

5 Quick and Easy ways to use YouTube in class with the sound turned off!

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YouTube is a wonderful resource for language teachers and learners. When I mention this to trainee teachers, many of them assume I am only talking about YouTube clips which have been specifically created for language learners. When this happens, I'll show them a few simple ways to use authentic YouTube clips for speaking practice. These activities can be used if you have access to interactive whiteboards, desktop projectors, laptops or let your learners use their mobile devices in class.

Remember the old adage: *a picture tells a thousand words*. Well, a quick and simple way to use YouTube clips with your learners is to turn the sound off and focus on the images. This means that your learners create the audio! These activities should work with young learners and adults and could even be used in one-to-one lessons.

1. Silent movie

Type of video: Any clip with physical movement and actions.

Language focus: Tenses and questions using tenses

Film is primarily a visual medium. At the beginning of the 20th century, movies were silent and the viewers were able to follow the story by watching the images on the screen. This activity requires the learners to describe what they have seen, what they are looking at, and make predictions about what will happen next.

Watch the clip with the sound turned off and pause at regular intervals. Practise past tenses by stopping suddenly and asking the learners to tell you what they saw. Practise present perfect, especially with 'just' by pausing and asking them what has just happened. Practise the present continuous by asking your learners to provide a running commentary about what they are watching (like a sports commentator). You can practise future forms by pausing and asking learners to predict what is going to happen.

Let your learners take control of the pause button so they can practise asking questions in different tenses.

2. You write the script

Type of video: Scene between 2-4 people with lots of dialogue. Scenes from soap operas or movies.

Language focus: Natural sounding, conversational English. Fixed and semi-fixed phrases, exclamations. Focus on sentence stress and use of intonation to convey emotions

Tell the learners that they are scriptwriters and their job is to create a script based around a short scene from a soap opera or dramatic movie.

Watch the clip with the sound turned off and ask your learners what they think is going on, who the people are, what they are talking about etc. Ask your learner to create a thumbnail character profile of the characters (She is Mary, she's married but is in love with her brother-in-law. He is Bill, he is Mary's brother-in-law and wants to take revenge on his brother for inheriting the family business).

Play the clip again and ask your learners to improvise a conversation based around the events that are happening on screen. What is great about this activity is that the situations are generally really familiar for learners (most cultures seem to watch soap operas) and even low-level students are able to produce appropriate

dialogue.

After improvising the dialogue, your learners might like to write some dialogue and perform it in front of the class.

3. Advertising agency

Type of video: Commercials / adverts

Language focus: Business English phrases, slogans and language of convincing and persuading

Find a short commercial on YouTube (or let your learners choose one) and ask them to watch it a couple of times then ask them to create the script for an advert. As well as being good fun, many learners find it a useful exercise for improving their pronunciation (especially intonation and stress patterns) because they are aware of the need for an exaggerated, dramatic delivery. This activity is particularly good for Business English learners and you can analyse how slogans and jingles are used in ads and also linguistic features of commercial language such as alliteration and repetition.

4. Voice-over artists

Type of clip: Movie trailer

Language focus: Present simple used in narration

This is a similar activity to the previous one. However, rather than use an advert, find a promotional trailer for a film. Again, our learners are familiar with the exaggerated and dramatic delivery of the actors employed to promote the movies. It's probably a good idea to listen to a few first and let your learners notice and even imitate the sentence stress and intonation patterns. In terms of the language practised, you could use this activity to demonstrate how we use the present simple for narrating anecdotes, telling stories and jokes, and generally involving the audience in the events of the story.

Then, let them find a trailer (or choose them yourself) and tell them they have to create a promotional trailer based on the images only. Make sure they turn the sound off! If possible, let each group choose a voice-over specialist and let them rehearse it. Then, turn the lights off (to make the classroom seem like a movie theatre/cinema) and let the student narrate their trailer while the clip is playing.

5. Memory Test

Type of clip: Anything with visual details which may not be noticed on first viewing

Language focus: Question formation

Find a YouTube clip with lots of visual details such as a scene from a movie, a documentary or a promotional video. Write down a list of quiz questions about the clip, for example, what colour tie was the man wearing? How many people were sitting at the table?

Tell your learners that you are going to watch it together and they have to remember as much as they can from the clip. Some learners might like to write notes but others may prefer just to watch. Then, put them in pairs or small groups and ask the questions about the clip. Check the answers by watching the clip again with the class.

Follow-up activity

Find another clip and show it to the learners. This time, ask each group to note down 5 or 10 details about the clip. Using these notes, each group writes their own memory quiz and then let the class watch the clip again. Encourage them to focus on the details. Then, ask each group to give their quiz sheet to another group who have 5 minutes to write the answers. After 5 minutes, each group hand back their answer sheet and the group who wrote the quiz mark it. When all the quiz sheets have been marked, watch the clip again and let the students identify the correct answers.

**Can you think of other ways to use YouTube in class with the sound turned off?
I'd love to know your ideas.**