

**Nune TOVMASYAN**  
**Ruzan GHAZARYAN**  
*Yerevan State University*

## **A PLAN OF A FILM-BASED LESSON FOR EFL STUDENTS OF INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

*Language teachers have been using films in their classes for decades, and there are a number of reasons why film is an excellent teaching and learning tool. They provide students with examples of authentic English. Films can bring variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of teaching techniques and resources, helping students to develop all four communicative skills. A whole film or sequence can be used to practise listening and reading skills, and can serve as a model for speaking and writing. Films can also act as a tool for follow-up tasks such as discussions, debates on different topics, role plays, reconstructing a dialogue or summarizing. In the paper a sample of a film-based lesson with a number of activities worked out by the authors is given.*

**Key words:** *films, video materials, authenticity, motivation, content-based curriculum, intermediate level, F.S. Fitzgerald, four language skills, critical thinking, lesson sample, "The Great Gatsby"*

It is clear that today English teachers have a lot of choices in terms of teaching the language. Teachers should focus students' attention not only on vocabulary and grammar structures but also they should prepare them for real communication where the knowledge of culture is sometimes crucial. The use of authentic materials like newspapers, literature, films, video, TV, surveys, cultural quizzes, tests, role plays, songs, anecdotes, travel brochures, menus, catalogues, phone books, CDs, the Internet, illustrations appears to be very helpful here.

English learners who lack the appropriate pragmatic awareness quite often find themselves in difficulty when interacting in English-speaking social contexts and they can easily get lost, as it is sometimes very difficult for them to interpret the hidden meanings which are inseparable parts of the language of native speakers. It is common for learners, even advanced ones, to fail to understand when English speakers are being ironic or sarcastic. These are things that people can come across while communicating with a foreigner, or while watching a typical British or American film. To understand native speakers it is necessary for the students to watch native language films and analyze them.

J. Katchen emphasizes the authenticity of the language in films. "Films represent authentic language. They can even serve for the input that EFL students do not usually receive from outside the classroom. The real spoken language includes several characteristics that a textbook cannot present. By watching films the students can also explore the issues of appropriateness and pragmatics while

observing also linguistic, paralinguistic and nonverbal behaviour” /Katchen, 2002: 221-236/. Films and videos provide students with natural exposure to a huge variety of authentic speech forms of the target language. Consequently, when all these are combined together with visual experience, they have a great motivational impact on students.

We think that films/videos in a content-based curriculum give students a chance to analyze different aspects and points of a given topic. Students are given an opportunity to speak the language, to use it in practice discussing some points, doing certain types of exercises based on the video material. With the help of this method students explore not only the aspects of the language, but also explore the content of the topic. Classroom viewing offers additional experience which will enhance the language learning process of the students.

Thus, films and videos provide a certain schema background that makes language in that context relevant and comprehensible. This implies in itself teaching based on informational context, which is academically appropriate for students and teachers.

One of the most important things in film- and video-related lessons is the careful selection of the film. Not all the videos and films are allowed to be shown to students. Teachers must consider the level of the students, their age, interests. A large variety of films work effectively for different levels of knowledge. The effective incorporation of films and videos requires careful attention. If a teacher chooses them correctly they become very effective classroom resources.

With the help of a carefully planned lesson the teacher makes the students get interested in what they are going to watch. This method demands a substantial time commitment for the right film selection and careful lesson planning. And also the teacher must be sure that students gain confidence and feel comfortable with the selected movie or video topic.

At first the teacher should brainstorm the students asking questions referring to the material. A little bit of additional information about what they are going to watch further is also needed. It is very difficult to specify the ideal length of the film or the video. Several factors must be considered:

- a) the knowledge of language,
- b) classroom timetable,
- c) equipment availability,
- d) students' specialization.

Also, “it is important to choose a meaningful film so that students can debate on it” /Morley, 1971/.

A film-based lesson should consist of several activities. To illustrate this we've taken the Oscar Winner Hollywood film “The Great Gatsby” and have worked out a number of activities which we think would be appropriate to use and will prove helpful in a film-based language lesson.

## Sample Lesson

### “The Great Gatsby”. Part 1; Minutes 01:10-05:25

#### Stage 1

#### Pre-Viewing Activities

The teacher should start this film-based lesson with some pre-viewing activities. The aim of pre-viewing activities is to prepare students for the watching of the film.

1. At the beginning of the lesson the teacher gives students hand-outs with a certain kind of information prepared by him for the students. To start with, he/she asks the students to read the first page where they’ll find some information about the film.

*“The Great Gatsby” is a cinematic adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel of the same name. The script is written and directed by Baz Luhrmann, and the cast consists of such stars as Leonardo DiCaprio, Tobey Maguire, Carey Mulligan, Joel Edgerton, and others. The main topic of the film is the concept of the American Dream. It follows the life and experiences of millionaire Jay Gatsby and his neighbour Nick Carraway, who tells about the events that took place at the height of the “roaring Twenties”. The film was released on May 10, 2013.*

2. After the students have read the given piece of the text the teacher should brainstorm them with questions. We believe that for the first part of the film the following questions will be quite appropriate.

- a) What do you understand saying the American Dream?
- b) Who was F. Scott Fitzgerald?
- c) Does the term “lost generation” say anything to you”?
- d) What period was the 1920s for the USA? Have you heard the expression “roaring Twenties”?

3. After brainstorming the teacher asks the students to look at the next page of the hand-outs, where they will find the following encyclopedic information about the American Dream and the period of American history described in the film.

*The American Dream originated in the early days of the American settlement, mostly with the poor immigrants searching for opportunities. For the first time it was manifested in the Declaration of Independence, meant to develop an attitude of hope. The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal and that they are endowed with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness”. “The Great Gatsby” is a kind of symbolic meditation on the 1920s’ America as a whole, and in particular on the concept of the American Dream in an era of prosperity and material excess. Fitzgerald portrays the 1920s as an era of decayed social and moral values. The values totally changed. People only wanted to get as rich as they could instead of striving for equality. Places and settings in the extract and in the whole novel epitomize various aspects of the 1920s’ American society. East Egg represents the old aristocracy. West Egg represents the newly rich. New York City shows the amoral quest for money and pleasure. The East is connected to the moral decay*

and social cynicism of New York, while the West is connected to more traditional social values and ideals. World War 1 ended in 1918, the young generation of Americans became disillusioned. The American Dream is originally about the discovery of happiness, but unfortunately in the 1920s this dream changed into the desire for wealth by whatever means. In “The Great Gatsby” F. S. Fitzgerald does not use the words “American Dream”, but in this novel he shows the impossibility of achieving happiness without wealth. It is shown through symbols in the novel, and you can see it in the film as well.

4. After reading the text the students are offered to discuss the title of the film, to guess what the film is about, to speak about their expectations of it.
5. A very important part of the pre-watching activities is the introduction of the new vocabulary.

#### Word Study

Students learn some new words and phrases to be able to comprehend the video material. The teacher introduces the new unknown words with the help of different tasks like gap filling or word matching or multiple choice exercises. For the first part of the film we offer the following :

#### The words

Disgusted (adj.)	sickened or filled with loathing
Consequence (n.)	1) a result or effect of some previous occurrence, 2) an unpleasant result , 3) significance or importance
Vulnerable (adj.)	1) capable of being physically or emotionally wounded or hurt 2) open to temptation, persuasion, censure
Temple (n.)	a building or place dedicated to the worship of a deity or deities
Contribute (v.)	1) to give (support, money, etc.) for a common purpose or fund, 2) to supply (ideas, opinions, etc.) as part of a debate or discussion

#### Exercises:

Fill in the gaps with the words given above.

1. In my younger and more ----- years my father gave me some advice: “Always try to see the best in people”.
2. As a ----- of their quarrel he left the city immediately..
3. In those awful days when I came back from New York I was ----- with everyone and everything.
4. In the summer of 1922 the new ----- of the city was constructed.
5. Everybody knew that he ----- to the cause.

## **Stage 2**

### **Viewing Activities**

The purpose of viewing activities is to facilitate the actual viewing of a film or video. These activities give students an opportunity to deal with certain issues and they can focus on a character or the plot development.

#### **1. Directed Listening**

Students can be asked to listen for general information or specific details considered important for comprehension. They can be asked to think over a relevant question while watching the film or video. In our case we offer the following:

- a) Who is Nick Caraway?
- b) What advice did Nick's father give him?

#### **2. Film Interruptions**

The film or video can be interrupted to clarify key points. Students can discuss the part that they have already watched. We offer the following questions for the first passage.

- a) Where did Nick rent a house?
- b) Whose mansion was next to Nick's house?
- c) Who does Nick mainly talk about ?

#### **3. Second Screening**

Films or videos can be shown to the auditorium for the second time to promote the better understanding of the main idea of the film.

## **Stage 3**

### **Post-Viewing Activities**

These activities stimulate both written and oral use of the target language. They also lead to writing and speaking practice.

#### **1. Interviews**

Students are given an opportunity to interview classmates to find out their reaction to the film or video. Students can do it either in writing or orally.

#### **2. Film Summaries**

Students can work alone or in small groups to write a brief summary of the passage they have watched. Films provide topics for the usual range of writing assignments. If the time between screening and class is too short, they prepare the task for the upcoming lesson. Responses are to be well-written and focus on one or two main points of the plot.. This has to be spelled out as students often see the "response" format as less strict than formal essays. Formal emphasis on writing assignments also discourages students from enrolling who are simply attracted by the idea of watching films.

#### **3. Discussions**

Discussing the film or video, students pay attention to the most important parts of the material that they have watched. Working together they can share insights, propose solutions and later report them in writing or orally.

#### 4. Comparisons

Students can compare what they knew about the film or video material before the viewing with what they have learnt after watching it.

#### 5. Using Notes for Writing Practice

Taking notes is very important. The notes that students have taken during the film or video watching can help them a lot in later discussions and brief summary writings.

#### 6. Role-plays

The students can role-play characters or a situation from the film or video.

#### 7. Debates

Debates have a very important role in these activities. Students discuss the main characters, the actors, the key scenes ...

#### 8. Group Presentations

For this task the students might be asked to prepare presentations on the biographies of F.Scott Fitzgerald, Leonard Di Capprio, the historical period of the 1920s in the USA, and etc. Presentations can be used along with debates to provide some background information to share with.

Summing up, we can say that films can bring variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of teaching techniques and resources, motivating students, creating meaningful context-related situations, helping students to develop all four communicative skills and critical thinking.

### REFERENCES

1. Moss D., Ross-Feldman L. Second-language acquisition in adults: From research to practice. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2003.
2. Loneragan J. Video Applications in English Language Teaching. Oxford: Pergamon, 1983.
3. Morley J., Lawrence M. The use of films in teaching English as a second language. Parts I and II. // *Language learning*, 21(1). 1971.
4. Summerfield E. Crossing cultures through film. Yarmough, ME: Intercultural Press, 1993.
5. Katchen J.E. Video in ELT – Theoretical and Practical Foundations // *Proceedings of the KATE International Conference*, Korea, 2002.

**Ն. ԹՈՎԱՍԱՍՅԱՆ, Ռ. ՂԱԶԱՐՅԱՆ** – *Ֆիլմ-դասի ծրագիր անգլերենը որպես օտար լեզու դասընթացի համար.* – Ֆիլմերն ու տարբեր տեսանյութերը ուսուցիչների կողմից կիրառվում են օտար լեզվի դասընթացներում արդեն մի քանի տասնամյակ: Ֆիլմերի շնորհիվ ուսանողները ծանոթանում են կենդանի խոսակցական լեզվին, տարբեր արտասանությունների, խթանում են ուսանողների հետաքրքրությունը լեզվի նկատմամբ, նպաստում են զարգացելու

լեզվական բոլոր չորս հմտությունները: Վերը նշվածից բացի ֆիլմերը ծառայում են որպես լեզվական նյութ, որի շուրջ ուսուցիչները մշակում են տարբեր բնույթի վարժություններ, որոնք առավել հետաքրքիր են դարձնում դասը, նպաստում են ուսանողների լեզվական և վերլուծական մտածողության զարգացմանը: Սույն հոդվածում ներկայացված է Օսկարի մրցանակակիր «Մեծ Գեթսբին» կինոնկարի մի հատվածի շուրջ հեղինակների կողմից մշակված դասի ծրագիր:

**Բանալի բառեր.** ֆիլմեր, տեսանյութեր, օտար լեզվի դասընթաց, միջին մակարդակ, Ֆ.Ս.Ֆիցջերալդ, լեզվական հմտություններ, նմուշ-դաս, վերլուծական մտածողություն, «Մեծ Գեթսբին»

**Н. ТОВМАСЯН, Р. КАЗАРЯН – К вопросу об использовании кино- и видеоматериалов при обучении английского как иностранного.** – Существуют много нестандартных методов преподавания иностранного языка, которые способствуют повышению мотивации студентов. В этом ряду использование кино- и видеоматериалов и работа над ними являются наиболее эффективными методами, которые не только активизируют внимание и интерес студентов, но и способствует совершенствованию и развитию их языковых навыков. В статье представляется разработанный авторами пример фильма-урока, основанный на материале фильма «Великий Гетсби».

**Ключевые слова:** фильмы, видеоматериалы, средний уровень, Ф.С.Фицджеральд, мотивация, языковые навыки, аналитическое мышление, фильм-урок, «Великий Гетсби»