

Advantages of Satellite Broadcasting  
Theory and Methodology  
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Satellite broadcasting is an effective teaching tool that can help language teachers produce students capable of communicating successfully in the target language. In addition to its audio-visual components, it provides authentic, contextualized input in real life situations. These features of teaching material are essential to enhance students' communicative abilities and cultural awareness, two aspects that are very vital to accomplish the real goal of language instruction.

The following section discusses the effectiveness of satellite broadcasting (film/video) with reference to language theory and methodology.

**It develops communicative competence**

By the end of the 1970's linguists and educators have recognized the failure of the grammar based methods to produce fluent speakers of the target language because teaching the knowledge of language (vocabulary and grammar rules) is not sufficient to develop the ability to process language in real situations or the ability to respond meaningfully in appropriate ways. Dell Hymes presented the term communicative competence to define language proficiency. This competence includes the knowledge of "when to speak, when not, and what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner." (1972, p.277) Savignon introduced the idea of communicative competence to foreign language teaching and defines it as the "ability to function in a truly communicative setting- that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors" (1972, p. 8). She also includes the use of gestures and facial expression in her interpretation to learn to function appropriately in the target culture (1983). Based on the definition of the communicative competence, many linguists and educators in addition to Hymes and Savignon has developed the Communicative Language Teaching Approach (CLTA) to provide the conditions necessary for developing communicative competence. They include:

1. providing authentic text;
2. engaging students in the learning process;
3. showing real life situations in context; and
4. involving students in interactive exchanges.

The role of the teacher in the CLTA has shifted from being the lecturer and the main source of information to becoming a guide and a facilitator, and students play an active role and become responsible of their learning.

Film is a rich medium to provide authentic input and to portray different aspects of the target language culture. One expert has said, "With each glance at the screen, one can learn something of the manners, gestures, customs, way of life, etc. of the country" (Someya 1990:37).

Also Arthur (1999) claims that, “Video can give students realistic models to imitate for role-play; can increase awareness of other cultures by teaching appropriateness and suitability; . . . can teach direct observation of the paralinguistic features found in association with the target language.”

### **Provides comprehensible input**

Krashen’s famous theory presented in the Natural Approach draws a distinction between language learning (conscious) and language acquisition (subconscious). Krashen claims that second language learners learn the language in a manner similar to the first language where children are exposed to large quantities of long stretches of speech. This elaborate input is what teaches the language because it is intensive and a little bit beyond one’s language level.

Tudor writes, “Krashen posits that there are two essential prerequisites for language acquisition to occur: the first is the exposure of learners to large amounts of highly contextualized authentic language input, even if this is somewhat beyond their current level of linguistic competence and the second is . . . “ (1987, 204)

From Satellite broadcasting teachers can select unmodified programs of commentaries, songs, news, and films to enrich students’ vocabulary, to improve their listening and comprehension skills, and to enhance their oral and writing communicative skills.

### **Motivates students and creates a low-anxiety learning environment**

In his affective filter hypothesis presented in the Natural Approach Krashen explains that self-esteem, motivation, and anxiety are among the variables that can promote or hinder learning. This generation of students spends so many hours in front of the TV. They love film and do not mind watching the same movie over and over. So, it is motivating for students to see this tool (TV) in the classroom. It also empowers their self-esteem when they can predict the language as the speech relates to the picture on the screen. Satellite dishes have become very wide spread now. Language teachers can take advantage of students’ interest in film and the affordability of satellite dishes to tape good programs for classroom use to motivate students to learn and to provide a low-anxiety learning environment; consequently, lowering students’ affective filter and allowing more learning to take place.

In support of the use of video and with reference to Krashen’s hypothesis of language acquisitions, Tudor writes, “Krashen posits that there are two essential prerequisites for language acquisition to occur: the first is . . . and the second is the presence of positive affective variables, one which is low anxiety” (1987:204)

### **It appeals to a wide range of different learning styles**

Gardner’s famous theory of Multiple Intelligences presents that all normal people are born with a set of seven different types of intelligences that they need in life to be productive. These intelligences are: linguistic, logical, kinesthetic, spatial, musical, and personal (interpersonal and intrapersonal). Accepting this theory, teachers understand that students come to class with their own unique set of intellectual weaknesses and

strengths. And unlike traditional teaching which have focused on and addressed only the first two types of intelligences, teachers nowadays can use satellite broadcasting to appeal to a wider range of different learning styles as one professor states:

“Video cassettes in the L2 classroom display many immediate and obvious advantages. For the mind they offer a procession of stimulating images in living color, for the ears a range of speaking voices at varied levels of language; and for the eyes, a fascinating glimpse of the non-verbal features of interacting in the foreign language the authentic and spontaneous lip movements and body language of natives. (qtd. In Donahy 1978)

### **Criteria for Selecting Film/Clips**

When you preview a film/clip before presenting it in class, use the following checklist to evaluate its effectiveness:

1. Is the content age appropriate?
2. Does it provide comprehensible input?
3. Is the topic interesting to the age group?
4. Does it reveal some aspects of the target culture?
5. Is the segment an independent unit from the rest of the film?
6. Does the content provide material for discussion and for personalized activities?

### **Characteristics of Communicative Activities**

After selecting the appropriate film or segment to view in the classroom, teachers need to make sure that the developed activities possess the following characteristics to ensure genuine communication that help develop communicative competence.

1. Comprehensible input. Participants in the exchange should understand each other.
2. Personalized language. Allow students to personalize language according to one's beliefs, likes, dislikes, and personal experiences.
3. Contextualized language. Exchange should occur in context as it is in the real world.
4. Information or opinion gap. There must be missing information to be delivered for communication to take place.
5. Interest. Participants want to and are willing to exchange messages.

## Lesson 1

**Film:** How to prepare Tabulleh

**Unit:** Food

**Description of the film:** A Lebanese chef prepares Tabulleh, a very famous Lebanese salad. Throughout the show a commentator shares the traditional aspects of preparing, serving, and eating Tabulleh.

### Activities

**Listening:** Watching the film clip and checking students' comprehension

**Speaking/Oral Communication:** Prepare a dish together

**Writing:** Publishing a cooking book

**Culture:** Each student will dress up in cultural clothes and will bring his/her own cultural food to share with class.

## Conclusion

In alignment with the Standards for Foreign Language Learning, the Virginia Department of Education (2000) has published a document for teachers of foreign languages to use in developing their curricula and activities. The document states, "Several terms that have particular significance with foreign language education as used throughout this document Reference is often made to culturally authentic materials." Another part of the document, defining the meaning of level appropriate material mentions authentic videos as an instructional tool to enhance language proficiency. Thus, language teachers can confidently utilize that satellite broadcasting as an effective, rich tool to provide contextualized, comprehensible, authentic input for teacher to fulfill the goal of the Foreign Language Education in the USA to equip students "linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad" (p.7)



## **Try it Yourself**

### **Film clip: Ramadan in Baalbak, Lebanon**

Description of the film clip: This segment describes the Lebanese market, streets, and mosques in Baalbak during the month of Ramadan. It presents some of the daily routines in this sacred month and names special Lebanese dishes served during Iftar (breakfast).

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities**  
**Listening**

**Reading and speaking**

**Speaking**

**Writing: Narrative writing**