Student-centered and Teacher-centred approaches to the application of TV Series in ESP Teaching

Viktorija Tataurova*, Riga Technical University, Centra rajons, Rīga, LV-1048, Latvia.  
Jekaterina Martinova, Riga Technical University, Centra rajons, Rīga, LV-1048, Latvia.

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Abstract

The use of movies and TV series in the foreign language classroom has proved to be successful for multiple reasons, such as the development of various English language skills, the increased motivation and engagement of the students, the awareness of cultural diversity, as well as the decreased anxiety and stress levels. However, previous research in the field has primarily concentrated on the use of teacher-centered methods and approaches. The present research employs two documentary TV series on teaching ESP to first-year tertiary-level students to investigate the students' feelings associated with the use of multimedia via two different perspectives: student-centered and teacher-centered. While the former method does not restrict the students with any requirements and allows for their creativity, the latter is fully directed by the teacher-instructor. On the completion of two sets of activities, the students are asked to reflect on their experiences with both teaching approaches by completing the surveys on Google Forms. The results of the research have suggested that the groups of students were satisfied with both sets of activities giving a slight preference to the student-centred one, which despite being time-consuming, was described as 'interesting, motivating, and engaging'.

Keywords: Movie-based learning; student-centered teaching; teacher-centered teaching

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Viktorija Tataurova, Riga Technical University, Kipsalas iela 6a, Centra rajons, Rīga, LV-1048, Latvia.  
E-mail address: Viktorija.tataurova@rtu.lv
1. Introduction

Movies and TV series are usually associated with entertainment. There are also educational movies used for understanding some specific subjects better. However, both educational and entertainment videos can be effectively applied to second language learning (Cattaneo et al., 2022). Because of the multimodality of the text presented in movies and TV series, it activates various senses in different types of learners – visual and auditory learners benefit the most from this type of learning (Pattemore & Muñoz 2020). For that reason and also due to the lack of tense atmosphere and hurry, as well as the fact that the educational content is presented in an entertaining mode, watching movies and TV series is believed to be especially beneficial in English for Specific Purposes (Christopher et al., 2019). Specifically, when it is used in combination with theoretical notes and vocabulary lists, it can result in increased vocabulary, the development of communication and listening, and other skills.

The trend of giving learners more power in their learning has existed for some time already. Educators are supposed to move from the behaviouristic, or traditional approach to classroom management towards the constructivist approach. The present research aims at establishing the learners’ perspective towards giving them more choice and power in their learning in contrast to fully teacher-centered classes. The proposed hypothesis is that learners will enjoy the teacher-led classes more for the reason that it allows for passive participation in the classes. Both sets of classes in this research are based on the Netflix TV series, but the approach to material presentation is different – one of the sets of activities is fully teacher-centered, and another is presented by the learners without any constraints or specific instructions given.

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. Bachman’s CLA Model

According to Lyle Bachman’s Communicative Language Ability (CLA) model, human language skills vary depending on language competence, language knowledge, knowledge structures, strategic competence, and psycho-physiological mechanisms (See Figure 1). In Bachman’s view, language competence embodies the elements of knowledge used in communication using language (Bachman, 1990). Language competence involves organizational competence embodying grammatical and textual competence, as well as pragmatic competence including illocutionary and socio-linguistic competence (See Figure 2). Strategic competence is the aspect that combines an individual’s language competence with the knowledge of the world and the characteristics of the communication setting. Psycho-physiological mechanisms of language use are defined by the channel (i.e., auditory, visual) and mode (i.e., receptive, productive) in which the communication happens (Bachman, 1990).

Figure 1
CLA components in communicative language use

Source: Bachman (1990, p. 85)
Figure 2
Language competence components

![Diagram of language competence components]

Source: Bachman (1990)

Canale and Swain (1980) summarized the characteristic features of CLA in the following aspects: (1) meaning is stressed; (2) emphasis on the context; (3) language tasks developed with specific aims; (4) meaningful phrases; (5) authentic activities; (6) uncertain results; (7) emphasis on communication; (8) application of the four basic language skills (namely, speaking, listening, reading, and writing); (9) direct evaluation; and (10) assessment made depending on the achievement of the communicative aim.

In the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced, which marked the development of the learner-centered approach to teaching. As Nunan (2004) describes it, a learner-centered approach incorporates learning where students are actively participating in their learning. It involves two aspects: (1) the learners are responsible for their learning (e.g., making decisions, and planning); (2) the purpose is to increase the classroom time devoted to the interactive learning activities aimed at developing communication. The further differences between the learner-centered and teacher-centered approaches to teaching are discussed in the following section.

1.1.2. Student-centred vs teacher-centered teaching

Learning has been traditionally based on the behavioral model which is characterized by the repetitive application of methods and approaches used to initiate a specific behavior from the learners under certain stimuli (Brophy, 2006). However, recently there has been a shift from the traditional method of instruction towards an approach formulated on constructivist theory (Brophy, 2006; Dollard & Christensen, 1996). The characteristic feature of constructivism is the learning environment where knowledge is created by both a teacher and a learner rather than conveyed from a teacher to a learner (Garett, 2008; Mifka-Profozic et al., 2023). Constructivism is a learner-oriented approach that is based on meaning construction, study, and authentic tasks (ibid.). Brophy (2006) describes that in the constructivist learning environment, learners are supposed to “strive to make sense of what they are learning by relating it to prior knowledge and by discussing it with others” (p. 49). The classroom serves as “a learning community that constructs shared understanding” (Brophy, 2006).

Brophy (2006) warns about the potential problems associated with the fast transition in the classroom management system: “A management system that orients students toward passivity and compliance with rigid rules undercuts the potential effects of an instructional system that is designed to emphasize active learning, higher order thinking, and the social construction of knowledge” (p. 40). In the same way, McCaslin
and Good (1992) emphasize that the struggle towards the shift to constructivist practices has “created an oxymoron: a curriculum that urges problem-solving and critical thinking and a management system that requires compliance and narrow obedience”. Freiberg (1999) proposes that educator takes a person-oriented approach, which is characterized by the split leadership system, community creation, and the equal value of teacher and student needs, rather than a teacher-oriented approach to classroom management. The following table summarizes the distinction between teacher-centered and learner-centered classrooms.

**Table 1**  
*Teacher-centred vs learner-centred classroom*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher-centred</th>
<th>Learner-centered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The educator is the only leader</td>
<td>Leadership is split between learner and educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The educator assumes the position of a supervisor</td>
<td>The educator assumes the position of an adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the paperwork and management are performed by an educator</td>
<td>Learners facilitate classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is teacher-regulated</td>
<td>Learning is self-regulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some learners may assist educators</td>
<td>All learners can participate in classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rules are developed by educators and distributed to learners</td>
<td>Learners and educators design rules collaboratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning outcomes are universal for all learners</td>
<td>Learning outcomes are developed based on the learners’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation is for the most part extrinsic (e.g., receiving a reward or avoiding a punishment)</td>
<td>Motivation is for the most part intrinsic (e.g., enjoying the learning process)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ control of the studying process is restricted</td>
<td>Learners maintain control of the studying process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few members may participate in the study process</td>
<td>Educational institutions cooperate with organizations and communities to improve and expand the learning opportunities for students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Modified from Freedom to Learn, 3rd Edition (p. 240), by Rogers and Frieberg (1994).*

### 1.1.3. Movie-based language learning

Learning occurs in a specific learning environment. Researchers distinguish between a natural learning environment, where learning is not intentionally created and occurs naturally through communication and conversations by the means of inner and outer voice, and a systematic learning environment which happens through systematic fiction of learning (Mehret, 2019). This systematicity is achieved through the application of various elements of the system, i.e., planning, design, development, implementation, and assessment (Gültekin et al., 2016). The elements can be further divided into categories, such as learner, learning materials, curriculum, teacher, and learning (Bacanlı, 2018). Learning is achieved through communication and association between the internal stimuli, also known as a learning experience (Demirel, 1993), and the external stimuli of a learner, such as vision, hearing, and motion (Mehret, 2019). The message received by a learner through external stimuli proceeds to short-term and long-term memory in the internal stimuli, where it is processed and conveyed to the memory, where the learning happens (Selçuk, 2005 & Yalın, 2008).

According to Özkara (2016), to achieve effective and functional teaching, all elements involved in learning should be adapted to the specific learning experience. Being one of those elements, one of the main characteristics of teaching materials is that they are goal-directed (Mehret, 2019). Owing to the rapid changes in technology, there exists a great choice of goal-directed learning materials and methods (Ong et al., 2024). Previously, it was only television and radio that were applied to learning, now there are many more possibilities with artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, intelligent learning systems, and other technological advances becoming a part of our daily lives (Chiquet et al., 2023).

Nowadays, the changes in technology have “increased and expanded communication and collaboration via the use of internet-based devices” (Donaldson, 2010). The areas of teaching and foreign language teaching have been greatly affected by this expansion. There have also been provided more opportunities for
“individual and collaborative learning, making learning fun, examples of various learning resources which can address different learning styles and developing language skills in a similar way to real life” (Warschauer & Healey, 1998).

One of these modern teaching methods is the application of movies and TV series as educational and entertainment multimodal teaching content. Magnusson (2014) suggested that reading text is a more useful teaching material than the multimodal text of movies. However, Sturm (2012) pointed to the deeper contextual information that movies can give to learners in comparison to the written text. Bezemer and Kress (2015) clarify that the concept of multimodality refers to the resources applied for conveying meaning and how various means of communication affect the message. The researchers exemplify that learning occurs every time a learner interacts with the world – communication happens using signs or modes. In a multimodal context, the semiotic resources, such as speech, posture, and gestures are the signs and modes giving the learner the information for interpreting the message (Björnsson & Andersson 2019).

Schmidt and Bateman (2012) claim that movies and TV series are more understandable learning materials than written texts for the reason of directing a learner in a multimodal way. Lindstrand and Selander (2009) exemplify how movies and TV series realize three types of meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual meta-functions – the ideational meta-function describes how movies or TV series illustrate some aspect of the world, the interpersonal meta-function describes how movies or TV series build relationship and communication between the actors, and textual meta-function explains how norms that surround movies and TV series coordinate them.

1.2. Related research

Previous research on the application of movies and TV series in the second or foreign language classroom has pointed towards numerous benefits of its use:

1. The development of listening and speaking skills (Goctu, 2017; Kalra, 2017; Ismaili, 2013), as well as increased confidence while communicating in the target language (Kalra, 2017).
2. The development of communication skills is achieved through the application of authentic study materials presenting the learners with real-life conversations in the target language (Aliyev & Albay 2016; Ismaili, 2013; Kalra, 2017).
3. The development of both oral and written proficiency in the language is ensured by the application of subtitles (Albiladi et al., 2018).
4. The improved pronunciation, and better awareness of stress, accent, and intonation (Aliyev & Albay, 2016).
5. The enriched vocabulary reasoned by the continuous repetition of the same vocabulary item (Ismaili, 2013), the association of the specific vocabulary with the particular scene from the movie (Yaseen & Shakir, 2015), as well as the fact that the learners are exposed to vocabulary applied in real-life and meaningful contexts which facilitates their understanding of the concept and helps them to apply the vocabulary more accurately (Kalra, 2017).
6. The increased motivation and engagement in comparison with the traditional learning methods (Goctu, 2017; Kalra, 2017), as well as the fact that the application of movies in the foreign language classroom was described as interesting (Ismaili, 2013) and fun learning method (Auberg, 2017).
7. The greater awareness of cultural differences, such as food, lifestyle, and traditions as portrayed in the movies (Albiladi et al., 2018).
8. The decreased stress and anxiety levels (Goctu, 2017) accomplished by a safe and enjoyable atmosphere ensured by language learning through movies (Liando et al., 2018).

As it was suggested by Roslim et al., (2021), learners of various levels, i.e., from the school level to the university level-learners have been proven to benefit from the application of movies in the foreign language classroom.

1.3. Purpose of study

The present research aims to investigate the students’ feelings associated with the use of multimedia via two different perspectives: student-centered and teacher-centered.
2. Method and materials

2.1. Participants

Forty (40) first-year students of the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management participated in the experimental study on the application of the Netflix TV series *The Future of* and *Pepsi, where’s my jet?* in the classroom. 135 minutes were devoted to each of the TV series.

2.2. Data collection tool

Data was collected through a questionnaire after an experiment was conducted.

2.3. Procedure

The classes are based on the four-episode documentary series *Pepsi, where’s my jet?* were teacher-led. The classes aimed to develop communicative and listening skills. The classes were discussion-oriented, and based on the topic of advertising. The main activities the classes were involved in were discussions and debates, some theoretical aspects were also added.

For the classes based on the TV series *The Future of*, the students were supposed to watch their selected episode of the documentary series and present it to the rest of the group in the form they would choose – some of the suggestions given were a poster, oral presentation, PowerPoint presentation, and video. The students in this activity were not restricted by any requirements.

After the activities devoted to each TV series finished, the students were asked to reflect on their experience by completing the questionnaire on Google Forms.

2.3.1. Reflection on the TV series–based classes

While the set of classes based on the TV series *The Future of* was a fully independent assignment without any specific constraints or requirements given, the classes designed based on the TV series *Pepsi, where’s my jet?* were planned, directed, and executed by a teacher-instructor, and here is the list of tasks the classes consisted of:

1. Warm-up questions about the Pepsi brand, its advertising strategy, and rivalry with the Coca-Cola brand aimed to initiate a discussion and introduce students to the topic.
2. A short insight into the history of the Pepsi brand as well as the story behind the TV series.
3. Video extracts with the post-watching questions to develop the listening comprehension, as well as the questions initiating the discussion.
4. The insights into the marketing concepts and legal concepts (e.g., celebrity endorsement, guerilla marketing, advertising disclaimers, what is an offer in legal terms, deposition).
5. Additional materials to provide the context of the situation (e.g., Pepsi’s original catalog, the letters the two parties exchanged, the newspaper headlines regarding the court settlement, and the pictures of the advertising campaign to fight back against Pepsi).
6. The final debate on the rightfulness of the court ruling is based on the additional reading materials aimed at the development of reading comprehension and the development of communication skills.
7. The home assignment included a report writing on the famous marketing fiasco cases of worldwide companies.

Both sets of activities turned out to be interesting, and exciting and involved the students in the studying process. The paragraphs below will report on the results of the questionnaire aimed at investigating the student’s perspective on the two sets of classes.

3. Results

The first question in both of the questionnaires was aimed at evaluating the activity on a scale from 1 to 10. The average grade assigned to the student-led classes based on *The Future of* TV series is 9.3. More than half of the respondents, or 22 learners evaluated the activity with 10 points, 10 students assigned 9 points, six respondents assessed the classes with 8 points, and two learners graded it with a mark of 7 points (see Figure 3 for results).
As regards The Future of TV series-devoted classes, the majority of the learners have selected positive adjectives for the description of their experience – 38 out of 40 learners described the activity as interesting, 35 students found it modern, 27 respondents suggested that it was an engaging task, 13 of those surveyed claimed that the activity was motivational, and 12 learners viewed that as being relevant. Concerning the negative adjectives selected by the learners to describe the activity, those were: time-consuming (chosen by six respondents), irrelevant, and frustrating (selected by one student each). Three learners used the other section to add the following descriptive adjectives: ‘cool’, ‘fun’, and ‘fun’ (see Figure 4 for results).

Referring to the skills the learners have developed participating in this activity, this is how the learners’ votes have been distributed – the majority of the learners suggested that the activity helped them to develop presentation, teamwork, and listening skills (marked by 30, 29 and 28 respondents respectively), about half of the respondents, or 22 and 21 students respectively believed that they developed communication and language skills while participating in the activity, critical thinking skills development was selected by less than half of those surveyed, or 17 learners (see Figure 5 for results).
Figure 5
The skills the students developed participating in the activity based on The Future of TV series

This task helped me to develop the following skills:

- Communication skills: 22 (55%)
- Listening skills: 28 (70%)
- Presentation skills: 30 (75%)
- Team working skills: 29 (72.5%)
- Critical thinking skills (e.g., evaluation of the sources): 17 (42.5%)
- Language skills: 21 (52.5%)

The last question regarding The Future of -- based activity asked for the students’ comments or suggestions concerning the assignment – the question was mandatory. Most of the learners did not have any comments or suggestions. The suggestion which was added is having more tasks/topics like this (two students referred to that in their comments). One learner stated that they would use different videos for the assignment, but they liked the idea of watching videos, another referred to the presentation of the material in the videos – they included too much information, and therefore it would be better if they included some bullet points, so it is easier to follow.

As regards the learners’ comments, they enjoyed the fact that the activity did not have any specific constraints, and they could present their topic in any form they would like, they claimed that it was more interesting than just completing the usual tasks, they liked the fact that the topics were ready for them, as selecting the specific topic to speak about in the class is usually a time-consuming process. One student suggested that they enjoyed watching their episode, making a presentation, and listening to the others sharing information about their episodes. They claimed that the activity was interesting and exciting, and the best they had during the study year. As regards the descriptive adjectives the respondents used in their comments, those were: interesting (about the assignment, experience, topic, and episodes), modern (regarding the tasks), exciting (referring to the assignment), cool (describing the assignment and topics), and useful (speaking about the episodes).

As regards the teacher-led classes based on the documentary series Pepsi, where’s My Jet? the average grade assigned to the classes by the students was 8.925 points, with 14 students assessing it with a grade of 9 points and the same number of students assessing it with 10. Eight learners evaluated the activity with a grade of eight points, three graded it with 7 and one learner gave the activity 6 points out of 10 (see Figure 6 below for results).

Figure 6
Student assessment of Pepsi, where’s my jet? – based classes
The majority of the students have pointed towards the following advantages of the classes designed based on the documentary TV series *Pepsi, where's my jet?* the fact that the classes consisted of clear and understandable materials, were appropriate for their English proficiency level, made the learning more fun, helped to develop their listening skills, gave a deeper insight into a topic, and were engaging and interactive (marked by 33, 30, 30, 29, 29 and 28 learners respectively). Less than half of the learners surveyed suggested that the activity helped them to develop communication skills, improve their vocabulary, and increase their motivation for studies (15, 15, and 8 students respectively) (see Figure 7 for results).

**Figure 7**  
*The advantages of the classes designed based on Pepsi, where’s my jet?*

The students were asked to refer to the aspects that should be improved in this activity in the next question. The aspects which the learners referred to were: the theoretical materials should be added (marked by nine learners), the topic should be more relevant to their field of studies (selected by nine respondents), the number of videos should be reduced (suggested by eight participants), the videos should be shorter (claimed by five students), the instructor should provide more feedback (stressed by three surveyees), and the classes/materials should be better structured (proposed by two subjects). 12 participants used the other section for the comments and suggestions. The following suggestions were made – adding more vocabulary materials and more questions to engage the audience. The descriptive adjectives used by the learners in the other section were (1) everything was good/great/fine – which was mentioned by six participants; (2) great, interesting, and engaging; and (3) good and well structured (see Figure 8 for results).

**Figure 8**  
*The aspects of Pepsi, where’s my jet classes which could be improved*
4. Discussion

The learners were asked to add any comments/suggestions in the last question – the question was mandatory. Most of the respondents did not add any comments. The comments which were added involved the reference to the nice course, the interesting and fun classes, the fact that everything was good, great and interesting, the need for including similar activities on other topics as well, the idea that the classes were not only relevant to the learners’ field of study but also allowed to learn something new, as well as the fact that the learner did not feel any rush and was motivated to stay till the end of the classes.

Overall, the observation of the classes suggests that there has been much more motivation on the part of the learners as regards both types of activities. More learners than usual were involved in the studying process and participated in discussions and debates in Pepsi, where’s my jet? – based classes. As concerns The Future of classes, the learners were more than usual enthusiastic about the topic they selected – they used various methods of the material presentation to share their topics – the posters were created, the interesting facts about the topics were added, the usual PowerPoint slides were made, as well as the slides designed with the help of the other software, the oral presentations not supported by the visual representation were made with the help of the whiteboard, the rhetorical questions, and other rhetorical devices used to involve the audience; the learners used closed-ended and open-ended questions, visual questions, as well as Kahoot to initiate the discussion on their topics. The slides designed by the learners were interactive and attractive. All of the above pointed toward the learners being interested and involved in the presentation-making process, doing their research on the topic, and trying to involve others in the discussion.

5. Conclusions

The review of the previous research on the application of movies and TV series in foreign language classrooms has proved that the use of these multimodal means of material presentation has been beneficial for the following reasons: development of listening, speaking, and communication skills, better oral and written language proficiency, increased vocabulary, motivation, and engagement, improved pronunciation, decreased level or stress and anxiety, and better awareness of cultural differences.

Both sets of activities are believed to have been successful for the reason of a considerably high assessment from the part of the learners, the increased involvement, and the wish to participate in discussions. The previously set hypothesis has not been proven. Surprisingly, the learners expressed even more enthusiasm regarding self-directed classes. They used various means of material presentation to make their presentation more interactive and interesting, attracting the attention of the audience; they were trying to involve others in the discussion and claimed that the activity was beneficial for the fact that it helped them to develop their listening, presentation, and team-working skills. As concerns, the activities designed based on the TV series Pepsi, where’s my jet? are believed to be partly successful for the reason of the drawbacks pointed towards by the learners – the lack of vocabulary list and the short theoretical insight.

Overall, it is believed that if movies and TV series include subtitles, are supported by the theoretical materials and vocabulary tasks, and meet the linguistic, learning, and content needs of the learners, they can serve as a great source of teaching content. Still, movies and TV series cannot be used as the sole learning material, they should be supported by reading texts, real-life simulations, debates, discussions, vocabulary tasks, podcasts, self-reflection tasks, and others. To meet the needs of modern learners, the opportunities that the technological age has provided should be embraced by teachers, especially foreign language teachers whose learners greatly benefit from the deep contextual information and the authentic content of movies and TV series.

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