

## 8MM LANGUAGE FILMS

By Harry A. Walbruck

Most of the films used in teaching are available in 16mm which has been the accepted school film size in this country for many years. A new trend, however, is developing towards the more economical 8mm format. Films of that size are being used more and more in high school and college classes where the subject matter allows for participation of a limited number of students only, especially in the teaching of foreign languages. Indicative of the opinion prevailing among educators who favor the 8mm film sizes in different types of instruction is the following statement: "The 8mm sound film medium is coming to mean the accessibility of educational film material at a low cost, which has been available only on the more expensive 16mm gauge."<sup>1</sup>

The debate on what film size is really the most convenient for all teaching purposes, however, boils down to these main points of view: 16mm films can be shown on larger, theater-like screens while 8mm films lend themselves to effective projection on smaller screens only, with a width up to 8 to 12 feet at most. In the lecture hall type usage, that is, for larger groups of one-hundred students or more, 16mm films will, therefore, always be preferred. In smaller classes, on the other hand, the economical advantages of the two 8mm film sizes ("regular 8" and "Super 8") are undeniable, especially since no bigger projection screens than those of 6 feet width are needed there.

Economics play a major role in the trend towards 8mm. When not just a single film, but a complete film series has to be considered, as in the case of most FL instruction, the cost factor weighs even heavier, and this is the main reason why "recent advances in motion picture film and particularly in procedures for adding a sound track to 8mm films have brought this smaller gauge of film to the attention of education."<sup>2</sup>

A few years ago, in 1964, 8mm sound film as an educational me-

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<sup>1</sup>Gary W. Ferrington, "8mm Home Study Center", *Film News*, No. 1, 1966, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Louis Forsdale and Gerald Dykatra, "An Experimental Method of Teaching Foreign Languages by Means of 8mm Sound Film in Cartridge-Loading Projectors", paper issued by AIM, University of Wisconsin, 1964, p. 1.

dium was considered in depth by more than 150 engineers, educators, film producers, and distributors.<sup>3</sup> All of them agreed that 8mm sound film would soon begin to play an important role in education. Already in the mid-sixties, according to the same source, there were over 1200 titles in 8mm film available from 29 domestic producers. In addition to some business uses, an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 projectors were being used permanently in schools. It can safely be assumed that this figure has vastly expanded since.

There have, of course, been arguments concerning the two 8mm sizes, "regular 8" and "Super 8". In comparing these two sizes in themselves, "Super 8 films" are about 15% higher priced than "regular 8" films, while 16mm films cost about three times as much. Another opinion on "regular 8" film seems worth quoting in this connection: "Good quality Standard-8 films are entirely satisfactory for viewing by small groups and be individuals. It is unfortunate that we are forced into purchasing the more expensive Super-8 size projectors and commercial films for these uses. Standard-8 for small screen viewing would permit the purchase of more equipment and films for the same money."<sup>4</sup>

Within the 8mm field, a growing number of special "Single-Concept" films has been put on the school market, too.<sup>5</sup> They come in easy-to-handle cartridges, usable in the classroom as well as in self-instruction. This seems to be the fastest growing branch of teaching films. The "regular 8" size, however, is being more and more replaced by the "Super 8" size.

This writer found "regular 8" teaching films quite satisfactory through the past few years. Some of them were commercially available, others produced by himself. In view of the great investments that many schools have previously made in "Regular 8", it is to be hoped that, at least for the years to come, "Regular 8" with its economic advantages will not be scrapped completely in favor of "Super 8".

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<sup>3</sup>Report of "Indices of 8mm Growth", *Newsletter of 8mm Film in Education*, No. 1, 196 p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Jerold E. Kemp and Richard Szumski, "8 Millimeter Film" *Educational Screen AV Guide*, July 1968, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>See, among others: 1. *Source Directory of the Educational Branch of the Technicolor Corporation*, 123 S. Hollywood Way Burbank, Cal.; 2. *Encyclopedia Britannica Films Inc.*, 1150 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, Ill.; 3. Halas and Batchelor, *8mm Film Loops*, Teaching Film Catalogue 1967-8, London, W. C. 2.