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12 Film Language Integrated Learning: A Usage-Inspired L2 Teaching Approach

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Recent decades have seen an increase in the use of authentic video materials in second or foreign language teaching (L2). Film Language Integrated Learning (FLIL) is a usage-inspired L2 teaching approach that seeks to combine insights from the dynamic usage-based (DUB) approach to language with the use of these video materials in the classroom. Consequently, FLIL uses popular films to provide (nearly) authentic, contextualised target language input. This input is scaffolded through repetition, a focus on chunks and visual support, such as captions and additional images. This chapter discusses two variants of the FLIL approach: stand-alone and embedded FLIL. Stand-alone FLIL incorporates short film scenes into a somewhat fixed instructional sequence that forms a complete teaching approach in itself. Three empirical studies, Hong (2013), Koster (2015) and Irshad (2015), provide evidence for its effectiveness on broad General English Proficiency (GEP) measures and writing proficiency. Embedded FLIL uses elements from stand-alone FLIL inside a broader language course, which allows for more learner output. Four embedded FLIL courses for Italian, German and Russian as a foreign language are currently taught at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands), and are generally perceived favourably by students. Further development of and research into FLIL implementations could focus specifically on testing free spoken proficiency, teasing apart the impact of different elements of the FLIL approach and matching materials with learner needs.

Introduction

The use of films and videos in (second) language education has a long history and is becoming more common, following trends in our current

visually dominated popular culture in the age of Instagram, YouTube and Netflix (Bahrani *et al.*, 2014). However, not until recently have the principles of usage-inspired instruction been applied to this use of video materials in the (second) language classroom. This approach has gained form in Film Language Integrated Learning (FLIL), pioneered by Marjolijn Verspoor and Nguyen Hong (2013), Mufeeda Irshad (2015) and Dietha Koster (2015), among others.

In this chapter, we seek to provide several examples of good practice for using films as authentic materials in second (L2) and foreign language teaching based on the usage-inspired FLIL approach. First, we briefly discuss the theoretical and empirical usage-based foundations for FLIL. We then move on to in-depth descriptions of FLIL, showcasing and discussing the pedagogical implications of six implementations of the usage-inspired FLIL teaching approach: three empirical studies and four foreign language courses currently in use and under development at the University of Groningen.

The first three implementations concern what we call ‘stand-alone’ FLIL. In this variant of the approach, the core film(s) and accompanying instructional sequence, either delivered through Microsoft PowerPoint or a custom-made computer program, form a complete language course in themselves, and do not include or require supplementation with other materials. The other variant, which we will call ‘embedded’ FLIL, concerns the use of elements from stand-alone FLIL inside a broader language course. In this case, this concerns four language courses for Italian, Russian and German, taught at the Department of European Languages and Cultures (ELC) at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. The chapter ends with some general conclusions and recommendations for further research into the development of the FLIL approach to second and foreign language teaching.

Dynamic Usage-Based Theory and Pedagogy

The FLIL approach is deeply rooted in Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) and the dynamic usage-based (DUB) approach to language development and teaching, thus the different manifestations of FLIL discussed in this chapter share a set of assumptions about (second) language development, teaching and the nature of language itself.

Within a DUB approach to language, language is seen as a complex dynamic system (CDS) consisting of an array of conventionalised constructions (see Langacker, this volume), ranging from individual morphemes to whole (idiomatic) phrases (Goldberg, 2006). These constructions are the essential building blocks of language and represent the combination of form (spoken and written), pragmatic use and meaning (Langacker, 2000, 2009). Verspoor (2017) has labelled these constructions ‘form-use-meaning mappings’ (FUMMs). According to the DUB

approach, these FUMMs are acquired through general cognitive processes of selective reinforcement, entrenchment, abstraction and generalisation of meaning, form and usage information from usage events, which include simple exposures if attended to sufficiently (Langacker, 2009; Verspoor, 2017). Over the past decades, researchers have sought to utilise the insights gained from DUB approaches to L2 acquisition for L2 teaching. This has been motivated, at least in part, by insights into the limitations of more ‘traditional’ approaches to L2 instruction, which, despite their proliferation over the past 50–60 years, still mostly require learners to ‘[...] memorize forms, master the rules, and memorize the exceptions’ (Tyler, 2008: 458). Several works have attempted to distil a set of pedagogical principles from the many separate lines of investigation in the current field of usage-based linguistics, while at the same time evaluating the underlying principles of the current most widely used form-focused and interactionist L2 teaching methods (Lightbown & Spada, 2013), namely Verspoor (2017) and Tyler *et al.* (2018).

While these works differ somewhat in their inclusion of the key characteristics of a ‘usage-inspired approach’, two shared core principles do appear to emerge from them, namely (1) the paramount importance of repeated, contextualised and meaningful L2 input; and (2) the need for implicit treatment of grammar in usage-inspired teaching approaches, given the benefits it can provide over explicit grammar teaching in long-term teaching programmes (Rousse-Malpat, 2019; Rousse-Malpat & Verspoor, 2012, 2018), although evidence for the effectiveness of explicit grammar treatment in some contexts also exists (see Tyler & Ortega, 2018b; Piggott *et al.*, this volume).

Throughout her work on usage-based linguistics, Marjolijn Verspoor’s primary principle for usage-based pedagogy has been the provision of frequent and repeated exposure to authentic L2 input before the production of L2 output. This is considered essential because, at its core, ‘[u]sage-based theories hold that the acquisition of language is exemplar-based. It is the piecemeal learning of many thousands of constructions and the frequency-biased abstraction of regularities within them’ (Ellis, 2002: 143). For learners, the language learning process is therefore fundamentally dependent on a high volume of exposure to these constructions (i.e. FUMMs) (Langacker, 2000, 2009; Verspoor, 2017). This fundamental hypothesis is supported by a growing body of empirical research (see e.g. Durrant & Schmitt, 2010; Ellis, 2002; Ellis & Collins, 2009; Gass & Mackey, 2002; Verspoor *et al.*, 2008). Based on this body of research, Schmitt (2010) estimates that an average of between 8 and 15 exposures to a target language form is necessary for its acquisition.

Verspoor has also consistently argued against explicit treatment of language structures in L2 teaching methods, instead focusing on how sufficient L2 input can provide the conditions necessary for grammar to be learned implicitly, without the need for explicit treatment. Although

there is evidence that explicit grammar instruction may be effective in certain contexts (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Piggott *et al.*, this volume; Tyler & Ortega, 2018a), recent research has also found that in long-term teaching programmes, more implicit, meaning-focused instruction without explicit grammar can also be effective for general L2 development, without negatively affecting written and spoken proficiency (Rousse-Malpat, 2019; Rousse-Malpat & Verspoor, 2012, 2018).

Consequently, the implementations of FLIL discussed in the next section (Hong, 2013; Irshad, 2015; Koster, 2015) are built on the premise that repeated exposure to meaningful, authentic usage events will allow for both item-based and exemplar-based acquisition of FUMMs as well as the emergence of abstract (grammatical) schema through processes of entrenchment, selective reinforcement and abstractions of commonalities and differences between usage events.

Films in Second and Foreign Language Teaching

The use of films as authentic materials has a long history in foreign language teaching, proliferating with advances in technology that made them accessible and affordable, such as VHS in the late 1970s (Otto, 2017). Around the same time, laser discs provided arguably the first interactive computer-assisted language learning (CALL) applications based on films, offering annotations, notes and even interactive quizzes alongside video materials (Godwin-Jones, 2017). Although these applications saw little use due to the prohibitive cost of laser discs at the time, later computer programs incorporated many of their elements (see e.g. Frommer, 1998).

Looking at more specific linguistic aspects, past research has found that the use of films is effective in enhancing learner vocabulary size, fluency, awareness of pragmatic usage and speaking and listening skills (see Bahrani *et al.*, 2014; Seferoğlu, 2008 for overviews). The use of closed captions for films has also proven particularly effective for vocabulary learning (Hsieh, 2019; Montero Perez *et al.*, 2018; Sydorenko, 2010), though split-attention effects observed in other studies may moderate these effects (Winke *et al.*, 2013). However, while these studies provide valuable insights for instructional design, their primary focus has been research oriented. FLIL combines insights from this body of research with insights from a DUB approach to language learning in order to develop a principled, theoretically and empirically supported teaching approach.

Stand-Alone FLIL

To date, three major studies have sought to operationalise DUB principles for a comprehensive FLIL course, which we shall call ‘stand-alone FLIL’, namely Hong (2013), Koster (2015) and Irshad (2015).

In all three studies, the learners were university students taking classes to learn English (Hong, 2013; Irshad, 2015) or Dutch (Koster, 2015) as a foreign language. Hong's study took place at a university in Vietnam, Irshad's in Sri Lanka and Koster's in Germany. In Hong's and Irshad's cases, English teachers struggled with large, heterogeneous classes (in terms of starting levels) and the questionable efficacy of the teaching materials in use at the time. This prompted Hong to develop an input- and meaning-based course using target language films and investigate its effectiveness compared to contemporary standard English classes. Koster used a similar approach to teaching Dutch, while Irshad developed the approach further by creating a CALL application that facilitates autonomous learning.

The basis for all three FLIL approaches was a more or less fixed instructional sequence in which students were repeatedly shown short segments of a film, each with their own instructional purpose and language contents. A set of Microsoft PowerPoint slides provided instructions and necessary (language) contents for each segment. This instructional sequence repeatedly exposes students to meaningful, authentic usage events from the target language in the form of film segments (Hong, 2013). Both explicit correction of production errors and explicit grammar instruction were avoided to allow for a fully meaning-focused approach (Rousse-Malpat & Verspoor, 2018). The films, slides and CALL application (in Irshad's study) were the only materials used by the students, distinguishing this stand-alone implementation of FLIL from the embedded variant discussed in more detail later. Although the underlying principles remain the same, the specific instructional sequences differ slightly between Hong's and Koster's studies and Irshad's study. The steps are explained in Tables 12.1 and 12.2.

The films used were chosen based on their language and cultural content, and their probable appeal to the students. In Hong's study, the experimental group received instruction based on two American films: *A Cinderella Story* (Giglio, Green, Rachmil [Producers] & Rosman [Director], 2004) and *Bridge to Terabithia* (Schwartz [Producer] & Csupó [Director], 2007). In addition to the language content, these films also conveyed ideas and information about cultural issues in American life, such as (high) school culture, bullying and family relations. In Koster's study, some of these issues are also addressed in *Alles is Liefde* (Beker [Producer] & Lürsen [Director], 2007), a Dutch romantic comedy centred on Sinterklaas, a Dutch children's holiday. Irshad chose the film *The Pursuit of Happyness* (sic) (Alper, Clayman, D'Esposito, Zee [Producers] & Muccino [Director], 2006), which tells the true rags-to-riches story of a struggling American entrepreneur, which was chosen to appeal to the business students participating in her study.

The results in the three studies were generally favourable for the experimental FLIL groups, though there is some variation in the extent

Table 12.1 Instructional sequence used by experimental group in Hong (2013) and adapted in Koster (2015)

Step 1	Familiarization with and pre-teaching of lexical items, chunks or expressions essential to the comprehension of the film scene, using images, target language definitions and sometimes first language (L1) translations
Step 2	First exposure to the segment without questions or task
Step 3	Questions from teacher about general concepts and events in the clip
Step 4	Second exposure with instructions for students to pay close attention to language used by characters
Step 5	Third exposure through showing of segment text on slides and optional fourth exposure through the teacher reading text aloud supported by visuals, depending on learner need
Step 6	Fifth exposure with instructions to check whether learners understand everything being said
Step 7	Sixth exposure through text shown on slides and seventh exposure by having individual students read out lines from the segment, with encouragement from the teacher but without correction
Step 8	Activity for semi-free language use, e.g. a (guided) writing task or acting out parts of the film scene, again with encouragement from the teacher and without correction

Table 12.2 Instructional sequence used in experimental (DUBc) group in Irshad (2015)

Step 1	First exposure and general question about the scene, requiring general comprehension of events in it
Step 2	Second exposure with subtitles. The scene can be replayed freely
Step 3	List of utterances from the scene, each with explanation through definition, paraphrasing, illustrations or (rarely) the participants' L1
Step 4	Fourth exposure to entire scene with subtitles and list of utterances
Step 5	Fifth exposure without subtitles and a stated goal to understand all utterances in the scene
Step 6	Quiz testing participants' reading, listening and writing skills. Questions may be scaffolded through hints

to which this holds true for different language skills and extra-linguistic measures such as self-confidence (SC) and willingness to communicate (WTC).

Hong (2013) compared two groups: one control group that was taught English using a series of textbooks developed by their own university, titled *Learning Breakthrough* (Bui *et al.*, 2010), and an experimental FLIL group that was taught using clips from the films and the instructional sequence (see Table 12.1) discussed earlier. The proficiency gain scores for both groups were measured using several instruments. A General English Proficiency (GEP) test was constructed by combining elements from Dutch and Vietnamese high school examinations and the Cambridge Key English Test (KET) and used to measure the participants' overall English proficiency. Additionally, holistically rated free spoken and written production tasks were used, as well as a questionnaire on

participants' WTC and SC. The experimental (film) group's gain scores were significantly higher than the control group's scores for the GEP and productive written test. For speaking, the experimental group's post-test score was significantly higher than the pre-test, while the control group's gains were not significant. However, the difference between the two was just non-significant. The results also showed that students in the experimental group were significantly more confident in their use of English, and that there was a non-significant difference for willingness to communicate.

Koster's L2 Dutch FLIL course used an adapted version of the instructional sequence, which included fewer steps and more opportunities for interactive activities, though the principle of gradually building up comprehension of a scene over at least five exposures was maintained. Unfortunately, the study lacked a control group, making its results difficult to compare to other studies. Analysis of the written fill-in-the-blank assignment and writing assignment (based on standardised Dutch as L2 examinations) showed significant differences between pre- and post-test scores, indicating the participants' L2 Dutch proficiency had increased. Participant evaluations showed that they generally appreciated the course, and learned most in the areas of mastering L2 chunks and expressions, and general comprehension of spoken Dutch. Noticeably absent from comments were requests for explicit grammar teaching or error correction, suggesting that students approved of the meaning-focused approach of the FLIL course.

Most recently, Irshad (2015) compared three groups: (1) a control group that was taught using a contemporary communicative English as a foreign language (EFL) textbook; (2) a 'presentation' FLIL group that was taught using slides and Hong's instructional sequence; and (3) a 'computer' group (DUBc) that was taught using the CALL application developed for the study, which allowed for autonomous learning. Irshad used Hong's (2013) GEP and writing tests, as well as a questionnaire on the strengths and weaknesses of the course. Overall, the DUBc method proved to be successful for GEP, as the results show that all groups gained significantly higher scores on the post-test than on the pre-test, but the DUBc group gained the most. No significant differences between treatments were found for writing, which is remarkable given that the DUBc group had significantly lower pre-test scores for writing than the other two groups, indicating that DUBc may actually have gained the most in terms of writing ability. Unfortunately, no (free) spoken production measures were used in this study, meaning these results pertain almost exclusively to written language production.

Taken together, the three studies described above provide an empirical foundation for the effectiveness of stand-alone FLIL in certain contexts. The results show the benefits of the FLIL courses over their contemporary traditional communicative language teaching (CLT) and

task-based counterparts in tertiary EFL education. The limited available data for free spoken production makes it difficult to draw conclusions about speaking, but Hong (2013) did find promising results warranting further research. The results provide a clear rationale for the further development of FLIL. This is discussed in more detail at the end of the chapter.

Embedded FLIL

In addition to the studies described above, several foreign language teachers and researchers from the University of Groningen have recently initiated the Pro-Active Language Learning (PALL) project, which aims to improve language proficiency courses in the Department of European Languages and Cultures by implementing (elements of) FLIL. In these courses, FLIL is not used as the sole means of instruction, but is instead embedded into the curriculum alongside other materials and teaching methods, constituting a 140-hour language course. This essentially makes watching the film part of a larger sequence of tasks, similar to Rifkin's (2000) sequential integration of films into a language course. This form of 'embedded' FLIL was implemented in four foreign language courses: one advanced Italian course (Italian 3a), two intermediate and advanced Russian courses (Russian 2 and 3) and one (upper-) intermediate German course (German plus 1a).

Showcase: Italian 3a

Several years ago, the Italian section started using films as a medium to expose students to cultural and linguistic aspects of the target language. Prior to the courses of the second semester of academic year 2018–2019, the film-based activities were mostly relegated to home assignments. These comprised film reviews, video presentations and preparation for the oral exam. The PALL project within the ELC department provided the impetus for the Italian section to gradually bring film-based FLIL activities into the classroom. The main course book *L'italiano all'università 2* (La Grassa *et al.*, 2013) has so far been the starting point for constructing logical connections with FLIL activities and the extra materials used in the course, such as texts for reading comprehension and other online resources (news, videos).

The course unit Italian 3 is divided in two terms (3a and 3b) and the last of a series of three proficiency courses. It is attended by second-year BA ELC as well as some international relations students. They are expected to progress from their initial B1 level to B1/B2 (in Course 3a), and later B2 (in Course 3b), allowing them to spend a semester in Italy to further develop their proficiency. The courses are designed with the objective of providing students with an overall insight into current topics of discussion related to Italian and Europe.

In Weeks 3 and 4 of the module Italian 3a, in which FLIL activities feature prominently, students carried out a task related to the Italian film *Le fate ignoranti* (R&C Produzioni [Producers] & Özpetek [Director], 2001), which deals with homosexuality and gender in Italy. In line with FLIL principles, no explicit grammar explanation was included. The FLIL task consisted of a pre-task (Week 3), an in-class task (Week 4) and a post-task (end of Week 4). In the pre-task phase, students completed several activities:

- (1) Before watching the film, students read an interview (online source) with the director of the film, related to homosexuality and Italian cinema.
- (2) After watching the film, based on the interview they read, students prepared a discussion focusing on the different characters and their relevance in the film and its impact on Italian society. Furthermore, they answered open questions related to the content of the film.

The in-class task was divided into three main activities:

- (1) Communicative activity: In pairs, students discussed what they prepared during the pre-task and shared their opinion on the director's choices in the film.
- (2) *In plenum* discussion: Students interacted with the teacher, highlighting the most relevant points of the discussion. Open questions answered at home were also discussed.
- (3) Extra class activity: A scene from the film was shown, in which the main character of the film (Antonia) and her mother have a conversation. Students analysed the relationship between Antonia and her mother by commenting on this relationship using at least three adjectives and explaining their choices.

The follow-up homework comprised two assignments:

- (1) Collaborative writing on the scene analysed in class (using Google Docs): Students imagined what the mother writes to Antonia the day after their conversation.
- (2) A short, written film review including a brief description of the film title and plot, a description of the development of the main character in the film and the student's personal opinion about the film, with a brief reflection on cultural and societal aspects.

It is important to note that the film-based activities described in this section are just an example of how films are integrated at several points in current Italian courses, along with more 'traditional' explicit grammar instruction.

Showcase: Russian 2 & 3

Two Russian proficiency courses were designed using the embedded FLIL approach: Russian Proficiency 2a/2b (CEFR A2-B1) and Russian Proficiency 3a/3b (CEFR B1-B2). These courses are attended by first- and second-year students of the BA ELC who take Russian as a major language and by students of other faculties who take Russian as an elective course. Starting as absolute beginners, students are expected to achieve B1 level by the end of Russian Proficiency 3, allowing them to spend a semester in Russia to further develop their proficiency.

In line with FLIL principles, both the Russian Proficiency 2 and 3 courses are designed to encourage meaningful exposure to the Russian language and give insight into the sociocultural context of Russia through films and authentic texts. To achieve this, the Russian 2 course used two films: *Стяляги* (Hipsters) (Koroptsov *et al.*, 2008) and *Сибирский цирюльник* (The Barber of Siberia) (Seydoux & Mikhalkov, 1998).

The students' main goals when working with the film are to:

- attain insight into the sociocultural and historical context of all the events in the film;
- identify characters' cultural perspectives on events in the film;
- identify and use (culturally) conventionalised ways of saying things (CWOSTs) (Smiskova-Gustafsson, 2013) and behaviour within the context of the film;
- understand all linguistic utterances in the film;
- read and understand short texts directly related to the film;
- follow discussions on simple topics related to the film.

To achieve these goals, students worked continuously in and outside the class. Before every class, they watched a short scene of the film or read a text connected with the content of the film at home. In class, the students were given a short, written, graded quiz on the content and the language of the homework assignment. Such a quiz consisted of multiple-choice questions, complete the dialogue or fill-in-the-gaps tasks. Next, sections of the film were discussed. New words, chunks and content issues were explained in the target language. In this way, the students learned to explain the meaning of expressions and words using definitions, synonyms and antonyms.

In order to assess what the students learned from the videos, there were two written tests on content and vocabulary and two oral tests in each half-semester. The first oral test was a role play on one of the scenes of the film. The presentation was an oral test, where students presented two short scenes of the film and one content topic in a group. The topic illustrates one of the important issues related to the historical and/or sociocultural context of the film. For instance, in the first

block of the Russian 2 course the film *Стיליםи* (Hipsters) (Koroptsov *et al.*, 2008) was used, which tells a story set in mid-1950s Moscow, depicting the Soviet alternative youth subculture ‘стиיליםи’ (‘hipsters’) and their struggle for self-expression within the prevailing reality of the Soviet repression. As part of their oral test, students gave a presentation on youth organisations in Soviet Union, how ‘forbidden’ jazz music was spread or the lifestyle of Soviet party leaders and hierarchy in society.

When working with films, students learned to select, process and analyse information from a range of authentic sources by exploring different Russian websites, online journals and newspapers. Many of the students continued to use Russian internet sources they liked in their free time. Thus, the film method introduces new tools and sources of authentic language to the students, encouraging their intensive exposure to the Russian language within its cultural and historical context.

Showcase: German plus 1a

In addition to the Italian and Russian courses, the course German plus 1a was redeveloped based on embedded FLIL principles. This course is open to both German major and other students, mostly those studying international relations. In this first German language course in the BA ELC, students are expected to reach level B1+/B2.

The films and the film-based activities were integrated into an existing programme, aiming to achieve several improvements:

- replacing some outdated materials (e.g. very intensive pronunciation training without meaningful content);
- integrating more authentic German audio input into the course;
- stimulating more interaction in communicative context in the classes;
- shifting the focus of the course to content relevant to the degree programme rather than isolated language forms;
- integrating academic skills.

The general topic of the course was ‘identity’ in connection with German history, culture, society, media and current topics. In total, students watched six films, one film every week. Four of the films were discussed in the group: *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland* (Brunner, Richter, Woerner [Producers] & Samdereli [Director], 2011), *Das Wunder von Bern* (Huth, Spieß, Wortmann [Producers] & Wortmann [Director], 2003), *Sonnenallee* (Boje, Buck, Haußmann [Producers] & Haußmann [Director], 1999) and *Barbara* (Koerner von Gustorf, Weber [Producers] & Petzold [Director], 2012). Students chose and watched two other German films in groups.

The in-class activities around the four films discussed in the group were structured in three phases per week and per film:

- Phase 1: Introduction to the topic(s) of the next film as well as topic-specific vocabulary and concepts (before students watch the film at home).
- Phase 2: Discussion of the film with a focus on different elements relevant for the film analysis and other interactive formats to review the film.
- Phase 3: Connection of the topic of the film to current societal discourse in Germany.

These three phases formed the basis for the weekly programme for every film. A wide range of interactive formats was used to ensure understanding of the language, content and cultural aspects of the films as well as the repeated exposure to topic-related expressions and stimulation of their active use. Some examples of these activities include: description and analysis of the main characters and their development; reconstruction of the script as a puzzle; intensive analysis of visual and audio effects in a scene; role plays with the fragments of the films with creative elements; looking for important quotations from the film and explaining their role in the film interpretation; discussions about the message of the films; reading and discussing film reviews, etc. The relation of the film's topics to the current societal discourse in Germany was also elaborated on in the writing tasks.

Although there was no explicit grammar instruction or focus on forms in class, students read and practiced grammar (Dreyer & Schmitt, 2009) at home and could ask questions about it in class. A small part of the in-class activities was designed with the aim to combine theory and practical use by eliciting the use of certain grammar constructs in communicative situations. While giving feedback on writing assignments and the writing exam, the instructors also regularly referred to the grammar topics students read and practiced at home.

The outcome of the film-based activities was assessed with the final graded assignment in the form of a vlog in which the groups of students discussed the films they chose and watched. They based this vlog on a five-step model for film analysis that was introduced at the beginning of the course: (1) a first impression; (2) analysis of plot and main characters; (3) analysis of vision, sound and narrative level; (4) the message of the film; and (5) evaluation based on the previous analysis steps (Alpha, 2016). The students also wrote a final essay on a current topic related to the film programme as well as to the current topics discussed in the media.

Student feedback on FLIL activities

In order to investigate students' attitudes towards the film-based activities, we conducted a short survey (see Appendix) among students of the aforementioned Italian, Russian and German courses. This survey comprised 11 questions on the perceived utility of several elements of

the FLIL activities in each of these courses, rated on a five-point Likert scale, as well as six open questions on similar topics. The most important results are shown in Figure 12.1.

Language-specific feedback: Italian

Four students completed the survey. The majority perceived the film-based activities as ‘fun and engaging’ (avg. 3.75/5) and that they improved their language proficiency (avg. 3.75/5). In students’ perception, the film-based activities helped them to develop their listening skills (avg. 4.5/5), while, on the other hand, students did not have the feeling that they improved their reading skills (avg. 2/5). More neutral responses were given concerning speaking skills (avg. 3.5/5) and writing skills (avg. 3.25/5).

It is interesting to note that, when asked to provide an opinion regarding the difference between the film-based activities and the more ‘traditional’ approach to the language in the course, students had different views: one student commented that they could benefit more from two hours of ‘traditional’ learning, whereas another student wrote that the ‘film opens the range of domains of language use better than traditional courses’.

Overall, most of the students found that the film-based activities were properly embedded in the programme of the course and that they contributed to the overall learning objectives of their study programme. One student commented that they would have liked to analyse one of the films in more depth, given that the programme of the course covers almost one film every week. All the students indicated that they would prefer to watch films with Italian subtitles, in order to connect the spoken and written language more closely and focus on forms. A student also added that they would like to have the opportunity to switch between Italian and no subtitles, to be able not only to enjoy the film at its normal pace, but also to re-watch and analyse some parts to pay closer attention to the language.

When asked about suggestions for improving the film-based activities, students gave different but constructive answers: they would like the films to be incorporated into the exams, in order to be tested on more content and/or academic skills, and would prefer to watch fewer and more recent films, so they would not lose interest in the viewing.

Language-specific feedback: Russian

Three students of Russian completed the survey. In general, these students indicated a positive attitude towards the FLIL-based classes. For example, they found the classes ‘fun and engaging’ (avg. 3.3/5) and motivating (avg. 3.7/5). They indicated that the FLIL classes were helpful for developing their general Russian language proficiency (avg. 3.7/5), specifically their speaking (avg. 4/5) and listening (avg. 4.3/5) skills. They were less positive about their writing (avg. 3/5) and reading (avg. 2.3/5) skills. Finally, the students indicated that FLIL classes helped them learn new words and expressions (4.3/5), but not grammar (2.3/5). Ultimately,

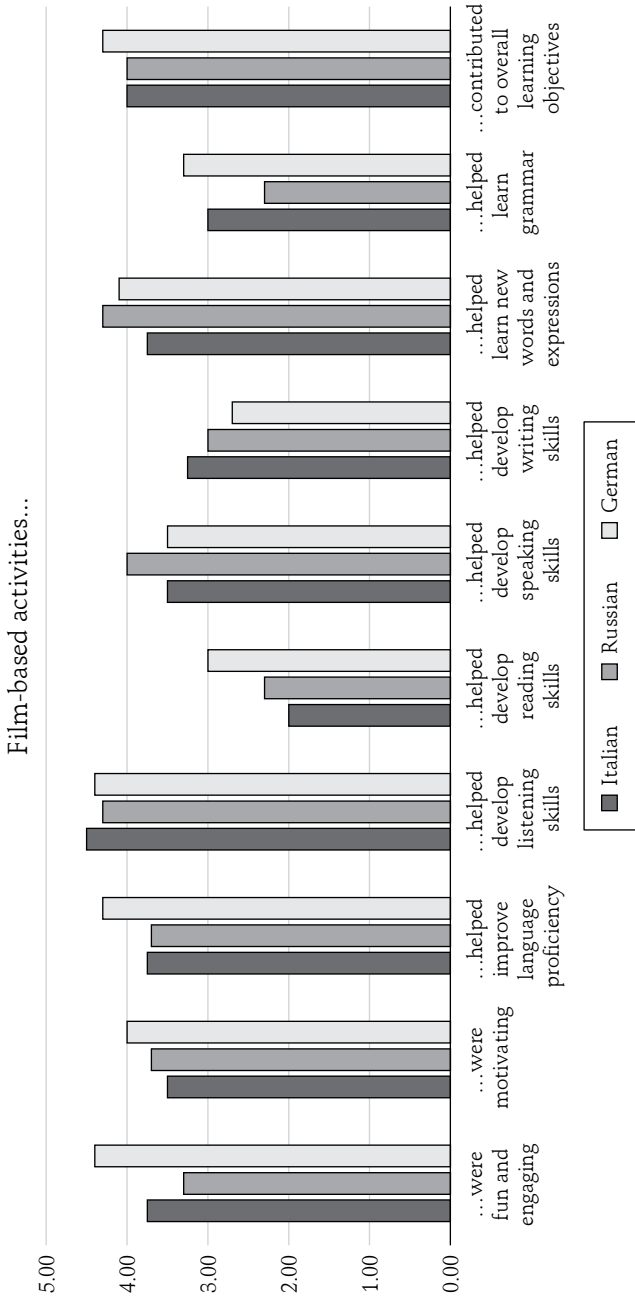


Figure 12.1

they considered the FLIL-classes to contribute to the overall learning objectives of the study programme (avg. 4/5).

Interestingly, this is the only course of the three discussed in the chapter where students indicated that they missed grammar instruction. On the other hand, they did indicate that they learned useful colloquial Russian vocabulary and expressions, and that they learned more about Russian history and culture than in the 'traditional' lessons. The students' recommendations included the use of more different films and the use of English and/or Russian subtitles for better scaffolding.

Language-specific feedback: German

In total, seven students completed the survey. All of them experienced the film-based activities as 'fun and engaging' (avg. 4.4/5) and, in general, also motivating to learn the language (avg. 4/5). They also found that the film-based classes helped them improve their language proficiency (avg. 4.3/5), which was especially true for listening (avg. 4.4/5) and speaking (avg. 3.5/4) skills, and to a lesser degree for reading (avg. 3/5) and writing (avg. 2.7/5) skills.

Almost all the students indicated that they preferred to watch films with subtitles, giving two main reasons: (1) subtitles help to understand what the characters are saying even when they speak very quickly and unclearly, with an accent or in a dialect; (2) subtitles help to connect spoken and written language and promote listening, reading and writing skills at the same time.

All the students found that the films were clear and properly embedded in the programme of the course. There were only two improvement proposals: One student suggested adding some fairly new films and another student proposed connecting every film to an assignment, such as writing a review, so that the films and the discussions about them in class would be 'more useful'.

Overall, most students in all four courses felt that they improved their language proficiency through the FLIL activities, though with varying rates of success for reading, writing, speaking and listening. There was also considerable variation between other ratings for different courses. The reasons for these discrepancies are not readily apparent due to a lack of data on the impact of specific elements of the different implementations of FLIL and non-FLIL activities in the embedded FLIL courses. This is an important area for further research.

Dynamic Usage-Based Theory, Stand-Alone FLIL and Embedded FLIL

As the preceding section shows, the embedded and stand-alone variants of FLIL differ substantially in certain respects, although they are both based on the principles of DUB theory and the findings of empirical research discussed at the start of this chapter.

The two FLIL variants differ mainly along the lines of materials used, instructional sequence, language structure focus and scope, repetition, input and output and the treatment of grammar, best summarised as follows:

	Stand-alone FLIL	Embedded FLIL
Materials	Complete course in itself, with its own teaching approach and methodology, requiring no additional materials	Embedded in a larger language course with additional materials, assignments, etc.
Sequence	Mostly fixed instructional sequence, though it may be changed by the teacher or students (e.g. in the case of the Irshad [2015] application)	No fixed instructional sequence
Focus and scope	More intensively focused on specific instances of language use (single words, chunks)	May be focused on specific instances of language use, but generally focused on larger context
Repetition of language	Frequent repetition of small chunks of language (phrases, sentences) in input, though with possibilities for focus on larger structures	Possibility for (learner-initiated) repetition of small chunks of language in input, but greater focus on repetition of language in output
Input and output	Limited room for using language in creative, free spoken and written output (in versions discussed above)	More room for and focus on using language in creative, free spoken and written output in class discussions and (homework) assignments
Grammar	No explicit grammar whatsoever	FLIL activities do not contain grammar, though other (homework) activities may include explicit grammar

Where stand-alone FLIL uses a rigid instructional sequence to gradually scaffold understanding of a film scene through repeated exposure and focus on small units of language (words, chunks, sometimes sentences), embedded FLIL mainly uses films as a starting point for further language processing in discussions, writing assignments and other exercises, similarly to the way CLIL may use authentic materials. This embedded, more extensive approach retains many features of stand-alone FLIL, as learners will most likely need to re-watch scenes multiple times, with and without captions, in order to understand them, either at home or in class. The class teacher may also choose to focus on small language units such as individual words and chunks if these prove difficult to students.

In line with DUB principles discussed at the start of this chapter, the embedded variant of FLIL thus provides learners with (opportunities for) repeated exposure to (nearly) authentic target language use in the form of single words and larger chunks, and scaffolds these where necessary, albeit in a more extensive form and without a rigid instructional sequence. It also provides opportunities for repetition of language in spoken and written output, and it incorporates the context of language use in terms of the cultural, historical, social and pragmatic background of the people, places and events portrayed in the films. This makes it suitable for more advanced learners of a language, as the film can be used as a starting point for (guided) production exercises such as class discussions and writing assignments.

Conclusions and Possibilities for Further Development

As the studies by Hong (2013), Koster (2015) and Irshad (2015) and the showcases above demonstrate, FLIL is a flexible framework for using films as authentic materials that can be successfully applied both as a stand-alone L2 teaching approach in itself as well as part of an existing language course. It provides large amounts of rich, (nearly) authentic target language input, and it can form the basis for further discussion and writing exercises. The results of the three stand-alone FLIL projects (Hong, 2013; Irshad, 2015; Koster, 2015) demonstrate the effectiveness of FLIL on GEP measures and written production, though more research is needed before more generalised conclusions can be drawn about its effectiveness outside the contexts of the specific studies. The results of the survey for the embedded FLIL Italian, German and Russian courses show that learners perceive FLIL to be effective in improving most language skills. Remarkably absent from reflections is a request for explicit grammar instruction, with the exception of the Russian 2 and 3 courses. We may speculate that this is due to the lower level of the students or expectations created by previous courses or expectations based on the more traditional form-focused Russian 1 course.

There are, of course, improvements to be made in the implementation of FLIL and many questions to answer in future research. Concerning stand-alone FLIL, one of the most important avenues of further study concerns teasing apart the impact of different elements of the instructional sequences and modalities, e.g. the use of subtitles and exercises, on students' attainment in the target language. Additionally, most research has primarily used written measures to test productive proficiency, so future research using free spoken production measures could help us gain insight into the method effects on spoken complexity, accuracy and fluency. Finally, all of the courses described in this chapter were developed within the context of existing courses or frameworks, each with their own set requirements. An important, but as yet unaddressed, issue in this regard is how to match the materials with the learners' needs. Both FLIL variants use scaffolding to help students comprehend the language used in the films, and Irshad's (2015) computer application allows learners to control their own pace of learning. However, these studies did not have the scope, time or resources to investigate in depth the individual learners' language levels, weaknesses and needs, and how these did or did not match the specific (language) contents of the films chosen for the FLIL courses. The favourable results found for the stand-alone FLIL implementations and generally good evaluation of the embedded ones do suggest that this match was at least partly successful, though this is only indirect evidence. In order to more precisely match input materials (i.e. films) with learners' levels, goals and needs, this too is an important issue to address in future research.

Appendix: Student Survey for Embedded FLIL Courses

Film-based activities survey

Dear student,

At some point in this academic year, you took part in one or more language classes in the German, Russian or Italian courses in the BA European Languages and Cultures. We are currently evaluating several important aspects of the use of films and videos in these foreign languages classes, and your feedback (through the survey below), would be very helpful and much appreciated.

The survey consists of 16 questions: 11 closed questions and 5 open questions. All answers given on this survey are anonymous.

Thank you for giving your feedback and helping us improve our language teaching!

Your email address (t.v.kassenberg@rug.nl) will be recorded when you submit this form. Not t.v.kassenberg? [Sign out](#)

1. Which language are you studying?

Check all that apply.

- German
- Russian
- Italian

2. Which course(s) did you take? (e.g. Italian

3a, German plus 1a, etc.)

Closed questions

Please note: the term "film-based classes" used in the questions below refer exclusively to those classes and activities related to the films and videos used in your German, Russian or Italian course, both inside and outside the classroom. You can disregard any other activities and exercises from textbooks or grammar practise materials.

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:

3. The film-based classes were fun and engaging

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Disagree strongly Agree strongly

4. The film-based classes motivated me to learn new language

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Disagree strongly Agree strongly

5. The film-based classes helped me improve my language proficiency

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

6. The film-based classes helped me develop my speaking skills

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

7. The film-based classes helped me develop my listening skills

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

8. The film-based classes helped me develop my writing skills

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

9. The film-based classes helped me develop my reading skills

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

10. The film-based classes helped me learn new words and expressions

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

11. The film-based classes helped me develop my knowledge and accurate use of grammar rules

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

12. The film-based classes are clearly and properly embedded into the program for the course

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

13. The film-based classes contribute to the overall learning objectives of my study program

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Disagree strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Agree strongly

Open questions

Please provide a brief answer for all questions that are applicable to you. This means that you do not have to answer a question specifically meant for only students of German if you study Russian or Italian

14. For ALL students: Was anything missing from the film-based classes and activities? If so, what?

15. For students of RUSSIAN and ITALIAN: do you feel that you learned more or less from the 'traditional' courses preceding this course compared to the film-based classes? If so, what?

16. For students of ITALIAN: would you have preferred watching the movie with Italian subtitles or without subtitles? Why (not)?

17. For students of GERMAN: did you prefer watching the films with or without subtitles? Why?

18. For ALL students: do you think the film-based classes are clearly and properly embedded into the program for the course? Why (not)?

19. For ALL students: do you have any other suggestions for improving the film-based classes? If so, please explain

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