

Audiovisuals in FL Classroom

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze the aspects of audiovisuals use in FL classroom. It is a well-known fact that that audiovisuals are part of our everyday life for many decades, and lately they have been included in the learning process within the communicative approach, under the pressure of a greater importance of pragmatic and authentic communication. There are many benefits coming from their use in the FL classrooms in the neurolinguistic aspect. Recently, many suggestions have been provided on the implementation of audiovisual materials in the foreign language class, some special criteria teachers should take into consideration during the process, but also concrete examples of such materials used in FL classroom generally, and particularly in that of Italian language.

Keywords: *audiovisuals; neurolinguistic; FL classroom; CEFR*

1.Introduction

If we refer to the enriched and diversified reality of multimedia context offered by informatics, audiovisuals actually present only a small percentage of the available media sources. However, besides classes where informatics labs and specialized people are still a far cry from the daily reality, a large amount of books on learning a foreign language guide us to infinite materials and input provided by the television and cinematography, which are easier to use. So, television and cinema provide enriched information regarding the linguistic and cultural context of a defined society. Regarding the prices, these resources are easy to find and use in different contexts.

2.Suggestions from CEFR

Recent studies carried through in glotodidactics suggest that we should use new technology while teaching a foreign language, such as audiovisual and multimedia. It is known that these tools have

not been created specifically for didactics, but they can be turned into didactic technology, if they are adapted and implemented in alignment with didactic objectives.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) offers a common basis for Europe, regarding the design of syllabus, curricula, scholastic texts, etc. In this document, which has essential importance for the learning of a foreign language in the European continent, audiovisuals are mentioned together with their important role in the teaching process.

In paragraph 4.4.4.3 of CEFR (2001, 90) it is said:

...In beneficial activities from audiovisuals, whoever uses the language receives simultaneously a conversional and visual stimulus.

Among similar activities, we can mention:

- Follow a text read out loud
- Watch television, video or a movie with subtitles
- Use new technology (multimedia, CD ROM, etc.)

In this same paragraph, in the description that follows, there is given as an example a table which provides the ability to watch via an audiovisual, according to the level of difficulty defined per each linguistic level.

Whereas in paragraph 4.6.2 (CEFR, 2001, 117) on media, it is said that:

... Media (channels) includes: Loudspeaker; Telephony; Video call; Videoconference; Speaker; Radio; TV; Movie; Computer (e-mail, CD-ROM etc.); Videotapes, Video-cassettes, Videodisc; Audiotapes, Audio cassettes, discs; Publications; Manuscripts, etc.

Furthermore, in this valuable contribution of the European Council, it is highlighted the encouragement for the development of different abilities in foreign languages, such as heuristic abilities, which also implies the use of new technology. (CEFR, 2001, 133)

3. Advantages of using audiovisuals for glottodidactic purposes

Neurolinguistics is new science, which started in the XX century, after the first attempts to interpret essential anomalies of language, such as aphasia, in the aspect of some specific linguistic, and it is developed through clinical observation, but also through various experimental studies of neurologic phenomena regarding language.

Moreover, studies on how the brain works were linked to pedagogic and linguistic studies to create new theories and teaching methods focusing on the coherence of didactic activity with cerebral structure and its functioning. The results achieved in this field have been used in pedagogy and didactics to investigate on the teaching/learning process from the neurolinguistics point of view. The performed studies on how the brain works have played an important role in defining learning patterns: perception, understanding and how memory works.

A very valuable contribution in this field has been given by the researchers Danesi (1988) and Cardona (2001). According to Danesi (1988) learning a language depends on the way cerebral hemispheres work according to the bimodality principle:

1. The right lobe synthesizes global understandings and intuitively perceives extra linguistic aspects of communication.

2. The left lobe analyzes details in sequences and acts logically, following a linear trait and focusing mainly on the linguistic aspect.

Therefore, according to the principle of Danesi, studying a language means that the brain lobes will be activated according to a defined pattern, which he calls the directional principle:

1. In the beginning, the right lobe is activated to have a general understanding;
2. Afterwards, the left lobe is activated for analytical understanding.

The efficiency of teaching in bimodal way has been certified since 1988 by a pilot study, where researchers Danesi and Mollica (1988, 76-90) have certified that bimodal teaching has significant advantages for those who are studying a foreign language, enabling these people to learn the maximum information with minimal efforts in a short period of time.

According to the researchers, this principle coincides with sighting or learning a foreign language through audiovisuals, because the natural learning pattern is followed in their usage. For instance, the first contact while watching a movie is the visual one, which happens immediately. In this way, the above-mentioned functions linked to the right lobe are activated. Furthermore, in a second moment, the acoustic perception is activated, which leads to analyzing the message, that is, analytic understanding, but in a detailed way.

With regarding to memory, a person remembers only 10% of what he hears, 50% of what he sees and hears and 80% of what he sees, hears and does.(Begley, 1994, 47). Therefore, according to Begley's suggestion, audiovisual materials combined with activities would prove very efficient for memorizing and learning a new language.

Moreover, memory is a consequence of cognitive activities, which are applied to those elements which need to be remembered. So, if an element has been treated in a different way, it has been analyzed, summarized or transformed, it will be easier to remember that rather than another element which has been approached in a passive way. (Pallotti, 2000)

Audiovisual materials play a special role in memorizing - a very important process for the development of lexical competence. In such materials, language is represented in its social-pragmatic context, and the student is able to observe the linguistic act within the communication context, which helps in the correct development of lexical competence, although the audiovisual sequences contain different linguistic and extra linguistic aspects that comprise complicated aspects of communicative interaction (Cardona, 2007, 57). Audiovisual input favours the transfer of words from a perceived lexicon into a productive one, increasing the student's communication skills (Cardona, 2007, 61).

Moreover, through the use of audiovisuals, students can be actively involved and, in these conditions, achieve a thorough and long-term learning of the language.

Using audiovisuals in FL classroom activates the "expectancy grammar" or the ability to predict what is going to be said in a defined context. This terms has been proposed by Oller (1979), who highlighted that the interaction between "cognitive processes" and "encyclopaedia" or the knowledge trunk, together with the communication competence composed of such components as: phonetics, writing, morphosyntax, semantics, text, pragmatic, social-cultural, extra linguistic,

semiotics, activate “expectancy grammar”, which is the basis for understanding. (Balboni, 1994, 45-47)

According to the Celestin, while watching an audiovisual, the image helps the word, that is, the image in the screen, including characters, premises, movements, voices, colours, etc., makes it possible for the observer to define a context and predict what can be said and what can happen in the future, thus activating one of the mechanisms that lies on the basis of the understanding and has been defined as “expectancy grammar” (Celentin, 2007, 37-38). As this “grammar” is a natural mechanisms which leads the learning of a language, it can be applied through the use of audiovisuals in classroom, in order to speed up its learning.

4. Audiovisual materials in the didactic process

The recorder was widely used in the foreign language classroom, because it was cheap and easy to use compared to other technologies. However, hearing text or dialogues in the classroom does not always prove positive, because in many cases this methodology can be difficult for those students who have gotten used to the written text. In this viewpoint, the use of a video would be efficient, for the audiovisual part would be understandable, thanks to the help of visual information, which increase the understanding skill of the students.

In order for the use of the video or DVD to be aligned with the objectives of teaching the new language, the teacher should know beforehand:

- Didactic ability of the tool;
- How it works and essential skills how to use it;
- Ways and purpose of using the tool in the didactic process;
- The teacher should keep in mind that he cannot play a movie during a class, for the purpose of doing something different, because it would not encourage the language learning.
- Moreover, presenting audiovisual materials might not be efficient, if the student is not clear on the aim of the activity. So, watching a movie with no didactic planning lacks opportunities of learning the language.

However, when the teacher is choosing an audiovisual text, before selecting and performing didactics on it, he should know some of the advantages it will bring to the didactic process, such as: improvement of the understanding skills, due to the presence of many extra linguistic elements (mimicry, gestures, body distance, etc.); contextualizing the linguistic input, which makes it possible that the process of forming linguistic hypothesis is correctly activated in the student; favouring intercultural approach of the origin culture with that of the foreign language; also, using audiovisual text has made it possible to put in practice those education competences regarding what one has achieved during previous experiences. (Diadori, 2006, 42-44)

It is the duty of the teacher to encourage his students not to be passive viewers of a movie, but to watch it and build hypothesis and critical judgments.

Regarding the didactic strategy in the use of audiovisual pieces, the teacher should facilitate the student in learning the message, before presenting exercises related to the understanding of the audiovisual text (Piri, Petro, 2016:28).

Authentic texts are text produced spontaneously from a community with the aim of communicating within or outside. These text gathered and chosen by the teacher are materials that can be used in the classroom. As these materials have been produced for a specific community and they are not used for the learning of a foreign language, they present original patterns of the target language culture and society.

There are many authentic audiovisual materials that can be used in the classroom. Among them: short movies (in the case of Italian language, we suggest movies of Italian producers, because they represent the language and culture of the target language; documentaries whose language is clear, but they can be used for more advanced levels. Cartoons are meant for a specific audience. The most famous Italian series are: “Lupo Alberto”, “La famiglia spaghetti” etc. We also suggest talk shows, quizzes and games, real TV and reality show, Tv chronicles, advertisements, video clips, children shows, news, TV series (we suggest Italian ones, such as “Un medico in famiglia”, “Il commissario Montalbano”, etc., whereas the most famous one is “Incantesimo”, and finally Italian soap operas, which are transmitted during the days and are similar to the South-American ones, such as “Vivere” and “ Un posto al sole”).

5. Conclusions

As it was mentioned above, there are many advantages of using audiovisual materials in the FL classroom, supported by scientific researches carried on in this field. On the other side, they are becoming a strong and efficient resource of gathering authentic linguistic, cultural, social, historical materials, which can be used in teaching patterns, in order to bring closer and update the reality of the target language. These advantages add value to the use of these technological tools in the didactic process, by positively influencing the teaching and learning results.

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