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„"If It Moves, They Will Watch It“ –
Selecting Effective Audio-Visual Material For Film-Based
Foreign Language Teaching With Beginners“

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We read to understand, or to begin to understand [...] Reading, almost as much as breathing, is our essential function.
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Introduction

Manguel’s wise words on the central role of reading in the lives of people introducing this thesis capture the importance of decoding strategies as a means to make sense of the world. Yet, to cope professionally with the increasing demands arising from the immense wealth of information people are faced with on a daily basis, reading written language is not the only form of reading that is required in nowadays technologically dominated society. The 21st century with its great breakthroughs has led to an expansion of the concept of literacy so that, next to written codes, the decoding of visual codes and their special interplay in the creation of meaning has become the essential number one skill of our time (cf. Anstey 446).

With the beginning of the media age, especially the medium of film has started its incredible triumph and, by now, has become established as one of the most powerful communication tools of our time. With its dominant role in society as an instrument that shapes culture, establishes and reproduces ideologies, dodging its influence has almost turned into a “mission impossible”. Ultimately, media literacy has become a key competence for a critically thinking citizen. Already at a young age, children should be guided towards being reasonable consumers and be equipped with the tools necessary to see through the complex net of various forms of representations and uncover the central message of films (Share 100). It seems that especially foreign language teaching lends itself well to tackle this issue.

Yet, while films have already found their way into upper secondary foreign language classrooms with experienced language learners possessing a relatively high proficiency level in English, the situation is different in lower secondary EFL classrooms (Suhrkamp Teaching Films 2). The self-evidently low language level of lower secondary foreign language learners in combination with the difficulty this fact entails for the teachers planning and implementing a film-based foreign language lesson is regarded as the most decisive factor responsible for the rare use of this highly valuable medium in this context (cf. Biechele 13, Hecht Leistung von Film 2, Welke and Faistauer 8, Thaler 28). Especially the selection of audio-visual material for those learners presents their teachers with a challenge (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 6, Biechele 15).

Due to this selection being a decision which can make or break whether a film can be exploited to the benefit of the learners in a foreign language lesson (Thaler 21, Biechele
15), it will lie at the heart of this thesis. In particular, this study aims at helping lower secondary foreign language teachers select audio-visual teaching material that is both, effective and suitable for young learners having just started to learn a foreign language.

To do so, the following questions will be discussed, based on relevant literature in the field¹:

- What is effective audio-visual teaching material in a beginners’ classroom?
- What is suitable audio-visual teaching material in a beginners’ classroom?
- What types of material lend themselves for work in a beginners’ classroom?

Broadly speaking, the overall structure of this thesis will reflect these questions. It is divided into five sections and will follow a top-down approach.

In the first section, the topic of film as the main focus of this thesis will be introduced by giving a brief outline of the origins of film within an educational context and dominant attitudes towards it. In a second concise chapter, the particular challenges of foreign language teaching on the basis of film and its problematic implementation in lower secondary contexts will be explained.

The second section will discuss film related to its effectivity as a teaching resource. In the first chapter of this section, a general definition of effective teaching material will be provided and the medium of film as an example thereof will be established. In addition, the effectivity of film in a beginners’ classroom will be explained. The next chapter will provide suggestions on how the just determined potential of film as a teaching resource can be effectively exploited with less experienced foreign language learners.

Section three will address film as a teaching resource in relation to its suitability for students just beginning their foreign language learning. At the outset of this section, the process of film selection will be explored in relation to characteristics of lower secondary learners. On the basis of this discussion, characteristics of audio-visual teaching material that is suitable for these learners will be inferred. Most notably, desired characteristics of film will be introduced that are likely to help young learners understand a film.

The fourth section introduces different types of audio-visual material that are considered suitable for language beginners according to experts in the field of film-based foreign

¹ This study is based on recent literature in both English and German. In order to cater for local needs, frequent references to sources from a German-speaking context will be made throughout the thesis.
language teaching. First of all, to provide an overview of the different types of material existing, the broad categories of authentic film and ELT video will be outlined and their potential for the lower secondary classroom will be explained. So as to familiarise the reader with the lesser known category of ELT video, an example of this film type will be introduced very briefly. The remaining part of this section will focus on authentic material. After an overview of authentic audio-visual teaching material commonly recommended for use in a lower secondary context, animated films, trailers and short films as examples of authentic film types which lend themselves for work with young, less advanced foreign language learners will be discussed.

Finally, section five will deal with a concrete example of suitable audio-visual teaching material in a beginners’ classroom. More precisely, the animated silent short film *For The Birds* will be closely analysed according to the characteristics audio-visual teaching material should possess so as to be considered suitable for a beginners’ classroom.
1. Film in a Teaching Context

1.1. Film and Its Struggle for Acceptance

Despite the high status of film held by younger generations, it has taken a considerable period of time for film to finally become accepted in a context of teaching. Film-based teaching can, as a result, be regarded as a relatively recent trend. In contrast, books have been incorporated into classroom teaching already a long time ago and are appreciated as highly effective resources to learn a foreign language to this day. The numerous advantages of the development of literacy preferably at a young age have become a well-established fact among both researchers and language teachers (cf. Elkin 158). Hence, it does not seem to be an exaggeration to claim that "children’s literature can transform the life of the individual child, as well as being a source of both learning and pleasure“ (Elkin 152).

As opposed to literature, the medium of film has always been much more controversially debated. Even today, it could not completely get rid of its former discredit as the trigger of the so-called “movie plague”\(^2\) (Osterheld 97 qtd. in van Hoorn 45). This stands in stark contrast to the aforementioned praise of the written word and its role in young people’s education. For a long time, the potential of film for language learners has thus been ignored. Unlike literature, film was given the status of an inferior cultural product and its production was not considered an art form (Vetrie 40, Thaler 12, van Hoorn 43, 51). The dominant view was that collaborative work of a whole team producing a film can never lead to something that gets close to the unique creation resulting from the genius of an individual, and much less if the result of this collaborative work is dependent on modern technology (van Hoorn 43-44). With regard to its content, aimed at the general masses including members of all social classes rather than selected upper-class intellectuals only, film was claimed to focus on trivial issues not worth being discussed in an educational setting (Vetrie 40, Thaler 12). Instead, it was demonised as the natural enemy of literature (Vetrie 40). Opposing true human excellence and intellect, film was even regarded as “a threat to the very existence of civilization as well as an expression of the vulgarization and decadence of the masses” by influential, yet in this respect reactionary, personalities such as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot (Giroux and Simon 5). Other sceptics saw the only remarkable effect of this

\(^2\) “Deshalb war es ernste Pflicht, besonders der Bühnenschriftsteller, gegen die Kinopest energische Maßnahmen zu treffen.” (Osterheld 97 qtd. in van Hoorn 45)
manipulative instrument in creating “cultural dupes, incapable of either mediating, resisting, or rejecting the imperatives of the dominant culture” (Giroux and Simon 4).

It is an unfortunate matter of fact that traits of this condemnation can still be encountered today (cf. van Hoorn 46). People like the neuroscientist Spitzer have made it their mission to warn people against the negative effects of regular media consumption, which he also did with his most recent work published only in 2005 (Hildebrand 19). Using the words of Thaler (12), this controversial researcher’s claim is that “watching TV and film is said to make people fat, stupid, and aggressive”. Conclusions like this prove that film could not get completely rid of its negative image as a mere entertainment medium (cf. Vetrle 40) with “deliberate and necessary suppression of thought and word”3 (Osterheld 97 qtd. in van Hoorn 44) as its main requirement. Thus, the popular belief of film rather harming than fostering the development of children continues to be persistent in the heads of many people up to the present despite the so-called famous Flynn-effect having indicated the exact opposite already in the 1990s (Thaler 12-13).

In contrast to this utterly negative view on film, most EFL teachers seem to be convinced of the potential of film in a teaching context. A questionnaire that was part of a study conducted by Thaler (qtd. in Thaler 20) has shown that approximately 66% of these teachers have adopted a “very positive” or “positive” attitude towards the use of film in a language teaching context as opposed to only two of them predominantly viewing it in a “more negative” light.

Even though audio-visual material seems to be more popular both as a resource and actual object of teaching in English foreign language lessons compared to other foreign language teaching settings (van Hoorn 40-41), classroom reality shows that films can still only rarely be found in EFL classrooms. Although 84% of EFL teachers claimed to have worked with audio-visual material with their learners in the past, only 6% did so ”frequently” (Thaler qtd. in Thaler 17). More recently, a study by Ismaili (126) in 2013 has shown that the undergraduate university EFL students were not used to film-based learning, but regarded it as a “new and very pleasant experience”. This suggests that those students did not experience any foreign language teaching with film whatsoever in the course of their school career although international institutions concerned with

3 “Die Filmwirkung ist die bewußte und notwendige Ausschaltung von Gedanken und Wort, […] also eine schematische Veräußerlichung jener Kunstform, an der Genie und Geist von Jahrhunderten gearbeitet haben.” (Osterheld 97 qtd. in van Hoorn 44)
foreign language teaching such as the Council of Europe (81) have proposed specific learning objectives related to audio-visual texts (cf. Thaler 20).

Summing up the discussion of this chapter so far, it can be said that literature in foreign language teaching seems not to be controversial at all and has been rightfully – and not surprisingly – given a central position at the heart of it. However, what is surprising is the everlasting subtle contempt for film compared to books by a still too high number of foreign language teachers (Welke and Faistauer 8, van Hoorn 51, Leitzke-Ungerer 11) and in spite of the convincing arguments fostering the use of new media for educational purposes long-since dominating today’s scientific discourse (cf. Thaler 17).

The relatively bad reputation of film needs to be questioned not least in view of the fact that, nowadays, the genre of (children’s) literature is not limited to the written word any more but was broadened to include its “changing forms and formats” (Unsworth et al. 7). This “need to adopt a more modern and generous definition of children’s literature, to accommodate new media, a mix of art-forms, mediated participation, and multiple audiences” (Elkin 156) can be seen as an immediate result and impressive proof of the triumph of modern technology – a development that cannot and must not stop at the doors of lower secondary classrooms (cf. Share, Donaghy Action 9-12).

### 1.2. Challenges

Having just emphasised the necessity to revisit the still existent traces of the long-lasting ban of the equally popular and influential medium of film from an educational context, the question arises why audio-visual material is still highly underrepresented in Austrian foreign language teaching classrooms. Considering the fact that most EFL teachers have a positive attitude towards the medium of film (Thaler qtd. Thaler 20), this suggests the main reason for this unfortunate situation needs to be found elsewhere.

In fact, there are several reasons why many teachers still abstain from both exploiting film and TV programmes as study material and incorporating them into their repertoire of teaching techniques. One of the most problematic aspects of film-based teaching concerns a basic aspect of teaching reality, the limited time available for each subject. More precisely, the relatively short length of a lesson compared to the long running time of most films does not allow teachers enough time to introduce and analyse a film within one lesson (Thaler 28).
Although this lack of time is a major organisational constraint, researchers have found that the reason most likely responsible for the rare use of film in foreign language classrooms is the teachers’ insecurity with respect to the medium (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Verbindung* 2, Biechele 13, Welke and Faistauer 8, Leitzke-Ungerer 11):

Teachers are insecure in particular when it comes to the questions how to select films and which genres are most suitable, how to use film as a teaching resource, which aspects are most suitable for analysis in foreign language teaching and which approaches are best to achieve which learning objectives.  

(Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 6)

The question of how to effectively use film in foreign language teaching is particularly relevant for teachers in lower secondary classrooms (cf. Suhrkamp *Teaching Films* 2). Film-based language teaching is perceived as a particular challenge in this context since those learners only have very low target language proficiency (Thaler 29, Hecht *Leistung von Film* 2). This inevitable characteristic of learners attending lower secondary school in combination with the insecurity of many teachers is most certainly responsible for the fact that films have been more popular with advanced learners in upper secondary EFL teaching so far (cf. Suhrkamp *Teaching Films* 2). Based on the assumption that teaching English as a foreign language does not differ fundamentally from German foreign language teaching, this conclusion seems to be confirmed by Biechele (15). According to her, “teachers of German frequently identify their learners’ insufficient language competence as the most difficult problem when it comes to selecting a film”.  

(Biechele 15)

Apart from establishing profound target language knowledge as a desired precondition for working with film according to the perception of many foreign language teachers, this insight shows that the challenges they are faced with when it comes to film-based foreign language teaching go far beyond preparing tasks and exercises to give to the learners in an attempt to help them develop certain film- or language-specific skills and competencies but already start with the choice of the actual material serving as the basis for those activities. This makes the selection of audio-visual teaching material a decisive factor significantly influencing the didactic adaptation and consequently, the degree to

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4 “Unsicherheiten bestehen vor allem bezüglich der Fragen wie Filme ausgewählt werden können und welche Genres sich anbieten, wie ein Film eingesetzt werden kann, welche Aspekte insbesondere im fremdsprachlichen Unterricht untersucht werden können und welche Zugangsformen für die Erlangung welcher Lernziele besonders geeignet sind.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 6)

5 “Deutschlehrende benennen oft die nicht genügende Sprachkompetenz ihrer Lerner als das schwierigste Problem bei der Filmauswahl.“ (Biechele 15)
which a film succeeds in its function as a source of learning in the acquisition of any foreign language (Donaghy *Action* 21, Thaler 21, Burwitz-Melzer *Literarische Texte* 222). As such, the challenge of foreign language teachers as expressed by Biechele is another proof of the fact that, indeed, “language learning materials constitute a key factor in creating effective teaching and learning environments” (Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 173). In view of this central role of material selection, it is not surprising that the consequences of such difficulty concerning the essential question of which audio-visual text to bring to class are fatal: Work with film in a foreign language teaching context is commonly perceived as “too difficult” not exclusively, but particularly with low-level foreign language learners (Sherman 118), so that this medium is frequently denied access to lower secondary foreign language classrooms (Suhrkamp *Teaching Films* 2).

Although some teachers already teach with the help of audio-visual material, it is often used in a way that does not facilitate learning (Hobbs 35, Vetrie 40). Indeed, the already rare use of film in foreign language lessons is frequently not motivated by pedagogical decision making (Biechele 13-15, Hobbs). In the majority of cases, it is used to let the learners’ brains relax after an exhausting activity or to do them a favour after some kind of desirable behaviour in the past (Biechele 13-15, Hobbs 45, Thaler 17). In those cases where film is used to achieve a specific lesson aim, films are particularly popular as an addition to common literature teaching (Welke and Faistauer 8, van Hoorn 49). This means that after a story was dealt with in book format, its film version is shown to be able to compare and contrast the two versions of the same story or, owing to the visual level of the film version, to fill potential gaps as a result of poor reading skills or target language knowledge (Hobbs 45). None of these uses exploits the unique potential of films resulting from the combination of spoken language and visual signs.

Yet, the teachers are not to be blamed for the rare and frequently “non-optimal [use]” (Hobbs 35) of a generally highly valuable learning tool. Certainly, they cannot be left to themselves with the undeniably existent challenges when working with film. It would be a hasty judgement to find fault with the persons responsible for planning and conducting the actual lessons since a purposeful use of media in the language classroom, first of all, has to be learned. This should happen in teacher training institutions. The fact that media education is missing as an obligatory part in training programmes for prospective foreign language teachers in Germany as well as in Austria...
(Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 2, van Hoorn 41) is probably the biggest hurdle that prevents current research findings clearly proving the benefits of film in foreign language learning at all levels to find practical implementation in the classrooms (cf. van Hoorn 40, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 6). If teacher training aims at preparing future teachers best possible for the demands of their jobs to, in return, allow them to do the same with their future students, these programs cannot turn a blind eye to film and TV as daily reality of these teachers’ future students. Not only teachers, but also the institutions training them need to embrace issues close to young people’s lives, which certainly includes mass media consumption via computer or television. Only by doing this, institutions can claim to offer a truly valuable and profound education for foreign language teachers and help them to equip young people with the necessary tools to become critical citizens. This urgent need for media education of prospective teachers has been addressed as a central concern at the Austrian conference on eEducation in 2013:

Basic media education is particularly essential in teacher training. So as to be able to educate people in a mediatised world, teachers need to be media literate themselves and have pedagogical competencies related to media. These include aesthetical, technical, ethical and didactic media-related competencies. For teachers wishing to foster a critical approach to media and credibly and reliably answer their learners’ questions, they themselves need to have some kind of media education and be able to use it reflectively. This does not only concern digital media – the specific qualities of different types of media and medial forms of expression need to be considered – visuality and film must not be reduced to their digital character, but are nevertheless central to digital media. (Niesyto 13)

In an attempt to make a small contribution to the major aim of a comprehensive media education, this thesis wants to support teachers intending to use films in lower secondary EFL teaching. Taking up one of the issues perceived as most difficult by a significant number of teachers, it wants to help them select films which are particularly effective and suitable for work with absolute beginners of English.

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2. Film and Its Effectivity in a Beginners’ Classroom

2.1. Establishing Film as an Effective Teaching Resource

Generally speaking, all types of teaching material brought to class need to share an essential characteristic: They need to be effective in a teaching context (cf. Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 172-173). Yet, the question arises what it is that distinguishes good from bad teaching material that makes certain kinds of texts effective within an educational context and others not. In order to answer this question, teaching material needs to be considered in relation to the demands on foreign language teaching in general (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 32).

One of the most frequently mentioned claims on foreign language teaching is that it needs to be realistic and true to real life. This means that language learners must be taught how to cope with the way a language other than their native language is used outside the safe environment of a classroom (cf. Howard and Major 105). On a linguistic level, this requires a certain language proficiency that makes successful verbal interaction with competent (native) speakers of the target language possible (Gilmore 98). On a more general level, language teaching also aims at “build[ing] up the attitudes, knowledge and skills [learners] need to become more independent in thought and action” or, in other words, to become critical thinkers in the sense of “democratic citizenship” (Council of Europe 5).

Taking into account these high aims of foreign language teaching, they imply that the common ground of all kinds of texts suitable for educational purposes is their ability to stimulate learning by offering vast possibilities for valuable exploitation in the classroom, all of which let learners benefit from them and foster their development of some kind (Howard and Major 101, 104). In other words, effective teaching material of all kinds helps to “[increase] learners’ knowledge, experience and understanding of [the foreign language] and, simultaneously, [helps] learners learn what they want and need to learn” (Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 173). Consequently, effective teaching material can be defined as material that stimulates learning (cf. Howard and Major 104). So as to be considered as valuable resources in the lower secondary foreign language classroom, films have to comply with the same criterion (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 32).

Generally speaking, film can “enhance the learning experience” (Howard and Major 104) in many regards. It can be exploited in the classroom so as to develop a variety of
different skills and competencies. Related to these skills and competencies, clear teaching objectives can be formulated for work with audio-visual material in a teaching context. These are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Competences</th>
<th>Objectives (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities)</th>
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| Perceptive Competence                     | Building awareness for the processes involved in reading audio-visual texts and their impact on the construction of meaning  
Acquiring basic knowledge about film in order to support processes of reception and production  
Developing a critical and attentive attitude towards the intentional manipulation of the audiences in terms of perception, cognition and reaction |
| Film Aesthetic and Critical Competence     | Acquiring and developing the ability to critically analyse and evaluate the contents of films  
Becoming aware of and know about the formal elements of film  
Recognising the manipulative effect of film-specific representations (e.g. for directing the audience’s emotional responses)  
The ability to use and create audio-visual products |
| Intercultural Competence                  | Expanding one’s own cultural horizon  
Developing the ability to reflect on aspects of the own culture, the target culture and transcultural aspects  
Promoting the ability to understand and accept foreign cultures |
| Cultural Competence                       | Enabling students to analyse film from a cultural study’s perspective  
Becoming aware of the impact of contexts of film production on the aesthetic qualities of film texts  
Creating awareness for the effects of contexts of reception on the form film takes |
| Communicative- and Productive Competences  | Enhancing audio-visual competency in the target language  
Enabling students to emotionally respond to and individually express their view on film texts  
Supporting students to independently produce oral and written texts in the target language |
As shown in the table, the medium of film can help learners develop their perceptive, film aesthetic and critical, intercultural, cultural and communicative competencies. Thus, it can be considered an effective teaching resource since it has the potential to stimulate learning in various regards.

Within these competencies, a special focus lies on the development of the learners’ audio-visual literacy. The term “literacy” highlights the similarity of audio-visual texts and traditional written texts and shows that, as a medium expressing meaning with the help of visual and audible codes, film can be “read” as well (Thaler 40, British Film Institute Look Again 4). In contrast to just watching a film, reading goes beyond a superficial engagement with the medium (Thaler 40) and refers to the process of “mak[ing] sense of […] media texts“ (British Film Institute Look Again 4). To do so, learners need to gain an understanding of the way a film “speaks” to its viewers.

Being a multimodal medium, film communicates through both, its visual and audible level (Suhrkamp Teaching Films 3-4). The ability to deconstruct a film according to these two modes is thus referred to as audio-visual literacy. As the term suggests, it is a combination of audio literacy and visual literacy and denotes “the ability to simultaneously notice and process audible and visual information”\(^7\) conveyed by a film (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 4) and ultimately also to view the two modes as components that significantly shape and influence its meaning and are powerful means of communication (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 4-5, Thaler 41). The table below taken from Thaler (41) explains this competency in more detail by splitting up the processes of listening and viewing into their components and illustrates how these two processes can influence each other.

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\(^7\) “Die Kombination des Hör- und Seh-Verstehens erfordert zunächst die Fähigkeit, Ton- und Bildinformationen auch simultan wahrzunehmen und zu verarbeiten, und dies kann gerade bei fremdsprachigen Filmen Schwierigkeiten bereiten (schnelles oder undeutliches Sprechen, Dialoge mit Hintergrundgeräuschen, fremdkulturelle Körpersprache, Verhaltens- und Denkweisen oder Symbolik etc.).” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 4)
Dealing with a film’s modes as means of communication, audio-visual literacy lies at the heart of film-based teaching. Although all of the individual competencies that can be achieved with the help of film summarised in Table 1 must not be viewed as completely independent skills, audio-visual literacy can be regarded as the basis for the development of other competencies (Thaler 40). Accordingly, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (Verbindung 2) state that ”audio-visual literacy is considered a competency that is part of a comprehensive film literacy, which prepares [the learners] for an intensive engagement with the content of a film (What is being told?) and its unique modes of representation (How does film tell a story?)”\(^8\).

\(^8\) “Das Hör-Seh Verstehen wird daher als Teilkompetenz einer umfassenden Filmkompetenz angesehen, die auf die intensive Auseinandersetzung mit den Inhalten eines Films (Was wird
While the skills and competencies that can be developed with the help of film-based teaching are not specific to a particular level of teaching or learning, admittedly not all of them can be realistically fully acquired by young learners. Consequently, film-based foreign language teaching at a beginners’ level will only be able to touch upon some of these competencies and prepare learners for a deeper engagement with the medium at a later stage and as such, only guide them towards the development of the necessary skills to understand – both on a linguistic and cultural level – original English films and TV series (Stempleski 7) (Hildebrand 300, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 2, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 25). Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (Filme Englischunterricht 26) have translated this highest of all film-based teaching goals – making sense of “all the kinds of programme you normally see at the cinema, on TV or on DVD” (Sherman 1) – into certain competencies and then split these competencies up into manageable aims and objectives learners should achieve in each academic year. The result is a curriculum that includes linguistic as well as film-related goals and as such, equally acknowledges the need to develop the learners’ language skills as well as film as a cultural product. These basic skills and competencies that can be achieved with the help of film already at a low level can thus be considered the parameters that define the effectivity of a specific film in a beginners’ classroom.

According to Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (Filme Englischunterricht 26), during the first two years of lower secondary education, learners should be guided towards identifying a film’s basic components such as its main events, characters, themes and major conflicts and verbalise them using simple language. In addition, they should develop the ability to talk about their emotions related to a film and how they have experienced it and describe and discuss the visual and auditory level of a film with the help of film-specific vocabulary. By the end of their second year, they should furthermore be able to detect similarities and differences between their own reality and the English-speaking world depicted on the screen, consider things from the perspective of another person or culture and produce short audio-visual material (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 26, see also British Film Institute Moving Images 52, British Film Institute Look Again 46). From the perspective of material selection, this means that a particular film can be considered effective teaching material.

erzählt?) und dessen besonderen Darstellungsverfahren (Wie erzählt der Film?) vorbereitet.“
(Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 2)
in a beginners’ classroom if it lends itself for the development of (one of) these competencies just described.

Yet, taking a closer look at these competencies relevant for young learners, it becomes evident that “a detailed film analysis is certainly something for the English language teaching classroom at an upper secondary level. But in order to make the analysis of a film equally natural for learners as the analysis of written texts, the development of audio-visual literacy and the ability to analyse images should start much earlier than it is commonly the case”9 (Suhrkamp Teaching Films 5-6). Since the importance of developing audio-visual literacy already at an early stage of learning is indeed highlighted in many relevant publications (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 83, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 2, Suhrkamp Teaching Films 5-6, Toth 20, British Film Institute Look Again 14), it seems a particularly essential task of film-based foreign language teaching at an absolute beginners’ level to focus the learners’ attention towards the audible and visual codes as unique of the medium of film so as to guide them towards expressing their perception of these codes in the target language (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 20-21). Taking this into account, it might be concluded that a film can be regarded as effective teaching material in a beginners’ classroom in particular if it helps to create opportunities for authentic, purposeful learner contributions based on the audible and visual representation of core components of the film.

With regard to all the skills and competencies that can be developed with the help of film during this “foundation stage” (British Film Institute Look Again 21), it needs to be pointed out that one single film is unlikely to lend itself equally well for the development of each skill or competency. This means that there is no universally effective film. Instead, any material can only be effective in view of specific lesson aims. These intended lesson aims then determine which particular criteria an audio-visual text should fulfil and thus, also the teachers’ selection process (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 78).

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9 “Im Detail ist die Filmanalyse sicherlich etwas für den Englischunterricht in der Oberstufe. Damit die Analyse eines Films für die Lernenden aber ebenso selbstverständlich wird wie die Analyse literarischer Texte, sollte mit der Förderung des Hör-Seh Verstehens und der Ausprägung bildanalytischer Fertigkeiten viel früher begonnen werden als dies bisher in der Regel der Fall ist.” (Suhrkamp Teaching Films 5-6)
2.2. Exploiting Audio-Visual Material Effectively With Beginners

In order to conduct a successful foreign language lesson for beginners which is based on effective audio-visual texts, it is essential to the success of the lesson that the teacher does not withdraw to “[l]et the video do the work” (Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 49) after the start button was pressed. Instead, similar to the students, he or she has to take an active role in order to make it possible for learners to draw maximum benefit from the potential of a particular, theoretically effective film (cf. Biechele 17). From the perspective of film, this means that in actual practice, a film is not an effective teaching resource per se only because it lends itself for the development of relevant skills and competencies as it does not stimulate learning automatically. Rather, it must be made effective with the help of specific tasks, exercises and other methodological decisions so as to help learners develop these skills and competencies. As Alan Maley (ix) puts it, “simply to view films in English is not enough. To appreciate them fully and at the same time develop our linguistic powers, help is needed in accessing their messages and integrating them with language learning”. Compared to more advanced foreign language learners at an upper secondary level, language beginners need more help to achieve this aim. Yet, it is possible to make use of the entire potential of audio-visual material as a teaching resource also with these learners and help them to benefit from film-based foreign language teaching by facilitating their comprehension of films and consequently, the learning effect related to film-based teaching (cf. Graham, Thaler 27, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 6). In the course of this chapter, ways will be suggested how to effectively work with film with beginners.

With regard to tasks, exercises and methodological decisions, it needs to be emphasised that teachers should constantly remind themselves as well as their learners that linguistic comprehension is not the only aim of film-based foreign language teaching (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 26). Hence, it is not always required to the same extent (cf. Arcario 112, 120). In general, the degree to which the learners’ linguistic comprehension is relevant for the success of a film-based lesson is dependent on what the teacher wants the children to learn in a particular lesson (Arcario 112, 120). Indeed, most of the aims of film-based teaching can be developed with the help of tasks that do not require the learners to understand each and every utterance made by the characters in the film (cf. Sherman 119).
If it is the aim of a particular lesson to increase the learners’ target language proficiency, film can contribute to this in two different ways. It can either be exploited as a source of linguistic input with specific tasks focusing on language aspects that are part of the characters’ speech in the film or it can function as an introduction to a certain topic inviting student responses either in written or spoken form, based on the events taking place in the fictional world on the screen (Arcario 110). In the first case, “language [is] generated by the screen” as opposed to the second case, where “language [is] generated by the class about what happens on the screen” (Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 25).

Obviously, the linguistic demand posed by the material or the learners’ ability to understand verbal interaction, respectively, is less crucial in the second case, where the learners themselves do the talking (or writing) after having watched the video (Arcario 112, 120). To give but one example of film-based teaching to increase the learners’ productive skills, Hofmann (13) has provided her first-year learners of English with a still from the short film *Lifted* showing two aliens together with the task to “[a]dd thought bubbles and write down what they are thinking and feeling”, based on the visible and audible impressions they have gained from the short film so far.

With such a change of lesson focus away from “language generated by the screen” (Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 25) by exploiting the multiple modes of the medium of film and their vast potential for a beginners’ classroom as it was done by Hofmann, the problem of high linguistic demand posed by a film can be eliminated completely. Indeed, both the visual level of film as well as its music lend themselves perfectly for tasks focusing exclusively on the visual or audible representation of events, respectively (Arcario 120, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 51-52). With both of these modes being the starting point for tasks focusing inevitably on “language generated by the class about what happens on the screen” (Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 25), close attention to both of these layers of films does not demand any target language knowledge from the learners.

What is more, such tasks focusing on “language generated by the class about what happens on the screen” (Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 25) make it possible to exploit the material as “writing and speech prompts”10 (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 122), thus “encouraging them to talk and write about films and their

10 “Die Arbeit mit Filmen eröffnet vielfältige Schreib- und Sprechanlässe, durch die die mündlichen und schriftlichen Kompetenzen der Lernenden gezielt gefördert werden können.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 122)
individual experience of film reception in the target language”¹¹ (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 20). Using films like this allows all learners to express their opinion regardless of their proficiency in the target language since they can do so according to their language level by either responding in one word answers or coherent sentences, shorter or longer sentences, basic or more advanced vocabulary etc. (cf. Weisshaar 19-20). As soon as their limited target language still needs to be compensated or aims to be expanded, the teacher can, of course, easily do so by eventually scaffolding or (pre-)teaching respective key words and phrases (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 155, Biechele 17).

A focus on a film’s visual level offers sheer endless possibilities for lower secondary teachers when it comes to the development of particular language skills. After the viewing process, the teacher can, for instance, ask learners to verbalise the events just seen on the screen, thus helping them to increase their pool of words and develop speaking skills. Alternatively, teachers can make it the learners’ task to bring those events, which have already been summarised in short simple sentences on a handout, into the correct order (cf. Weisshaar 22). This can particularly challenge their reading skills. While both of these exercises just described already demand a certain proficiency level in the target language, Donaghy (Action 39) has come up with an activity focusing on the visual level that can already be used with absolute beginners in one of their very first foreign language lessons. For this activity, learners are dictated or given a list of a certain number of words denoting animals or things in the target language, which they need to compare with a short film. It is their task to differentiate the vocabulary items according to their presence or absence in the audio-visual text by detecting those items which are visually represented in the video. To do so, they have to remember the meaning of each vocabulary item on their list, which is why it is an equally engaging and effective vocabulary revision.

Also aspects of sound and music can be effectively exploited to increase the learners’ target language knowledge. Yet, due to the (semi-)technical terms required to describe the sound properties of an instrument or a character’s voice usually far exceeding the vocabulary knowledge of young learners, a detailed description of these elements will indeed turn out to be more fruitful at higher levels with more experienced foreign

¹¹ “Aufgabe des Fremdsprachenunterrichts ist es, Schülerinnen und Schüler in der Fremdsprache zum Sprechen und Schreiben über Filme und ihre individuellen Rezeptionserfahrungen zu motivieren.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 20)
language learners having more extensive and specialised vocabulary knowledge. Yet, in contrast to this, focussing on the perception and effect of the music created by these instruments or a character’s voice is a way to acknowledge the importance of a film’s sound level which, with substantial language support, is even possible at a basic level and with relatively limited target language proficiency (cf. Henseler Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 155, British Film Institute Moving Images 8). Suitable tasks can be created based on the following questions taken from the British Film Institute (Look Again 9) and Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (Filme Englischunterricht 156):

- When is there silence/no sound/no music in the film? Why?
- What kind of music is this?
- What feelings/images does the music suggest to you?

As already indicated by the questions above, apart from increasing the learners’ target language knowledge, focussing on the two modes of a film allows learners to increase their audio-visual literacy (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 16, Thaler 41). Related to this, it cannot be emphasised enough that learners cannot be too young or less proficient in the target language to be guided towards an analysis of aspects unique to film and constituting its modes (British Film Institute Look Again 10, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 26). Thoughtfully reflected methodological decisions make it possible to raise even young learners’ awareness towards a film’s complexity and the unique way it creates and spreads messages through its compositional aspects, thereby increasing the learners’ competencies related to film.

To work on this issue with young learners, the use of stills, for instance, has proven itself particularly in practice with less proficient foreign language learners (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 154). With the help of stills, learners have enough time to study specific aspects of a film and reflect on the possible reasons for these decisions made during the production process (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 154). This benefit of stills can be best exploited by using the so-called “freeze frame” technique, where the events on the screen are stopped on several incidents to draw the learners’ attention to the multitude of supposedly minor details frequently not actively noticed such as “[t]he position of elements within the image, the colours used, and the lighting” as well as “camera distance (e.g. close-up,
long shot etc.), camera angle and camera movement”. Due to all of these compositional
details significantly influencing the viewers’ perception of and opinion on what is
depicted, working with stills is an effective way to help young learners become visually
literate (British Film Institute *Look Again* 8).

Although it is the aim of audio-visual literacy to see how images and sound/music
create meaning in combination (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Verbindung* 7), it is
often difficult for young learners to process a film’s audible and visual representation
simultaneously (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 166). So as
to make it easier for them, the two modes of a film can be analysed separately at first
(Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Verbindung* 7). Apart from enhancing comprehension,
a separate focus on a film’s visual and audible representation of events makes work with
film more engaging as the unknown level creates excitement and makes the learners
curious about what it might look or sound like (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme
Englischunterricht* 89).

So as to make the learners notice and experience the audible representation of events
more intensely, it is advisable to let the learners hear the sound and music of a film
without any visual support before confronting them with the two modes in combination.
To do so, teachers just need to switch off the screen of the computer. Based on their
audible impressions of the film such as the number of different voices they can hear,
how these voices sound and the exact sounds and music used in a particular situation,
learners can verbalise how they imagine the visual representation of the film to look
like. They can think about the concrete events that could happen in this particular scene,
where these events could take place and who might be involved (Henseler, Möller and
Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 91-92, Stempleski 15). The fact that learners can
guess and describe the visual level of a film based on their audible impressions raises
their awareness towards the importance of the sound level in the creation of meaning
(British Film Institute *Look Again* 9).

In contrast to this “sound only” technique, a single focus on the visual representation of
events as in the “silent viewing” technique helps the learners focus on the way a film
communicates through its images. To apply this technique, the film needs to be shown
without sound so as to omit any distractions caused by a film’s audible level. Based on
what they see, learners can then describe how a scene is visually realised on the screen.
Furthermore, this technique allows learners to come up with their own dialogues and
sound effects in a particular situation. In addition to training the learners’ observation skills, “silent viewing” is, most notably, also an effective way to enhance comprehension of a film’s verbally conveyed information. In contrast to traditional viewing of a film, “silent viewing” makes the learners realise the wealth of information that is conveyed through a film’s images more intensely and draws their attention to the context in which a speech situation takes place. Learners are thus made to realise clues possibly revealing the content of the discussion between the characters, which allow them to draw conclusions and help them make sense of spoken interactions (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 90).

A particularly useful universal suggestion which demonstrates how to fully exploit the potential of audio-visual material with language beginners despite their limited language proficiency comes from Arcario (117), who suggests “grad[ing] the task instead of the material”. Indeed, the right choice of (easier) observation tasks can help to successfully counteract the demand on learners when dealing with video in a foreign language teaching context. Just like with conventional listening and reading tasks, also tasks based on a film allow for a focus on overall comprehension similar to listening/reading for gist rather than detailed information (Thaler 42, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 197). A task focusing on overall comprehension of a film addresses core components of the storyline such as the overall theme of the film, the depiction of characters, the events on the screen and the places where they are taking place. From experience, these aspects lend themselves perfectly for work with absolute beginners (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 170, Hildebrand 294), but also raise young learners’ curiosity the most (Thaler 182). Related to these basic narrative components, Thaler (182) has formulated questions related to these so-called “4 P’s” that allow for a global, yet informative analysis of almost any (audio-visual) text rather than a detailed analysis.
The common characteristic of all questions related to the “4 P’s” (Thaler 182) presented in the table with the exception of one (What do they say? Can you repeat what X says?) is that they are not dependent on the learners’ ability to understand verbally conveyed information and thus, perfectly suitable starting points for engagement with film in a beginners’ classroom appropriate to the learners’ linguistic and general cognitive abilities.

Aside from enhancing comprehension, focussing on these global questions is also an effective way to make learners purposefully and actively engage with the material. First of all, such questions make it possible to train their competencies related to narrative aspects of any kind of story. Thus, they can be considered valuable points of departure for the development of the learners’ productive skills with regard to both, their target language proficiency and the composition of their own films. At the same time, identifying and understanding these basic components of a story lays the foundation for
a critical analysis of a film in relation to its production and influence on the mass at a later stage of learning (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp FilmsEnglishunterricht 18). Second, global questions are also a means to avoid “talking [the film] to death”12, which is essential so as not to ruin the experience of watching film and TV, owing its high status just to its enormous entertainment value (Hildebrand 293).

Another universal, yet no less effective suggestion to help learners deal with audio-visual material is reducing its length. In contrast to higher levels, where learners have developed the necessary concentration and comprehension skills to work with full-length film material, it is advisable for younger learners to introduce them to film-based teaching with material of relatively short length (Graham 64, Hayes 47, Stempleski and Tomalin 7, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 2, Thaler 25-26). Contrary to many assumptions, a film does not need to be very long to serve as the basis for engaging lessons filled with learning (Arcario 118-119). Yet, it is absolutely essential that the scenes chosen “make sense” and are “complete in [themselves]”, no matter how short they are (Tomalin Young Children 49). Focusing exclusively on short, particularly promising scenes has several advantages for the foreign language classroom, particularly if they manage to tell an arguably very short story (cf. Tomalin Young Children 49-50, Gallacher). First, audio-visual material of short length takes into account the learners’ limited concentration span by reducing the amount of input that needs to be processed (cf. Donaghy Action 21, Burwitz-Melzer Literarische Texte 226). Second, it makes it possible to do a closer analysis of a certain aspect of the film and still leaves enough time to exploit it for the development of the learners’ language skills, thereby not exceeding the limited time available within one lesson (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp FilmsEnglishunterricht 36, Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 14, Thaler 151, Schwerdtfeger 47). Third, due to their suitability for close examination of film-specific or linguistic details, short sequences help learners focus their attention since teachers can provide them with a clear while-viewing task before showing the video (Thaler 27). Fourth, they make it possible to watch the video more than once within a single lesson (Massi and Blázquez Shorter Better 36, Stempleski and Tomalin 7, Schwerdtfeger 47). This is not only helpful to overcome comprehension difficulty (cf. Stempleski and Tomalin 7), but also allows teachers to use various different approaches in order to achieve the intended aim within one lesson, which Tomalin (Young Children

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12 “Auch bei der Beschäftigung mit TV-Serie kommt es darauf an, den Gegenstand mit Hilfe analytischer Ansätze kritisch zu untersuchen, ohne ihn aber zu zerreden oder jeglicher Faszination zu berauben.” (Hildebrand 293)
51) considers “[t]he secret to success” when it comes to using audio-visual material with young learners. Apart from preventing learners from getting bored, changing tasks and activities are a highly effective way to combine several linguistic skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking and to simultaneously work on them within a relatively short period of time, thus being an example of optimum exploitation of film in the classroom (Tomalin Young Children 51, Schwerdtfeger 46, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 123).

While the suggestions just explained all succeed in making it easier for young learners to cope with audio-visual classroom material, subtitles are only a suboptimal solution for the large gap between the language level of a film and language beginners. Although they might seem to be the perfect way to bridge this gap at first glance (Film: 21st Century Literacy 14, Harji, Woods and Alavi 38), the fact that “the eye is more powerful than the ear“ (Sherman 16) will make them do more harm than good when it comes to their intended role as an aid to achieve certain lesson aims (Sherman 16-17). This is true particularly when a film is watched to develop the learners’ listening skills (Kaiser 239). Generally speaking, subtitles in the learners’ first language accompanying films directed in the target language can hardly be regarded as a valuable tool to increase the learners’ target language proficiency (Sherman 17, Henseler Dreams 21). Although such written translations of spoken language into a more familiar language might make less proficient foreign language learners feel more comfortable with the material (Kaiser 239), they demand more attention from the learner than the actual film, which should actually be the main focus of attention (Sherman 17, Henseler Dreams 21). The situation is similar with regard to subtitles in the target language for films directed in the target language, also referred to as captions (Kaiser 239). With the exception of reading skills, such additional written cues to meaning will most likely not help learners develop their foreign language skills. In view of young learners’ limited target language proficiency also affecting their ability to read – and understand – English subtitles within a limited period of time, this advantage does not seem to be relevant in lower secondary classrooms (cf. Henseler Dreams 21). In view of these insights, the decision whether to use such a supposed comprehension aid needs to be particularly thoughtfully reflected (cf. Sherman 17, Sundquist 127).

The use of transcripts in an attempt to help learners meet the linguistic demands of a film requires similarly careful considerations as it can be equally counterproductive since they “increase students’ tendency to focus on individual words at the expense of the
whole“ (Sherman 119). Generally speaking, handing out written versions of (part of) a film’s dialogue is therefore likely to be as effective a distraction from the medium of film as subtitles. Similar to subtitles, the fact that learners will “be able to listen and read simultaneously“ (Graham 64) will rather be a disadvantage than the desired advantage as transcripts will most likely turn any activity into a traditional reading activity owing to the strong appeal of visual signs (Sherman 16). Despite these drawbacks of this supposed comprehension aid when working with film, transcripts can be used to alleviate a serious concern of many students having just started to learn a foreign language. Indeed, they can be an effective means to fill comprehension gaps that are a frustrating, yet inevitable consequence of film-based teaching with beginners (Sherman 119). This advantage can be fully exploited and its negative consequences omitted if they are provided subsequent to the film-related exercises as an additional resource rather than during the while-viewing phase (cf. Viney and Viney Interview).

After this focus on film as a teaching resource from the perspective of its effectiveness, it will now be considered with regard to its suitability for young learners.
3. Film and Its Suitability for Beginners

3.1. Discussion of Film Selection in Relation to Young Learners

Not every audio-visual text considered as effective teaching material is equally suitable for each language learning context and for every group of learners (cf. Biechele 15). Basically, the choice of pedagogically suitable audio-visual material should be guided by a principal concern. Teachers should make it a major aim to avoid demotivating their students by introducing films that are too challenging for them in terms of topical focus or language use (Kreis 41, Hayes 47, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 32).

To help teachers decide on film material that is appropriate for their learners in a sense that it is in line with their general knowledge of the world and their target language knowledge, teachers need to know their learners as well as the film in great detail (cf. Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 177-178, Howard and Major 102, 104; King). In order to effectively work with film in the classroom, it is highly recommended to base the selection of material on the characteristics, abilities and needs of learners (Pineda qtd. in Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 177-178). Placing the learners at the heart of the selection process will make them engage more actively with the material and consequently, also in whole the learning process (Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 177) and is therefore absolutely essential so as to create “meaningful, dynamic, challenging, enjoyable, and effective learning settings” (Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 178). This is why the suitability of audio-visual material for lower secondary learners will be discussed in close relation to the characteristics, abilities and needs of young learners.

The following illustration created by the author of this thesis attempts to define foreign language learners according to certain properties as identified by Biechele (15-16), Donaghy (*Action* 21), Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (*Filme Englischunterricht* 32-33), King, Gallacher and Tomalin (*Young Children* 49-50). The distinct characteristics of learners can be used as relevant observation points for teachers and form the basis for an informative learner profile.
The illustration above shows that the appropriateness of a film for a specific group of learners is dependent on their culture, their development in terms of both personality and cognitive abilities as well as their foreign language skills. All of these factors help learners deal effectively with the medium as a means to make sense of all the information entering their minds via visual and auditory channels to decode its message, thus making in-depth intellectual involvement with information possible (Biechele 15-16). As such, all of them need to be taken into account in the selection of films suitable for lower secondary learners of a foreign language (Biechele 15-16, Donaghy Action 21, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 32-33, Howard and Major 102, King, Gallacher, Tomalin Young Children 49-50).

First of all, teachers need to pay particular attention towards acknowledging the heterogeneity of a group of learners in terms of the learners’ cultural background(s). This is essential for culturally sensitive material choices. Obviously, only films dealing with issues accepted and considered unproblematic not only in the target culture, but also in the culture(s) of the learners are suitable classroom material (Gallacher, Arcario 118, Donaghy Action 21, Herrero and Chan 12, King). Needless to say, films like Sacha Baron Cohen’s comedy The Dictator, which rely on racist jokes and intentional negative stereotypical representations of certain members of a community to evoke
laughter among their viewers, can hardly be regarded as fulfilling this essential criterion and are therefore not suitable for the foreign language classroom.

Secondly, teachers must select material that is in line with the learners’ cognitive and personal development. As the development of cognitive abilities is a gradual process, care needs to be taken so as not to face children with films dealing with issues they are not yet able to process properly (Hildebrand 292). In order “to be sure that the materials do not run ahead of the children’s level of maturity” (Tomalin *Young Children* 50), thus being appropriate for the learners’ cognitive and personal development, it is therefore crucial to consider the appropriateness of films for different age groups when selecting audio-visual material for teaching purposes (The F.I.L.M Project 8, Gallacher, Thaler 26).

Dependent on the learners’ age are in particular the topics likely to “[appeal] to the emotions of the learners” (Donaghy *Action* 21). The importance of finding topics that do so cannot be emphasised enough as such a correspondence is absolutely essential so as to encourage and maintain their active involvement with the material. With respect to this involvement, issues likely to be part of the lives of young learners can be considered most effective, which is why films dealing with relevant issues for the respective target group should be preferred in the classroom (Biechele 16, Burwitz-Melzer *Literarische Texte* 225). Personal experience allows learners to relate to the world presented on the screen, which creates the desire to talk about what they have seen. This desire can then serve as a basis for purposeful and valuable learner contributions and as such, as an authentic opportunity to use the target language (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 8-9).

In order to find such appealing material, teachers of lower secondary learners are generally advised to take into account the learners’ preferred films and TV programs watched at home for enjoyment. In contrast to primary school children usually preferring very basic topics and storylines, popular material among the target group chosen already deals with slightly complex and even controversial issues. Therefore, teachers can already start introducing issues currently relevant for society or conflicts typical of teenagers coming of age (Burwitz-Melzer *Literarische Texte* 226). Love, adolescence and the development of one’s own personal self might have already become an issue for lower secondary learners, which is why such topics should already be addressed at these lower levels with films dealing with these issues (Hildebrand 292).
With regard to the development tasks of children, Burwitz-Melzer (*Literarische Texte* 226) explicitly encourages an engagement with the topic of failure and other possibly negative experiences, among which she mentions “loneliness, also within one’s family, experiences of separation and fears in the lives of children”\(^{13}\).

Indeed, childhood, and particularly also adolescence, is an equally defining and troublesome time for people when most of them are struggling with essential questions of life and their own role in it. It is characterised by an increased self-awareness and is full of insecurities, which many children and teenagers try to compensate with the help of film. The learners’ gradually developing personal identity as well as their distorted self-perception accompanying them during the process of growing-up sensitise young adults towards the perception of their surrounding and thus, also film (Hildebrand 292).

In an attempt to find solutions for their own personal issues, young adults quite often try to find orientation on the screen. In view of this circumstance, addressing potentially problematic issues typical of adolescence can be seen as an opportunity to provide young learners with such orientation or, in Hildebrand’s (23) words, an “aid for personal development”\(^{14}\) (Hildebrand 24-25, 292, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 12).

Although not being directly involved in the action, learners can significantly benefit from the thematisation of such sensitive issues just by observing other people going through similarly difficult phases of their lives, which might eventually help them to successfully manage these phases themselves (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 12). According to Bandura (22),

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\text{Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (Bandura 22)}
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Being “source[s] of vicarious personal experience” (Sanders 144), such films allow learners to see and evaluate different coping strategies “from the safe perspective of a

\(^{13}\)“Die muttersprachliche Lektüre und die in der Regel frequentierten Fernseghewohnheiten der Acht- bis Zwölfjährigen weisen heute in eine ganz andere Richtung: Zu spannenden Erzählungen, die auch schon gesellschaftliche Problemstellungen beinhalten, zur Darstellung des Alltags multikultureller Familien, zur Darstellung von problematischen Emotionen wie Einsamkeit, auch in der Familie, Trennungserfahrungen und Ängste im kindlichen Leben.” (Burwitz-Melzer *Literarische Texte* 226)

\(^{14}\)“Das Fernsehen wird in diesem Lebensalter zweifellos als Hilfe zur Persönlichkeitsbildung herangezogen.” (Hildebrand 23)
spectator”15, which they can then maybe apply in their own situation (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 12).

Generally speaking, with regard to the topical focus of a film, it is of highest significance to address only child-friendly themes and topics in the foreign language classroom. Particularly in a beginners’ classroom, where learners are relatively young, care needs to be taken so as not to address potentially traumatising or age-inappropriate issues. With regard to this matter, the PG-rating is a useful reference for teachers to select feature films spreading exclusively “positive messages” (The F.I.L.M. Project 8). With their complete abandonment of taboo words, sexual references or references to drug addiction and only “minimal” violence (The F.I.L.M. Project 9), films rated with a G are suited for “general audiences” (Motion Picture Association of America) and as such, a safe choice for language teachers wishing to work with film in the classroom. Similarly uncontroversial in a lower secondary teaching context are films rated PG. Although “parental guidance [is] suggested” (Motion Picture Association of America) for very young children viewing such films, the still highly restricted depiction of aggressive and sexually alluding behaviour will most certainly not influence lower secondary learners’ personal development in a negative manner. In contrast to the two lowest ratings just described, films rated PG-13 are not considered suitable for beginners but are recommended for a teaching context at upper secondary level or slightly below, at the earliest (The F.I.L.M. Project 8).

While consideration of child-friendly material might seem straightforward at first glance, certain surprises become evident when taking a closer look at the PG-rating of popular films for young people. Although the Harry Potter books and films have become established as classics in the field of children’s and young adult’s literature, their film ratings indicate that not all of these films can be considered appropriate classroom material for work with 10-year-olds. In contrast to the film adaptations of the first three books having been rated PG, the later productions do not belong to this supposed “family category” (McCintock) any more due to their increasing focus on violent behaviour and the gloomy atmosphere (Hildebrand 291). Although this development was meant to be a logical consequence of the protagonists becoming more and more mature and the events slowly leading to the final encounter between Harry

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15 “Allerdings geschieht dies aus der gefahrlosen Position des Zuschauers bzw. der Zuschauerin, indem die Lernenden sich und ihre Lebenssituation, ihre Erfahrungen und Wünsche in den dargestellten Figuren, Situationen und Konfliktkonstellationen spiegeln.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 12)
and his ultimate nemesis (McClintock), changes of the target audience due to developments like this cause a dilemma for teachers, for whom it becomes difficult to account for young learners’ interest in films like the *Harry Potter* series that has been aroused, in this particular case, with the first three films (cf. Hildebrand 291). Such cases require a particularly thoughtful and reflective teacher selecting certain scenes without an overt depiction of violence or other issues deemed unsuitable for the target group (Hildebrand 290).

In practice, finding appealing, yet non-disturbing audio-visual classroom material that deals with events in a way that is understandable for young learners is not always easy. This becomes obvious, for instance, with regard to the genre of superhero movies. Although most of those films have been given a PG-13 rating (Yueh), their following has exceeded their intended audience, resulting in an increasingly younger fan base (MrWeiler). But despite the huge popularity of such films among people of all ages, it would be a fatal decision to automatically grant all these productions access to the classroom only because of this development. For instance, teachers cannot expose their young learners to the immensely gloomy and overtly brutal scenes which make up a large part of the Netflix productions which have brought the popular comic heroes Jessica Jones and Daredevil on screen. Audio-visual texts containing such potentially unsettling and at worst, frightening content cannot be deemed suitable for young learners despite their possible interest in these recent series. Similarly prone to traumatising young viewers is the blockbuster *Deadpool*. Apart from the serious background of the protagonist of the same name as the film, the not yet fully developed cognitive abilities of young learners would not allow them to make sense of the constant use of sarcasm, irony and cynicism and the frequent intertextual references in the film. Due to these issues, this superhero movie would also be an unsuitable choice of classroom material for young learners. Teachers wishing to account for superhero movies as examples of a long-lasting trend in popular culture as well as their learners’ interest in them would be best advised to base their lesson on uncontroversial material such as the PG-rated animated Pixar production *The Incredibles* or the equally child-friendly Cartoon Network series *The Powerpuff Girls*, the latter having even won two Emmy Awards as well as the highly coveted Kids’ Choice Award (Prudom).

In an attempt to avoid introducing material that is beyond the learners “level of maturity” (Tomalin *Young Children* 50), teachers need to take care so as not to fall into the opposite extreme. This would mean confronting the learners with material actually
intended for a younger audience, which might possibly be below their cognitive and personal development. Lower secondary learners might not react positively towards any material overtly addressing even younger (pre-school) children, such as the immensely popular and award-winning, though infantile, animated series Peppa Pig, which would most likely reduce their overall interest in the video and consequently, also the learning effect (Gallacher, Burwitz-Melzer *Literarische Texte* 225-226, Hildebrand 23). Experience has shown that teachers indeed are more prone to selecting topics or material, which is below rather than beyond the learners’ cognitive and personal development. This phenomenon can be traced back to the dilemma that most authentic audio-visual material dealing with appealing content for children and teenagers features language far beyond the linguistic level of foreign language learners attending lower secondary school (Burwitz-Melzer *Literarische Texte* 225-226).

This insight leads over to the final learner characteristic teachers need to consider when selecting a film, their knowledge of the target language. Although the learners’ proficiency in the target language obviously helps to understand the words spoken by film characters and should be taken into account in film selection (Donaghy *Action* 21, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 32), successfully dealing with a film and comprehending it demands more from the learners than target language knowledge, which is why this criterion should not lie at the heart of the selection process (cf. Biechele 15). Other factors, in particular the learners’ cognitive development and cultural background, seem to be much more decisive factors affecting the comprehension of a film than their ability to understand every single word spoken in the film. Without these two characteristics, learners cannot make sense of a film’s message (Biechele 16).

As a multimodal medium, film does not only communicate with words, but “creates meaning on several intelligible levels of film language” (Hinterberger 55-56). This is why the degree to which a film is accessible and thus, suitable for young learners is dependent on characteristics of a film which admittedly include, but go far beyond its verbally conveyed information. These characteristics that determine the suitability of a film in terms of its accessibility for young learners will be explained in the following chapter.
3.2. Comprehension-Enhancing Criteria of Film

Many scholars such as Arcario (113-120), Berk (6-8), Sherman (15), Suhrkamp (Teaching Films 6), Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (Filme Englischunterricht 32-33, 165), Herrero and Chan (12), Thaler (26-27) and most recently, also Donaghy (Action 21) have tried to provide a point of reference by differentiating between films according to certain features likely to help learners understand them. In an attempt to answer the question “What makes films easy or difficult?” (Sherman 15), all of them have come up with similar issues. In the table below, the main factors affecting comprehension of a film according to the researchers mentioned are summarised by the author of this thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>videos presenting a story from the</td>
<td>incomplete scenes presenting only part of a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beginning to the end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chronological storyline</td>
<td>non-chronological storyline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple story in line with genre convention</td>
<td>complex story with multiple storylines deviating from genre convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited number of characters and settings</td>
<td>high number of characters and settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extensive exploitation of visuals to convey meaning</td>
<td>low exploitation of visuals to convey meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extensive exploitation of sound/music to convey meaning</td>
<td>low exploitation of sound/music to convey meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convergence between action and dialogue/sound/music</td>
<td>divergence between action and dialogue/sound/music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no speech overlap</td>
<td>speech overlap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slow, clear speech in one (standard) accent</td>
<td>fast, unclear speech with a mix of accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little (semi-)technical vocabulary</td>
<td>much (semi-)technical vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little dialogue</td>
<td>much dialogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Characteristics of Audio-Visual Material Enhancing and Hindering Comprehension

As illustrated in the table above, there are several factors influencing the degree to which it is difficult for learners to deal with audio-visual material. In a beginners’ classroom, film-based teaching should be based on material characterised by features listed in the left column of the table claimed to ease comprehension (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 32-33, Thaler 26-27).
In view of young learners’ general fascination by good stories (Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 65, Pinter Reflections 5, Bland 3), suitable audio-visual teaching material for lower secondary learners meets this need by telling a story. In line with this, narrative text types should be preferred with beginners (cf. Thaler 26). The narratives of these texts should feature all relevant components of a story from the beginning to the end (Tomalin Young Children 49-50, Gallacher). This is especially relevant to young learners attending a first or second form of lower secondary school. Young learners in this category may appreciate complete stories as they will be helpful in the process of making sense of the events taking place in the fictional world (Tomalin Video, TV and Radio 65, Tomalin Young Children 49-50, Shrum and Glisan 192). An intact storyline allows learners to make valuable contextual inferences and thus, enables them to compensate for a lack of comprehension (Thaler 152, Shrum and Glisan 196). Apart from being complete, the story of the film should tell the events in a linear way (Thaler 27). A chronological order of events acknowledges the connection of scenes with each other. As such, it is essential so as to create a sense of coherence, which additionally enhances comprehension of the meaning of a text (Shrum and Glisan 192). Next to its comprehension-facilitating effect, a complete, coherent story allows learners to “[forget] about [their] problems, [immerge] into fictitious worlds, [be] lost to reality” (Thaler 135). It offers the possibility for learners to experience film’s original function as a powerful source of entertainment “[transporting] viewers into a state of delightful entertainment and thrilling suspense” also in an educational context (Thaler 152). Working with audio-visual material that tells a complete, coherent story can therefore not only be regarded as a comprehension aid, but also as an easy, but no less effective way to meet a major demand on (film-based) foreign language teaching with young learners: making them enjoy the journey towards becoming proficient foreign language users by evoking positive associations related to language learning (Tomalin Young Children 48, Pinter Reflections 4).

Concerning the actual story that is told, learners having just begun to learn a foreign language very often appreciate material where the events follow a simple, straightforward storyline which they can easily grasp (Donaghy Action 21). Comprehension is enhanced even more if this storyline is characteristic of films belonging to this genre and without any unexpected deviations from conventions (Donaghy Action 21, Sherman 15, Herrero and Chan 12). Such stories make it easier for younger learners to relate to the events on the screen by drawing on their prior
experience in connection with a certain film genre (cf. Thaler 26, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 172).

Another characteristic of a story that makes it more easily comprehensible is the number of characters and settings featured in the story (Suhrkamp *Teaching Films* 6, Thaler 26, 179, Berk 7). Apart from usually limiting the amount of verbally conveyed language that needs to be processed, a film or scene featuring only one or two different characters allows learners to focus more intensely on them, which increases the chances that they will be able to make sense of their verbal and non-verbal interactions (cf. Berk 7). Similarly, it aids comprehension if learners only have to focus on events taking place in one or two settings since it limits the number of props and other contextual clues that need to be interpreted by the learners.

Apart from the story itself, also the way the story is told can enhance the learners’ comprehension. In view of the limited language proficiency of lower secondary learners, teachers are well-advised to select audio-visual material fully exploiting the potential of its images, sound and music as (major) means to convey meaning.

Rich visual input and expressive images allow learners to access a film more easily (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 32, Gallacher, Arcario 113). Therefore, in the words of Prša (12), “the more information learners can extract from the visual level of a sequence, the more learner-friendly is the sequence“\(^{16}\). Tomalin (*Young Children* 48) explains the facilitating effect of a film’s visual level when it comes to understanding the speech of the characters as follows:

> Unlike a picture book, video allows children to learn not only how speakers are dressed and what their environment is but how people move as they speak, how others react to what they say, and so on. Learning is easier for the child because the more complete visual context presented by video supplies additional clues to meaning. (Tomalin *Young Children* 48)

As mentioned by Tomalin (*Young Children* 48), such “additional clues to meaning” that help learners make sense of spoken interaction on a visual level are typically provided by a character’s outer appearance, facial expressions, gestures, body language and movements, all of which carry meaning and facilitate the learners’ understanding of a character’s speech (cf. Thaler 178).

\(^{16}\) “Je mehr Informationen die Schüler den Bildern einer Sequenz entnehmen können, desto lernerfreundlicher ist sie (vgl. Brandi: 15, 171).” (Prša 12)
So as to help learners bridge the large gap between their own proficiency level in the target language and the language level of a film but also to make its overall meaning clear to them, all images of a film should be depicted in a way that helps learners make sense of the events on the screen. In line with this, suitable material for a beginners’ classroom should consist of “unambiguous, easy-to-interpret iconic signs [...] students can easily access by relating to their general world-knowledge” (Hinterberger 55).

What is more, in view of the overall comprehension-facilitating effect of a film’s images, it is suggested to use material that not only contains such signs, but features a high number of them. An accumulation of such “unambiguous, easy-to-interpret iconic signs” (Hinterberger 55) allows learners to access a film more easily by providing a particularly “high degree of visual support” (Donaghy *Action* 21) (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 32). Typically, rich visual input as a consequence of an accumulation of such images can be found in action-packed films or scenes. Scenes with a lot of action such as one of the adventurous hunts of the male cat Tom for the smart mouse Jerry tend to feature a variety of expressive images functioning as their main mode of communication. Compared to, for instance, interviews, such material is therefore more easily accessible and consequently, more suitable for beginners (cf. Donaghy *Action* 21, Sherman 15, Arcario 115).

Apart from rich visual input, it also enhances the learners’ overall understanding of a film if it makes extensive use of sound and music to convey meaning (cf. Weisshaar, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 165). In particular the music of a film is a similarly expressive and powerful means of communication as a film’s visual level. With regard to this, Borstnar, Pabst and Wulff (141) state that “[a] happy mood, dangerous events, settings with their characteristic atmosphere, specific characters, recurring patterns of action or behaviour as well as the specific meaning of sequences can all be established with the help of music.”

As Borstnar, Pabst and Wulff’s observation shows, music can tell a story on an audible level. Consequently, the presence of music can help learners make sense of a scene by providing audible clues to its overall meaning (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 40, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Verbindung* 4). This is

17 “Fröhliche Stimmungen, bedrohliche Vorgänge, Schauplätze mit Lokalkolorit, spezifische Charaktere und Figuren, wiederkehrende Handlungsmuster, spezifische Bedeutungen von Handlungsegmenten für den Film können sämtlich über die musikalische Ebene etabliert werden.” (Borstnar, Pabst and Wulff 141)
particularly useful for scenes which do not feature extensive visual input or include dialogue or visual representations of events, which are potentially difficult to interpret for young learners. With regard to the latter case, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (*Filme Englischunterricht* 51) explain, “for instance, [i]f a film’s image does not clearly show whether a character has good or bad intentions in a particular situation, music can clarify these intentions”\(^{18}\).

So as to make sure the learners can follow and make sense of what is happening on the screen, not only the degree to which audio-visual teaching material makes use of a film’s images, sound and music is decisive, but also the relation in which these modes stand to each other (Thaler 23, 27, Toth 58, Herrero and Chan 12). Concerning this, there are two possibilities how a film’s audible and visual level can influence each other: Either a film’s visual and audible level function as an entity by corresponding with each other or they stand in opposition to each other (Borstnar, Pabst and Wulff 141, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Verbindung* 5, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 51). Generally speaking, it increases the chance that learners will understand what is going on on screen if the information they can decode from a film’s images and its sound and music make sense in combination. If one and the same or a very similar meaning is expressed with the help of two different modes, it makes the meaning of a scene more clear to the learners (cf. Serdinsky 93, Toth 51, 58). To provide a very basic example of a convergence between the image and sound level, a scene in which the camera captures the speaker while he or she communicates with another person and focuses exclusively on this character makes it easy for the learners to fill the gaps created by one mode with the information that can be inferred from the other mode (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Verbindung* 5, Arcario 113-114). Taking this into account, audio-visual material for less experienced foreign language learners should be characterised by a close relationship between sound and image level or, in the words of Thaler (27), by a “high sound-vision congruity”.

Perfect examples of such “sound-vision congruity” (Thaler 27) enhancing the learners’ understanding of a film’s verbally conveyed information can be found in films featuring scenes where characters announce an action, which is then immediately performed (Sherman 15, Donaghy *Action* 21). This is for instance the case in one of the screen

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\(^{18}\) “Wenn z.B. über das Filmbild nicht deutlich wird, ob eine Figur in einer bestimmten Situation gute oder böse Absichten verfolgt, kann die Musik Klarheit verschaffen.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 51)
adaptations of the famous fairy tale Cinderella, in which the mean stepsisters make the main protagonist do all the housework (Serdinsky 50). As correctly observed by Serdinsky (50), the viewers immediately understand what kind of housework Cinderella has been given by her stepsisters even if they are not able to make sense of the verbally conveyed commands since they can observe Cinderella carrying them out. In such scenes, a film’s images help to make verbal information more clear and thus, more easily understandable.

Yet, not only an overlap between verbally conveyed information and image enhances comprehension, but also a corresponding relationship between sound/music and image can help learners understand a film. Although in the latter case, the correspondence is not necessary to enhance the learners’ understanding of spoken interaction, it is essential so as to guarantee the overall understanding of a film and prevent confusion (Toth 58). Is, for instance, a romantic scene with two people exchanging amorous glances accompanied by the typical soft and slow music of string instruments, the music of this scene “reinforces its message”\(^{19}\) by telling the same story that is told on a visual level also on an audible level (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 51). While such a correspondence between image and music does not facilitate comprehension of verbal information, it certainly makes the overall meaning of a scene clear and does not leave any room for misinterpretations.

Next to a film’s images, sound and music, also its use of the target language influences the degree to which learners are able to make sense of a film. In view of Arcario’s (115) observation that “[i]t is usually the density of language that most contributes to a video scene being perceived as easy or difficult to comprehend” in terms of linguistic comprehension, the following rule of thumb can be established concerning the number of words uttered by the characters: The lower the “language density” of the material, the higher the chances that young learners can understand it (Thaler 22). Although the amount of spoken language does not determine the degree to which this language is understandable for young learners, a scene which does not feature much dialogue typically does not rely on verbally conveyed information as its dominant mode of communication. What is more, chances are high that little dialogue goes hand in hand with an increased exploitation of a film’s visual and audible level to create meaning so

\(^{19}\) “Nach Hansjörg Pauli (1976) kann die Musik das Bild unterstützen, indem sie dessen Aussage bekräftigt (Paraphrasierung).” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 51)
as to still allow for successful communication. This effect can be observed, for instance, in action scenes of conventional feature films or selected short films.

Generally speaking, the spoken language featured in a film or film scene that is intended to be used as teaching material in a beginners’ classroom should be expressed in a way that is accessible for less advanced target language users. Learners can more easily understand spoken language that is expressed slowly, in a comprehensible (standard) accent and without using sophisticated or specialised vocabulary (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 32, Thaler 27, Herrero and Chan 12, Arcario 115). In addition, it aids comprehension if characters take turns one after another and avoid interrupting each other (Donaghy *Action* 21).

Taking into account these comprehension-easing characteristics of spoken language, films in line with them are not always easy to find. Yet, there are certain films featuring characters that are likely to make other characters pay attention towards expressing themselves as clearly as possible to ensure successful communication. Scenes featuring these characters lend themselves particularly well for exploitation in the beginners’ classroom (Herrero and Chan 12, Sherman 16). Similar to real-life situations, such natural on-screen speech modifications can typically be encountered in conversations with people having a first language other than English or toddlers (Herrero and Chan 12). Characters from non-English-speaking countries are likely to be featured in films dealing with intercultural relations, such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 1* and 2. The Greek immigrants in these films are portrayed as people with a limited proficiency in English, which manifests itself in a tendency towards talking in a strong accent and using very basic vocabulary in their short utterances and functions as a marker of cultural difference between them and the population already living in America for a longer period of time. Similar speech adaptations can be observed in the formerly immensely popular series *Full House* and its recently released sequel *Fuller House*. Whenever the pre-school kid Michelle from *Full House* or D.J.’s youngest son Tommy in *Fuller House* are directly addressed by any member of the family, they do so with very carefully chosen and clearly articulated words in order to make sure the youngest family members can understand what they are saying. Other film situations predestined for communication breakdown and consequently, probably featuring language that is relatively easy to understand in order to overcome language barriers and avoid misunderstandings involve characters coming from another planet, such as the alien Alf in the iconic series of the same name, or other fantastic characters not existent in real
life (Sherman 16). In addition to these unreal characters, also characters intentionally depicted as not very intelligent can be more easily understandable for less proficient foreign language learners (Sherman 16). As an example of such a character, the equally beloved and smiled at Homer Simpson can be named. Being hardly known for his great intellect, his speech is characterised by occasional longer pauses for thought and a relatively low speech rate to depict his lack of intelligence also in the way he communicates with others.

3.3. Characteristics of Suitable Audio-Visual Teaching Material for Beginners

Based on the discussion of film selection in close relation to the characteristics of young learners, a broad definition of films that are suitable for these learners can be deduced. According to the insights gained in the course of this section, suitable films for young, less proficient lower secondary foreign language learners:

- are sensitive with regard to different cultures,
- are child-friendly in terms of content,
- address issues relevant to young learners and/or their daily reality,
- follow a clear structure,
- feature dialogue/spoken language that is easily comprehensible,
- make extensive use of expressive images which are easy to interpret,
- make extensive use of sound and music, and
- focus on these two modes as a means of communication rather than on spoken language

With these characteristics, this definition of audio-visual material that is suitable for teaching young learners joins the ranks of a variety of other definitions describing child-approved audio-visual teaching resources according to similar characteristics. Most notably, those by Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (Filme Englischunterricht 32-33), Gallacher, Donaghy (Action 21), Arcario (113-120), Thaler (26-27) and Tomalin (Young Children 49-50) need to be mentioned.

Similar to Gallacher and Arcario (117), who have split up their desired characteristics of child-approved audio-visual teaching material according to “general criteria“ and criteria increasingly essential “for presenting language or for comprehension tasks“ (Gallacher), an important distinction can be made with regard to the broad definition inferred in this thesis. The first three characteristics are more related to the content and
overall theme of a film and determine its suitability from an educational point of view. In contrast to these educational quality criteria of audio-visual teaching material, the criteria related to a film’s structure, language use and accessibility via the auditory and visual channel refer to the way in which a film communicates its content and themes and thus, determine a film’s suitability for young learners from a didactic point of view. For foreign language teaching purposes, a film lends itself best for work with young foreign language learners if it is within the scope of many of these criteria.

Having addressed audio-visual teaching material from the perspective of material selection in this section, the following section will introduce different types of material which are considered suitable for a beginners’ classroom according to experts in the field of film-based foreign language teaching. At the outset of this section, the basic types of audio-visual classroom material, ELT video and authentic video, will be discussed.
4. Introduction of Suitable Types of Audio-Visual Material for Beginners

4.1. Authentic Material Versus ELT Material

Broadly speaking, teachers can choose between two types of audio-visual material. The question whether to use so-called authentic or specifically produced teaching material gets to the heart of the ongoing authenticity debate in foreign language teaching (Breen 61, Gilmore 97, Kilickaya 1). With regard to film-based foreign language teaching, the conflict authentic versus non-authentic material frequently equates original films produced by big (Hollywood) production companies versus ELT videos. While the first group is usually “designed for entertainment rather than for language teaching” (Stempleski 7), the opposite is true for the latter one. As a result of these two types of film pursuing different purposes, there are significant differences between them. The following table was adapted from Stückler (26-27) by the author of this thesis and compares the main features of authentic film and ELT video typical of and frequently observed in each film type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authentic Film</th>
<th>ELT Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>focus on any topic</td>
<td>focus on topic relevant for teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choice of characters according to storyline</td>
<td>choice of characters according to structure of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture represented from the inside perspective</td>
<td>culture represented from the outside perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no focus on particular grammar or vocabulary</td>
<td>simplified language in terms of grammar and vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normal speech rate</td>
<td>low speech rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mix of different accents and dialects</td>
<td>clear, standard accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background noise according to storyline</td>
<td>reduced background noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deviation between language and visual level</td>
<td>match between language and visual level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Typical Characteristics of Authentic Film and ELT Video

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20 For more extensive information on ELT video used at beginners’ level see Stückler’s thesis entitled “Sprachlehrfilme für den AnfängerInnenunterricht. Zu den audiovisuellen Materialien der Lehrwerke studio d und Berliner Platz NEU” and Hecht’s publications.
As illustrated in the table above, the production of authentic film and ELT video tends to be guided by different decisions in order to achieve their purposes.

As films not intended to pursue any particular language teaching purpose, authentic films feature language that is likely to be encountered in everyday life in a particular country. Hence, language use in these films is relatively natural in a sense that no adaptations to increase linguistic comprehension are included. As such, language can deviate from the standard in terms of both grammar and vocabulary. Conversations usually take place at normal pace as it would be the case among native speakers of the language, for whom authentic films are actually mainly intended. Due to the large variety of possible topics being addressed, authentic film may contain words from any semantic field regardless of their difficulty, specialisation or the learners’ sequence of acquisition. Furthermore, it frequently includes currently popular phrases and collocations of particular regions (Stempleski 9). Although the language of such films does necessarily entail some kind of “artificiality” or “constructedness” as dialogues are not the result of spontaneous, natural communication but pre-written by the authors of the film (Stempleski 9, Hambrook 164), it can still be regarded as relatively “real” (Stempleski 9).

In contrast to authentic film, ELT video is specifically produced to help people learn a new language. As such, both topic and language level are designed to meet the needs of the particular group of learners for which the video is intended (Stückler-Sturm 224, Stempleski 8-9). This makes this kind of video unlikely to be too challenging in terms of target language use for young foreign language learners since comprehension difficulty is considered as an issue in the production of ELT video. Attempts to minimise this difficulty involve reducing the linguistic demand posed by the video, which is usually achieved by a consistent use of a comprehensible (standard) accent, careful use of vocabulary and grammar and reduction in the rate of speech (Stückler 26-27).

Owing to the currently continually growing market of ELT video, material for any language proficiency and age group is available (Stückler-Sturm 221). Similarly diverse is the focus of ELT material on different lesson aims that can be achieved with this kind of video, which can range from the development of language skills, expansion of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to increasing the knowledge on a particular country, its culture and people (Stückler-Sturm 222, 224). Building on the Total
Physical Response approach particularly effective with very young (pre-school) learners (Pinter Teaching 51), many ELT films explicitly encourage participation of their viewers when inviting them to mime certain actions or repeat phrases (Stückler-Sturm 222, Hambrook 161). While some ELT videos are self-contained and independent from other videos, others build on one another and accompany the learner for some time during his or her learning process, thus forming a whole series (Stückler-Sturm 222). Usually, producers of ELT video provide their customers with support for teaching in the form of “viewing guides, student workbooks, video transcripts [and] teachers’ manuals” (Stempleski 8) and frequently even with ready-made didactic material to be used in class only requiring slight adaptations to meet the learners’ needs (Stückler-Sturm 225).

With their distinct characteristics, both types of audio-visual material, authentic film and ELT video, offer different advantages for the foreign language classroom. The fact that authentic film is able to achieve its purpose of entertaining its viewers with less distortion of the real world than ELT video (cf. Hambrook 164-165) is particularly valuable for language teaching. Although the partly fictional character of every authentic film as a result of certain decisions made throughout the production process such as choice of camera perspective and selection of scenes cannot be denied (Bakalarz-Zákos 193), learners get a relatively realistic insight into the culture of the target country (Stempleski 9, Biechele 15).

With reference to intercultural learning, authentic film thus has a significant advantage over ELT video. Although learners can also get to know the target culture through video produced for teaching purposes (Stückler-Sturm 225-226), stereotypical representations are a frequent consequence of the different production circumstances compared to authentic film that result from its need for explicit, unambiguous representation of people and events. In such cases, learners can be made to learn from ELT video through teachers directly and critically addressing this flaw when revealing these representations as overgeneralisations (Hambrook 166).

While authentic film lends itself better for cultural topics, practitioners might particularly appreciate ELT video and its teaching suggestions for lessons focusing on aspects of the target language (cf. Thaler 151). In contrast to authentic films usually featuring a mix of different grammatical structures, many ELT videos are built around a certain grammar item when including contexts and speech situations frequently
associated with it in real life (Arcario 116). As Arcario (116) has correctly pointed out, “repetition is helpful for lower level students but can be difficult to find in authentic materials”.

Related to lesson planning, one of the greatest advantages of ELT video undoubtedly is that it is resource-saving for teachers. It makes it redundant for them to spend a lot of time and energy on the selection of an appropriate film in terms of content and language and its reduction to a short sequence with the desired language- or culture-specific focus. Moreover, owing to the didactic support material available, teachers do not have to transform the sequences chosen into effective teaching material by designing pre-, while- and post-viewing tasks that are equally fun and cognitively challenging for the specific target group (Stempleski 8-9, Stückler-Sturm 225).

The reduced preparation demand makes ELT video especially valuable for language teachers wanting to work with film for the first time, but also for generally film-experienced teachers feeling uncomfortable in view of the increased complexity of film-based teaching with beginners and thus, long having refrained from using it with these less proficient language learners in lower secondary classes. Since both topics and linguistic aspects have already been pre-selected by the producers of ELT video and are already adapted to the curricula and course books, teachers might feel that there is less room for mistakes left for them, which might encourage them to incorporate film into their teaching also in this supposedly more “demanding” context (cf. Stückler-Sturm 224-226). This makes ELT video and most significantly, also the resource material at hand not only a practical companion, but also a kind of safety net for teachers. In view of many teachers’ low confidence in dealing with audio-visual material in class as their major concern regarding film-based teaching, ELT video might indeed herald the start of film-based teaching in some lower secondary language classrooms.

From the learners’ perspective, audio-visual material specifically produced for language learning is attractive since it is easier to understand than authentic film. On the one hand, this is achieved because of the simplified language use and additional steps taken to reduce the linguistic demands on the learners described earlier on in this chapter (cf. Arcario 115). On the other hand, the unambiguous relationship between visual level and language use aids comprehension (Stückler-Sturm 225). Yet, both of these features of ELT video need to be carefully implemented so as not to make it unnecessarily artificial
or too easy, both of which would fail to capture the interest of the learners (Stückler-Sturm 225).

Generally speaking, audio-visual ELT material might be good to “give [learners] a success” (Tomalin *Video, TV and Radio* 67). The joy and pride beginners feel when having understood utterances in a foreign language might change their view on the subject and make the ultimate goal of becoming proficient language users actually appear reachable (cf. Tomalin *Video, TV and Radio* 67, 82). This insight might be an incredibly effective motivator, increase the learners’ overall interest in the target language and eventually lead to further achievements true to Burstall, Jamieson and Hargreave’s (244 qtd. in Hecht *Unterrichtsbegleitendes Videomaterial* 27) famous line “In the language learning context, nothing succeeds like success”. In contrast to this, the “special thrill” (Sherman 2) learners might experience when successfully solving exercises on authentic material can have a similarly positive effect on their motivation (Stempleski 10). In this respect, “[a]uthenticity itself [can be regarded as] an inducement” (Sherman 2) since the success of this kind of comprehension might possibly make the learners ambitious to constantly prove their capability of dealing with “the real thing” (Sherman 2) as opposed to simplified video unlikely to be encountered outside the classroom (cf. Stückler-Sturm 26).

Although parts of the discussion in this chapter are rather theoretic, all of these aspects have significant implications on lower secondary language teaching practice. In view of the complexity of the concept of authenticity and the strengths of ELT video just described, teachers are well-advised to follow Gilmore’s (98) advice not to base their choice of teaching material on authenticity as the single criterion. He brings to the point the debate on authenticity when concluding that “[a]uthenticity doesn’t necessarily mean ‘good’, just as contrivance doesn’t necessarily mean ‘bad’” (Gilmore 98), thereby seemingly warning teachers from letting ideology make them exclude alternative teaching material such as ELT video a priori (cf. Hecht *Unterrichtsbegleitendes Videomaterial* 96). The Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen takes a similar stance on non-authentic material. Under the caption “enhancing authentic encounters“ in the curriculum, it is recommended to use audio-visual media “in a way that is as authentic as possible [emphasis added]”21 (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen

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21 “Förderung authentischer Begegnungen: Direkte persönliche Begegnungen (z.B. Einsatz von „native speakers“ und anderen Personen, mit denen die Kommunikation in der Zielsprache erfolgt, Schüleraustausch, Intensivsprachwochen) sowie die Nutzung von audiovisuellen Medien und neuen
3). This formulation implies that there is indeed room for ELT video in the language classroom if it helps to achieve the pedagogical aim of the lesson despite its lack of authenticity according to dominant definitions of the term (cf. Hecht *Unterrichtsbegleitendes Videomaterial* 96). Consequently, lower secondary teachers seem to be left with the same parameters they have to consider for every pedagogical decision made before and during a lesson: Whether to use authentic audio-visual material or specifically designed educational videos in a particular lesson should be based on careful considerations of the complex processes involved in teaching and learning a foreign language.

Regarding these pedagogical decisions, Stückler-Sturm (228) highlights the need to consider teaching in all its aspects. Similar to Gilmore (98), she warns against singularly prioritising one of these aspects over the others. According to her, it would not be pedagogically wise to subordinate all other factors affecting the success of teaching under the aim to ensure maximum linguistic comprehension because of young learners’ low target language level. This means that ELT video should not be used only because of its accessibility for less advanced language learners and regardless of its quality in other aspects. Instead, Stückler-Sturm (228) mentions “emotional comprehensibility” in terms of storyline as an equally important guiding principle. By doing this, she draws attention to the inherent “particular dilemma” (Hambrook 126-127) of ELT video production, which is a constant struggle between ease of comprehension and interesting cinematic presentation (cf. Hambrook 116, 126-127).

To help teachers find those ELT videos which best deal with this issue, Hecht (*Unterrichtsbegleitendes Videomaterial* 97-98, *Leistung von Film* 5) has proposed three criteria characteristic of effective ELT material. As with any kind of teaching material, video specifically produced for teaching purposes needs to make learners want to talk about it, depict the country of the target language and its culture as realistically as possible and raise the interest not only of learners of the target language, but also those of native speakers (cf. Stückler-Sturm 227). These criteria should help teachers differentiate between ELT video of good and poor quality and at the same time, aim at capturing the degree of authenticity of ELT video. If all three criteria are fulfilled, even ELT video can be regarded as authentic concerning its purpose as a language teaching

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Technologien wie E-Mail und Internet sind im Sinne möglichst großer Authentizität zu empfehlen.“ (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen 3)

22 “Die Forderung nach „Echtheit“, also der emotionalen Nachvollziehbarkeit, ist nicht nur auf sprachlicher Ebene, sondern auch in der Dramaturgie zu stellen.” (Stückler-Sturm 228)
tool (Hecht *Unterrichtsbegleitendes Videomaterial* 97-98, Hecht *Leistung von Film* 4-5). This view challenges a definite classification of ELT video as a typical example of non-authentic – and hence, supposedly “bad” – material and confirms “that also didactic texts can be in line with criteria of authenticity”\(^{23}\) (Stückler-Sturm 227), depending on the parameters used to define the term “authentic” (cf. Gilmore 98).

What is more, the concept of authenticity must not be viewed only from the standpoint of material selection. It goes far beyond the purpose for which a text was produced and also includes the degree to which task and communicative situation mirror situations learners are likely to encounter in real life outside an educational context (Breen 68). In view of the overall aim of foreign language teaching to prepare learners for the “language and behaviours required of them in the world outside the classroom” (Howard and Major 106), it seems more important to allow for authentic reasons to use the target language and “[set] up conditions favourable to authentication” with the text (Widdowson 81) than choosing texts complying with dominant definitions of text authenticity by all means (Howard and Major 106, Mishan 16-17).

This chapter has shown that authentic video and ELT video offer different strengths and weaknesses for work with beginners. Concerning authentic film, its main weakness in a beginners’ classroom, without doubt, is its high demand on the learners’ target language knowledge (Hecht *Leistung von Film* 2). When comparing the language-specific characteristics typical of authentic film to the comprehension-facilitating characteristics of suitable audio-visual material in a beginners’ classroom explained in chapter 3.2., it becomes evident that there is not much of an overlap. Instead, in contrast to ELT video, authentic film tends to feature those characteristics frequently perceived as “difficult” to understand (Sherman 15). Although this fact indeed establishes authentic film as a very demanding resource for film-based foreign language teaching particularly in a beginners’ classroom, it implies by absolutely no means that this type of film is not suitable for work with learners having just started to learn a foreign language at all. In opposition to Hecht’s (*Leistung von Film* 2) generalisation that ”authentic film […] is too much of a challenge at this stage of learning” due to those learners being “far from

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being at an advanced level”\(^\text{24}\), most experts vehemently oppose an exclusion of authentic film in this particular context and as such, are convinced of its potential for film-based language teaching also at a beginners’ level (cf. Arcario 117, Biechele 14-16, Donaghy Action 21, Gallacher, Henseler Dreams 20, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 26, 32-33, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 2, Stempleski and Tomalin, Suhrkamp Editorial 1, Suhrkamp Teaching Films 2, Thaler 26-27, Tomalin Young Children 50-51, Kreis, Pinter Reflections 5).

What is more, the suitability of authentic material for learners lacking advanced language proficiency was proven in actual practice in successful lessons conducted by experienced lower secondary foreign language teachers (Burwitz-Melzer Ice Age, Lewin, Machado and Laranjo, Möller and Plum, Nuxoll and Rolvering, Vogt), some of them in a first form (Henseler Casper, Hofmann, Lubej, Machado and Laranjo, Möller, Weisshaar) and others even in primary schools (Hrushko, Leonardi, Lubej, Machado and Laranjo, Kreis).

In all of these lessons, young learners could benefit from authentic material since they were given substantial support so as to be able to deal with the material. As illustrated in figure 2 below taken from Gilmore (112), the success of a lesson is not only affected by the choice of material, but also by the degree to which learners are helped to cope with it and access it.

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{High Challenge} & \text{Low Challenge} \\
\hline
\text{High Support} & \text{Low Support} \\
\text{(Effective learning)} & \text{(Learner boredom)} \\
\text{(Minimal learning)} & \text{(Learner frustration)} \\
\end{array}
\]

**Figure 2** Relationship Between Demanding Material, Support and Learning Effect (Gilmore 112)

This illustration shows that, indeed, “[t]he most effective classrooms are seen as those where learners have both high challenge and high support” (Gilmore 112). In view of

\(^{24}\) “Die meisten Deutsch-Lernenden sind allerdings weit entfernt von einem fortgeschrittenen Niveau. […] Der sogenannte „authentische“ Film, also das, was für den deutschsprachigen Medien-Markt produziert wird, stellt nach Expertenmeinung auf dieser Stufe eine Überforderung dar.” (Hecht Leistung von Film 2)
this, authentic material quite rightly is the main resource used for film-based foreign language teaching at all levels and should be exploited in every foreign language classroom regardless of the learners’ target language proficiency.

Nevertheless, teachers of lower secondary learners – and also of even younger ones – can appreciate ELT video fulfilling the quality criteria previously described in particular as an introduction to film-based teaching. In addition, to allow learners at the beginning of their process of learning a foreign language to benefit from the strengths of ELT video it offers to them, they should not completely be denied this type of audio-visual material. After all, only by bringing different films from different sources and with different characteristics into the classroom, the entire potential of this valuable medium can be fully exploited in the foreign language classroom (cf. Burwitz-Melzer Literarische Texte 225).

4.1.1. Example of ELT Material

Although much of the ELT material is aimed at children younger than those attending a lower secondary form, particularly also at those not yet part of the school system, a variety of material is specifically intended for the target group chosen for this thesis. As an example of an ELT series to be used with English beginners in an educational setting, Wallace and Gromit can be named. It is based on the clay animation films by Nick Parks, a member of Aardman Animations, and the BBC. Some of these original films have even been awarded Oscars and BAFTA awards and have resulted in two equally popular spin-offs, Shaun the Sheep and Timmy Time (Viney and Viney Wallace). The two video producers already renowned as the creators of successful ELT material such as Grapevine and Main Street, Peter and Karen Viney, have made changes to three original Wallace and Gromit short films, A Grand Day Out, The Wrong Trousers and A Close Shave, to make them suitable for a foreign language teaching audience (Viney Blog). Published by the Oxford University Press, the adaptations as well as the original films centre around the life of the quirky inventor Wallace and his clever dog Gromit, both being "some of the best-known and best-loved stars to come out of the UK" (Youngs).

The ELT versions of the original short films are described on the producers’ homepage as follows:

In all three Wallace and Gromit videos, the visuals, music and sound effects are identical to the original versions. However, in the ELT Adaptations the
language level has been greatly simplified and a narrator has been added. (Viney and Viney Article)

While a narrator was included as an additional source of linguistic input (Viney and Viney Interview), most of the other adaptations are simplifications concerning the choice of vocabulary and grammar. Also specific regional expressions and cultural references perceived as too challenging for a young non-native audience were subject of change; the Yorkshire accent of the main character Wallace was not completely eliminated (Viney and Viney Interview).

Although deviating from one of the characteristics of ELT video perceived as typical, the three Wallace and Gromit short films have been successfully turned into language teaching material suitable for “foreign learners in their first year of learning English” (Viney and Viney Interview), but with increasing difficulty from video to video.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Wallace and Gromit Video</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>early beginner</td>
<td>A Grand Day Out</td>
<td>all ages, but mainly 7 to 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beginner/starter</td>
<td>The Wrong Trousers</td>
<td>all ages (7-90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elementary/pre-intermediate</td>
<td>A Close Shave</td>
<td>all ages (7-90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6** Wallace and Gromit ELT Adaptations for Different Target Groups (Viney and Viney Article)

Since the videos build up on each other, they can be used as a distinct course if used in sequence (Viney and Viney Article). As characteristic of most ELT video, also this series comes with extensive additional material providing teachers with a wealth of information and teaching ideas in the form of a teaching book as well as a student book including all kinds of ready-made teaching activities structured into a pre-, while- and post-viewing stage (Viney and Viney Article).

Due to their wide acceptance and international success, both spin-offs of the original Wallace and Gromit productions, Shaun the Sheep and Timmy Time, were announced to be transformed into ELT video material for children between two and six years by the British Council in 2014 (British Council).
4.2. Authentic Film

4.2.1. Overview of Authentic Film Types

Within the category of authentic film, it can be distinguished between a vast number of different film types. While traditional film classification is based on the notion of genre, from a pedagogical perspective, it makes sense to differentiate between types of film according to their running time (Thaler 21). The table below is adapted from Thaler (21) and groups the most popular film types into short, medium and long forms dependent on their average length.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Forms</th>
<th>Medium Forms</th>
<th>Long Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5 seconds – 5 minutes)</td>
<td>(20 – 45 minutes)</td>
<td>(90+ minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>music videos</td>
<td>drama series</td>
<td>feature films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sketches</td>
<td>sitcoms</td>
<td>national live events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV news</td>
<td>soap operas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speeches</td>
<td>talk shows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weather reports</td>
<td>game shows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercials</td>
<td>documentaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviews</td>
<td>educational films</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trailers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online videos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Film Classification According To Length (adapted from Thaler 21)

As these long lists of types of film belonging to short, medium or long film forms show, the medium of film is highly heterogeneous and includes a significant number of film types fulfilling different purposes. Considering this multitude of different types and formats of film, teachers have sheer endless possibilities when it comes to selecting audio-visual teaching material for their lessons. Since this great variety of films makes it hard to decide on a concrete example that is brought to class, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (*Filme Englischunterricht* 33) have suggested certain film types and formats that lend themselves particularly well for the lower secondary classroom. According to their recommendations, lower secondary teachers should base their teaching on the following material:
• cartoons and animated films
• short films
• trailers
• music videos
• commercials
• TV series and films for children and teenagers
• educational programmes

In line with the saying “variatio delectat” (Thaler 23), variation is key when it comes to the type of audio-visual material that is brought to class in order to familiarise the learners with a variety of different film genres, maintain the learners’ interest and develop a broad spectrum of skills and competencies (cf. Thaler 21-22, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 33, Donaghy Action 20).

The limited scope of this thesis does not make it possible to introduce and discuss all of these film types considered suitable for young learners. The discussion in this section will thus focus on animated film as produced by renowned production companies such as Disney and Pixar due to this type of film being most frequently and most importantly, also successfully exploited in a beginners’ classroom. In addition, trailers as well as short films will be introduced as examples of suitable audio-visual teaching material for young learners, both of which are less established, yet valuable types of film to be used with beginners.

4.2.2. Animated Films

Broadly speaking, an animated film can be defined as a children’s film that makes use of the production technique of animation (Thaler 176). Animation is a special technique of film production that does not involve filming pre-scripted scenes with the help of a camera. Rather than consisting of images depicting actors and actresses performing actions in reality, animated films consist of countless images that were created by a skilful animator either by hand or with the help of a computer. These images are then made to “provid[e] an illusion of movement”. In a literal sense, the process of animation can therefore be understood as bringing to life something that is inanimate, i.e. does not live (Wells 10). Usually, this production technique creates images which are highly exaggerated. Consequently, in animated films, events are depicted in a more extreme manner compared to live-action films (cf. Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 178). Proof of this argument can be found in figure 3.
The figure above is a still from the hand-drawn animated cartoon *Tom and Jerry*, which shows Jerry with his hands behind his back, syrupy smile and wide open eyes peering at Tom, who is depicted with clearly furrowed brows, clenched fists and a firmly closed mouth.

These exaggerations bear a significant advantage for film-based foreign language teaching with young learners. Representations of events as extreme as this one convey meaning more clearly than realistic depictions. This makes them more easily comprehensible, which is why they help young learners make correct inferences from a film. In figure 3, for instance, the viewer can easily identify the cat literally boiling with rage due to the combination of Tom’s mimes and gestures just described being highly exaggerated, yet conventionalised signs to express one’s fury. Similarly, Jerry’s overtly innocent posture and facial expression do not make it difficult to identify him as acting like personified innocence. Due to being exaggerated representations of conventionalised behaviour, the animated image thus compensates for a lack of linguistic understanding and allows young learners to follow what is happening on the screen more easily (cf. Donaghy *Action* 21). In view of this, the technique of animation can be said to fully exploit the power of images to convey meaning, which probably makes animated exaggerations the highest degree of support on a visual level learners can get. Therefore, animated film is likely to be the most suitable type of authentic film for a beginners’ classroom since there will be hardly any live-action film that counteracts the high linguistic demand posed by authentic film just like animated film.

What is more, owing to such powerful exaggerations frequently resulting in highly humorous depictions of already comic events (Massi and Blázquez *Shorter Better* 37),
animated films do not only seem to ease young learners’ comprehension like no other type of film, but do so in a highly engaging way, thereby making language learning a particularly fun experience for young learners (cf. Champoux 80). Furthermore, these partly absurd exaggerations are likely to “[appeal] to the emotions of the learners” (Donaghy Action 21) more intensely compared to the more realistic depictions of live-action films (cf. Champoux 80), thus possibly creating a desire to communicate one’s thoughts and feelings related to the film which might be particularly strong.

Apart from these strengths in terms of visual transmission of content bridging the gap between the language level of the film and those of the learners and the potential of the animated image to elicit learner contributions, this production technique bears another significant advantage for young learners. From a cultural studies perspective, animation can be considered a distortion of reality since it does not depict the world in a realistic way. Owing to animated film’s main constituent being images resulting from a creative design process, reality in those films is depicted in an abstract way. Due to this abstraction, the animated image shares an essential characteristic with abstract art. Similar to an abstract painting, animated representations are more open to interpretation, which has a significant effect on the viewers. The fact that this production technique does not depict reality as it is allows young learners to relate more easily to the world created on the screen since it is easier for them to find points of reference and identification. Consequently, there are more opportunities for them to project themselves into the story, which makes them interact with and relate more intensely to animated films compared to live-action films.

Next to the advantages of the production technique of animation, it is animated film’s inherent focus on children as their main audience that makes them a particularly suitable teaching resource for young learners. As films belonging to the genre of children’s films, animated films typically feature all the characteristics typical of this type of film (cf. Thaler 176-177, Wojik-Andrews 161). Most notably, this means that animated film is in line with the content-related criteria of suitable audio-visual teaching material. Indeed, almost all Disney and Pixar films belonging to this genre are rated PG and as such, “fall squarely in the family category” or, at least in the “family category” with children aged ten or older (McClintock). This makes sure that teachers do not have to worry about confronting lower secondary learners with issues inappropriate or too complex for their young eyes. As typical children’s films, none of these films includes
scenes that overtly depict violent or sexually alluding behaviour or substance abuse or makes use of taboo words.

What is more, the way in which animated film deals with its child-friendly topics helps young learners in their personal development and eventually also find their place in an adult world, thereby acknowledging them as not fully developed, yet susceptible consumers (cf. Tomalin *Young Children* 50, Hildebrand 20-26). The contribution of animated film to the personal development of children is mainly due to the educational component that is typical of children’s films (Thaler 176).

From a pedagogical perspective, animated films are suitable teaching material for young learners due to their tendency towards happy endings. As observed by Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander (13), “Disney films have driven home the opportunity of the individual to succeed and that, above all, it is personal success that we celebrate”. A closer look at actual examples confirms their generalisation also in practice as there is indeed hardly any animated film that does not end on a positive, encouraging note. Considering recent productions such as *Finding Nemo*, *Shrek* and *Rio*, it becomes evident that, in none of these films, the viewer is confronted with a bad resolution for the protagonist’s problem: Nemo is eventually reunited with his father Marlin and his friend Dorie, Shrek’s love for Fiona, the princess who magically transforms to an ogre like Shrek, is returned, the Spix macaw Blu and his beloved Jewel are united in the end and start their own family. Regarding young learners’ limited life experience, watching their favourite heroes succeed fulfils a particularly essential task. Confronting children with examples of successful plans of people’s lives provides them with much needed “security and orientation in a world full of medial and real conflicts”25 (Hildebrand 32).

Another characteristic typical of animated film fostering young learners’ development is that they tend to include a moral lesson of some kind (Adams, Thaler 176). Again, a brief look at recent productions confirms this assertion and shows that, indeed, all of them have in common that they “communicate something to us that is larger than the story itself” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 20). For instance, through the “buddy story” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 19) about the anthropomorphised animals Manni, Sid and Diego and a human baby, the viewer of *Ice Age* learns that deep and true friendship is possible against all the odds and worth striving for in spite of individual differences, however fundamental and irreconcilable they may seem (cf.

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25 “Kindern geben sie Halt und Orientierung in einer Welt medialer und realer Konflikte.” (Hildebrand 32)
Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 21). A very similar theme is dealt with in the film Madagascar (Booker 159). Similar to the Madagascar and the Ice Age productions, also Rio 2 shares a crucial message with its viewers. Next to highlighting the urgent need for protection of nature with the ruthless logging of the South American Amazon rainforest as one of its themes (Chang), this film raises the viewers’ awareness towards the extended boundaries of the concept of family by illustrating that family is not only determined by genetic similarity but equally includes people close to one’s heart (Cox-Henry). Rio 2 director Carlos Saldanha summarises the messages of his work as follows:

Rio 2 is a great movie and a lot of fun, but beyond that, it’s about family and protecting the environment. […] There are some very good messages in this film and we hope parents and children come out of seeing this film thinking about that. The messages don’t hit you over the head; they’re presented in a good way. The film also focuses on the theme of family and future of the children and that’s really our future. I want my children to have a good place to live and I want their children to still have a good planet to be on. (Cox-Henry)

Apart from this suitability of animated film with regard to its content, animated film also adheres to the conventions of traditional children’s films with regard to structure. As a typical children’s film, the storyline of an animated film is usually very simple and straightforward and its structure highly conventionalised, which makes it easily accessible for young learners. When comparing the events depicted in animated productions such as Shrek, Mulan, The Incredibles and Ice Age, indeed all of these films deal with very similar, basic issues and are structured the same way (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 9, 13). This structure typically follows the conventions of the “universal story”. Due to such a story evolving around a heroic character in the majority of cases, this “universal story” became known as “The Hero’s Journey” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10). In short, the stages characteristic of “The Hero’s Journey” can be summarised as follows:
Taking into account Walt-Disney’s Mulan as an example of animated films, it becomes evident that these films indeed seem to feature each of these stages. This film is about the rebellious Chinese girl called Mulan, who takes drastic steps in an attempt to protect her father from an early death. In view of a pending invasion of the Huns, the Chinese need to recruit soldiers so as to protect their country from these enemies. Despite her father being disabled and Mulan’s pleading, the Chinese emperor expects the elderly man to fight in this war since he does not have any male offspring who could do so instead. In Mulan, this is the “unexpected event [that] [changes] the hero’s ordinary world” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10). The hero Mulan intervenes when deciding to fight the Huns in her invalid father’s stead. The insight that her father would most certainly not return from this war functions as Mulan’s “call to adventure” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10). With her hair cut short and dressed in the uniform of her father, she successfully hides her feminine attributes and invents a male identity for herself. Making others believe she were a man is the only way for her to restore the order of things and save her father from the front. So as not to arouse the suspicion of the other members of the training camp and to avoid revelation of her true identity, Mushu, a clumsy little dragon, helps Mulan behave the way he believes to be typical of men. Her journey towards becoming a “real soldier” is the “quest” of the film (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10). But Mulan has difficulty acting like the rest of the soldiers that manifest themselves in highly unnatural, exaggerated behaviour. She is therefore at risk to be exposed as a woman on several occasions, which are the “challenges [Mulan is facing] until [she] achieves [her] goal” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10), convincing her companions of her being a man to protect her beloved father. Mulan not only manages to keep up her fake identity but also proves to be a valuable member at the front due to her intellect. Owing to her, the Huns can be stopped
and her captain can be saved. Yet, Mulan does not get the chance to celebrate her success as she does not stay unwounded in the battle. This situation causes another “crisis” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10) since her captain finds out about her true identity and reveals her secret. The tragedy reaches its peak with some of the presumed dead Huns turning out to be alive and kidnapping the Chinese emperor. Mulan’s great intellect helps her once more and allows her to free the Chinese leader, which is the movie’s final “showdown” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10). Instead of being punished for breaking the law when creating a different identity for herself, Mulan’s bravery is appreciated and eventually also her captain manages to forgive her and even realises his feelings for the young woman (cf. Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10-11).

With regard to these conventional storylines typical of animated films, another characteristic of animated films becomes obvious that makes these films suitable for work with language beginners. Being filled with dangerous adventures and mysteries, animated films “often include a high proportion of action sequences” (Parry 198), which tend to rely more on the power of images to tell these adventures and mysteries rather than on spoken language.

This chapter has introduced animated film, in particular the productions by the two major production companies Disney and Pixar, as a film type that is suitable for young learners. It was shown that these films indeed fulfil many criteria suitable audio-visual teaching material for young foreign language learners should fulfil. As typical children’s films, animated films focus exclusively on child-friendly topics and avoid any references to violence, sex, drug abuse or other issues deemed inappropriate for children. On top of that, the educational component inherent in animated films that is due to their tendency towards happy endings and moral lessons makes them particularly suitable for a beginners’ classroom since these films enhance young learners’ personal development. Apart from these content-related criteria, animated film is also in line with certain comprehension-enhancing criteria which suitable classroom material for young learners should possess. The story told in animated films is typically very basic and in line with genre convention, which makes them easily accessible for young learners. Concerning their structure, such films usually adhere to “The Hero’s Journey” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10). This makes them highly conventionalised and thus, predictable. Furthermore, as a closer look at the film Mulan and the stages of the conventionalised structure typical of animated films has shown, this type of film contains many action scenes and thus also many particularly expressive images.
images provide the learners with rich visual input which they can decode so as to be able to better understand these films. Although the linguistic level of animated films is not below the linguistic level of any other authentic film, the exaggerated visual representation of events owing to the production technique of animation significantly eases the learners’ comprehension, which, generally speaking, makes animated films more accessible for young learners compared to live-action films.

Apart from being in line with essential criteria that determine the suitability of audiovisual teaching material for young learners, animated film should also be taken into account when selecting material for these learners for the simple reason that children enjoy watching them (Leonardi 23). Indeed, from *Frozen*, *Ice Age* and *Inside Out* to *Kung Fu Panda*, *Minions*, *Monsters, Inc.* and *Rio*, outside an educational context, almost any animated film recently produced has been celebrated as a great source of entertainment and unique cinematic experience for the whole family all over the world (cf. Macgillivray 90). Taking into account this enormous appeal of animated film among children and teenagers, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp’s (*Filme Englischunterricht* 33) suggestion to use animated films also in the classroom seems particularly plausible. Allowing learners to practise their target language and analytical skills with the help of material they like is an effective way “to [make] the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable” (Donaghy *Action* 18), which will increase the chances of learners viewing learning in a positive light. Owing to the popularity of animated film among young learners, bringing children’s films from animation studios such as Disney and Pixar into the foreign language classroom can thus be considered an effective way to make them engage actively in the learning process, which is a prerequisite for successful learning to take place (cf. Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez 178).

Yet, despite animated film’s suitability for the lower secondary language classroom, exploiting such feature films typically running up to 90 minutes in full length in class will most certainly not yield the desired results in a way that it encourages learning (cf. Donaghy *Action* 21, Burwitz-Melzer *Literarische Texte* 226). However, splitting up a film into “digestible portions” (Thaler 143) by singling out specific scenes goes hand in hand with denying the learners crucial information necessary to benefit from the film (Thaler 143), manipulating its message (Thaler 152) and reducing the pleasure of the viewing experience (cf. Thaler 152). In order to avoid such interference with a cultural product of high artistic value, teachers can bring shorter versions of animated films into
the classroom, for instance in the form of trailers advertising these animated productions or short films making use of the production technique of animation.

### 4.2.3. Film Trailers

Although being a very common film type outside the classroom, trailers have only very sparsely been discussed in relation to foreign language teaching (Welke 205, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 164). Since familiarity with a type of film is essential so as to be able to exploit it valuably in the classroom, this chapter will provide an overview of the characteristic features of this film type and highlight its potential in the beginners’ classroom.

Typically not exceeding more than two or three minutes, trailers familiarise learners with a full-length feature film within a reasonably short period of time (Film Education *Introduction*). In contrast to full-length feature films primarily aiming at entertaining their viewers, trailers fulfil an additional function. These short clips are typically produced to provide a brief introduction to a feature film with the main aim to make the viewers interested in the film (Film Space *Trailers* 2). Successful trailers manage to raise the curiosity of many people by “convey[ing] the excitement and atmosphere of film” (Film Space *Trailers* 2) and encourage them to eventually watch the full product, thereby maximising both the audience of a film as well as the profit for all people involved in the production and distribution of the finished product (Film Education *Introduction*). As such an “advertising medium” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 157), the “persuasive” nature of trailers highlights their similarity to commercials aiming at fulfilling the same function (Film Education *Introduction*). So as to address those people who will be likely to have an interest in the whole film and eventually convince them of the potential of the film in relation to their expectations, it is essential that the trailer adheres to generic conventions, which are exploited as a main strategy of persuasion (Film Education *Genre and Narrative Structure*, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 171-172).

Despite the similarity of trailers to commercials with regard to their purpose, trailers also feature characteristics typical of purely narrative film formats. Since the “product” that is intended to be sold by a trailer is the story of the film, this story is usually the central element of each trailer (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 159). In order to fulfil its function as an “appetizer” making the viewers hungry for the film, a trailer needs to provide enough information so as to let
the audience get an impression of what the advertised film is about (cf. Film Space *Trailers* 6). Therefore, trailers usually offer insights into all relevant aspects of the feature film. Viewers are familiarised with the main characters, relevant places are shown, key scenes of the film are included and the main conflict is established (Film Education *Introduction*). Taking this into account, trailers can be regarded as “form[s] of condensed storytelling” (Film Education *Introduction*).

Despite this similarity to feature films in view of their focus on a narrative, trailers do not “answer all of the questions of the story” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 9) as it is typically done by many child-appropriate full-length feature films such as animated productions (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 10). In contrast to these films offering all the details of the fictional events addressed, trailers focus exclusively on “the ‘best bits’ of the film; the very funny, the very sad, the action-packed, the bizarre, etc.” (Film Space *Trailers* 7).

Although this focus on selected scenes is certainly a highly effective strategy to foreground the strengths of the feature film it promotes, it goes hand in hand with a fragmentation of its story (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 163). While, on the one hand, this fragmentation is the inevitable result of the need to introduce a cultural product with a running time typically far exceeding 60 minutes within a very short period of time, on the other hand, it is a desired effect of trailers in view of their advertising purpose. Certain aspects of the story are deliberately omitted in the trailer so as to “let these omissions cause questions which can only be answered by the viewer when watching the whole film”26 (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 159). Since trailers can only succeed in their function as crowd pullers if they manage to establish the film as some kind of mystery, it is absolutely essential that trailers “tease but […] don’t tell” (Film Space *Trailers* 7).

This need is also reflected in the general structure characteristic of many trailers. At the beginning of each trailer, the viewer meets the main characters of the film and is familiarised with their lives. As a next step, a trailer introduces the specific situation eventually causing a major conflict, which is central to the feature film (Film Education *Narrative Structure*). Yet, unlike the feature film, a trailer does not elaborate on this

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26 “Auslassungen sind Teil der Werbestrategie: Trailer präsentieren zentrale Szenen, liefern jedoch nur Fragmente einer Geschichte, wobei das Nichtgezeigte Fragen beim Zuschauer aufwirft, die nur durch das Anschauen des Films beantwortet werden können.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 159)
conflict extensively but usually ends the moment in which the conflict reaches its peak and the trailer has created the most suspense (Film Space Trailers 7). Most notably, the omission characteristic of trailers thus frequently concerns the ending of the story told in the feature film (Film Education Narrative Structure).

Although most trailers indeed make use of so-called cliff-hangers (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 159), many of them do not leave the viewers completely clueless with regard to the ending of the film. Occasionally, trailers already indicate a positive resolution by providing "just a hint that the protagonist is going to learn an important lesson" (Film Education Narrative Structure). When watching the trailer promoting the animated film Up, for instance, the viewer will not be too surprised by the developing friendship between the young boy Carl Fredricksen and his idol, the aged explorer Charles Muntz, in the film. The ending of the trailer already suggests this outcome with Muntz changing his mind after having slammed the door of his flying house into his face and eventually inviting his most devoted fan in.

Constant suspense is a particularly essential characteristic of trailers so as to make them meet the demand to appeal to their viewers in order to sell the advertised film (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 159). This is why trailers need to be characterised by an “efficient suspense curve”27 (Hildebrand 294) so as to keep the “entertainment value”28 (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 159) of this film format at a high level. In actual fact, the “suspense curve” (Hildebrand 294) of trailers is even more effective compared to full-length films due these film formats frequently deviating from the traditional chronological order of presentation. In an attempt to increase suspense, events following one another in the full-length film might therefore not be depicted this way in the trailer but rather in a way that will capture the viewers’ attention and interest the most. The result is a frequently jumbled sequence of events compared to its longer relative, the feature film (Film Education Narrative Structure, Film Space Trailers 7).

Expressiveness is a major concern for trailer producers so as to capture the attention of the audience (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 159). This is why trailers are film formats drawing even more heavily on a visually and aurally

27 “Durch ausgewählte Episoden mit einer wirkungsvollen Spannungskurve, in denen zudem alle wichtigen Figuren vorkommen und in ihren Beziehungen zueinander vorgestellt werden, lässt sich (hoffentlich) das Interesse der Schüler wecken.” (Hildebrand 294)
28 “Nach Hediger (ebd., S. 235f.) muss ein Trailer selbst Unterhaltungswert haben, um in Erinnerung zu bleiben.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 159)
stunning representation of events than many others (cf. Film Education Introduction). As explained by Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (Film Englischunterricht 173), “trailers have a strong visual component and are characterised by a density of information, fast cuts and short shots resulting from these fast cuts. Compared to a feature film, which is promoted by a trailer, the cutting rate is frequently three times as high” 29. Occasionally, trailers even make use of special effects such as slow or fast motion (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Film Englischunterricht 159).

Apart from a trailer’s visual level, in particular its sound and music are exploited to create maximum suspense in order to influence the audience. To do so, producers of a film even let composers write music specifically for the trailer of their film, which is then foregrounded in the trailer by turning up its volume (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Film Englischunterricht 159). What is more, many trailers make use of sound effects which are intensified with the help of technology so as to make them more effective (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Film Englischunterricht 174).

As a consequence of the expressiveness of sound and music being more effective means to capture the viewers’ attention and interest than spoken language (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Film Englischunterricht 159), trailers do not rely as heavily on dialogue to tell their stories as feature films. Indeed, trailers usually only include relevant utterances of a character’s speech if they are needed to characterise a person in the film or make sense of the main events (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Film Englischunterricht 163). Since the use of dialogue in trailers is closely linked to a certain function, the utterances made by characters which become part of a trailer tend to be very short (Film Space Trailers 7).

Yet, with the voiceover, trailers very often feature another source which verbally conveys information. Although the brief summary of the main events given by a typically male voice may occasionally be provided solely by written intertitles, selected utterances of a character taken from the film or the music (Film Space Trailers 9), the voiceover is characteristic of the majority of trailers (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Film Englischunterricht 160). Apart from the advertising function the voiceover fulfils by highlighting the contribution of big names involved in the production process such as

29 “Trailer weisen eine starke visuelle Komponente auf und zeichnen sich durch Informationsdichte und schnelle Schnitte und dadurch bedingte kurze Einstellungen aus. Im Vergleich zum Spielfilm, der durch den Trailer beworben wird, nimmt die Schnittfrequenz oft um das Dreifache zu.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Film Englischunterricht 173)
famous actors/actresses and directors/directresses, it is a valuable comprehension aid for learners since it can help them put the fragmented pieces of the story in relation to each other. At the same time, it can fill comprehension gaps by providing background information (cf. Film Space Trailers 9). Thus, the original function of the voiceover is to help learners draw correct conclusions from the visual representations of events depicted in the trailer (Film Space Trailers 9, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 160). Yet, taking into account the “sound-vision congruity” (Thaler 27) resulting from the fact that, by providing a summary, the male voice usually tells what is shown in the film scenes chosen for the trailer, the supportive relationship of voiceover and image also works the opposite way. This relationship of the images supporting the voiceover is equally essential for young learners since it means that the images can help learners access the information that is verbally conveyed by the male voice. In view of the frequently low amount of dialogue included in trailers, this might make the spoken language of a trailer more easily accessible compared to feature films.

As an example, the voiceover of the trailer promoting the animated Disney production Mulan, which is spoken by the Chinese emperor, who is a character in the film, summarises the story of the feature film with the words: “I’ve heard a great deal about you, Mulan. You took your father’s arm, ran away from home, impersonated a soldier, endangered the lives of thousands of men and destroyed my palace. But soon the world will know the great things you have done” (DisneyMoviesOnDemand). While the Chinese emperor familiarises the viewer with the main events constituting the story of the feature film, the scenes selected for the trailer depict Mulan performing them, which significantly enhances comprehension of the target language in this trailer.

Despite the advertising function of trailers making these film types particularly suitable for a closer analysis of the manipulative use of spoken and written language, music and editing (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 165, 174), at an early stage of learning, it is suggested to work mainly on the narrative components of a trailer rather than on the persuasive strategies typical of these types of film. Consequently, despite trailers certainly being a distinct type of film (Film Space Trailers 7), “at a lower secondary level, trailers are mainly used as short films”\( ^{30} \) (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 171).

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\( ^{30} \) “In der Unterstufe warden Trailer hauptsächlich als Kurzfilme eingesetzt und als Sprech- und Schreibanlässe verstanden. Beobachtungsaufträge konzentrieren sich daher auf folgende Aspekte:
Due to trailers containing all relevant information of a story with regard to its core components, just like feature films, they allow for a basic analysis of these narrative components (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 164-165) and in particular also with regard to the questions related to Thaler’s (182) “4 P’s”, i.e. persons, places, plot and problem, which provide particularly worthwhile and manageable observation points for less advanced foreign language learners (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 170). Based on these observation points, learners can practise how to “extract basic information from simple and authentic English film sequences” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 26) and work on their target language skills by verbalising it. Taking into account that trailers are products produced for commercial rather than pedagogic purposes (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 157) and thus considered authentic texts, they are an effective and equally resource-saving tool to help young learners achieve this crucial aim of film-based foreign language teaching that can realistically be gained with language beginners in their first year of learning.

In addition, an analysis of several different trailers according to these “4 P’s” (Thaler 182) allows for a comparison of these trailers with regard to these essential components constituting a feature film within a short period of time, which can be exploited so as to make learners aware of genre-specific conventions and enhance their understanding of the concept of genre as an essential notion within film studies (*Film Education In The Classroom*). As correctly pointed out by Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (*Filme Englischunterricht* 172), the learners’ familiarity with different types of film as a result of film consumption being a significant part of their private lives does not make it too challenging for them to classify audio-visual material according to its genre. Given that the teacher pre-teaches relevant terms in the target language, this task should therefore be manageable for young, less experienced foreign language learners (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 172).

While not necessarily enhancing the learners’ overall understanding, the fragmentation of trailers provides many opportunities for learners to fill the gaps created by the trailer. As observed by the members of the Film Space (*Trailers 7*), “[i]n some ways watching

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31 “Die Schülerinnen und Schüler entnehmen einfachen und authentischen englischsprachigen Filmsequenzen wesentliche Informationen (Ziele der Hauptfiguren, Hauptereignisse).” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 26)
a trailer is like doing a jigsaw puzzle – we’re given some information as to plot and character and our task is to fill in the missing pieces”.

In relation to the trailers to the films Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb and The Spongebob Movie: Sponge out of Water, for instance, the Film Space (Fantasy 2) encourages young learners to use their creativity and come up with a scene that might have been omitted in the trailer, but be part of the feature film. To do so, they can either describe their scene in writing or draw the visual representation of this scene.

Owing to the use of images and music as dominant means of communication together with the fact that these modes are highlighted and exaggerated in an attempt to create a strong effect, these modes lend themselves particularly well as objects of analysis (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 164). Although the wealth of information that is typically conveyed in the images and music of trailers indeed promises particularly significant results, it makes the simultaneous processing of these two modes particularly challenging for young learners with regard to this film type. So as to counteract the frequent consequence of learners being overwhelmed by the amount of information that needs to be decoded from a trailer’s images and music, tasks focusing exclusively on one of its modes (i.e. “silent viewing” or “sound only” tasks) are particularly recommended in relation to trailers (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 166).

On the Film Education website (In The Classroom), the UK Film Industry highlights the creation of storyboards in connection with trailers as an equally suitable and worthwhile activity for young learners. While storyboarding can be done in relation to a trailer that was introduced in class, learners can also be encouraged to come up with a storyboard for a trailer introducing a film that was invented by them, which would be a particularly creative task (cf. Film Education In The Classroom). In the first case, the creation of a storyboard requires learners to observe closely and pay attention to the visual representation of events. Apart from drawing key scenes, learners can be encouraged to add their own dialogue or voiceover scripts, both of which would be engaging ways to make learners use the target language (cf. Film Education In The Classroom). In any case, the introduction of storyboards as visual representations of scenes which are intended to be part of a film and consequently, an essential part of film production (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 142) can be used to raise the learners’ awareness towards the complexity and multiple stages involved in the creation of a film (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 11).
Although trailers can be effectively exploited in a beginners’ classroom with regard to different skills and competencies, these film types are not always easy to comprehend for young learners. With regard to the comprehension-enhancing criteria which suitable audio-visual teaching material for language beginners should possess, the following observations can be made. Generally speaking, many trailers:

- tell a story, but not in a chronological order and without providing real closure
- are in line with and foreground genre conventions, which help learners draw from their prior experience with respect to a specific genre
- follow a basic conventionalised structure, but are not always easily accessible owing to fragmentation of their story as a result of their focus on selected scenes of a feature film
- feature only few characters and settings owing to their brevity
- make extensive use of expressive sound and music to tell their stories
- do not contain much dialogue
- are characterised by a “high sound-vision congruity“ (Thaler 27) owing to the voiceover commenting on events depicted in these images, which enhances comprehension of the target language used in the trailer

Although trailers offer additional clues to meaning in the form of voiceovers and intertitles which other film types do not and which might help learners make sense of them, many learners might not manage to notice and process these clues properly (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 166). Although “[t]railers […] are loud and fast so as to spread their message effectively and permanently”32 (Hediger qutd. in Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 159), these compositional steps frequently have the opposite effect. In particular the fact that trailers are fast, i.e. characterised by frequent cuts, can impede comprehension of these films (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 165-166).

To a certain extent, lower secondary teachers can avoid these comprehension difficulties when selecting trailers which do not include a high number of different scenes of the feature film they promote and consequently, do not make extensive use of cuts (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 165). Such trailers are more

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32 “Trailer sind mit anderen Worten laut und schnell, damit ihre Botschaft besser ankommt und hängen bleibt.” (Hediger qutd. in Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 159)
accessible for young learners and allow for effective work with this film type even in a beginners’ classroom.

4.2.4. Short Films

In comparison to feature films, short films can be considered a comparably young type of film that is used as a teaching resource (Rössler 312). Similar to trailers, the genre of short films has therefore not received much attention within the field of foreign language teaching yet (Rössler 309, 313, Sundquist 123). This is surprising since it can be regarded as a highly suitable type of film in the foreign language classroom – not exclusively, but especially for young learners (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 148). This becomes evident with regard to the features typical of this type of film.

Taking into account the many different types of short films existent, this type of film seems to be characterised by a similar diversity as authentic film in general. Broadly speaking, short films can be classified into animated shorts, live-action shorts and documentaries (Rössler 309). While short films can be easily produced and made public via the Internet by laypeople, this type of film has also aroused the interest of many professional filmmakers, most notably of the big animation production companies Disney and Pixar (Massi and Blázquez *Thousand Films* 63).

Owing to the advantages of the production technique of animation described in chapter 4.2.2., the animated short film is of particular relevance for young language learners. Being frequently released as additional material on the DVD of animated feature films (Massi and Blázquez *Extra Features* 3), animated shorts either pick up on characters or storylines already introduced in these feature films, such as the short film *Mike’s New Car*, which was released on the *Monsters, Inc.* DVD, or focus on new characters and storylines, thus having no connection with the feature film whatsoever (Massi and Blázquez *Thousand Films* 64). The latter is the case with the short film *Lifted*, which tells the story of two aliens without any reference to the story or main character of the feature film *Ratatouille*, which it accompanies.

Owing to the diversity of this type of film in general, short films tend to be characterised by different features, which is why describing this film type with

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reference to its typical characteristics is not easy (Rössler 310, Sundquist 123). Yet, as the name suggests, one of the main characteristics all short films have in common is their brevity compared to regular feature films, which is actually also the main difference between these two film formats (Sundquist 124). Although the genre of short films is in general also very heterogeneous when it comes to length, most of these films do not exceed 15 minutes. There seems to be no lower limit so that there are many short films of only some seconds or a few minutes available (Sundquist 123-124). As a result of this short running time, in contrast to feature films and similar to dramatic texts in written literature, in these films, there usually is an overlap between the narration time and the time span of the story that is told (Rössler 310, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 148). Furthermore, just like trailers and other videos of short duration, short films allow for repeated and highly intensive engagement within one lesson (Kinda-Kerekes 6, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 3), which helps learners take maximum advantage of the medium (Massi and Blázquez Shorter Better 38).

Despite their short length, short films are not dependent on other material to introduce or finish any storylines and in contrast to trailers, tell a complete story (Massi and Blázquez Shorter Better 36, Donaghy Action 24). As independent so-called “mini-films” (Massi and Blázquez Thousand Films 63), they usually include all core features typical of feature films. They focus on a narrative situation or problem, allow for the development of a character in the course of the narration and provide a solution (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 24, Massi and Blázquez Shorter Better 64). But owing to their brevity, they do so in a condensed way (Rössler 310). Consequently, short films tend to follow the same structural guidelines as feature films, with only one exception:

The short story has ONE character that wants something badly and is having trouble getting it. That “trouble” is, at most, ONE other character or environment that causes conflict. The resolution to the conflict communicates ONE specific idea, theme, or concept. (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 23)

Next to such a limited number of characters and themes, many short films only make use of one or a maximum of two different settings (Rössler 310) and of props “only […] necessary to populate the scene appropriately or drive the story forward” (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 22).
What is more, their brevity does not make it possible to introduce a highly elaborate story. This is why many short films focus on relatively simple storylines only consisting of a main plot, which is occasionally, or rather rarely, accompanied by one additional subplot (Rössler 310, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 149). Typically, the story told in a short film starts “in medias res” (Rössler 313) without an extensive introduction of the characters or situation (Sundquist 124). Similarly sudden as their beginning is also their ending (Sundquist 124, Rössler 310). Yet, in contrast to feature films, the main focus of short films is not their narration but their theme, which is embedded in the story so as to provide meaningful context to address this theme (Rössler 311), which might be a further reason for the simplicity and straightforwardness of their storyline.

With regard to the topics and themes addressed in short films, it is noteworthy that not all of them focus on the big, quintessential questions of life. As mentioned by Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander (23), “[s]ometimes it is enough to retrieve an object, understand an environment, solve a problem, reveal a secret, or discover something new”. Yet, the topical focus of all short films is “frequently unusual, but still linked to everyday situations and experiences” (Rössler 314) and as such, usually addresses topics familiar to and of interest for most learners (Donaghy Action 25). Especially animated short films tend to deal with issues relevant for lower secondary learners. Considering recent productions by Pixar, these short films indeed fulfil this essential criterion of suitable audio-visual teaching material. While The Blue Umbrella focuses on the highly intense experience of first love, the story of both Day and Night as well as Partly Cloudy deals with the significance and beauty of true friendship as its main theme (cf. Leslie 27-29). Also negative experiences are frequently addressed in such short films. To provide but one example, Lifted elaborates on the theme of failure in relation to technology, but highlights the comic side of it by effectively exploiting this theme as a source of humour (cf. Hofmann).

Taking into account these topics and themes, short films share a significant similarity with children’s films. More often than not, there is an educational component embedded within this theme so that short films frequently come to an end with the protagonist learning something (Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 24). The Pixar animated short

[^34]: “Die häufig ausgefallene und doch zugleich an Alltagssituationen und -erfahrungen anknüpfende Themenwahl vieler Kurzspielfilme aktiviert überdies eigenes Welt- und Erfahrungswissen der Lernenden und kann zu persönlichkeitsbildenden Reflexionsprozessen anregen.” (Rössler 314)
For the Birds, for instance, is a hilarious visualisation of the proverb “Who laughs last laughs longest”. Apart from the viewer, this lesson is learned by a group of little blue birds initially ridiculing and teasing a fellow bird for his enormous size and different outer appearance eventually becoming subject to mockery of this bird in consequence of an unfortunate incident making them lose all of their beautiful blue feathers. Similarly, the Pixar production Boundin’ makes not only the little lamb as the main protagonist of this film, but also the viewers realise that unexpected and sometimes unwanted changes are an inevitable part of everybody’s life, which should not cause us to give in but should be considered as valuable opportunities to “learn to ‘bound, bound, bound and rebound’” (Leslie 26) (cf. Leslie 25-27).

The limited time available in short films not only influences their stories as such, but also significantly affects the way in which these stories convey their meaning (Rössler 310-311, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 148). In order to compensate their high density as their “drawback” compared to long formats, short films usually rely on a particularly strong visual and audible level supporting the events in the film (Sundquist 124, Rössler 310-311). As a result, many short films tend to rely on the expressiveness of sound, music and image to convey their meaning rather than on extensive dialogue (Donaghy Action 25, British Film Institute Reframing Literacy 10). Many recently produced animated short films such as For The Birds, Partly Cloudy, The Blue Umbrella, Peck Pocketed, Lifted and Defective Detective even manage to tell their story without conveying any verbal information at all. While such films may include both diegetic and non-diegetic sound such as music or specific sound effects, they do not contain any spoken language (Massi and Blázquez Shorter Better 37). Consequently, they solely rely on “images and movement, sequence and duration, sound and music to tell their stories” (Donaghy Action 25). Such silent shorts lend themselves perfectly for learners at a total beginners’ level as they do not require the comprehension of language but guide the learners’ focus towards visual or audible clues that need to be decoded and expressed verbally by the students in the target language with the help of the teacher (Donaghy Short and Sweet, Donaghy Action 21, Massi and Blázquez Shorter Better 37, Hofmann 8).

As the discussion of short films has shown, this type of film shares relevant features with both, feature films and trailers. Yet, there are also significant differences between them. A closer look at the differences between short films and trailers reveals that short
films seem to lend themselves even better for work in a beginners’ classroom than the similarly short advertising films.

The most significant differences between trailers and short films concern their characteristic structure. In contrast to trailers typically presenting the events of a full-length feature film in an order creating maximum suspense (cf. Film Education Narrative Structure), short films do not introduce any other audio-visual text and therefore focus on presenting events unique to them in a chronological order (cf. Massi and Blázquez Shorter Better 38). Moreover, owing to the fact that a short film tends to tell a story that is as long as the narrative time, unlike a typical trailer, a typical short film neither makes use of ellipses, flash-forwards or flashbacks. Thus, it does not rely as heavily on editing as a means to tell a story as its similarly short relative. These aspects additionally ease comprehension of short films as learners do not have to create semantic relations between individual scenes. Another difference between short films and trailers concerns their ending. While a “trailer builds to a climax, where it ends” (Film Space Trailers 7) owing to its advertising function, short films usually do provide some sort of closure (Sundquist 124, Sullivan, Schumer and Alexander 23). Taking into account these differences, short films might be easier to follow for young learners than trailers due to their structure that is more clear and thus, more easily accessible for them (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 5).

Aside from these structural advantages of short films compared to trailers, the “self-contained mini-films” (Massi and Blázquez Thousand Films 63) also have the significant advantage that learners are less familiar with them (Donaghy Action 25, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 5). This makes working with this type of film more exciting as learners do not know what to expect when watching them. In contrast to this, work with the omnipresent trailers of well-known film blockbusters will only rarely be able to surprise young learners. This unfamiliarity with the material makes it possible to raise the learners’ curiosity (Donaghy Action 25). This is particularly true when, for instance, asking the learners to verbalise what they think might happen in the following scene based on audible and visual clues and what they have noticed so far (cf. Weisshaar) (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 5).

Comparing short films to the criteria audio-visual teaching material that is suitable for beginners should meet, it becomes evident that a typical short film as described in this chapter is in line with almost all of them. Short films usually tell a complete, simple
story frequently only consisting of a main plot in a chronological order and make extensive use of their images, sound and music rather than their dialogues to do so. Moreover, most short films only include a limited number of characters, settings and themes, which prevents young learners from being overwhelmed with information processing also in this respect. In a nutshell, “[s]hort films are brief, accessible and tell stories that learners understand” (Donaghy Action 25).

Taking these strengths into account, this type of film can be considered what Tomalin (Young Children 49-50) regards as an “ideal video clip” to be used with less experienced foreign language learners which is perfectly suited to guide learners towards the understanding of longer film formats at a later stage of language learning (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 2). In particular animated short films as produced by Pixar seem to unite the strengths of trailers, feature films, children’s films and animated films within one single film and even add the significant advantage that most of them do not make use of verbal interaction at all. As such, animated silent shorts are able to completely refute the supposed excessive demand on young learners due to their lack of knowledge of the target language as the main argument of many foreign language teachers against the use of films in lower secondary English lessons.

With regard to the effectivity of short films as a teaching resource in general, it can be said that the potential of this film type in a beginners’ classroom is not restricted to the development of specific competencies. Owing to the vast amount of different short films available, there are sheer endless possibilities to use this type of film with language beginners (cf. Massi and Blázquez Thousand Films 64).

Most notably, this type of film offers several starting points for purposeful oral and written discussion (Rössler 314, Donaghy Action 25, Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Filme Englischunterricht 148). The simplicity and brevity of a short film’s plot make it a worthwhile activity for learners to come up with their own backgrounds for the characters and the story (Rössler 314). Alternatively, Donaghy (Action 25) recommends the creation of alternative endings, sequels and the re-narration of the story from another perspective as particularly suitable production tasks related to short films. With the help of appropriate language support and reflected didactic implementation, all of these tasks can already be given to and successfully managed by language beginners, albeit at a basic level.
Apart from enhancing the learners’ target language skills, owing to their easy accessibility, short films are particularly suitable to familiarise learners with the analysis of the characteristics unique to the medium of film and thus, also the language of film already in a beginners’ classroom. In view of the complexity of trailers and animated films compared to short films, such an analysis in an attempt to lay the foundation for the development of the learners’ film aesthetic and critical competence would probably be more challenging if they were based on these films (cf. Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 150, Donaghy *Action* 25).

Having discussed short films in theory and established animated silent shorts as the perfect material for young learners in this chapter, it seems worthwhile to take a closer look at the way these animated silent short films create meaning despite their abandonment of spoken language to find out whether they also meet the criteria of suitable audio-visual teaching material for less advanced foreign language learners in practice. The following section will thus provide a close analysis of an example of such a film type. For this analysis, the Pixar production *For The Birds* will be considered.
5. Analysis of Suitable Audio-Visual Material for Beginners

5.1. For The Birds (2000)\textsuperscript{35}

5.1.1. Analysis

Since the use of image, sound and music to create meaning is particularly effective in this short film and significantly contributes to its accessibility for young learners, For The Birds will be analysed in greater detail in what follows.

For The Birds is an animated silent short film by the production company Pixar. It was directed by Ralph Eggleston, produced in 2000, but re-released as a 3D version as additional material on the Monsters, Inc. DVD in 2013. Within 4 minutes, together with an entire flock of blue birds, the viewer learns that who laughs last, laughs longest.

On a bright, sunny day, a flock of equally looking birds lands on a power supply line one after another. After the first bird having found his\textsuperscript{36} optimum position on the wire, he is joined by another, equally looking bird. This second bird stretches out his wings and feels visibly content in the sun, which is evident because of his smile and the fact that he is visibly yawning. The first bird, appropriately enough named Bully by the producers on their website, suspiciously eyes the newcomer with one eye half closed, the corners of his mouth slightly bent downwards and leaning away from his unwished-for companion before giving vent to his displeasure owing to the bird disturbing his peace and starting pecking at him. The birds turn to each other, start twittering excitedly and with changing pitch level and intensity. At the latest when the birds are moving closer to each other and spread their wings in excitement, it becomes clear that the situation undoubtedly resembles a discussion. Another bird, referred to as Snob on Pixar’s official website, lands on the wire, overtly shaking his head and turning away from the two brawlers. Jostled by Bully, Snob joins the discussion and starts pecking other birds having meanwhile landed on the same wire and enlarged the group of fighting birds.

Until now, the images depicting the birds have focused closely on the wire so as to capture the behaviour of selected birds, but then the movement of a camera slowly zooming out is imitated so as to show the pecking and fighting of the entire flock

\textsuperscript{35} A similar analysis of For The Birds was done by Leslie in her article “Handling Tough Emotions”.

\textsuperscript{36} Owing to the birds’ highly anthropomorphised appearance and the fact that some of them were given names by the production company, the pronoun “he” rather than “it” will be used to refer to a bird throughout this chapter.
meanwhile consisting of approximately fifteen birds. The lively discussion of the flock is interrupted by a squeaky-sounding chirp that introduces another newcomer to the flock on an audible level. All of the birds immediately fall silent and throw a puzzled look at the audience. Remarkably, this is the moment where the melodious, rhythmic sounds of an acoustic guitar, which have accompanied the events until this moment, come to a halt abruptly. The only sound that can be heard now is the singing of the wind, indicating the new twist of the plot and highlighting the excitement of the situation. The birds’ heads turn to the left of the frame, indicating the source of the chirp in this direction. The movement of a camera is imitated once more so as to follow their gaze and introduce a much larger “dopey bird” (Pixar), which is referred to as Dopey by Pixar, standing on the pylon and shyly waving with his wing, obviously wanting to join the group. This introduction is done with a point-of-view-shot that makes the viewer take over the perspective of the flock when seeing the big bird for the first time. In contrast to the small birds being rather round with a head that is not set apart from the rest of the body, this bird has a strikingly long, thin neck, a comparably big head with a considerably longer beak and messy feathers on his head. What is more, owing to his seemingly endlessly long feet not much thicker than a branch of a tree, he is more than four times the size of the small birds. With this look and behaviour, he resembles an insecure teenager with a long nose and messy haircut who tries to make new friends. The shot that immediately follows this point-of-view-shot from the perspective of the flock is a medium close-up of the flock to provide the viewer with a detailed impression of their reaction towards the big bird. Yet, it does not show the power line from the front as in the rest of the scenes, but from the side (see figure 4).

Figure 4 Point-of-View-Shot from For The Birds (0:58)
By doing this, the image depicts the scene from the perspective of Dopey, who has previously landed on the pylon. It shows one bird behind another on the wire, trying to get a glimpse of the big bird and staring at him with their eyes extremely wide open, signifying their astonishment. This point-of-view-shot puts the viewers in Dopey’s position, thus not only making the big bird subject to the flock’s critical scrutiny, but also the viewers with the effect that they can identify more closely with Dopey in this particular situation.

In this very moment, the rhythmic, “upbeat” (Leslie 27) guitar music continues again, indicating the return to the normal course of events. The wire is shown from the front again to show all of the small birds and their second reactions towards the big bird. With the small birds pulling faces, giggling and pointing with their wings towards the direction of the big bird, it is obvious that the small birds overtly make fun of the big bird. Interestingly, without exception, all of the small birds find pleasure in imitating Dopey’s off-standing feathers and other attributes of his different appearance, which shows that they have seemingly forgotten about their former differences. The sudden presence of a bird that looks so different from them might have made them realise their similarity and has made them “become one” (Pixar) in consequence of having found a new, common victim. As soon as the birds’ bullying starts, the rhythmic guitar melody that has started again is accompanied by low voices singing invented words to highlight the fact that the flock does not take the big bird seriously. Yet, their bullying is interrupted by another squeaky-sounding chirp by Dopey from the off, with which the newcomer wants to get the small birds’ attention. This attempt is successful as it makes them startle and stop making fun of him. They look suspiciously at the big bird, their discontent with this interruption overtly visible due to their suddenly very serious facial expressions. Dopey is shown from the perspective of the flock again, who points with his head towards the group and smiles shyly at the flock. Again, he starts chirping, but this time it is a slightly longer chirp with a rising pitch. In this situation, the visual and audible representations of Dopey make it easy for the viewer to identify his intention and interpret his chirp a question asking for permission to join the flock. In this scene, the music undergoes a significant change. Immediately after Dopey’s chirp which has made the flock stop making fun of Dopey, the singing of the men accompanying the guitar music changes to coughing, functioning as a rebuke and highlighting the inappropriateness of the flock’s behaviour.
The coughing of the men continues while, one after another, the birds move towards the middle of the supply line to create more distance between them and Dopey and start chirping very fast and at a very low pitch level, which is reminiscent of people whispering. With their heads ducked, eyes narrowed to slits and occasional glimpses towards Dopey, there is no doubt that the birds are discussing the possibility of Dopey joining their group, but do not seem to be fond of this idea. The combination of sound, music and image makes it clear to the viewers that the small birds are talking badly about Dopey and pull him to pieces. Unimpressed by the flock’s discussion, the big bird clumsily approaches the flock and finds his place right in the middle of the small birds, who quickly move to the side and suspiciously eye their new group member with eyes wide open and lean away from him. When Dopey leaves his position on top of the pylon, the music again changes and the men accompanying the guitar music start melodiously humming, which highlights the harmlessness and carefreeness of the big bird and his good intentions to make new friends. Yet, Dopey’s good intentions have serious consequences as the supply line cannot hold the additional weight of Dopey and bends almost to the ground, which makes the group of birds with Dopey at its centre come closer to each other. This new course of events is also realised on an audible level. When the supply line approaches the ground, there is a long “aaah”, which starts very softly and with a very low pitch, but gets increasingly louder and high-pitched the more the line bends and the closer the birds on the line approach Dopey, thus creating tension. In contrast to the small birds being infuriated because of the intruder into their territory, which manifests itself in continuous excited twittering and angry looks at the big bird, Dopey is content with this situation and visibly enjoys being with his new “friends”, which can be seen with regard to his happy facial expression. Remarkably, in this scene, the music becomes less prominent. Instead of the melodious guitar music, only the slow plucking of the guitar strings can be heard so as to focus the attention of the viewer on the action that takes place on a visual level and the angry twittering of the flock. Living up to his name, Dopey does not realise the flock’s anger and ironically starts singing happily. Even more annoyed by Dopey’s lack of intelligence, one of the small birds pecks at his toe, which makes the big bird lose balance and hang upside down from the wire. Only his toes still holding the wire prevent him from falling. Dopey expresses his surprise caused by his lack of balance on an audible level with a “woooo”. His inconvenient situation gives the birds an idea how to tell him in no uncertain terms that his presence is not desired. So as to make the viewers realise this significant moment of
the story, the viewer sees a close-up of the two small birds closest to Dopey the moment they are struck by a supposed brainwave and their faces leaving no doubt about their mean intentions. Peering at each other with slightly narrowed eyes, furrowed brows and grinning at each other, this evil facial expression suggests to the viewer that they will take actions which will not be helpful for Dopey in his pitiful situation. The same interpretation of the scene is also suggested by the music. The plucking of the guitar strings is accompanied by the men ironically whistling, which is conventionally done to highlight a person’s alleged innocence in a particular situation. Being familiar with this highly conventionalised use of whistling, the viewer immediately knows that the flock is up to no good. Putting their mean plan into practice, the small birds closest to Dopey start pecking the big bird’s toe once more, but this time with a higher intensity so as to make him let go of the wire with his toes and fall. To make it clear to the viewers that the small birds’ pecking is indeed an attempt to get rid of Dopey, the small birds start giggling and making repeated rhythmical chirps, which one can easily identify as cheers of encouragement. While most of the small birds eagerly cheer the two birds pecking at Dopey, one of the birds realises the fatal consequences Dopey’s fall from the wire would have for the rest of them, which becomes evident with regard to the fact that he stares to the ground with his eyes wide open in shock. Once more, this moment is highlighted since the image shows this clever bird with a close-up to draw the viewers’ attention towards this bird and prevent them from missing this significant moment of the story. So as to make these consequences clear to the viewer as well, the movement of a camera zooming out is imitated once again to show that the wire is already close to the ground and resembles a slingshot. In order to warn his friends about the fatal consequences, the small bird twitters excitedly and points with his head towards the ground with an overtly worried facial expression. It can be easily seen that the flock has understood the warning of their clever companion since the shock of the small birds is clearly visible owing to their eyes being wide open. What is more, their shock can also be heard since they start twittering excitedly and with a high pitch, which clearly expresses their panic also on an audible level. With the help of the music accompanying this scene, also the viewer learns which consequences the small birds are awaiting. As soon as the clever bird realises the huge mistake of the flock by pecking at Dopey in an attempt to make him fall, male voices constantly imitate the sound of an elastic wire releasing tension, which makes it clear that this wire will function as a catapult and make all of the birds fling away high into the sky in consequence of Dopey eventually
falling from the wire. By doing this, the male voices not only help the viewer understand what these fatal consequences anticipated by the clever small bird will look like, but they already foreshadow the events that will take place shortly. Indeed, the pecking of the small birds is successful and Dopey lets go of the wire, which leads to the exact consequences anticipated by the clever bird and foreshadowed by the male voices accompanying the guitar music. The small birds are catapulted into the sky. The moment when the wire releases, the guitar music accompanied by the male voices abruptly stops, which highlights this new course of development and expresses the absence of the birds also on an audible level. For a few seconds, the viewers can only hear the sound of the wind, which creates excitement. On the visible level, the viewer only sees the birds being flung away very briefly. Just before the birds are catapulted into the sky, the viewer is confronted with a close-up showing the dumbfounded faces of the small birds realising their big mistake. The image that is shown right after this incident depicts the situation from the same perspective and shows countless blue feathers falling to the ground (see figure 5).

![Figure 5 Still from For The Birds After the Major Event (2:29)](image)

As illustrated in figure 5, the still depicts the effect the slingshot incident has on the flock rather than the incident itself. By doing this, the image makes the viewers focus on this effect, which is more relevant for the further development of the story.

After this focus on the consequences this main event has on the flock of small birds, in the next scene, the focus is on Dopey to show what happened to him after the flock’s successful attempt to get rid of him. The big bird can be seen sitting in the middle of a cornfield, observing and wondering about the vast amount of feathers slowly approaching the ground. The viewers thus learn that Dopey has indeed fallen to the ground, but also that he has landed safely. As soon as one of the small birds lands right next to him, all exposed and pink due to having lost each and every of his feathers,
Dopey realises the effect his fall has had on the flock. He can hardly hide his amusement but bursts into laughter. The viewers can not only hear Dopey laughing, but also see him throwing his head back in amusement and hiding his face with his wing, which signifies him being overwhelmed by the comic twist of fate and the naked small bird. The next shot is a close-up of the exposed bird, which makes it easy for the viewers to see his discomfort with this embarrassing situation. This discomfort becomes obvious with regard to the shy glances the bird throws into all directions and his clumsy attempts to hide his private parts first with his wings and ultimately with a leaf he is given by Dopey, who is still roaring with laughter and continues to do so while more and more of the plucked birds are landing on the ground.

5.1.2. Discussion in Relation to Characteristics of Suitable Audio-Visual Teaching Material for Beginners

This close analysis of For The Birds has shown how this short film creates meaning with the help of its images, sound and music and completely without spoken language. At the same time, it has revealed that it is in line with all of the comprehension-facilitating criteria which suitable audio-visual material in a beginners’ classroom should possess.

Starting with the little blue birds pecking and mocking the big bird and ending with them losing all of their feathers, For The Birds contains a clear story which is told from the beginning to the end. Since this story does not make use of any flash-forwards or flashbacks but introduces the events in a linear way, the story is chronological and highly coherent and thus, easily accessible for young learners.

Yet, in this short, coherence is not only created by the story itself but also by the music. Indeed, “[m]usic can have syntactic function and support the narrative structure of a film by filling leaps in time, connecting the storyline and accentuating key scenes.”37 (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 5) and it does so on several occasions throughout this short. The most significant moment the music provides a link between individual scenes is when the male voices accompanying the guitar music create sounds that resemble the sound of an elastic wire functioning as a catapult, which later on happens exactly like this in the story. In addition to this, the music or, more precisely,

37 “Musik kann aber auch syntaktische Funktionen übernehmen und die Erzählstruktur unterstützen, indem sie beispielsweise Zeitsprünge überbrückt, Handlungsstränge verbindet und Szenenhöhepunkte hervorhebt.” (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp Verbindung 5)
the absence of music, marks, amongst other things, one of the most significant turning points of the story told in *For The Birds*, which is the presence of the outsider Dopey, who wants to become a member of the flock.

Apart from the music, also the way this short film is edited contributes to its clear, easily accessible structure. In contrast to the vast majority of trailers, this short film makes only rare use of cuts and only uses a small range of shot types. What is more, a clear relationship can be established between most of the cuts. For instance, before Dopey is introduced with a point-of-view-shot that captures the perspective of the flock, all of the small birds turn their heads excitedly into one direction, which makes it clear to the viewer that the next shot will focus on the object or person that has aroused the small birds’ curiosity.

Generally speaking, the shot types chosen to capture different moments of the story told in *For The Birds* help learners focus their attention on relevant aspects of the story and are thus used in a way that enhances the learners’ overall comprehension. As an example, each time the birds show emotions or have an idea which will have a significant impact on the way the story will develop, the image shown focuses exclusively on these birds, and sometimes even only on the faces of these birds. This appropriate use of shot types makes sure the viewer gets the chance to read the conventionalised facial expressions and gestures of the birds indicating these turning points. To provide but one example, figure 6 below shows an extreme close-up of the birds’ faces the moment they are struck by the supposedly clever idea to get rid of Dopey by pecking his toes. With the birds’ faces being the single focus of the image, it does not include other details that might distract the viewers from relevant sources of information, which, in this particular case, are the birds’ facial expression. The single focus on the two birds’ mimes makes it impossible for the learner not to realise the slight smiles and the way they are looking at each other with their eyes being small slits. Therefore, it is easy for them to draw the correct conclusion from these conventionalised and exaggerated facial expressions that these birds are exchanging knowing glances since they both had the same mean idea.
Apart from being clearly structured, *For The Birds* also meets another criterion of suitable audio-visual teaching material for beginners as there are only few characters relevant to the story. Although next to the big bird Dopey, there is a total of 15 small birds featured in the short, only three of these small birds are depicted as individual personalities. What is more, this is only the case at the beginning of the short for approximately 10 seconds. Throughout the rest of the story, the small birds act as a group, which is why the behaviour of the entire flock is relevant for the understanding of the story rather than the behaviour of individual members of it. Despite the presence of 16 individual birds in this short film, it can therefore be said that learners are not overwhelmed by a high number of characters and the amount of information that needs to be processed related to these characters.

What is more, throughout the short film, there is no change of setting but the entire story takes place on (or below) a power supply line, which is located in a place full of vast cornfields. The fact that there is only one setting, which is additionally also highly minimalistic since it only consists of a wire, has the advantage that there are no props at all which need to be interpreted by the viewers so that they can focus all of their attention on other relevant clues to meaning and do not get distracted.

What is particularly striking about this short film is that it manages to tell its story in a comprehensive way and effectively engage its viewer despite its complete abandonment of spoken language. As such, it does not require the learners to understand any spoken language in order to make sense of it, which makes this short particularly suitable for language beginners. Instead, the birds communicate mainly through mimes and gestures.
This communication with the help of visible clues is the main reason why, as a typical animated short, *For The Birds* consists of highly expressive images. Indeed, the exaggerated nature of the animated image becomes most obvious with regard to the birds’ behaviour. As already indicated in the close analysis, all of the birds are highly anthropomorphised and display overtly human features such as eye and mouth movements and their wings imitating the movement of hands. Thus, their facial expressions and body language can be easily interpreted by the viewer due to their similarity to conventionalised human behaviour and the exaggerated representation thereof. For instance, in figure 7 below, the viewer immediately identifies the small bird as feeling ashamed and uncomfortable without his feathers due to the overtly self-conscious, almost anxious look in his eyes and his wings preventing his private parts from being exposed to public. All of these actions are natural reactions in his pitiful situation, but highly exaggerated in this short so as to convey their meaning more clearly.

![Figure 7 Visual Representation of Events in For The Birds (2:46)](image)

In addition to such communication via mimes and gestures, communication in *For The Birds* also takes place on an audible level. Instead of expressing themselves with the help of words, the birds communicate with the sounds typically associated with these animals, twittering. Although the anthropomorphisation of the birds does not make the birds use human language to communicate, their twittering shows signs of anthropomorphisation as it can be characterised according to the same features as human language and even follows the same conventions. Just like human language, the intensity, pitch and pace of their twittering indicate what the birds might be “talking” about. This makes their twittering equally telling and easy to interpret for young learners as the birds’ facial expressions and body language. For instance, the constantly varying pitch and intensity of the flock’s fast-paced twittering after more and more birds
have landed on the wire at the beginning of the short film make this twittering overtly resemble the language use of humans during a heated discussion, which makes the viewers immediately realise that the birds are having an argument. Similarly, Dopey’s chirp demanding the small birds’ attention while they are making fun of him is characterised by a rising pitch, which can thus easily be identified as a question. In view of these examples, it can be concluded that not only the visual representation of events follows well-established traditions and conventions, but also the conventionalised use of pitch and intensity of sound enhances the learners’ comprehension of the short film, thus contributing to its accessibility for young learners. Despite the absence of dialogue in a traditional sense, For The Birds therefore seems to be in line with the criterion that suitable audio-visual teaching material should feature easily accessible language use.

Another aspect that makes this short film particularly suitable for a beginners’ classroom is the fact that it is accompanied with music from the beginning to the end. This music helps learners understand what is going on in the film in various ways.

Generally speaking, “[t]he [happy] music works to reassure the viewer that the meanness of the smaller birds will not result in an unhappy ending for the big bird. […] [It makes clear that] there will be a funny payoff by the end, despite the nastiness of the small birds in the lead-up to that punchline” (Leslie 27). Although this music is characteristic of vast parts of the short film, it regularly stops at relevant parts of the story to reinforce the tension that is created in the images of the short. This is, for instance, the case when the birds are catapulted into the sky. In this scene, the absence of the music corresponds with the absence of the small birds in the visually represented events in consequence of the wire having functioned as a slingshot.

While the rhythmic guitar music remains the same almost throughout the whole short, the sounds made by the male voices change constantly and adapt according to the situation that is currently depicted on a visual level. By doing this, they provide additional information which help learners make sense of individual scenes. For instance, the nonsense words sung by the men while the flock is mocking and making fun of the big bird support these mean actions depicted on a visual level, thus making their meaning more clear and suggesting the same interpretation of the events as the images.

Apart from reinforcing the visual level of the short, the male voices also offer valuable audible clues that allow young learners to draw appropriate conclusions from the visual
representations of events and interpret them correctly. The moment when the small bird realises that their supposedly clever attempt to get rid of Dopey is actually not as clever as it initially seemed, the male voices start imitating the sound of an elastic wire that suddenly releases tension. By doing this, the sounds made by the men explain why the small bird has come to this conclusion and make the consequences of Dopey’s fall anticipated by this bird clear to the viewers. In another scene, the whistling of these male voices reveals the intentions behind the small birds pecking at Dopey’s toes and establishes it as a mean way to get rid of the big bird. Most notably, throughout the whole short film, there is no incident in which the music does not correspond to the images of the film. Instead, the music either tells or explains the events that can be observed on an audible level.

The situation is similar with regard to the use of sound. The short features many scenes in which there is an overlap between the information conveyed on the sound and image level, which makes these scenes easily accessible for young learners. This will be exemplified with reference to the scene depicted in figure 8 below and the sounds accompanying it.

![Figure 8 Small Birds Making Disparaging Remarks about Dopey (For The Birds 1:02)](image)

The fast-paced, low twittering of the birds and their posture and facial expressions are clear, unambiguous signs of the small birds talking badly about Dopey. Since this conclusion is suggested by both, the images as well as the sound level, this scene will hardly be misinterpreted by young learners.

Generally speaking, the events depicted in the images of this short film tend to be accompanied by an appropriate realisation of these visual representations on the sound level. When the clever small bird shares with his friends that Dopey’s fall from the wire
will make the wire shoot them into the sky, the small birds’ reaction is realised on both levels. On the one hand, the images show the birds jumping with fright and with a worried facial expression. On the other hand, on an audible level, there is an excited and overlapping twittering of several birds. Both, the visual as well as the audible manifestation of the small birds’ reaction contribute to the easy accessibility of this particular scene as they reinforce each other’s message by conveying the same information. As just illustrated, as a typical silent short film, For The Birds makes extensive use of its visual and audible level to convey meaning and thus helps the learner understand what it is about.

Apart from being easily accessible for less experienced foreign language learners owing to its clear structure and exploitation of its modes to convey meaning, For The Birds also fulfils the criteria of suitable audio-visual teaching material for young learners with regard to content. Dealing with the topic of bullying and deliberate exclusion of certain members from a group for no real, absurd reasons, it addresses issues that too many students are familiar with and which many of them can therefore probably relate to. Yet, as correctly observed by Leslie (26), the short “chooses not to focus on the one being bullied […] and instead focuses on how bullying has a negative effect on the bullies. The small birds, by their own short-sightedness and mean-spiritedness, are the cause of their own discomfort and embarrassment”. With this focus on the bullies rather than on the victims, it treats the issue of bullying with the necessary sensitivity and does not put the victims of bullying in an uncomfortable position. At the same time, the fact that the small birds as the original perpetrators have to face consequences of their incorrect behaviour, which make them eventually become subject to mockery themselves in the course of the short, highlights the inappropriateness of their behaviour. The realisation “that there are consequences to being a bully” (Leslie 27) might eventually make real-life bullies think twice about their ill-treatment of their colleagues and has the potential to make them stop bullying. In view of this, this short film can be said to include an educational component that can be valuably exploited in the classroom so as to help young learners become more reflected and mature personalities. Yet, this short can not only function as a “source of vicarious personal experience” (Sanders 144) for potential bullies, but also for their victims. Following Dopey’s example, this short film might encourage learners suffering from bullying to model his behaviour. Although Dopey’s calmness and emotional stability throughout vast parts of the short are admittedly mainly due to him being unaware of the mean behaviour of the flock, they can be used
as the point of departure for the insight that such ill-treatment of others is not worth any reaction and must not be given the power to affect one’s self-esteem in a negative way.

Generally speaking, the element of humour that is characteristic of this short makes it possible to address the serious issue of bullying in a safe, face-saving way for all students involved in such unpleasant situations in real life by counteracting the seriousness of the theme (cf. Macgillivray 89). What is more, the humorous character of this short film is likely to cause strong responses among learners, which might have a positive effect on their willingness to share their opinion with their colleagues and use the target language.
Conclusion

This thesis has addressed film-based foreign language teaching from the perspective of material. As the use of film as a teaching resource is more established in upper secondary foreign language classrooms, the focus of this thesis was on lower secondary education. As explained in the first section of this thesis, next to the teachers’ insecurity with respect to the medium of film owing to media pedagogy not being an obligatory part of teacher training in Austria, the most decisive reason for the fact that work with film is still rather the exception than the rule in a lower secondary context is the limited language proficiency of less experienced foreign language learners, which is perceived as a particular challenge by lower secondary teachers when it comes to film-based foreign language teaching in general and the selection of suitable audio-visual material in particular. So as to help lower secondary teachers select material that lends itself for work with these learners and allows for purposeful exploitation in the beginners’ classroom, the main part of this thesis has elaborated on the characteristics which make a film an effective and suitable teaching resource particularly in a beginners’ classroom and has introduced types of audio-visual material which are considered a good choice for work in this context by experts in the field.

First of all, this thesis has addressed film from the perspective of its effectivity in a beginners’ classroom. It has shown that film can be an effective tool for teaching and learning in the foreign language classroom since it can enhance the development of the learners’ perceptive competence, film aesthetic and critical competence, intercultural competence, cultural competence and their communicative competence in the target language. The curriculum published by Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp (*Filme Englischunterricht* 24-31) is proof of the fact that the potential of film is not restricted to upper secondary, but that the foundation for these competencies learners should acquire throughout their school career can – and should – already be laid at a beginners’ level by raising the learners’ awareness towards the unique power of a film’s images, sound and music in the creation of meaning and encouraging verbalisation thereof in the target language. In the first instance, a particular film can thus be regarded as effective teaching material in a beginners’ classroom if it lends itself for the development of (one of) the competencies just mentioned at a basic level. Since one single film will most certainly not lend itself equally well for the development of all of them, the degree to
which a particular film is effective in a beginners’ classroom is dependent on which of these specific skills and competencies are intended to be developed, i.e. the lesson aim.

Yet, the discussion in this section has also shown that mere exposure to a film will not be sufficient so as to make learners acquire the intended skill or competency in actual practice. Instead, a film needs to be effectively exploited. To do so, teachers must make use of particularly well-chosen task types, exercises and general methodological decisions, some of which were introduced in chapter 2.2. In view of this insight, it can be concluded that in a beginners’ classroom, a particular film can be regarded as effective teaching material if it lends itself for work on the competencies described above in a sense that teachers can create meaningful tasks and exercises based on it so that learners can be helped to acquire them.

In an attempt to find out what (type of) material lends itself particularly well for work with language beginners, material selection was addressed in relation to the characteristics of young learners in section number 3. The discussion of film selection in relation to learner characteristics has led to the insight that the choice of suitable audio-visual material for a particular group of learners needs to be carefully reflected and based on the learners’ cultural background(s) and stages of development in terms of their personalities, cognitive abilities and target language knowledge. It has shown that, in order to be considered suitable material for a beginners’ classroom, film must take into account and treat the learners’ incomplete development in various respects in a sensitive way. It is therefore essential that a film fulfils content-related criteria as well as criteria related to its accessibility in order to be considered suitable for a beginners’ classroom.

With regard to its content, suitable classroom material for young learners must deal with issues that are relevant to the lives of children but without overtly depicting violence, sex, nudity and substance abuse and making use of offensive language and insensitive representations of different cultures. This is why feature films can only be considered suitable in terms of content if they are rated G or PG.

Concerning the way a film communicates its content, the discussion has shown that, although the spoken language of a film has an influence on the degree to which young learners are able to make sense of a film, it is not the single criterion that is decisive for the understanding of a film and consequently, neither the single criterion decisive for the suitability of a particular film for language beginners. Owing to the multimodal
nature of the medium, overall comprehension of a film is much more affected by the extent to which it makes use of its images, sound and music to tell its story. Moreover, the structure of a film can help learners make valuable inferences from context, which can additionally enhance comprehension. Consequently, a film needs to be easily accessible for young learners not only in terms of target language use, but also with regard to its overall structure and non-verbal modes of communication.

Taking into account these content-related criteria as well as the criteria related to a film’s accessibility, suitable audio-visual teaching material for a beginners’ classroom can be defined as clearly structured, child-friendly material which relies heavily on expressive, conventionalised images, appropriate sound and music and only little on spoken language, which should be easily comprehensible, to tell its simple, straightforward story.

Having defined criteria which a film should ideally possess in order to be suitable for language beginners, different types of material in line with (some of) them were introduced in section 4. The discussion of authentic material and ELT video has shown that both, original English film as well as material that was either simplified or specifically designed for language learning purposes, can be valuably exploited in the beginners’ classroom, but offer different strengths and weaknesses. While the former seems to lend itself particularly well for cultural topics in consequence of its authenticity allowing for a more realistic insight into the target culture, the simplified target language use characteristic of ELT video makes this type of film more easily comprehensible in terms of language, which might be an advantage in lessons focusing on aspects of the target language. In view of many teachers’ insecurity with regard to the medium of film, ELT video can also be appreciated as an introduction to film-based teaching owing to the extensive teaching suggestions usually accompanying this type of material. However, authentic video should be preferred in the selection of material not only with advanced learners, but also in the beginners’ classroom. Although the frequently elaborate language use in authentic film is particularly challenging for less advanced foreign language learners, this does not make this film type unsuitable for young learners as substantial language support and carefully designed tasks and activities can help learners access these films.

With regard to authentic video, cartoons and animated films, short films, trailers, music videos, commercials, TV series and films for children and teenagers and educational
programmes were mentioned as types of audio-visual material which lend themselves particularly well as learning resources for less advanced foreign language learners according to experts in the field. So as to familiarise the reader with some of these film types in the course of this thesis, animated films as produced by Pixar and Disney were introduced as children’s films making use of images resulting from a creative design process rather than of images recorded with a camera, trailers were defined as “advertising films for longer formats”\(^{38}\) (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 165) and short films were established as “self-contained mini-films” (Massi and Blázquez *Thousand Films* 63) with reference to the typical characteristics of each of these film types. While the suitability of animated films as produced by Pixar and Disney for young learners was found to be mainly due to their exclusive focus on child-friendly topics, their inherent educational component as well as the advantages of the production technique of animation in terms of accessibility via its visual level and the process of identification, their length significantly complicates an implementation of these films in the classroom and impedes comprehension. In contrast to this, trailers can more easily be integrated into a single lesson and are more easily accessible owing to their brevity, but tend to be difficult to make sense of because of their fast cuts and characteristic use of cliff-hangers. Being in line with all of the criteria which suitable audio-visual teaching material for language beginners should fulfil, short films in general and animated silent short films in particular can be regarded as the most suitable type of authentic film for a beginners’ classroom discussed in this thesis.

The close analysis and subsequent discussion of the Pixar animated silent short film *For The Birds* in section 5 has shown that this particular example of a typical animated silent short film indeed fulfils all criteria which suitable audio-visual teaching material for language beginners should fulfil. It was found out that *For The Birds* contains a narrative that is coherent and, most notably, complete. As it does not feature any spoken language, there is no danger of this short film being too difficult to understand for young learners in terms of its target language use. Rather, it relies completely on its sound, music and images to express its meaning. With regard to the images of this short film, all of them are easily accessible owing to the conventionalised use of signs and the exaggerated representation of events. Apart from the visual level, it aids the learners’ comprehension of this particular example that the entire short film makes extensive use

\(^{38}\) “Trailer sind aber vor allem Werbefilme für längere Formate.“ (Henseler, Möller and Suhrkamp *Filme Englischunterricht* 165)
of sound and music to tell its story also on an audible level. Apart from these comprehension-enhancing criteria, *For The Birds* is also in line with the demand on suitable video concerning its relevancy for young learners due to its focus on mobbing and the exclusion of certain members from a group, which are the sad daily reality of too many children.

Having addressed film-based teaching in a beginners’ classroom from the perspective of material, this thesis has taken up one of the most problematic issues related to the use of film in lower secondary foreign language teaching. By providing comprehensible answers to questions relevant to film selection in relation to young, less proficient foreign language learners, this thesis has hopefully made a small contribution to a more comprehensive media education as one of the most urgent tasks of teacher training in Austria so that, in the future, more lower secondary foreign language teachers will choose film over the course book from time to time. Apart from the fact that work with film contributes significantly to the learners’ development of target language skills, such a development would be particularly desirable as it is absolutely essential to foster a critical and rational consumption of this powerful medium already at a young age, which can be considered one of the greatest challenges of our media-dominated society.
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Appendix

English Abstract

Being an instrument that shapes culture, establishes and reproduces ideologies, film undoubtedly is one of the most powerful communication tools of our time. So as to foster reasonable consumption of this highly influential cultural product, media literacy is an essential competency and should be developed already at a young age. Despite this incredible triumph of film outside an educational context, the use of audio-visual material as a teaching resource is still an exception in most lower secondary foreign language classrooms to this day. In an attempt to support lower secondary teachers in the process of selecting audio-visual teaching material that lends itself for work with young learners having just started to learn a foreign language and allows for purposeful exploitation in the beginners’ classroom, this thesis focuses on the characteristics which make a film an effective and suitable teaching resource in this particular context and introduces types of audio-visual material which are considered a good choice for work in this context by experts in the field.

The discussion of relevant literature in the field of film-based foreign language teaching has led to the insight that the effectivity of a film as a teaching resource is dependent on the degree to which it can be exploited with the help of meaningful tasks and exercises appropriate to the language and cognitive level of the learners as a means to develop their perceptive competence, film aesthetic and critical competence, intercultural competence, cultural competence and their communicative competence in the target language. In order to be considered suitable material for a beginners’ classroom, it has been found out that a film must fulfil certain content-related criteria and criteria related to its accessibility. Suitable audio-visual teaching material for a beginners’ classroom could be defined as clearly structured, child-friendly material which relies heavily on expressive, conventionalised images, appropriate sound and music and only little on spoken language, which should be easily comprehensible, to tell its simple, straightforward story.

Material that is in line with these criteria includes both, authentic video and video specifically produced or adapted for language learning purposes. While animated films as produced by Pixar and Disney are suitable for young learners in particular because of their focus on child-friendly topics, their inherent educational component and the advantages resulting from the production technique of animation, the long running time
of these films is their major drawback. Owing to their brevity, trailers can be more easily integrated within one single lesson, but tend to be less accessible because of their characteristic fast cuts and use of cliff-hangers. Being in line with all of the criteria which suitable audio-visual teaching material for language beginners should fulfil, short films in general and animated silent short films in particular could be established as the most suitable type of authentic film for a beginners’ classroom discussed in this thesis. The close analysis of Pixar’s award-winning production *For The Birds* has proven that animated silent short films not only meet the criteria of suitable audio-visual teaching material for less advanced foreign language learners in theory but also in practice.
German Abstract

Als ein kulturell und gesellschaftlich maßgebliches Medium ist Film zweifellos eines der bedeutendsten Kommunikationsmittel unserer Zeit. Um einen vernünftigen Umgang mit diesem einflussreichen kulturellen Produkt zu gewährleisten, ist es unumgänglich, Medienkompetenz bereits in jungen Jahren zu fördern. Trotz seines eindrucksvollen Siegeszugs außerhalb des schulischen Kontexts ist der Einsatz von Film im Fremdsprachenunterricht in der Unterstufe nach wie vor eher die Ausnahme als die Regel. Um Lehrerinnen und Lehrer in der Unterstufe bei der Auswahl von audiovisuellem Unterrichtsmaterial, das für die Arbeit mit jungen Fremdsprachenlernenden geeignet ist und sinnvoll im Anfangsunterricht eingesetzt werden kann, zu unterstützen, befasst sich diese Arbeit vorwiegend mit den Eigenschaften, die Film zu effektivem und geeignetem Material für den Fremdsprachenunterricht in diesem Kontext machen und stellt Materialtypen vor, die von Fachexperten für den fremdsprachlichen Anfangsunterricht empfohlen werden.

Wie eine ausführliche Analyse der Fachliteratur zeigt, ist die Effektivität eines Films als Unterrichtsmaterial abhängig davon, inwieweit er durch sinnvolle und sprachlich sowie kognitiv angemessene Aktivitäten zur Entwicklung von Wahrnehmungskompetenzen, filmästhetischen und -kritischen Kompetenzen, interkulturellen Kompetenzen, kulturellen Kompetenzen und fremdsprachlichen Handlungs- und Kommunikationskompetenzen beiträgt. Als geeignetes Material für den Fremdsprachenunterricht gilt ein Film, sofern er gewisse inhaltliche Kriterien erfüllt und leicht zugänglich für die Lernenden ist. Demnach kann geeignetes audio-visuelles Unterrichtsmaterial als Material definiert werden, das eine klare Struktur aufweist, sich mit kindgerechten Themen befasst und vorwiegend mit Hilfe ausdrucksstarker, konventionalisierter Bildsprache sowie angemessener Musik und Geräuschen und nur wenig mittels gesprochener, jedoch einfach verständlicher, Sprache eine kurze, simple Geschichte erzählt.

Sowohl authentisches als auch didaktisches Videomaterial kann diese Kriterien erfüllen. Während sich Animationsfilme wie beispielsweise die Produktionen der bekannten Studios Disney und Pixar vorwiegend aufgrund ihrer kinderfreundlichen Themen und Inhalte, ihrer erzieherischen Komponente und animationstechnischer Vorteile für den fremdsprachlichen Anfangsunterricht eignen, ist die Länge dieser Filme ihr größtes Manko. Wegen ihrer Kürze können Trailer zwar leichter innerhalb einer
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