Article: ‘Teaching English As A Foreign Language – 7 Tips For Using Popular Movies’ by Larry M. Lynch

Movies and Videos in the EFL Classroom

If you’re looking to expand the role of movies and videos in your EFL classroom, what better way to expand the learners’ communicative skills, grammar and vocabulary than by using clips from popular movies? Try using these seven tips for stimulating learner motivation while enjoying a favored pastime of children and adults alike, watching short scenes or clips from popular movies.

1. Use pre-viewing activities

Before the video, warm up your learners to the theme and grammar using pre-viewing activities. A variety of these might include puzzles, photos and images, short games like “concentration” or TPR activities, a story or anecdote, or activating the schema of the learners’ in a number of other ways.

2. Have learners complete a chart while viewing

While they are watching a short video or movie segment you might have the learners fill in key information in a chart. Items like names of characters, occupations, family relationships, clothing and settings can be easily recorded this way. This allows the learners to focus more on the communicative aspects and less on actually writing.

3. Select a grammar point repeatedly demonstrated in the movie clip

There’s no need to leave grammar out of a video-based lesson or stage. If a useable grammar point or structure is repeated or prominent during the movie clip you plan to use, all the better. Just remember to pre-teach that grammar or structural element, even a class or two before the video, so that it will be recognizable in context.

4. Have a list of six to eight lexis

Select a list of from six to eight or ten vocabulary words, idioms and expressions from the movie clip or video you plan to use. Pre-teach these during the pre-viewing stage of the lesson. When the learners then hear them used in context during the video viewing session, the lexis will have added impact.

5. Make use of visual input

A popular movie clip is an audio-visual experience, so use it as such. While learners are watching and listening for general and detailed spoken information, include visual aspects for them to skim and scan for as well. How many? How much? When? Where? Who? How and why are good starters for capturing visually-presented information from the movie clip or video segment.

6. Allow learners to select their preferred movie clip

It can be quite a dilemma. There you have perhaps two or three or more movies from which to choose, but you’re not sure which your learners would prefer. So I have an idea, do you choose, let them do it. Take three movies for example, show the learners only the first five minutes of each, and then let them choose which they’d like to work with. If you have a clip in mind from each of the movies, show each clip and give them a choice. You can work up your activities and lesson stage plans confident in having your learners’ interest and motivation.

7. For post-viewing discussion:

If not addressed during pre-viewing activities, now is the time to talk about favorite actors, actresses, similar plots and stories from other movies, and what might be different or better outcomes for what as seen. Stage re-enactments, altered dialogues and plot twists your learners might come up with. Be imaginative, be creative, be bold or even funny, but get them communicating about their experience.

Prepare a Worksheet

You can prepare a one or two page worksheet to be photocopied and used by the learners for the video session. Alternatively, learners can copy the format into their notebooks. Just be sure to plan your pre-viewing, while-viewing and post-viewing activities well and your English language video clip-based lesson is sure to be an award-winner.

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