Chapter 4
Multimodal Listening Through Movie Trailers: Towards a Framework for Classroom Implementation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reports on work resulting from a UCM (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain) Research Project on Innovative Teaching in Higher Education carried out during the academic year 2015-2016. The aim of the project was two-fold: (1) to develop a multimodal framework for the development of multimodal listening activities with a focus on movie trailers and (2) to assess the resulting multimodal listening activities designed within this framework by means of a quality assessment tool, the COdA rubric. The results obtained from the evaluation process reveal the qualities and limitations of the multimodal listening material evaluated as much as the qualities and limitations of the multimodal framework that we designed prior to the development of this material. This evaluation process is aimed at as a first step in the development of other multimodal listening materials—within our multimodal framework—that may fill some existing gaps.

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BACKGROUND

This paper describes research undertaken within the Complutense University of Madrid (Spain) during the academic year 2015-2016 as part of a research project on innovative teaching aimed at enhancing quality with a double purpose: (1) to develop a multimodal framework for the implementation of movie trailers as the basis for the teaching of multimodal listening skills and (2) to assess the resulting movie trailer learning objects.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, when video materials were first introduced into the language classroom, their use in language teaching environments has been on the rise (O’Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; Field, 2012). The development of multimedia environments, with easy access to different types of videotexts, contributed positively to their popularity among language teachers. Nowadays, videos are considered to be one of the best teaching materials to enhance the acquisition of listening comprehension skills (Cakir, 2006). Many researches emphasize their value as a source of authentic language input with multiple possibilities for implementation in the classroom. As a pedagogical tool, videos offer considerable enhancement over simple audio (Coniam, 2001). Visuals provide important contextual information and non-linguistic input to guide listeners through the acquisition process (Vandergrift, 2007; Ur, 2012). Multimedia texts allow the construction of meaning through different resources, contributing to a more holistic perception of reality (O’Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007; Cross, 2011).

In this context, movies and movie trailers have therefore become easily accessible language products commonly associated with fun since films can be highly motivating and useful in the language teaching/learning process (Caixia, 2013). Properly selected and implemented in the classroom, they have an important role in the language teaching/learning process (Stempleski and Tomalin, 1990; Baddock, 1996). Most researchers admit that the film mode is direct and accessible for students and ensures easier intelligibility of the written texts (Montgomery, 1992). According to Caixia (2013), visual images establish a direct relation with the depicted objects so that film stories are usually understandable for students. Sound and light are the other specific characteristics of the film mode that tend to contribute to general understanding. In certain situations, sound and light effects suffice to tell a story with no words (Bo, 2008).

Despite the increasing popularity of videotexts as a valuable resource for listening comprehension practice, however, most of the listening activities in the EFL classroom still consist of audio recordings based on discourse without a visible speaker (Ur, 2012). It seems that textbook developers are still reluctant to include videos into language textbooks or language tests (Basal, 2015). Videos still “remain largely