and enhances communicative competence.

The emotional depth of film also contributes to enhanced learner engagement. The unfolding narrative and characters' experiences often provoke emotional responses, fostering deeper involvement and promoting a more empathetic understanding of the target language and culture. Unlike exercises designed to elicit specific, "correct" answers, which can create undue pressure, authentic films invite open-ended responses and interpretations, reducing anxiety and encouraging active participation.

Finally, allowing learners to select films that are personally relevant, worthwhile, and comprehensible is a key element in promoting motivation and fostering a positive learning experience. This freedom of choice empowers learners, making them active participants in their learning process, thereby increasing their engagement and overall success in language acquisition. The ability to connect with a film on a personal level reinforces the value of the learning experience and encourages continued engagement beyond the classroom setting.

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