ON THE USE OF AUTHENTIC AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH STUDIES COURSES. A SAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES

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The main objective of this article is to present a didactic proposal consisting of several activities involving the use of audiovisual material. These activities have been designed for the English Studies degree and they have been divided into four subject areas, namely use of English, Linguistics, Translation, and Literature. Previous to the presentation of the activities, the reasons for using videos in the English Studies classes were set out.

INTRODUCTION

In a society in which technology is developing at an incredible speed and permeating everybody's lives, and particularly the lives of young people, teachers have a great opportunity to use ICTs, and more specifically authentic audiovisual texts, in the classroom. TV series, films, music videos, social networks, or websites such as Youtube occupy most of the youngsters' spare time. The main purpose of this article is to reflect upon the advantages of the use of authentic videos in the English Studies degree and to present a didactic proposal in this sense.

After considering the main reasons in favour of resorting to audiovisual texts in section two, section three will be devoted to a proposal of activities which could be used in some of the different areas which are integrated into the English Studies (ES) degree.

REASONS FOR USING AUDIOVISUAL TEXTS IN ES COURSES

Amongst the different reasons which can be put forward in favour of the use of authentic videos in the courses which are part of the ES degree, the following can be mentioned:

a) Motivation: Probably one of the most important reasons for using audiovisual texts in class is related to the students' motivation. The presence of audiovisual texts permeates young people's leisure time. Therefore, the use of videos in class may help to create an attractive and enjoyable learning atmosphere which can be connected in the students' minds with that they like doing in their free time. As put forward by Díaz

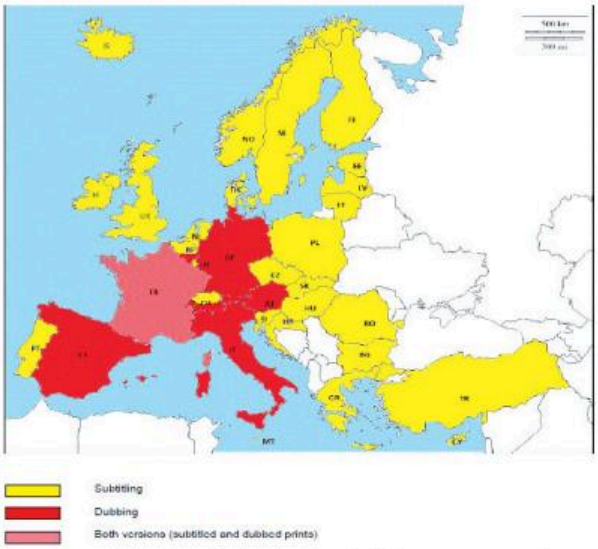

Figure 1. Map of subtitling and dubbing countries[1]

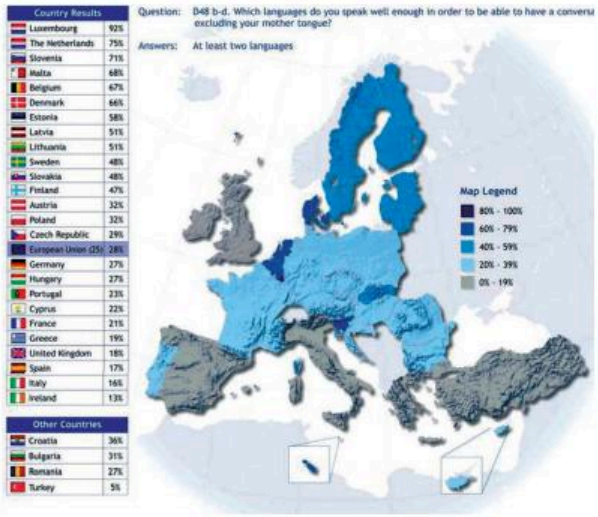

Figure 2. AVT modalities and knowledge of FLs[2]

Cintas and Fernández Cruz (2008: 304), if video viewing is interesting and motivating for the students, it can be very helpful for decreasing their anxiety level or what Krashen (1987) called their *affective filter*, which will be undoubtedly beneficial for their performance.

b) Contextualisation: The use of videos allows students to see language being used in context, which implies that they constitute an excellent tool to illustrate all those pragmatic and sociocultural aspects which are so important in real life situations.

c) Orality: an important advantage of using authentic videos is that thanks to them, students will be exposed to a diversity of registers and accents in the foreign language, English in this case.

d) Naturalness: videos normally present natural registers and conversation speeds, similar to those which occur in real life. Moreover, as pointed out by Talaván (2013: 52), they include linguistic elements which do not normally appear in textbooks, such as colloquial expressions, slang terms, sayings, etc., which are necessary to communicate efficiently in certain contexts.

e) Connection with literary genres: another advantage of the use of audiovisual texts in English Studies is the obvious connection between films or TV series and literary works. Not only do they share several narrative techniques, but there is a great quantity of films and TV series based on literary works. In addition, it must not be forgotten that the cinema has also influenced the novel to a great extent.

f) Audiovisual translation: one of the most important types of specialised translation in a society in which audiovisual material is present everywhere is audiovisual translation (AVT). Moreover, AVT is probably the type of translation students most enjoy. It is something evident that AVT could not possibly be dealt with if audiovisual texts are not used.

g) Flexibility: as put forward more than once (Tomalin 1986, Talaván 2013), videos can be used in many different ways and with diverse pedagogic objectives.

h) Transferable competences: as highlighted by Talaván (2013: 52-53), working with audiovisual texts fosters transferable skills related to the use of programmes and media. In addition, it offers the possibility of introducing linguistic registers related to fields such as the cinema or television.

i) Cross-curricular or global issues: videos may constitute an excellent opportunity to introduce global issues in any type of course. Among those global issues the

following could be mentioned: peace education, gender equality, health education, environmental education, human rights, social justice, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, respect for sexual diversity, etc.

Related to the advantages of using videos in the English Studies degree, it should be remembered that, as highlighted by Talaván (2013: 10), the difference in the competence levels in foreign languages – and particularly in English – across European countries seems to be related to the dominant AVT modality in each of them. Thus, in subtitling countries, such as the Netherlands or Belgium, the knowledge of English is much higher than the European average; on the contrary, in dubbing countries, such as Spain or Italy, the knowledge of English is clearly lower than the average. In this sense, figure 1 presents the distribution of AVT modalities across European countries, and figure 2 portrays the percentages of inhabitants that speak at least a foreign language in the different European countries.

A DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

Use of audiovisual material in the EFL class

For Use of English courses two activities are proposed here. One of them is based on a music video clip, particularly for Katy Perry's "Firework",[3] whereas the other one is a short documentary on racism entitled "RACE: Are we so different?" Apart from focusing on the development of different language skills, both of them are used to introduce global issues, such as human rights, respect for minorities, or racism.[4]

SKILLS DEVELOPED: LISTENING, SPEAKING, WRITING

AIMS:

- To practise listening, speaking, and writing skills.
- To acquire and use vocabulary related to human rights.

TIMING:

In-class: 60 minutes.

Autonomous work: 180 minutes.

STEPS:

1. Students listen to the song entitled "Firework", by Katy Perry, and watch the video clip (available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGJuMBdaqIw&ob=av2e).
2. They are asked what it suggests to them.
3. They are told to search for the lyrics of the song on the Internet.
4. They are asked to relate the scenes in the video with the lyrics of the song and to identify any scene which portrays a violation of the human rights.
5. They are told to search for the Human Rights Declaration on the Internet.
6. They write a 300 word composition on the violation of Human Rights in our world.

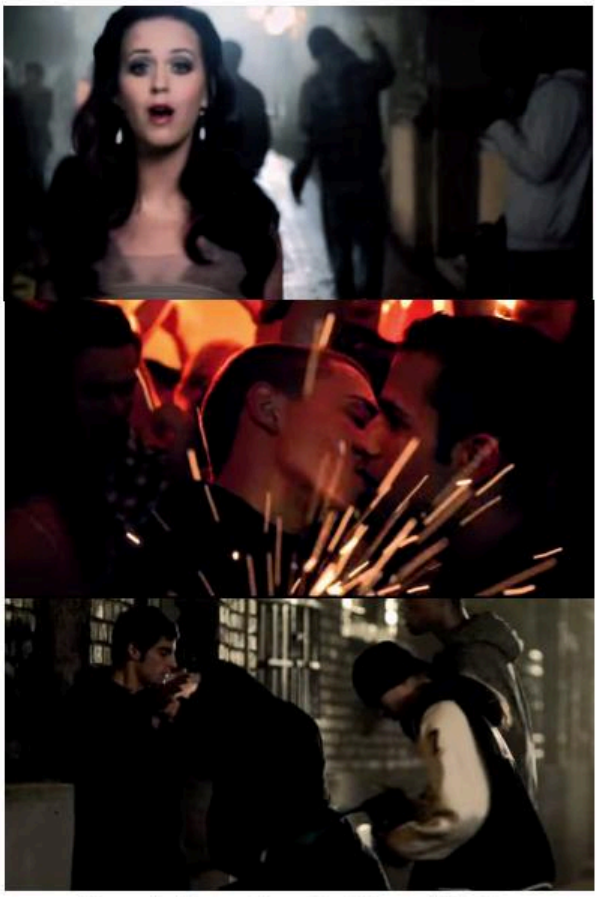

Figure 3. Frames from the "Firework" video

SKILLS DEVELOPED: SPEAKING, LISTENING, READING

AIMS:

- To practise reading and oral skills.
- To acquire and use vocabulary related to racism and human rights.

TIMING:

In-class: 60 minutes

Autonomous work: 30 minutes.

STEPS:

1. Students watch a video on racism entitled "RACE: Are we so different?" (available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aaTAUAEyho).
2. They are asked about the content of the video.
3. They are told to reflect upon the notion of racism, relating it to themselves and their country. The following questions could be posed: What is the strongest point defended in the video? Do you agree on that position? Why?

   Is Spain (or your country) a racist country? The last sentence pronounced in the video is "Examine and re-examine your thoughts and beliefs about race". Would you consider yourself a racist person? Have you ever had a racist thought, attitude or behavior?
4. They bring pieces of news to the classroom to defend their positions on the topic.

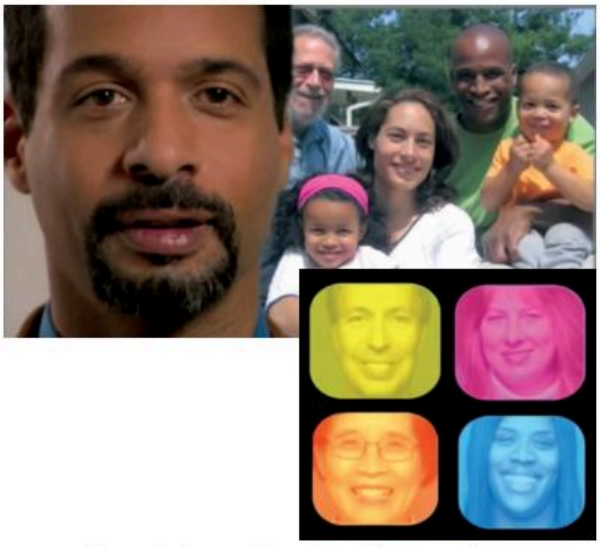

Figure 4. Frames from the video on racism

Use of audiovisual material in Linguistics courses

The activity presented below has been designed for a course in Linguistics. More specifically, it is circumscribed to the field of Pragmatics and it is related to speech act theory[5] In this sense, the following excerpts, from the animated film Shrek, could be exploited in the classroom to deal with request production in English. After having paid attention to situational factors, such as the degree of familiarity and the relative power between the interlocutors or the degree of imposition involved in the requested actions, and after having identified all the requests appearing in each of the following excerpts, the student would have to sort them out into three types: Hints (e.g. *What did I say about singing?*), Conventionally indirect (*Can I whistle*? or *Would you look at that*?), and *Direct (You gotta let me stay!* or *Now remove your helmet)*. The contexts in which those realization patterns are used could also be analysed, in order to explain, for instance, why a direct request is used at the end of fragment 1 or in fragment 4.

AIMS:

- To identify different request strategies in the excerpts.
- To classify them into three categories: direct, conventionally indirect and hints.
- To become aware of the importance of contextual factors for request production.

TIMING:

In-class: 60 minutes

Autonomous work: 60 minutes.

STEPS:

1. Students watch the video excerpts.
2. They are asked to identify the request strategies in the different scenes and to sort them out into the three different categories.
3. They are required to explain the influence of the relation between the interlocutors and other contextual factors on request realisation.

Figure 5. Poster of Shrek (Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shrek.jpg)

(1)*Donkey*: Can I stay with you?
Shrek: Uh, what?
Donkey: Can I stay with you, please?
Shrek: Of course!
Donkey: Really?
Shrek: No.
Donkey: Please! I don't wanna go back there! You don't know what it's like to be considered a freak. Well, maybe you do. But that's why we gotta stick together. You gotta let me stay! Please! Please!

(2)*Donkey*: I can't wait to get on the road again
Shrek: What did I say about singing?
Donkey: Can I whistle?
Shrek: No!
Donkey: Can I hum it?
Shrek: All right, hum it.

(3)*Princess Fiona:* There's an arrow in your butt!
Shrek: What? Oh, would you look at that?

(4)*Princess Fiona*: Now, remove your helmet.
Shrek: Look, I really don't think this is a good idea.
Princess Fiona: Just take off your helmet.
Shrek: I'm not going to.
Princess Fiona: Take it off.
Shrek: No!
Princess Fiona: Now.
Shrek: Okay! Easy. As you command, Your Highness.

Use of audiovisual material in Translation courses

The activity proposed for Translation courses is based on a video extracted from one of the film adaptations of John Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-zvMyxNAo).[6] The activity focuses on a translation problem, namely the translation of cultural references, and on the creation of subtitles, for which students will have to use a programme for the creation of subtitles and will have to take certain technical aspects into account. Amongst them, for instance, as stated in Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014: 85), for Spanish subtitles, the maximum number of lines per subtitles is 2 and the recommended maximum number of characters per line is 39, which amounts to a maximum number of 78 characters per subtitle. Although the programme most frequently used by professionals for the creation of subtitles is *WinCaps*, there are free software programmes which are very suitable for educational purposes in English Studies degrees, such as *Subtitle Workshop or Aegisub.*

AIMS:

- To identify cultural references in the dialogue of the scene reflected in the video.
- To apply different translation techniques to translate those cultural references.
- To create the subtitles for the video.

TIMING:

In-class: 60 minutes

Autonomous work: 150 minutes.

STEPS:

1. Students watch the video containing Lennie's dream in Gary Sinise's adaptation of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.
2. They are asked to identify the cultural references in the scene portrayed in the video.
3. They are required to apply solutions to translate those cultural references.
4. Finally they create the subtitles for that video by means of *Aegisub*, *Subtitle Workshop* or any other programme for the creation of subtitles.

Figure 6. Frame from the *Of Mice and Men* video

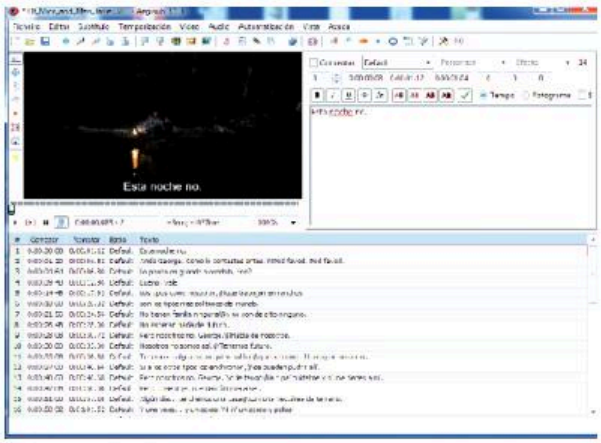

Figure 7. *Aegisub*'s working interface

Use of audiovisual material in Literature courses

The video containing the final scene of Baz Luhrmann's film adaptation of Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby has been selected to illustrate an activity designed for a Literature course (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oa5bRR8EHt8). The whole film and this particular last scene are very faithful to Fitzgerald's novel.[7]

AIMS:

- To compare the final scene of Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* with the novel on which it is based.
- To explain the symbolism in that final scene.
- To analyse the concept of the American dream.

TIMING:

In-class: 60 minutes

Autonomous work: 90 minutes.

STEPS:

1. Students watch the video containing the final scene of Luhrman's The *Great Gastby*.
2. They are asked to compare it with the end of Fitzgerald's novel and of Clayton's film adaptation.
3. They are told to identify the symbols in the video, namely the green light and Gatsby's dream, and to explain them.

Figure 8. Frames from the The Great Gatsby video

CONCLUSIONS

In this article the use of audiovisual texts in the English Studies degree has been defended and a proposal of activities for different courses has been presented. The chapter started with a statement of the advantages of using videos, among which students' motivation, language contextualization and naturalness stand out. In the Translation classroom, if AVT is to be deal with, working with audiovisual texts is compulsory. With regard to Literature courses, the innumerable and diverse connections between literature and cinema make it very advisable to use authentic videos in the classroom.

As put forward by Talaván (2006: 51), taking into account the rejection towards subtitled films in some countries, such as Spain, activities such as those presented here can lead students to appreciate the pedagogical and cultural advantages of seeing subtitled films in the original version and realize the amount of content of the film in the source language which is not conveyed to the dubbed version. Therefore, students can be encouraged to watch films and TV programmes in the source language outside the academic context.

NOTES

1. Extracted from European Commission (2011).
2. Extracted from European Commission (2006).
3. The lyrics for this song may be found at http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/katyperry/firework.html.
4. In fact I had designed these two activities to deal with global issues in the EFL class and they had been published in Rascón, Díaz, Díez and García (2013).
5. A very similar activity was proposed in Díaz-Pérez (2013).
6. The script of this video clip reads as follows:
   - Not tonight.
   - Come on, George. Tell like you done before. Please? Please? Please?
   - You get a kick out of that, don't you? OK. I will. Guys like us that work on ranches are the loneliest guys in the world. They ain't got no family and they don't belong no place. They got nothin' to look ahead to.
   - But not us, George. Tell about us now.
   - Well, we ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. If them other guys gets in jail, they can rot for all anybody cares.
   - But not us, George, because I... See, I got you to look after me, but you got me to look after. But, George, tell about how it's gonna be.
   - OK. Someday... we're gonna have us a little house and a couple of acres, and a cow and a pig and chickens.
   - Pig and chic...
   - We gonna live off the fat of the land, and have rabbits.
   - And have rabbits. George, tell what we got in the garden.
   - OK.
   - Then tell about the rabbits in winter, and about the stove and, uh... how thick the cream was on the milk.

- Yeah.
- Go ahead, tell it.
- Why don't you do it? You know all of it.
- George, no! George, no, it's not the same when I tell it. That's not the same. Tell, um, what... how I get to tend the rabbits.
- We're gonna have a big vegetable patch and we're gonna have a rabbit hutch. And down in the flat, we'll have a... little field of alfalfa for the rabbits.
- And I get to tend the rabbits.
- Yeah, you get to tend the rabbits. When it rains in the winter, we'll just say "The hell with going to work," and we'll just build a fire in the stove, and we'll just sit there and we'll listen to the rain.

7. The script of this video clip reads as follows:
I rang, I wrote, I implored. But not a single one of the sparkling hundred that enjoyed his hospitality, attended the funeral. And from Daisy... not even a flower. I was all he had. The only one who cared.
After Gatsby's death, New York was haunted for me. That city... my once golden shimmering mirage... now made me sick.
On my last night in New York, I returned to that huge incoherent house once more. Wolfsheim Associates had cleaned it out.
He threw all those parties, hoping she would wander in one night.
It's like an amusement park!
How do you live here all alone?
She makes it look so so splendid, don't you think, old sport?
Music, and then we can dance until the morning.
Will you come, old sport? We need you.
I wish we could always be like this.
We will be.
I remembered how we had all come to Gatsby's and guessed at his corruption, while he stood before us, concealing his incorruptible dream.
It's perfect. From your perfect irresistible imagination.
The moon rose higher. And as I stood there, brooding on an old unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked up Daisy's green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come such a long way, and his dream must have seem so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it... But he did not know that it was already behind him.
Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter. Tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And one fine morning... So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

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