



© 2022 Rybalka & Herasymenko. This article is distributed under the terms of CC Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International as described at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>

DOI: 10.31499/2306-5532.1.2022.257777

UDC: 372.881.111.1

TV SERIES AS A MODERN DIDACTIC TOOL FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Nataliia Rybalka

Assistant

Mykhailo Tuhon-Baranovskyi Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade,
Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine

ORCID: 0000-0003-3804-6875; e-mail: rybalka_n@donnuet.edu.ua

Olha Herasymenko

Assistant

Mykhailo Tuhon-Baranovskyi Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade,
Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine

ORCID: 0000-0002-0539-1165; e-mail: gerasimenko_ou@donnuet.edu.ua

A foreign language is an obligatory subject of the curriculum of every educational institution. Undoubtedly, this subject requires the use of special methods and lecturer's teaching skill. The main difficulty while studying a foreign language is mastering the language outside the environment of its use, i.e., the lack of the opportunity to communicate with native speakers. Therefore, one of the most important tasks assigned to the lecturer is the creation of real and imaginary situations of communication in a foreign language lesson using various methods of work. To achieve this goal, the lecturer can use videos and all kinds of video materials, which are of great importance in learning a foreign language. This explains the popularity of films, TV series and video films both outside the educational process and for the development of all the skills acquired in the process of studying a foreign language.

In addition, the use of video films in the educational process increases the motivation to learn foreign languages. Motivation as a system of internal stimuli, impulses, emotions and desires is one of the main psychological factors in mastering foreign languages.

As the title implies, the present article deals with issues related to the choice of TV series as one of the modern didactic tools used while teaching foreign languages. Particular attention is given to the advantages and disadvantages of using the series in the educational process. As the title implies, the article describes arguments that are given in favor of this teaching method in comparison with



educational, short and full-length films. The article distinguishes and describes the types and formats of serials, the criteria for their selection in order to use them while teaching, as well as the stages of working with each series. Authors of this paper propose a list of recommended series for learning English and German languages.

Key words: video material, didactic tool, foreign language, education, series.

У представленій статті розглядаються питання, пов'язані з вибором телесеріалу як одного із сучасних дидактичних інструментів, що використовується у процесі навчання іноземної мови. Авторами зроблена спроба виокремлення та аналізу переваг та недоліків щодо використання серіалу у навчальному процесі. У статті представлено аргументи на користь даного методу навчання у порівнянні з навчальними, короткометражними та повнометражними фільмами. Обґрунтовано та проаналізовано різновиди та формати серіалів, критерії їхнього відбору для використання під час занять, а також розглянуто та описано етапи роботи з кожною серією. Авторами статті пропонується власний список рекомендованих серіалів для вивчення англійської та німецької мов.

Ключові слова: відеоматеріал, дидактичний інструмент, іноземна мова, навчання, серіал.

Introduction. In the XXI century, it is vital to know foreign languages in the process of informatization and globalization. Moreover, knowledge of a foreign language today is one of the main requirements for highly qualified specialists. That is why the issue of creating the necessary conditions and opportunities for learning and teaching a foreign language and finding effective means of mastering it is relevant for research and teaching staff.

Nowadays, foreign language is one of the leading subjects that contributes to the formation and development of such important student's personal qualities as communication, variability, knowledge of the specifics and features of economic development and culture of foreign countries, local lore, dialogueness, and polylogueness of professional language.

In finding a teacher's efficient approach to teaching foreign languages, the main thing is to create an individual style of information release. In this respect, the use of TV series to teach foreign languages is an exciting alternative to the usual textbooks and books.

Feature film, in particular a multi-series feature film or series, is considered a didactic tool in the works of many domestic (H. Zhohlina, H. Kalabukhova, Ju. Komarova, R. Reimer, A. Chykunova) and foreign scholars (M. Allan, R. García, M. González, J. Harmer, L. Mitchell, A. Wallwork). These researchers believe that a series is a learning tool that best provides the opportunity to make the process of teaching and learning a foreign language fascinating, exciting, and informative, which, moreover, helps motivate students in this matter.



Feature films are a "flexible didactic tool" (Chikunova, 2010), as they provide opportunities to practice and improve foreign language listening skills and offer students plausible communication situations and a variety of extralinguistic information. It is essential to learn a foreign language outside the language environment. Thus, the understanding of what is happening in the series is carried out not only at the linguistic level, as the gestures and facial expressions of the characters compensate for the lack of language proficiency and simplify its acquisition, which is essential at the initial and intermediate stages of training.

It is undeniable that video materials have a more significant advantage over audio recordings, as their absence often complicates the perception of even a monologue, not to mention the problems that arise with identifying the speaker when listening to dialogues and polylogues, while the combination of visual and sound images contributes to much more complete extraction of information (Barmenkova, 1999). Therefore, the relationship between linguistic, cultural, and didactic aspects of the series is undeniable.

Methods. The main scientific results were obtained using a set of general scientific and unique research methods: analysis of video materials, series, comparison, synthesis, systematization, and generalization of scientific literature.

The present article aims to study the introduction of the TV series as a didactic and learning tool and its impact on student's motivation to learn foreign languages. Below mentioned objectives are to fulfill the aim of this study.

The objectives of the study are the following:

- to identify the advantages and disadvantages of using TV series while learning and teaching English and German;
- to provide valuable solutions which help to overcome possible difficulties the learners might experience;
- to propose a list of recommended series which can be used with learners with different levels of language proficiency.

Results and discussion. As a product of one of the most important arts in the modern world, reflecting the moral, ethical and cultural values of society, a modern film in terms of linguistic and cultural studies becomes the richest source of knowledge and an integral element of foreign language learning. It promotes the learning process, instills specific universal values, and expands students' different lingual horizons. However, perceiving "film as a mirror" (Allan, 1985), we must not forget that it shows us reality from the point of view of a particular screenwriter and director. That is why choosing a film to use while teaching a foreign language requires a specific approach.

Series is a genre not as popular as a didactic tool compared to educational, short, and feature films. However, from our point of view, its vast potential is still insufficiently studied because, in more detail, the advantage of the series is undeniable.

The educational series often focuses on students with a foreign language proficiency A1-A2 (according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Accordingly, the set of lexical units and grammatical constructions is primitive and no longer suitable for students with B1 language proficiency. Native speakers shoot these specially adapted series for foreign language learners where actors use the words, expressions, and grammar that students must learn at a



particular level (from A1 to C1) while speaking a foreign language.

Generally, when working with adapted series, there is a small glossary and tasks for each part of the series that can be different – from grammar and vocabulary to translation and pronunciation. Task series help to expand vocabulary, improve grammar knowledge, learn to perceive a foreign language aurally, and memorize modern colloquial phrases and pronunciation.

However, in our opinion, in implementing TV series to learn a foreign language at the primary level, it is necessary to study the alphabet, pronunciation rules, and basic grammar.

In addition, in the educational series, language tempo is somewhat slow (to facilitate comprehension). It is convenient at the initial stage but no longer relevant for students with a pretty high level of language proficiency.

Speakers and actors in educational series mostly speak a normative foreign language, making it difficult to perceive further and understand other foreign language options, considering the variety of accents in other countries.

In short and feature films, the language is reproduced in the rhythm typical of foreign speakers with all its nuances and the richness of lexical and grammatical structures. The relative succinctness (compared to the series) of such audiovisual materials and the "concentration" of information suggest. However, there will be a significant concentration of students in the demonstration and a confident lexical and grammatical level of preparation; otherwise, the film's main idea is lost, misunderstanding, and disappearance of interest.

From our point of view, constant repetitions and retellings of events on behalf of different characters in the series are a significant advantage because they not only provide a better understanding of what is happening on the screen. They also contribute to consolidating lexical and grammatical material and acquaint with the model of sentence construction with emotional and evaluative elements.

Another feature of the series is the use of close-ups when students not only hear the lines of the characters but also can follow their articulation. Such "reinforcement by the articulation of the auditory image facilitates the process of speech perception aurally, especially in cases where they formed an image of the word is not yet fixed" (Reymer, 2006). This feature affects the completeness of understanding of the lines of the film's characters and provides an opportunity to improve pronunciation.

Having aroused the audience's interest from the very first episodes, the series can hold viewers' attention throughout the season, thus motivating students to watch all series, even if, at first, for some reason, the teacher does not plan further work with this film.

Among the disadvantages of using TV series as a didactic tool is the time spent watching. However, this problem can be solved by organizing the process of watching the film by students outside the classroom, independently choosing the time and mode of viewing. This option allows individualizing the work through different levels of foreign language proficiency. Some students need to watch the series two or three times for a better understanding, and others just need to watch some excerpts.



As a didactic tool, the series must meet specific criteria that the lecturer uses in the selection process. Therefore, the choice of the series is determined by the following aspects:

1. *Social group. Interests.* It is essential when choosing didactic material to consider what social group it is aimed at and the age and interests of students.

2. *Level of language proficiency.* The lecturer must conduct a questionnaire or test among students to determine the level of foreign language proficiency and its relevance to the level of complexity of the series or film.

3. *Actualness.* This concept implies that the series reflects the "modern reality of the country of the language being studied: news of public, political, cultural life" (Gillette, et al., 1999, p. 71).

4. *Topic relevance.* The topic should be relevant and extremely interesting for students. Moreover, it is worth considering that among students, there is a tendency to participate in language internships abroad, so it is necessary to focus on the cultural aspect of a particular country.

5. *Cultural aspect.* Watching the series must acquaint students with the rules of modern foreign society, people of different ages and social groups, and their daily lives, customs, and traditions.

6. *Influence on the educational process.* A necessary aspect is the positive topic presence that will benefit a particular student and the group of students. Therefore, TV series about universal values will prevail in friendship, family, patriotism, love, devotion, and trust (Schott & Schott-Brecher, 2003).

7. *Speech peculiarities of different age groups.* The series is the only opportunity for many students to "communicate" with native speakers. That is why it is necessary to provide all the conditions for this passive communication to be multifaceted and diverse.

8. *Variety of accents.* The presence of characters in the series, who speak not only the normative foreign language but also use different accents or dialects, allows students to get acquainted with the peculiarities of the phonetic design of the language by representatives of different regions.

9. *Dynamics and diversity of communicative situations.* The rapid development of the plot will not leave students indifferent to the process of series watching. Due to the variety of situations in which the series characters find themselves, students have the opportunity to put themselves in the place of the participants of the events, to try themselves in different roles.

10. *Popularity and artistic value.* It should be noted that when choosing a series as a means of teaching a foreign language, it is necessary to consider its popularity. Great attention must be paid to the different world and national ratings and the number of versions of this series in different languages. At the same time, the artistic value of the series should be taken into account, which is confirmed by a large number of awards and nominations both among the actors and the founders of the series.

11. *Emotional component.* The acting must be realistic so that watching it causes a storm of various emotions: tears, empathy, fear, laughter, hatred, and love.



Working on each series while learning a foreign language is divided into several stages. We offer possible practical tasks for each stage of work on the example of a German-language film "I'm Juli":

1. Preliminary/introductory stage. Before watching, the lecturer explains the new lexical items that occur in the series beforehand (a list of words translated into Ukrainian offered to students along with tasks) and examples of the use of stable expressions in specific situations.

Profanity is explained with a smiley mark. Before watching, students can read the series' synopsis, which significantly facilitates the understanding of what is happening on the screen.

Aufgabe 1. Daniel hat an einem Tag zwei unterschiedliche Frauen kennen gelernt. Wie geht der Film wohl weiter?

- Daniel und Melek verlieben sich und verbringen zusammen einen wunderschönen Sommer in Hamburg und Berlin. Der Film erzählt diese Liebesgeschichte.
- Daniel verliebt sich in Juli und fährt mit ihr in Urlaub nach Süddeutschland. Der Film erzählt diese Urlaubsgeschichte.
- Die beiden Frauen interessieren Daniel überhaupt nicht. Er verbringt seine Sommerferien allein zu Hause in Hamburg. Der Film erzählt diese Sommergeschichte.
- Etwas anderes: _____

2. Series watching. As was emphasized above, students watch the film outside the audience conveniently, having the opportunity to watch individual episodes, which is necessary both to understand the content of the whole series and to perform individual tasks further. The use of subtitles in a foreign language is not excluded.

Aufgabe 2. Sieht und dann liest folgende Liebeserklärungen! Welche Liebeserklärung möchten Sie hören?

Liebeserklärung A

"Meine Herzallerliebste, ich bin Tausende von Meilen gegangen. Ich habe Flüsse überquert, Berge versetzt. Ich habe gelitten und ich habe Qualen über mich ergehen lassen. Ich bin der Versuchung widerstanden und ich bin der Sonne gefolgt, um dir gegenüber stehen zu können und um dir zu sagen, dass ich liebe dich".

Liebeserklärung B

"Meine Liebe, ich habe diese lange Reise gemacht. Es war manchmal sehr hart, aber ich habe nicht aufgegeben. Ich habe immer nur an dich gedacht. Ich liebe dich! "

Liebeserklärung C

"Hallo Süsse, das war'ne verdammt lange Reise, Hab' viel gesehen und erlebt, hab' auch andere kennen gelehrt. Bin endlich da und weiss: Du bist's! ich liebe dich! "

3. Work on the video. This stage involves tasks, some of which are performed by students at home with subsequent testing at the next lesson, and other tasks are performed without prior training in the classroom.

Aufgabe 3. Richtig oder falsch? Kreuzen Sie an!

- Daniel versteht nicht, warum Juli lacht.
- Juli versteht nicht, warum sich Daniel aufregt.
- Daniel glaubt, dass Juli an der ganzen Situation schuld ist.



- Daniel wollte eigentlich nach Bari und nicht nach Istanbul.
- Juli weiss nicht, wer das Auto geklaut hat.
- Ohne den Ring von Juli würde Daniel gemütlich zu Hause sitzen.
- Juli denkt, Daniels Leben in Hamburg war sehr langweilig.

First of all, attention should be paid to exercises that contribute to the formation of the necessary professional competencies, namely:

a) to have a system of linguistic knowledge that combines knowledge of basic phonetic, lexical, grammatical, word-formation phenomena and patterns of functioning of the studied foreign language and their functional varieties;

b) to have the main discursive ways of communicative goals realization of the statement concerning features of the current communicative context;

c) the ability to use etiquette formulas in oral form (theatrical performance of various scenes, descriptions of events and characters, sounding in the foreign language of individual episodes while maintaining the speech tempo, articulation, intonation, and emotions of the film's characters);

d) the ability to carry out written translation taking into account norms of lexical equivalence, grammatical, syntactic, and stylistic norms (written translation of sentences containing new vocabulary from a foreign language into Ukrainian or vice versa);

e) the ability to perform the consecutive oral translation and oral sheet translation in compliance with the norms of lexical equivalence, grammatical, syntactic, and stylistic norms of the translated text, and temporal characteristics of the source text (interpretation of sentences containing new vocabulary from a foreign language into Ukrainian or vice versa; in the language of series fragments) [4, p. 68-69].

The next phase of our research aims to identify the series types and formats. There are the following types of series:

1. *Original Series*.

2. *Miniseries*. The series is one season long, with a completed plot of 2 to 8 series. In some circumstances, a miniseries may become a full-fledged series.

3. *Limited series / Event series*. The series is one season long and has more than six episodes.

4. *Anthology series*. The peculiarity of this format is that each season has its own story with new characters.

5. *Spin-off series*. This format is a branch of the popular series. The spin-off action takes place in the exact location as in the original. However, the main characters are either completely different or those who play episodic roles in the original series.

6. *Sequel*. A series that continues the story set out in a popular but closed series.

7. *Prequel*. This format is a prehistory of events or characters of the original series.

8. *Remake*. A new version of the previously popular series.

9. *Reboot*. A new series version features a rethought plot and a new vision of the original characters.

10. *Revival*. Filming of new series of the officially completed series.

11. *TV adaptation*. A series based on the plot of a book, comic book, or movie.

Among such a variety of formats and genres, the lecturer can easily find something and choose a series that corresponds to students' level of foreign



language knowledge. For instance, such a genre of series as "teaching sitcom" may be suitable for those interested in learning spoken English. We can distinguish the following series:

Extr@. This series is recommended for those who have just started their acquaintance with spoken English. The main characters speak on ordinary topics and use colloquial words at a slow tempo in order to assimilate the information received by the viewer. It has also been released in German, French, and Spanish, which will undoubtedly be suitable for those who learn these languages in parallel with English. The series combines the entertainment process and educational material well, which can make you motivate yourself to learn.

Friends. Together with "Extr@", this series will help to develop spoken English and learn many different slang expressions and sayings. In addition, the series tells about friends' daily lives, problems, skirmishes, and funny situations.

In addition to the sitcom series, there is also a range of series that help to develop English:

Monty Python's Flying Circus. This series is not only full of funny sketches and absurd humor, but it also uses an interesting play on words and funny use of idioms. Because most of the funny sketches in this series are remembered from and to, it also allows to practice vocabulary by repeating the phrases of the characters. Therefore, it may be suitable for students with intermediate language proficiency.

Sherlock is British TV series that helps to learn how the British use English vocabulary and new words related to crime detection and deduction. Therefore, this series is more suitable for those with advanced English levels.

Stranger Things is an American sci-fi series with many youth vocabulary, idioms, and scientific terms. In addition, it is filled with references to the culture from the 80s, which makes it possible to learn slang words and is more suitable for an intermediate level of language.

Regarding the series that are useful in the process of teaching and learning German, there are a list of series:

1. For beginners: "Hallo aus Berlin", "Mein Weg nach Deutschland", "Deutsch Plus", "Nicos Weg", "Extr@", "Video-Thema";
2. For intermediate level: "Ticket nach Berlin", "Easy German", "Jojo sucht das Glück", "Das Deutschlandlabor", "Im Juli";
3. For advanced level: "Tatort", "Türkisch für Anfänger", "Mein Leben und ich", "Anna und die Liebe", "Kommissar Rex", "Stromberg", "Berlin, Berlin!", "Dark", "Club der roten Bänder", "Babylon Berlin".

Conclusion. Foreign language series for students with different language levels is a real opportunity to learn the language and improve different skills. TV series as a method and tool of teaching and learning a foreign language is one of the ways to immerse students into a modern language. The use of series while learning and teaching English and German today is an integral part of the learning process and tangible support in the lecturer's work. Its use contributes not only to an increase in interest in learning a language but also expands students' horizons. Series watching is more comfortable and enjoyable, contributing to better assimilation and memorization of the material. With the help of series, a student can listen to



vocabulary, to established grammatical forms, learn new words and immerse themselves in unique, fantastic worlds.

Taking everything into consideration, it should be concluded that the right choice, well-organized preparation, and essential work on the series help increase students' motivation and encourage them to further self-improvement in the professional field. The presence of this motivation is one of the most critical components in the process of foreign language mastering.

Undoubtedly, the use of video materials and extracurricular activities while learning and teaching a foreign language opens up several unique opportunities for a lecturer and a student in terms of mastering a foreign language culture, especially in terms of the formation of sociocultural competence, as one of the components of communicative competence in general, which we will study in further research on this issue.

References:

- Allan, M. (1985). *Teaching English with video*. Vol. Longman handbooks for language teachers. London: Longman.
- Barmenkova, O. (1999). Videozanyatiya v sisteme obucheniya inostrannoy rechi [Video lessons in the system of teaching foreign speech]. *Innostrannye yazyki v shkole*, no. 3. p. 20-23. [in Russian]
- Chikunova, A. (2010). *Kriterii otbora autentichnyih videomaterialov dlya studentov ekonomicheskikh spetsialnostey v protsesse obucheniya angliyskomu yazyku* [Criteria for selecting authentic video materials for students of economic specialties in the process of teaching English]. <http://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/19259/1/iurp-2010-78-17.pdf>. (In Russian)
- Gillette, S., Goetsch, K., Rowenkamp, J., Salehi, N., Tarone, E. (1999). *Using Audio, Video, and Computer Materials in the Communicative Classroom*. Master Communications Group, Incorporated.
- Reymer, R. (2006). *Audirovanie kak uchebnyiy aspekt inoyazyichnoy kulturyi* [Listening as an educational aspect of foreign language culture]. <http://festival.1september.ru/articles/311770/> (In Russian)
- Schott, P., Schott-Brecher, S. (2003). *Der neuste deutsche Film*. Verlag. 168 p.

Received: March, 30

Accepted: April, 23