

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Methodological principles and practical significance of learning foreign languages through movies and TV shows

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ARTICLE INFO

Received
22 October 2026

Published
22 October 2026

ISSN
applied for

Keywords: foreign language learning, films, TV series, subtitles, listening comprehension, shadowing



Read online
unipublish.org

Abstract. This article examines the methodological features of using feature films and television series in foreign language teaching and learning. It discusses how audiovisual materials can support natural communication skills, listening comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and contextual understanding. Particular attention is paid to the effective use of subtitles, shadowing, vocabulary notebooks, and short video clips as part of a structured learning process.

How to cite: Oxapova, A. (2026). Methodological principles and practical significance of learning foreign languages through movies and TV shows. *UniPublish Journal of Science*, 1(1), 6-8. <https://unipublish.org/articles/methodological-principles-and-practical-significance-of-learning-forei>

Introduction

Learning a foreign language involves more than memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary lists. In real-life communication, speakers often use contractions, idioms, colloquial expressions, and different patterns of intonation. Their speech may also be faster and less predictable than the examples presented in textbooks. Movies and television series can

help learners become more familiar with this natural language environment. When used purposefully, audiovisual materials can turn entertainment into a useful part of language learning. This article considers practical methods for using films and TV shows to develop learners' communicative competence.

I. Why use movies in addition to textbooks?

Textbooks provide a systematic foundation in grammar and vocabulary, while films and TV series show how language is used in realistic situations. Their value can be considered in three main areas.

Natural intonation and emotion. The meaning of an expression such as "How are you?" can change depending on the speaker's emotions, stress, and intonation. By observing actors, learners can notice how people express happiness, sadness, surprise, or frustration.

Contemporary vocabulary and idioms. Audiovisual materials expose learners to colloquial expressions, contractions, and idioms that may be less common in formal textbooks. Teachers should help learners distinguish informal expressions from language appropriate for academic or professional contexts.

Contextual learning. When learners hear a new word while watching an action or a meaningful scene, visual context can help them infer its meaning and remember how it is used. This supports vocabulary learning more effectively than encountering every word in isolation.

II. How to use subtitles effectively

Watching films does not automatically improve speaking or listening skills. Learners need to engage actively with the language. If they watch an English film with subtitles in their native language throughout, they may focus mainly on reading rather than listening. A gradual approach to subtitles can make viewing more purposeful.

Stage 1: Understanding the general meaning. Beginners may first use subtitles in their native language to understand the plot and situation.

Stage 2: Connecting sound and written language. Learners can then watch the same scene with subtitles in the target language, such as English. This helps them connect pronunciation with spelling and notice unfamiliar expressions.

Stage 3: Listening without subtitles. At a later stage, learners can watch the scene without subtitles and check how much they understand. Replaying short sections allows them to focus on difficult words and connected speech. The stages should be adapted to each learner's level rather than treated as a strict rule for everyone.

III. The responsibilities of teachers and learners

Learning through films should be organized and goal-oriented rather than limited to watching episodes for entertainment. Teachers can select short clips that match learners' proficiency levels and lesson objectives, prepare comprehension questions, and guide discussion after viewing.

Vocabulary notebook. Learners can record a small number of useful words or idioms, write down their meanings, and create original sentences with them. Reviewing and using these expressions later helps turn passive recognition into active knowledge.

Shadowing and imitation. Learners can replay a short dialogue and imitate the speaker's pronunciation, rhythm, pace, and intonation. This technique, often called shadowing, can support pronunciation and speaking fluency when practised regularly.

Discussion and retelling. After watching, students can summarize the scene, explain a character's intention, or act out a short dialogue with a partner. Such tasks encourage them to use the language rather than only recognize it.

IV. Practical observations and personal reflections

When I first began learning English, understanding spoken language was one of my greatest challenges. Native speakers often seemed to speak very quickly, and watching a film without subtitles was discouraging because I understood very little. I later changed my approach by working with short clips of approximately five minutes. First, I watched a clip with English subtitles and noted unfamiliar expressions. Then I watched the same scene several times without subtitles, paying attention to pronunciation and meaning.

V. Common challenges

One common difficulty is poor time management. Learners may watch long episodes for entertainment without paying attention to language. To avoid this, it is helpful to divide films into short sections and set a realistic goal for each session, such as learning three

After several weeks of regular practice, I began to feel more comfortable with the pace of spoken English. In my teaching practice, I have also found that short video clips can increase students' interest and encourage classroom discussion. When a teacher pauses a scene and asks what a character means, students have an opportunity to interpret language in context. This makes the lesson feel more connected to real communication. These observations suggest that films are most useful when they are combined with clear tasks and active practice.

to five useful expressions, identifying examples of connected speech, or retelling the scene in their own words. Learners should also choose materials that are suitable for their level and review new language regularly.

Conclusion

Feature films and television series can be valuable resources in foreign language education because they expose learners to natural speech, pronunciation, emotion, and contextual vocabulary. However, their effectiveness depends on how they are used. Combining subtitles, repeated listening, vocabulary review, shadowing, and follow-up speaking activities

can make viewing more educational and purposeful. Films should complement rather than replace systematic language instruction. With regular practice and clear learning goals, learners can gradually improve their listening comprehension and become more confident in real-life communication.

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