

## **USING FILMS AS AN AUTHENTIC MATERIAL IN EFL CLASSES**

It is quite tempting to rely solely on an ESL textbook under the belief that it has been tried by professionals and it is, thus, the best for our students. However, upon taking a closer look at the material in the textbook, it often looks or sounds forced and unnatural, so it becomes necessary to supplement the textbook with authentic material.

Anything that was written or recorded in English without the purpose of teaching English as a second language is authentic material. Authentic material is the most interesting kind of material for English language learners since it shows how the language is used in everyday interactions. Nowadays, most ESL students have already come into contact with some kind of authentic material either through music, the Internet, television, movies and other media, so to be able to understand the language used in day to day media is usually one of their goals. Using challenging authentic material in the ESL class will motivate students to continue in their learning process and help to liven up your class.

The following is a compilation of authentic material sources; however, it is not an exhaustive list, since more and more material gets created on a daily basis.

- Ad Banners, advertisements, billboards
- Catalogues, college and university brochures, flyers, travel brochures
- Movies, scripts, commercials
- Radio shows, newspapers, Internet websites, magazines, TV shows
- Social media, You Tube, Phonebooks
- Ticket stubs, manuals, menus, maps
- Greeting cards, horoscopes [2]

The English used in authentic material is natural and its sole purpose is communicating whatever the material was created for, rather than teaching a particular structure. This can make the overall language in the material a little challenging, especially for students in beginner or lower intermediate classes; however, authentic material is an excellent source of new vocabulary. In fact, the interest level rises so much when students are presented with authentic material that their need for comprehension compensates for the difficulties they encounter.

This article will be following a Task-Based Learning format and for this there will be two pre-tasks, a Task stage – that will include the task as well as a report – and a Language focus stage. The skills that this article will focus on will be listening and speaking with a chance to expand it on a following lesson to reading and / or writing depending on the level of the students and their interest in this topic.

To get the students interested in the material and as a kind of **warm-up**, students will watch the clip without sound. This kind of silent viewing allows students to focus on

what is happening without worrying about understanding the language. Also, it allows you to ask the students to discuss in small groups and predict what the characters are talking about. If there are lower level students you can do the same kind of **pre-task**, but you should expect shorter answers with less details. You can also make bigger groups of students or provide them with cue cards with some hints or information on the characters. If students have an advanced level of English they could write the characters' lines and read them out loud while watching the silent clip. For this kind of activity it is crucial to pick a short enough clip without too many exchanges so that students do not get lost trying to keep up with the pace of the video.

Once the first pre-task is complete, you can play the clip with sound and give the students a quick listening exercise so they can practice their listening skills. Having to complete blanks in the character's lines will ensure they pay attention. For lower level students you can provide the vocabulary words in a box for them to choose from. You can also add some extra words to increase the difficulty. For students with a higher level just increase the number of blanks or ask students to predict what the words will be before watching the clip with sound.

Once the students have watched the video and understood the character's point of view on a specific topic – and how it suddenly changes, they can work in pairs or small groups to create a list of the reasons why they agree or disagree with her original point of view. It is important to make sure that students comprehend the character's point of view and what happens in the clip before the task can be carried out. If the students have a lower level, you can ask them to work in bigger groups so they can help each other formulate their opinions. Also you can make vocabulary available on the board prior to their discussion. It might even be necessary for students to check the meaning of the words the character uses and their connotation before the task can be introduced. If the students have a higher level you can ask students to argue both sides or predict what will happen in the next scene after she suddenly changes his/her point of view.

In the **Report stage** of the lesson students present their lists and explain them. It is very important to make sure all students have a chance to speak so that the task is effective.

During the **Language Focus stage** of the lesson elicit from students the expressions they need to learn in order to express their opinions efficiently. For lower level students you can provide the list of expressions and their meaning and ask the students to match them. If students know some of the expressions you can complete their list and ask them to check the meaning of the new expressions in their dictionaries. For advanced level students you can even ask them to discuss the difference in register in the variety of expressions used to express opinions, agree and disagree.

During the **Feedback stage** of the lesson you can explain to your students which expressions are preferred in which situations and what is the most effective way of expressing their opinion and why.

Depending on how much the students enjoy the class and the material you can extend this to a second class in which lower level students can create an opinion poster, intermediate level students write an opinion paragraph and advanced level students complete a reading comprehension exercise or write an opinion essay.

Activities used in different lesson stages:

- Watch a trailer to the film and give the prediction what is the film about (what kind of a film it is, name the family members, do they look like...?, give the adjectives to the story etc.)
- Watch an episode from the film and give the adjectives concerning the feelings of the character, his/her appearance, surrounding etc.
- Give for watching an episode without the audio track for one group of students and another episode for the other group, and then they must retell the film's events to each other.
- Find the soundtrack to the film from the list.
- Write the script of the episode, read it from the main character perspective, sound the movie instead of the audio.
- While films are being made they often have a working title. Match up the working titles with their real film titles.
- Match the birth names of the following actors with their screen names.
- If you could give yourself a screen name, what would you call yourself?
- A tagline is like an advertising slogan and is used to help market a film. It is a memorable phrase that gives an idea of what type of film it is and what the film will be about. They are most often found on film posters. On which film poster would you see the following taglines? Write your own film taglines.
- Name the actors who said the following lines and in what films.
- Match lines from romantic films with the film titles. Two of the quotes may come from the same film. Then decide which line you think is the most romantic.
- You can freeze-frame the picture for describing the elements of it.
- You can use the zoom device to focus on a particular aspect of the picture content [1].

In conclusion, authentic materials from movies have an indefinite number of uses for all kinds of lessons and levels. When we include authentic material in our ESL lessons, the way students learn is more natural and resembles acquisition of the language rather than forced learning of certain grammatical structures.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Workman G. Popular Films for Language Use 2: Chadburn Publishing, 2009.
2. <http://how-to-teach-english.ontesol.com/teach-english-using-movies-tv-shows-and-online-videos/>