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## **INCORPORATING VIDEO CONTENT IN THE ESL CLASSROOM: LEARNING STRATEGIES AND CONCEPTUAL SIDELINES**

*Анотація.* Стаття присвячена проблемі використання автентичних відеоресурсів, зокрема фільмів і трейлерів, у вивченні іноземної мови. Поєднання звукового і візуального образів, реальні ситуації спілкування, що мають відповідне мовне оформлення та невербальний екстралінгвістичний супровід, дають підстави розглядати фільм як засіб відтворення іншомовного середовища у процесі вивчення іноземної мови. У статті представлена цілісна методика використання даного відеоресурсу від форм роботи, які передують перегляду, а також виконуються в процесі перегляду до таких, які слідує за ним. Особливий акцент зроблено на необхідності відходу від репродуктивного формату обговорення до описивно-аналітичного. Представлені та проаналізовані варіанти використання власне мовного контенту фільму, авторського рукопису, а також мовного і концептуального матеріалу відгуків критиків, поданих на відповідних сайтах характеристик героїв, а також шляхи впровадження методики CLIL як аспекту опрацювання контенту, проблематики фільму і культурно-історичних явищ, включених у сюжет. Як окремий доробок авторів, представлена серія вправ, які зумовлюють перегляд студентами фільмів саме мовою оригіналу. Дана методика спрямована на розвиток усіх умінь іншомовного спілкування, а також підвищення соціокультурної компетенції, забезпечення між предметних зв'язків, а також аналітичних умінь, навичок

ведення дискусії, активізацію відповідних мовних одиниць і граматичних кліше.

**Ключові слова:** фільм, трейлер, CLIL, сценарій фільму, методи роботи з мовним і соціокультурним контентом фільму.

**Abstract.** *The article is dedicated to incorporation of authentic video resources, films and trailers in particular, in the process of foreign language learning. Combination of sound and visual image, real-life communicative situations with the corresponding language content as well as non-verbal extralinguistic background leads researchers to consider film as a means or re-creation of foreign language environment in the process of foreign language study. The article presents an integral methodology of using this video resource with activities ranging from pre-viewing to post-viewing ones as well as those designed for the viewing stage. A particular focus is made on the necessity of shifting from the reproductive format of discussion to descriptive and analytical. There have been presented and analysed variants of using the actual language content of a film, the language of movie script, as well the reviews of qualified critics available on corresponding sites, characterization of personages and also ways of implementing CLIL as an aspect of processing the content, problematic issues raised in the film, cultural and historical phenomena included in the storyline. As a special contribution of the authors, a set of activities ensuring that the students do not resort to watching the film in their native language has been presented. This whole methodology is directed at all the development of all communicative skills in a foreign language, raising students' sociocultural competence, introducing CLIL, improving skills of conducting a discussion, activating the relevant vocabulary and grammar clichés.*

**Key words:** *film, trailer, CLIL, film script, methods of processing language and sociocultural content of film.*

## **1. Introduction**

The global acknowledgement of the benefits of visual image in the learning process has given a remarkable rise to an exceedingly growing number of learning initiatives enhancing the use of video content both in classroom settings and online. Teachers' activity packs already abound in interactive film-based classroom activities suggested to cater for the students' individual needs and possibilities, as well as for teachers' creativity and professional growth. There is practically not a single aspect of language learning where film may be treated as irrelevant the latter offering newly created extensions to habitual classroom and self-study practices. The authors of numerous IFL Teaching platforms such as *Teach with Movies*, *iSL Collective*, *Internet TSL Journal* etc. have already generously shared their ideas, worksheets and projects based on films as well as the theoretical background necessary for creating a substantiated methodological base. Yet, certain aspects of using movies to teach a foreign language still require closer consideration.

The unrivaled power of visual image plus sound makes film an outstanding resource for learning a language recreating a natural speaking environment as well as enhancing the development of the four communicative skills. Apart from providing authentic and varied language for simultaneously reading and listening comprehension, films also trigger advanced follow-up discussions and may be used as inspiration for writing. Furthermore, the multi-layer content of practically all releases creates an exclusively favourable milieu for incorporating CLIL (content and language integrated learning) in the English classroom as well as dealing with lexis of real-life conversation embracing different levels of vocabulary from elevated style, professional slang to most recent colloquialisms, idioms and multi-part verbs.

## **2. Statement of purpose.**

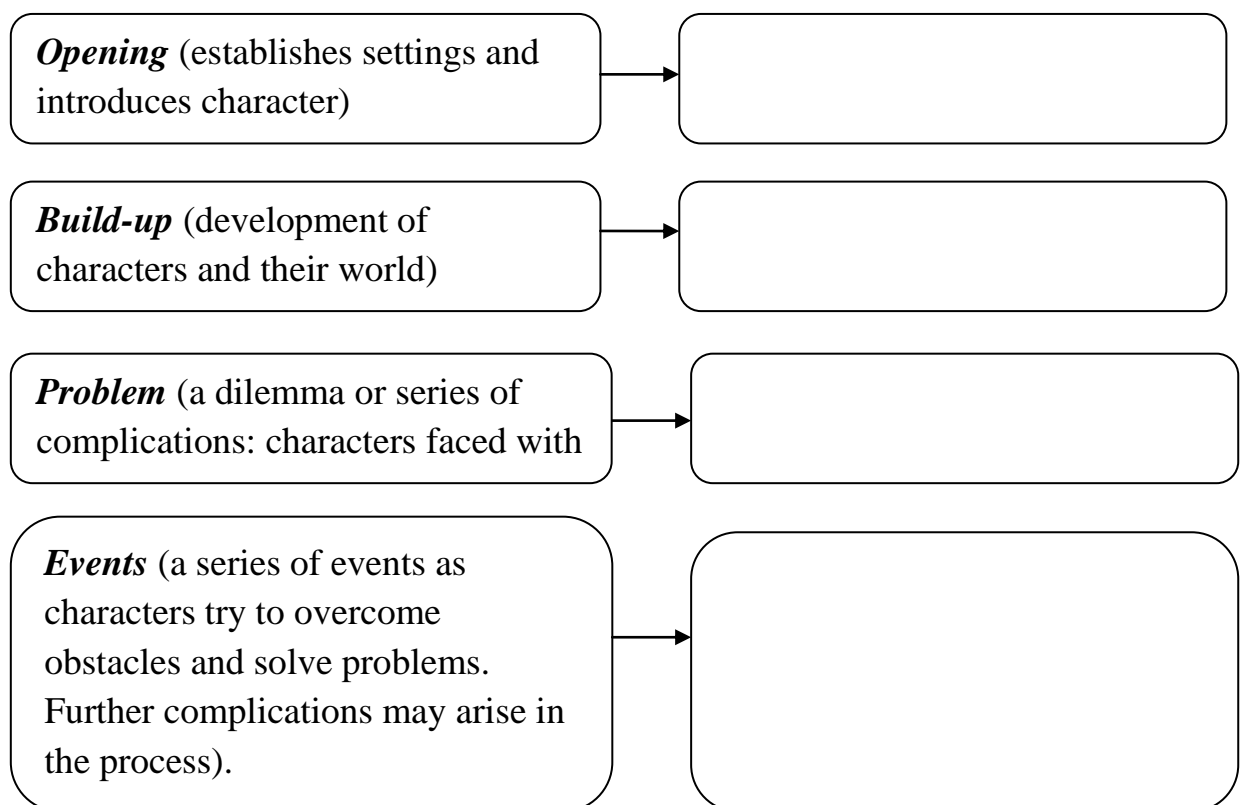
This article intends to introduce a systematic approach to applying video content in the EFL classroom with the purpose of developing the students' speaking skills as well as expanding their sociocultural and intercultural

competences. A special ambition is to introduce in-viewing vocabulary exercises and speaking activities that align directly to the original language of a film therefore ensure that the students avoid using the dubbed versions for completing the tasks.

### 3. The study

#### 3.1. Analysing trailers

As a pre-watching stage, an effective way to penetrate into the storyline and thus to encourage an active and eager discussion is to start a film session with a movie trailer, a great source of input for lessons for their being short enough to be convenient for viewing in class, containing natural conversation in context, setting the tone for the film and, importantly, helping to build a sense of anticipation about the storyline. This can be treated as self-sufficient learning stuff and as an introduction into a more advanced viewing practice. At this stage students may be asked to watch the trailer and then elicit their ideas on the following structural conventions:



The students might be asked to watch the trailer once, without the sound. Then watch the trailer again, still without the volume, pressing pause at points that illustrate the visual features listed on the chart below. Make notes on your chart explaining what you see in the frozen frames.

|                      | Viewing without volume | Viewing with volume |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Genre                |                        |                     |
| Narrative            |                        |                     |
| Unique Selling Point |                        |                     |
| Target Audience      |                        |                     |
| Music                |                        |                     |
| Dialogue             |                        |                     |

### **3.2 Films as a multiple track resource**

Paying no minder tribute to the huge developmental potentials of printed narrative, we must herein insist that films offer an extensive range of additional challenges in terms of building up the learner's skill set, enabling various practices ranging from mere reproduction to advanced research. It is not only the language content that, as a rich resource, undergoes elaboration in a variety of activities and speaking practices, it is also the content of the movie script, critics' reviews and viewers' comments, character sketches provided at a variety of sites and, finally, an sophisticated network of topic or problem related issues emerging from the plot or even a single quotation, enabling the teacher to incorporate the concept of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

The actual language content of a film may enrich students' knowledge in terms of not only vocabulary but also the means of conducting natural dialogue occurring in varied everyday situations as well as in more formal settings. This includes responses and reactions of different emotive intent, filler phrases, specific formulations expressing agreement and disagreement, suggestion and refusal, praise and criticism of different degrees. A special focus should be made on body language as it is a matter of building up the students' intercultural competence as

well as deeper insight in the character's peculiarities, background and degree of authority. The "raw material" for activities and exercises may range from singular vocabulary units, idioms and collocations to quotations and sophisticated monologues.

As far as the movie script is concerned, it is to be viewed as a very specific and generous source of functional language to be used for descriptions and comments. The teacher can prepare a set of frozen frames or short episodes; expose them successively one after another to the class simultaneously encouraging the students to act as commentators to the characters' actions. Without any vocabulary previously derived from the film script, the students are supposed to give accurate and detailed descriptions by themselves. Then the teacher proceeds with presenting the description made by the script writer and the students compare the writer's versions to their own.

*Example:*

Students' description:

*Crawford is looking blindly into space. He sighs and looks at his watch. He stands up and takes off his glasses.*

Original description:

*Crawford stares through the grotesque lenses, motionless, expressionless. He takes a deep breath and checks his watch. Then he stands, removing the glasses.*

This is a very special activity aimed at developing skills of transformation, paraphrase and alternative formulation. It may also cultivate the students' sense of style and authenticate their speech.

Apart from receiving a renewed input of the target language while watching a film, the students also learn about the target culture. There can't be any single film that does not act as springboard for a whole array of subtopics that may not only encourage the students to investigate and discuss the issue under consideration, but also step over the limits of the curriculum-based content. This is the outlet of CLIL – content and language integrated learning resting on four "Cs":

content, communication, cognition and culture. Considering CLIL a worthy object of further discussion, we will in this article dwell on how to incorporate it in the context of film-based discussions on the example of “The Painted Veil” (2006). The film shows a British medical doctor fighting a cholera epidemic in a small Chinese village, while being trapped at home in a loveless marriage to an unfaithful wife. The film thus relates to a number of issues requiring closer consideration: Chinese culture, village life, symbols in Chinese dance, epidemics of cholera in Far East, history of cholera treatment, the role of Britain in military and medical missions in the XX century etc.

Character analyses accessible at *SHMOOP*, *SparkNotes*, *GradeSaver* offer professionally compiled character sketches which can be successfully used as language basis for follow-up discussions and even games. If the number of characters is rather extended, then the students can be engaged in a reading-speaking activity resembling the traditional taboo game requiring that Student A reads the ready-made characterization of a personage, reports the description to Student B and Student B is asked to identify the character. A whole range of vocabulary and grammar activities can be included too. The point is to use authentic material with the aim of getting the students to emulate native speakers in structuring descriptive and analytical reasoning.

Another language resource that a film-based discussion can well benefit from and a very original, hardly ever considered in classroom settings, genre of writing is critic reviews. *Rotten Tomatoes*, *MetaCritic*, *IMDb* etc. provide elaborate and varied film reviews which can serve as a useful source of ideas as well as film review vocabulary. Typically, students are encouraged to write their own film reviews according to certain schemes including background infos, main points of the plot, general comments and opinions, useful recommendations. However, the reviews of qualified critics can be used for more profound analysis, exploring and deriving the specific language of critical discourse. The students can be requested to act as singular critics presenting positive and negative reviews of a film using

ideas of the assigned critics as well as their language and style, and to engage in a follow-up discussion of the critics' points of view.

### 3.3 Specifics of developing lesson plans for film-based discussions

As viewing a film is possible only as a homework item, a special challenge for the teacher is to ensure that the students do not resort to watching films in their native language. This is achieved through a variety of tasks listed below:

1. Prepare a list of statements cited by the characters of a film, preferably with rich linguistic content, and get the students to identify which of the characters each of the statements refers to and in which particular scene it was used. Additionally, the students might be requested to give a description of the settings, the activities performed while speaking, the weather or the clothes the characters were wearing in that particular scene.

I think you've more than filled his shoes, you know.

*(Dr. Jack Harper meaning that Clay had met his late father's expectations).*

Don't you think I might at least deserve the time of day?

*(Dr. Neyer insisting that Clay should agree on extra examination as he was one of the most successful and famous specialists in the area)*

*(from "Awake")*

2. Provide the beginning or the ending of a phrase and ask your students to complete the lines while watching the film.

*Right... I shall go and brush up on ... (my very small talk).*

*She keeps half the house closed  
to save on heating. That explains the ... (frosty reception).*

*(from "Easy Virtue")*

A more advanced variety of this practice is to suggest a middle sentence and get the students to put in the previous and the following statements.



3. Change one word in each of the statements you include in the task and suggest that the students get it right back to the original:

*It's dangerous. We could come forward (across) as hostile.*

*I am listening to the same news (cover) coverage.*

*It is a whole new chess (ball) game.*

*(from "The Arrivals")*

4. A more sophisticated variety of the previous activity is asking the students to restore the original formulation from their paraphrased versions suggested by the teacher:

*You couldn't have surprised me more! (You could knock me down with a feather).*

*Can you tell me why I should create so much discomfort for myself just for your sake? (Give me one reason to put myself to an inconvenience on your account).*

- *I am trying to relieve the consequences of the heavy drinking. (Walking off a crippling hangover)*

*(from "The Painted Veil")*

#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations.**

Film content both in terms of administering authentic natural spoken language and its cultural input are an indispensable resource in the modern EFL classroom. It is now available for students of all levels of competence and may become a favourable ground for language study, contrasting screen versions with books, doing projects and engaging in analytical discussions. Further research may focus on developing methodology of using short videos, podcasts, multimedia for various learning objectives.

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