

## HOLLYWOOD IN THE CLASSROOM: USING AMERICAN FILMS TO TEACH ENGLISH AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

### HOLLYWOOD ÎN SALA DE CLASĂ: UTILIZAREA FILMELOR AMERICANE ÎN PREDAREA LIMBII ENGLEZE ȘI A CONȘTIENTIZĂRII CULTURALE

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**Abstract:** *This bachelor's thesis explores the educational potential of integrating American films into the English Language Teaching (ELT) process. The research focuses on the transition from traditional methods to the use of audiovisual authentic materials to enhance students' linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness. The theoretical framework analyzes the concept of authenticity, the advantages of films in the classroom, and the development of intercultural competence. Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, utilizing surveys and data collection tools to evaluate students' attitudes and the practical impact of film-based activities on their learning progress. The results indicate that American films serve as a powerful motivational tool, offering exposure to natural language patterns, idioms, and diverse cultural nuances that textbooks often lack. The findings suggest that while challenges such as linguistic complexity exist, the pedagogical benefits regarding listening comprehension and communicative confidence are significant. Ultimately, the paper provides a set of practical recommendations and classroom activities designed to optimize the use of cinematography as a dynamic teaching resource, concluding that American films are essential for fostering a comprehensive understanding of the English language in a globalized context.*

**Keywords:** *communicative competence, the English language, cultural context, film integration, audio-visual reception*

**Rezumat:** *Acest studiu explorează potențialul educațional al integrării filmelor americane în procesul de predare a limbii engleze. Cercetarea se concentrează pe tranziția de la metodele tradiționale la utilizarea materialelor autentice audiovizuale pentru a îmbunătăți competența lingvistică și conștiința culturală a elevilor. Cadrul teoretic analizează conceptul de autenticitate, avantajele utilizării filmelor în clasă și dezvoltarea competenței interculturale. Din punct de vedere metodologic, studiul adoptă o abordare mixtă, utilizând chestionare și instrumente de colectare a datelor pentru a evalua atitudinile elevilor și impactul practic al activităților bazate pe film asupra progresului lor. Rezultatele indică faptul că filmele americane servesc drept un instrument motivațional puternic, oferind expunere la tipare de limbaj natural, expresii idiomatice și nuanțe culturale diverse pe care manualele adesea le omit. Concluziile sugerează că, deși există provocări precum complexitatea lingvistică, beneficiile pedagogice privind înțelegerea auditivă și încrederea comunicativă sunt semnificative. În final, lucrarea oferă un set de recomandări practice și activități de curs menite să optimizeze utilizarea cinematografului ca resursă didactică dinamică, concluzionând că filmele americane sunt esențiale pentru cultivarea unei înțelegeri cuprinzătoare a limbii engleze.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *competență comunicativă, limba engleză, context cultural, integrare cinematografică, receptare audio-vizuală*

The integration of American films into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is no longer a luxury but a pedagogical necessity in the 21st century. In the Republic of Moldova, the educational system faces a paradoxical challenge: while students are immersed in a digital, English-speaking world outside school, the classroom environment often remains anchored in traditional, text-heavy methodologies. This research, titled *“Hollywood in the Classroom: Using American Films to Teach English and Cultural Awareness,”* explores the transformative potential of cinematic resources as a bridge between the formal curriculum and real-world communicative competence.

The rationale for this study stems from the observation that students often view English as a set of abstract grammatical rules rather than a living, breathing cultural tool. By introducing authentic Hollywood cinema, the researcher seeks to shift the focus from “learning about the language” to “experiencing the language.” The study is guided by the need to create a sustainable, time-efficient methodology that allows teachers to use film without compromising the 45-minute lesson structure or the national curriculum's requirements.

The first chapter of the thesis establishes a rigorous theoretical framework, drawing on established principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and cognitive linguistics.

At the heart of the study is the definition of authentic materials. Unlike fabricated educational videos, commercial movies present language in its natural state, encompassing colloquial expressions, slang, and various registers. Following the theories of Risager (2006) and Kramsch (1993), the thesis argues that film is a prime example of linguaculture, a medium where linguistic forms are inextricably linked to cultural meaning. This perspective recognizes that cultures are not static sets of facts found in textbooks but portable schemas of interpretation that students must learn to navigate.

The pedagogical effectiveness of film is justified through Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Film provides “comprehensible input” by utilizing visual scaffolding, facial expressions, gestures, and situational context, to help students decode messages slightly beyond their current linguistic level. Furthermore, the familiarity of American cinema serves to lower the Affective Filter. When students engage with content they find intrinsically motivating (such as clips from *Home Alone* or *The Intern*), their anxiety levels drop, creating a safe environment conducive to incidental acquisition.

Moreover, the thesis incorporates Paivio's Dual Coding Theory, explaining that the human brain processes verbal and visual information through separate channels. By stimulating both channels simultaneously, film ensures a higher degree of information retention and a deeper understanding of abstract concepts.

The second chapter details the empirical investigation conducted to test these theories. The study adopted a Mixed-Methods Research (MMR) design, combining quantitative breadth with qualitative depth.

The study followed the cyclical model of Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting. The “Acting” phase took place during a research practicum at “Ion Creangă” and “Mihai Eminescu” High Schools, as well as the “Nicolae Iorga” Gymnasium. The primary focal group was Class 8 B, consisting of 13 students, where the researcher implemented a series of “ready-to-use” worksheets.

A significant portion of the methodology is dedicated to the Content Analysis of the English textbooks currently used in Moldovan gymnasium education. The research identifies a recurring “visual void” in units dealing with complex cultural themes, such as “Teenage Life in Canada” or “Environmental Causes.” While the textbooks provide the thematic framework, they often lack the “linguistic oxygen” that only authentic audiovisual materials can provide. The methodology adapted the Six-T's Approach (Themes, Texts, Topics,

Threads, Tasks, Transitions) to demonstrate that by replacing static reading passages with dynamic scenes from films like “The Princess Diaries” or “Wall-E”, the teacher can transform a theoretical lesson into an experiential one.

To ensure the validity of the findings, data was collected from multiple sources:

1. *Quantitative Surveys*: 100 participants (70 students and 30 teachers) provided data on digital habits and pedagogical barriers.

2. *Classroom Observation*: The researcher used structured grids to monitor student engagement, participation frequency, and the use of “target language” during film-based tasks.

3. *Content Analysis*: A systematic review of national English textbooks (Grades 5-9) was conducted to identify specific units where Hollywood clips could provide visual support for the curriculum's themes.

The methodology also adapted the Six-T's Approach (Themes, Texts, Topics, Threads, Tasks, Transitions) to ensure that the film integration was not an isolated event but a cohesive part of the lesson plan. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between structured film activities and student performance. Quantitative analysis showed a “Subtitle Paradox”: while students instinctively prefer Language1 (Romanian/Russian) subtitles for comfort, their linguistic growth is significantly accelerated when exposed to Language 2 (English) subtitles. This creates a noticing environment, allowing learners to map the phonological form onto its orthographic form in real-time, eventually promoting “Linguistic Autonomy.”

In the focal group (Class 8 B), the implementation of the “clip-based” method resulted in a marked increase in spontaneous communication. Students became active participants when tasked with “Silent Viewing” or “Freeze-frame” activities, treating the film as a visual text that must be decoded. The discussion highlights that the main barrier to film integration is not a lack of technology, but a lack of time-efficient materials. Using short segments (3-5 minutes) allows teachers to maintain the pace of the lesson while reaping the benefits of authentic input.

Moving beyond vocabulary acquisition, the thesis explores the development of Critical Media Literacy. The study observes that using American films helps students decode the “visual trap” of Hollywood, learning to distinguish between dramatized stereotypes and social realities. Through “Comparative Analysis,” students reflected on their own national identity in relation to globalized American narratives, becoming “intercultural mediators” capable of negotiating meaning in a complex world.

The thesis concludes that the successful integration of Hollywood cinema requires a shift in Teacher Agency. The educator must evolve into a “curator of authentic experiences,” requiring a mastery of digital humanities to clip and sequence video fragments. Professional development in Moldova should prioritize Digital Pedagogical Content Knowledge to provide teachers with the confidence to turn every classroom into a window to the world.

In conclusion, the research demonstrates that when a teacher acts as an “organizer and facilitator,” film becomes a powerful visual equalizer. It supports weaker students through context while challenging stronger students through idiomatic complexity. The integration of Hollywood films ensures that English is taught not just as a subject for examinations, but as a gateway to understanding the diverse global landscape of the 21st century. Drawing on established theories of second language acquisition and supported by empirical evidence gathered in Moldovan classrooms, the study has shown that authentic Hollywood cinema offers what conventional textbooks structurally cannot: living language embedded in cultural context, comprehensible input enriched by visual scaffolding, and a powerful motivational anchor that lowers learner anxiety and invites genuine communication.

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