Using Movies for Interactive ESL Instruction

by Mike Laib & Scott Gist (2009 CATESOL Conference Presentation)

ABSTRACT:

The presenters discuss the use of movies in teaching a range of ESL communicative skills, including listening, intonation, and fluency, as well as academic skills, such as paraphrasing, summarizing and vocabulary building. Teaching considerations to be covered include movie selection, lesson structuring, and copyright concerns.

SUMMARY:

Movies have long played a role in ESL classrooms but are not always presented in a way that promotes interactive and systematic skill building. The presenters provide suggestions for how to use movies more effectively for both language and cultural expansion. Selecting suitable movies requires finding appropriate content, language, length, and level of interest for students. Pacing a film means planning ahead, breaking a film into chunks, and sometimes showing short clips as a good option when a lesson needs a specific focus or time is limited. The presenters discuss when and how to use subtitles based on the ability of students, the difficulty of a film, and the objective of the lesson. Teachers can avoid having students become passive or disengaged while watching a movie in class by using various tools, such as handouts, dictations, discussions, games, role plays, and other communicative activities. Teachers can also assign student presentations to encourage cooperative learning, as well as written assignments to develop vocabulary, paraphrasing, and summarizing skills. Movie websites are suggested as additional teacher and student resources. Finally, the presenters discuss how copyright laws apply to nonprofit and profit schools that wish to show or reproduce movies for instructional purposes.