Film and streaming media as resources in English teaching

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ABSTRACT

This study regards the role of film and streaming media in English teaching. The aim of the study is to look at how film and streaming media can be seen as resources in teaching and also find out how teachers use and regard film and streaming media in education. Seven secondary and upper secondary school teachers of English were interviewed for the study. The results of this study suggest that film can be regarded as a resource in teaching for several reasons. According to the interviewed teachers, a “film experience” is regarded as a powerful tool for starting a discussion or introducing a theme. The use of film can also benefit students with different learning styles. The interviewed teachers also expressed that film offers authentic target language input. It is also likely that students’ positive perception of film in teaching has effects on language learning since motivation and attitudes, according to research, affect language acquisition. The results also suggest that teachers generally are positive to the use of film in education and believe that students can learn many things from audio-visual media. The interviewed teachers use film in their teaching in several ways and point out that, in this context, the role of the teacher is very important.
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1. INTRODUCTION

The level of English as a second language varies between different countries in the world. In a European survey, Swedish and Norwegian students came out with very good results in comparison to students from other countries. Swedish and Norwegian students were good at listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking and also writing. They also had a positive perception of English as a school subject. (National Agency of Education (NAE), 2004a) In Sweden, Norway and some other countries, foreign language films and TV-programs are mostly broadcast in the original language with the use of subtitles instead of dubbed translations. In addition to this, a lot of the information that can be found on the Internet and a great part of the music that young people listen to, is in English. These facts are often given credit for the high level of English as a second language.

Today, film and streaming media are naturally part of young people’s lives. According to statistics, young people between 15-24 are the most active media consumers. They spend on average about seven hours each day using the Internet, watching TV, watching film, reading newspapers and listening to the radio. More than 50% of young people aged 9-24 state that they watch video clips on the Internet, for example, on youtube, every day. (Nordicom-Sweden, 2009)

The syllabuses for English at secondary school and upper secondary school underline that it is important to analyze and see the language that young people encounter outside of school as an asset for language teaching. (NAE, 2000) Despite this, research on teaching material shows that teachers predominantly use text- and work-books. In a study, 94% of the teachers answered that they use text- and work-books and 80% of the students answered that they use text- and work-books often or very often. (NAE, 2004a) A similar study showed that the majority of teachers tend to focus on books and written texts as teaching material and that film was used at least once every term by 73% of the teachers. (NAE, 2006a)

It is important for teachers and people who work with children to be aware of the role of media and popular culture in young people’s lives. It is a challenge to have an open and flexible approach to film, TV and other media products. The real experiences of children and teenagers have to be considered as equal in importance to the experiences and ideas of the teacher. The teacher has to help students to place their experiences in a larger perspective.

In this study, the didactic potentials and the use of film and streaming media are studied in relation to the learning and teaching of English as a second language. My personal experience shows that film is sometimes regarded as valuable teaching material and at other times only used for amusement or as a time-filler. The starting point for this study was, therefore, the curiosity to find
out if my personal view is correct.

The possibilities of using media in teaching are immense. It is, for example, possible to watch a movie with subtitles in English or find an interesting video-clip within seconds. However, there is no guarantee that contemporary media is being used to its fullest potential.

The use of film in language teaching is not a completely unexplored area of study but research on teaching material and activity types in second language teaching is generally not that extensive. In the book Second Language Classrooms, Chaudron (1995) points out that “the classroom-oriented research in the choice of descriptors and task and activity types is lacking.” (1995:187) It is necessary to continue to look at how teaching methods and teaching material change as technology evolves.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to look at the didactic potentials of film and streaming media in English teaching and also give a picture of how teachers use film in the classroom and how they regard film in teaching. The main questions at issue for this study are:

- What didactic potentials are there of film and streaming media in English teaching?
- How do teachers use film and streaming media in the classroom?
- How do teachers regard film and streaming media as teaching resources?

1.2 Scope and material

The empirical material used for this study is based on interviews with seven English teachers from different secondary and upper secondary schools in the province of Norrbotten, Sweden. The main focus is on teachers’ experiences and thoughts about film and streaming media in the teaching and learning of English.

The study is limited to film and streaming media but TV-watching is also discussed to some extent. The interactive use of the Internet in social networks and blogs are not part of this study. Streaming media are multimedia (film, video clips, news, radio programs) that are delivered by a streaming provider and the term streaming media refers to the delivery method rather than the media itself. In this essay, the term film is used to denote different types of film such as fiction and documentaries. It is also frequently used to denote audio-visual media in general, which also includes media provided by streaming.
1.3 Method

The method used for this study is the interview method, which is used to collect data that is difficult to access by observations or questionnaires. There are many different types of interviews but there are essentially two kinds used for the purpose of research. They are:

- **Exploratory interviews**, depth interviews, or free-style interviews.
- **Standardized interviews** such as used, for example, in public opinion polls, market research and government surveys. (Oppenheim, 1992:65)

A semi-structured exploratory interview method was used for this study. The interviews mostly took the form of a discussion but some specific questions were also asked. Find the interview questions attached (Appendix 1). The purpose of an exploratory interview is to try to understand how the respondents think and feel about the topic and not primarily to gather facts. Oppenheim (1992) explains the task of the depth interviewer in this way: “The job of the depth interviewer is thus *not* that of data collection but *ideas* collection.” (ibid:67) Nevertheless, some factual questions were also asked.

In this study, the respondents are seven English teachers. They were contacted and asked if they would like to be interviewed and all of them consented. According to Trost (2005), it is not necessary to have a completely representative sample from the population in a qualitative study. It is more important that the respondents are as different as possible from each other so that the answers that are obtained reflect many different ideas and opinions. The teachers that participated in this study have different experiences and also work in different schools and municipalities. Three of the respondents teach at secondary school and four respondents teach at upper secondary school. Two of the teachers work in a private school and the other five teachers in municipal schools. Five of the seven respondents are women. The group of respondents is, hence, heterogeneous. They are called Teacher A, B, C, D, E, F and G in the results section.

The interviews are confidential and when the respondents are described as above, it is important not to make the information about the person so detailed that he or she can be recognized. (Patel & Davidsson, 2003) In this case, the names of the schools have not been inserted since it might identify the teachers.

When it comes to interviews there are two main ways of collecting data or ideas as stated earlier. These are either by taking notes or by recording the interview. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with both of these strategies. If a recorder is used the interviewer only has to concentrate on the process of the interview since there will be an exact record of what has been said. Recording can, on the other hand, make respondents uneasy and unwilling to reveal sensitive
information. Recordings also take a long time to transcribe. Note-taking gives the interviewer an instant record of what has been said. It can, however, be very distracting to take notes and information may therefore unintentionally be left out. (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 1996) All the interviews that were conducted for this study were held at the respondents’ working-places. The interviews took between 15 and 35 minutes and the interviews were recorded on a computer with an external microphone. The data obtained from interviews can be analyzed in many different ways. Since the data is not countable the analysis is qualitative. The main approaches to qualitative analysis are: case studies, content analysis, discourse analysis and multi method approaches. (Keats, 2000) In this study, the content analysis approach was used since the other types of analysis require a great deal of experience of the researcher since they are closely connected to different types of interpretation. (ibid) The content analysis approach is described by Keats (2000:28) in this way: “Content analysis considers the nature of the verbal communication. The level of analysis can be directed to words, phrases or themes. Responses to the interview questions are transcribed into textual form and then categorized according to the unit of measurement selected”. Following the context analysis approach, the recordings were initially transcribed and the statements and phrases were divided into different categories. The answers are presented under different headings in the results section and also commented.
2. **BACKGROUND**

In this section, theories and results from earlier research are presented. Initially, there are some theories of learning, followed by theories of second language acquisition. Results from earlier research on second language learning and teaching are also presented. The final section of the background regards film in education. The role of film in the steering documents for the Swedish school system is presented as well as some previous research about the use of film in education. Negative influences of film and TV are also discussed.

2.1 **Theories of learning**

There are several different theories that aim to explain learning processes. In this section three learning theories are presented. Firstly, the *social theory of learning* is presented as proposed by Wegner. Secondly, Dewey’s *learning by doing* and, finally, Gardner’s *theory of multiple intelligences* is discussed.

2.1.1 **Social theory of learning**

Wegner (1998) presents a social theory of learning which focuses on learning in a social context. She opposes the institutional view of learning as something that is best done separately from other activities and underlines that it is essential to place learning in the context of our lived experiences of participation in the world. She describes learning as something as natural as eating or sleeping. She bases her theory on the assumption that “learning is, in its essence, a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing”. (Wegner, 1998:3) According to Wegner, people continuously learn new things through social interaction. She means that we are formed by participating in different social contexts. The social context can be a playground with playing children or a team of colleagues at a working place.

2.1.2 **Learning by doing and reflective thinking**

John Dewey is famous for the expression “learning by doing” that has come to define his view of learning. According to Dewey (1995), people are integrated into society and can only learn and develop by actively participating in social activities. Dewey believed that school had to be brought closer to society and that students should work more with solving practical everyday problems that they might encounter in real life. His idea was that education should be stimulating and bring a more profound and broad knowledge to students. According to Dewey, students should practically try to solve a problem, experiment and then evaluate the result. Dewey believed that it is curiosity
that drives people to search for more knowledge and that teachers in school must find ways to encourage the curiosity of children as they grow. (Dewey, 1998) Dewey discussed how everything that we experience is formulated in thoughts and how everything we experience is part of a context. If a child sees a bird, the child’s focus is on the bird. Nevertheless, other things are part of the “bird experience”. The bird might be sitting in a tree, it might sing or maybe it is flying in the sky. The experience of seeing a bird is more than just seeing a bird; the bird is seen in a context. (Dewey, 1998) According to Dewey, there is also a difference between thinking and reflective thinking. Reflective thinking is a way of combining different experiences to come to a conclusion. Reflective thinking is complex and Dewey described the process in this way: “Holding the mind to a subject is like holding a ship to its course; it implies constant change of position combined with unity in direction” (1998:48). Dewey believed that there are differences in how children and adults think and that the demands on adults require more reflective thinking and problem solving. According to him, school should focus on active forms of teaching and reflective thinking. (Dewey, 1998)

2.1.3 Theory of multiple intelligences

Howard Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences (MI) in 1983. He argues that the traditional definition of intelligence is insufficient for explaining different human abilities. He regards IQ-tests as misleading since they only measure some aspects of knowledge. According to Gardner, a person’s intelligence must be wider than this. A child who is good at mathematics is not more intelligent overall than a child who finds mathematics difficult. The other child might be stronger in another area. (Gardner, 1984)

Gardner initially proposed seven different basic types of intelligences. People have all of these intelligences but one or some are stronger in each individual. The intelligences are:

- **Visual-spatial intelligence**: The ability to recognize and work with patterns and spatial judgment on a big scale (as pilots or navigators) or on a small scale (as architects and designers).
- **Verbal-linguistic intelligence**: The ability to speak and write well, the ability to learn foreign languages and use the language as a tool.
- **Logical-mathematical intelligence**: The ability to solve problems by means of logic and work with numbers and abstractions.
- **Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence**: The ability to control one’s bodily motions and a capacity to handle objects to solve a problem or create products.
- **Musical-rhythmic intelligence**: The ability to create and appreciate music, sing and play musical instruments. Rhythm, music and hearing are important for those with a strong musical-rhythmic intelligence.
• **Interpersonal intelligence**: The ability to understand and respect other people and the ability to work efficiently in a team.

• **Intrapersonal intelligence**: The ability to be self-reflective, introvert and independent. (Gardner, 1993)

Gardner has since the theory was first introduced also presented two more plausible intelligences. They are:

• **Naturalistic intelligence**: The ability to nurture and relate information to the natural surroundings. (“Have green fingers”)

• **Existential intelligence**: The ability to tackle questions about the meaning of life, human existence, life and death, etc. (Gardner, 1999)

The theory of MI is closely linked to learning and learning styles. People with different intelligences have different ways of solving problems and learning. Gardner (1999) argues that the theory is often used in the wrong way in teaching. Some schools, especially in the USA, work with MI for a limited time period, but do not change the fundamental view of teaching and learning. According to Gardner, traditional methods often contrast with the theory of MI and teachers have to be flexible and ready to try new methods if they are to succeed. They have to get to know the students, their interests, background, preferences and goals. Educational decisions have to be made looking at each individual and teaching methods have to be adapted to suit different intelligences. (Gardner, 1999)

### 2.2 Theories of second language learning

The theories that are explained above regard learning in general but can also be linked to language learning. There are, however, some theories that have been developed more specifically to explain second language acquisition. These theories are often linked to first language acquisition theories. The main difference between first and second language acquisition is that everybody who is brought up in a social environment learn their first language automatically. When it comes to second language acquisition, the situation is different. Some people tend to acquire a second language very easily while others find it more difficult. The learning conditions for a second language can also be rather different. A child who learns a second language in an informal environment is in a completely different situation than a child or a student in a language classroom. An adult who learns a second language, is also in a different situation. The theories that are presented in this section are taken from sources in which they are presented from a language didactic viewpoint.
2.2.1 Piaget and Vygotsky, behaviorism and Chomsky’s innatist perspective

Some of the main theories that have been used to explain learning and language acquisition are the ones presented by Piaget and Vygotsky as well as the behaviorist theory and the innatist perspective put forward by Chomsky. The thoughts of Piaget and the behaviorist theory are not very relevant today to explain language acquisition, while Vygotsky’s ideas about social interaction and the innatist perspective are still important to explain some aspects of learning processes.

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget proposed that children’s language depends on their cognitive development. He saw language “as one of a number of symbol systems that are developed in childhood”. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:20) According to Piaget, a child’s language represents what she has learned by interacting with the environment. Lev Vygotsky also studied child development, but he, on the other hand, concluded that language develops from social interaction. He argued that children advance their language when they are in social situations with other children and adults. In Vygotskian theory, greater importance is given to interaction and conversations than to internal processes. (ibid)

The behaviorist theory explains learning in terms of “imitation, practice, reinforcement (or feedback on success), and habit formation”. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:34) This theory was not only used to explain language learning, but all kinds of learning. Second language teaching was influenced by the behaviorist theory, especially between the 1940s and the 1970s. A teaching method that developed from this theory is the audio-lingual method. Classroom activities focused on imitation and memorization and students had to learn sentences by heart. Since language acquisition is seen as a “habit formation” this would suggest that structures that are present in a person’s first language would easily be transferred to the second language while structures that are not present would be difficult to learn. However, it has been shown that second language acquisition is more complex than this and that it cannot simply be explained as a transfer of habits. By the end of the 1970s, researchers started to find other ways to explain second language acquisition and Noam Chomsky, among others, began to look for other possible explanations. According to Chomsky, all humans have an innate knowledge of a Universal Grammar. This knowledge allows all children to acquire the language of their environment. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006) Chomsky maintained that all languages are innate and that universal principles lie beneath all of them. Children are biologically programmed for language and language develops in the child in just the same way that other biological functions develop. “The environment only makes a basic contribution - in this case, the availability of people who speak to the child. The child, or rather, the child’s biological endowment, will do the rest.” (ibid:15)

In support of this theory, Chomsky claimed that all children learn a complex system of
vocabulary and grammar at an age when they would not be expected to learn anything as complicated. There is no available input to the child of each and every form of a language that would allow them only to repeat. There must be some innate mechanism or knowledge that allow the child to generalize and construct sentences from the fragments of language that they hear. (ibid)

The idea of a Universal Grammar is often connected to the Critical Period Hypothesis which is a hypothesis that humans and other animals are biologically programmed to learn a certain skill or obtain a certain knowledge in a specific period of their lives. When the critical period has passed it becomes more difficult or even impossible to acquire the same abilities. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006) Chomsky never made any claims about how his theory could be adapted to second language learners but some other linguists argue that it is possible to use this theory to explain second language acquisition. There are also linguists who find the theory difficult to adapt to second language learning especially for learners who have already passed the critical period. (ibid)

As the views of language acquisition changed, partly because of Chomsky, the audiolingual method was replaced by teaching methods that focused more on meaning, generally these are called Communicative Language Teaching methods. (ibid)

2.2.2 Current psychological theories

Research about second language acquisition has since the 1990s focused mainly on psychological theories. Cognitive and developmental psychologists argue that general theories of learning can be used and that there does not necessary have to be a specific module in the brain for language.

Some cognitive psychologists see language acquisition as a “building up of knowledge that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding”. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:34). Following this view, the learners have to “pay attention” to the language they try to understand or produce until certain features become automatic. When parts of the language are automatic, the learner “pays attention” to other features. The information has to be processed to become accessible. This way of looking at learning is not seen as an exclusive feature of language acquisition. (ibid)

The connectionist theory is one of many psychological theories. Language acquisition is, according to this theory, regarded as a “gradual build-up of fluency through practice”. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:40) Some changes in language use are nevertheless difficult to explain in this way. Changes might occur that can be explained only in terms of “restructuring”. A learner can all of a sudden seem to just “put it all together”. (ibid:40)

The cognitivist theory is another theory that is rather close to the connectionist theory. Connectionists, nevertheless, tend to attribute greater significance to the environment and mental
networks of connections between different linguistic features. They agree with the cognitivists that learners gradually build up their knowledge but they also believe that the learner develops a network of connections between different elements. (ibid) This would, for example, explain mistakes of overgeneralization such as using the regular past tense ending -ed also for irregular verbs, which is a rather common mistake. “I putted it on the table” can be heard both from children who learn English as their first language and second language learners.

2.3 Research on second language teaching and learning

There are many different theories that aim to explain second language acquisition and different methods have been proposed as ideal to teach and learn a second language. It is, nevertheless, difficult to determine what the best way to promote language learning in a classroom situation is. The different theories are often contradictory and just because a teacher knows much about second language acquisition, it does not guarantee a good result. Lightbown and Spada (2006) emphasize the complexity of second language learning and teaching. According to them, factors that affect learning are:

- personal characteristics and experiences of the learner,
- the social and cultural environment both inside and outside the classroom,
- the structure of the native and target languages,
- opportunities for interaction with speakers of the target language,
- and access to correction and form-focused instruction. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:194)

Personal characteristics and the impact of learner behavior were also presented by Chaudron (1995) and Chambers (1999) has also looked at motivation as a factor that affect language learning. He discusses this factor in his book Motivating Language Learners and states that “a pupil who regards foreign language learning as useful and/or enjoyable and who feels encouraged by, for example, parents to learn foreign languages, [is] more likely to feel positively motivated to participate in the learning process.” (p.26)

In the research overview Second Language Classrooms, Chaudron (1995) has looked at the main contributions of research to the area of second language teaching. He has studied a large body of research and the results of the studies he presents are sometimes contradictory. The collected research primarily deals with the issues of teacher talk in the classroom, learner behavior and teacher-student interaction. However, in a discussion on learning outcomes, the “availability of authentic target language input” (Chaudron, 1995:185) is also regarded as a factor that affects learning outcome significantly.

Since there is no simple answer to what the best way to promote language learning is, it is plausible that a combination and a variety of teaching methods and materials is preferred in order to
give students with different learning styles and characteristics the opportunity to develop their abilities.

2.4 Film and streaming media in education

In this section, the concepts of high culture and popular culture are considered. Furthermore, the role of film in the steering documents for the Swedish school system is presented, followed by earlier research on the use of film in education. The negative effects of film and TV are also discussed.

2.4.1 High culture vs. popular culture

In this context, the concepts of high culture and popular culture are important to consider since teachers’ perceptions of these concepts can influence how they regard film in general and film as teaching material.

Nilsson (1999) points out that there is no cultural theory that can provide a specific definition of what culture is. The definitions of culture have to be found within the different areas of research, such as history, sociology, and art. Different traditions and ideas that exist in society can be defined as culture but various artistic productions such as sculptures, paintings, books, and films are also cultural expressions. (1999:10)

Storey (2006) explains in Cultural theory and popular culture that there are many ways to describe popular culture. Films, books, and theatre that are appreciated by a large number of people are often regarded as popular culture. However, it can sometimes be difficult to know where to draw the line. Another way of defining popular culture is as a culture that does not keep the same standards as high culture. (ibid) The second definition of popular culture includes a judgment of quality and then the question arises: Who is to decide what is good quality and what is not?

Rönnberg (2006) discusses the conflict between traditional culture and popular culture and points out that adults often regard commercial visual media, such as film, TV, and streaming media as low culture and regard books and written texts as high culture. According to Rönnberg, it is more important to think about the thoughts that arise when children and adults, for example, watch a film, than defining the product as “high culture” or “low culture”.

The role of popular culture in school is discussed by Persson (2002) and he points out how important the popular culture is in the lives of young people in our modern society. He mentions, for example, how important film is for the creation of a proper identity. (2002:16) According to Persson, school has for a long time tried to overpower popular culture. New forms of mass media have often been blamed for problems in society. (Persson, 2002)
2.4.2 Film in the steering documents for the Swedish school system

In Sweden, there is a nine-year compulsory school for children aged 7-16 free of charge. The curriculum that regulates the compulsory school is the *Curriculum for the compulsory school system, the pre-school class and the leisure-time centre*, Lpo 94. (NAE, 2006b) There is also a specific syllabus for each subject. After the compulsory primary and secondary school it is possible to continue to upper secondary school. The national curriculum that regulates the upper secondary school is the *Curriculum for the non-compulsory school system*, Lpf 94. (NAE, 2006c) There are specific syllabuses for all subjects as in compulsory school.

Film was, for the first time, mentioned in the steering documents for the Swedish school system in 1962 (Lgr 62) and ever since, the role of film and media has become more important in society and in the steering documents. In the national curriculum for the compulsory school from 1980 (Lgr 80), it was no longer a recommendation but an obligation to include newspapers, radio- and TV-programs and film in teaching, to enable students to learn about current events, cultural differences and different social contexts.

In the current curricula, one of the goals to aim for is that “[p]upils should be able to keep their bearings in a complex reality where there is a vast flow of information and where the rate of change is rapid.” (NAE, 2006c:5) Another goal is that pupils should: “develop their ability to critically examine facts and relationships.” (ibid) It is, therefore, possible to understand that it is important to include media and popular culture in teaching.

In the syllabuses for different subjects, it is also possible to see that film has become more important. In the syllabus for Swedish, film, literature and theatre are regarded as equally important. Film is, for example, considered to “open new worlds” and allow students to “develop empathy and understanding”.

Literature, films and the theatre open new worlds and communicate experiences of excitement, humor, tragedy and joy. Literature, films and the theatre help people to understand themselves and the world, and contribute to the development of an identity. Literature, films and the theatre provide opportunities for developing empathy and understanding of others, and for what is different, as well as for reviewing values and attitudes. By this means alternative views can be formed of, for example, racism, extremism, stereotyped gender roles and undemocratic conditions. When young people meet literature, films and the theatre, there are opportunities for them to assimilate literary models and expressions. (NAE, 2000:87)

It is, furthermore, stated in the syllabus for English that it is important to link the teaching of English to the informal ways children get in contact with English outside school, through film, TV, Internet, music and computer games. It is emphasized that the subject of English should provide a “background” as well as a “wider perspective” on the students’ experiences.

Pupils encounter today many variants of English outside school. […] The subject of English provides both a background to and a wider perspective on the cultural and social expressions surrounding pupils in
today's international society. The subject covers both examining the meaning conveyed by language and making use of the richness and variety of English, which children and young people meet outside the school. (NAE, 2000:13)

As these examples show, it is possible to find support in the steering documents for the Swedish school system, for the use of film in teaching. Nevertheless, there are no national decisions on how to use film or what films to use since the system is goal and knowledge related. It is up to the teacher or a group of teachers to work out how it is possible to reach different goals by using different teaching methods and material, where film can be included.

2.4.3 Film in teaching

There are some specific features of film that make it a very powerful tool in teaching. Film theorist Kraucher (1973) stated, for example, that there are some aspects of reality that only the cinema is privileged to communicate. Some of the original characteristics of film are the camera movements, angles and editing that enable the production of views that cannot be found in reality. Different visual effects are also combined with sound and music and, according to Weis and Belton (1985), the artistic effects of film and the effects on the viewer are increased by the sound.

The NAE has, together with the Swedish Film Institute, published *Film for Joy and Learning* (2001) which is a document that is aimed at illustrating why it is important to include film in teaching and also give a picture of how film can be used by teachers. In this document, it is possible to read that:

> Watching a movie together can provide an excellent starting-point for conversation and reflection about important issues in life. It is often easy to see and understand human behavior and dilemmas in the fiction film format. Documentary film can put people, places and events in new perspectives. Films can bring the past to life, mirror the present-day and help us to identify with people in different countries, with different cultural backgrounds and living under different conditions. Experiencing a movie together provides a way to spark pupil curiosity and inspire continued knowledge seeking. (NAE, 2001:13)

Furthermore, Lundahl (2009) discusses the use of media in English teaching in the book *English Language Didactics*. According to him, it is obvious that the teacher has to use all the possibilities that are offered by different media. He mentions how easy it is to find information on the Internet that can be used as a base for a discussion. He also mentions the possibilities of using e-mail and chat to communicate with native speakers of English or students in other European countries. He furthermore emphasizes the possibilities of using news, documentaries, film and music in the classroom. According to Lundahl, the line is fuzzy between high culture and popular culture and since popular culture is so important in young people’s lives, school has no longer the choice of not

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1 Original title: *Engelsk Språkdidaktik*. Translation made by the author.
including it in teaching. He further states that popular culture can act as a bridge between school and the lives of the students outside of school. This is also expressed in the National Evaluation of the compulsory school 2003 (NAE, 2004b), where it is stated that the teacher has to adapt and take advantage of the benefits that are offered by the new ways of communication in the teaching of English. It is also stated that teachers should use film and computers in teaching when it is appropriate. (NAE, 2004b)

Ohlin-Sheller (2006) deals with the different textual worlds and media that young people encounter in her dissertation Between Dante and Big Brother: Textual worlds of Swedish upper secondary school students. She argues that there is a discrepancy between the texts that are used in school and the experiences of the students. She found in her study that the teachers’ main focus was on written texts and that film sometimes was used as an alternative. If a filmed version of a book was used as teaching material, it was always the book that was regarded as the “correct” version. She also found that film was most often used as a time-filler or for amusement on a Friday afternoon. (Ohlin-Sheller, 2006)

2.4.4 Negative effects of film and television

There are many advocates for the use of film in teaching but film and TV-watching are sometimes regarded as something negative. It is possible to raise the question whether it is necessary to encourage the often “passive and destructive” behavior of TV- or film watching in school since it already occupies so much of young people’s lives.

Negative effects of TV-watching are often reported by the media. Violence and inactivity are two negative behaviors that are frequently mentioned. In Sweden, the debate was especially intense in the early 1980s, after a program about video violence from Studio S. (Kågeson 1981) A sequence from the film The Chain Saw Massacre was shown to illustrate the violence that young people were exposed to. After this occasion, the issue has been discussed, every now and again, at different occasions.

Gunter and McAleer (1997) have, in Children and Television, looked at several different studies on the effects of TV-watching and conclude that there are positive as well as negative effects. Some children get more aggressive or anxious after watching certain programs but Gunter and McAleer (1997) find that the general image of the relationship between children and TV is misleading. They conclude that:
Television has been accused of encouraging children and teenagers to become more aggressive, to begin drinking under age, to use bad language, and to adapt sexist and racist points of view. Television is also seen as undermining the educational development of young people through cultivating mental passivity and laziness and by keeping children up too late. While it may be true that the overindulgence with television, as with most other things, can bring problems, it is equally true that when it is used properly and constructively television can have many positive influences on young viewers. (Gunter & McAleer, 1997:217)

As the above-mentioned researchers point out, there are negative as well as positive effects of film and TV-watching. If film is to be used in education, it is necessary to remember the negative effects and consider how they can be avoided. The teacher has to be aware of what feelings a film can provoke and also consider the “laziness” that is connected with film watching.
3. RESULTS

In this section the results from the teacher interviews are presented. The teachers’ answers and comments are listed under the topics: thoughts about film in English teaching (3.1), reasons for using media and film in teaching (3.2), ideas about what students can learn from watching film (3.3), identified difficulties and negative aspects (3.4), ideas about student reception (3.5), descriptions of how film is used in teaching (3.6) and the use of streaming media (3.7).

3.1 Thoughts about film in English teaching

All teachers who participated in this study stated that they use films in their teaching to some extent. Some teachers were very positive to film and those teachers did not find that there are that many difficulties connected with the use of film. The teachers generally thought that it is good to use film in teaching as long as it is done in a professional way and with a well defined aim. The more experienced teachers generally had more well thought-out ideas about film in teaching. These are some of their comments:

Film can be good or bad, it depends on what the teacher makes out of it. (Teacher F)

I think film in teaching is really, really great. When I use film, I usually choose a film that is not only something to watch, but a film that has something more to it. I try to choose films that can be connected with the realities of my students in one way or the other. (Teacher B)

Film can be good but also difficult to use. I teach many students who are very shy or not so motivated, so it is difficult to get them to participate in a film discussion. (Teacher C)

Well, I hate what I used to do about 10-15 years ago when we watched a whole film together in the classroom, I never do that now, never. Now I use video-clips from youtube and the BBC or shorter films or documentaries. We look at scenes or episodes which can be discussed from different perspectives. (Teacher E)

Power point is no magic-stick and neither is film. Only because it is something new does not necessarily mean that it is good. It is all about how you use it. (Teacher E)

The students read and write less now, than before and the language of film is more direct and easier to understand. However, there are not as many nuances in the language used in a film as in the language of a well written novel. In any case, we should not blame the decrease of reading and writing on film and the media in general, we didn’t actually write for such a long time so maybe it is not such a big loss as we believe it to be. To be honest, audio-visual media is closer to the natural human way of communicating than writing is. (Teacher E)

The main part of the answers give the idea that film is rather well regarded and used in a good way. Nevertheless, some answers reveal that the general view of film in teaching is not always positive. Some teachers expressed that film is sometimes regarded as less valuable and some teachers also said that they occasionally used film in emergencies as a time-filler.
Some people might say “But are you watching a film?” as if it is a bad thing to do. Actually the students improve their receptive skills by listening and reading and also their communicative skills since they have to discuss their experiences and impressions of something they have seen. (Teacher B)

Film is generally not accepted as qualitative material for teaching, but it is important to change that idea. Unless you do something after watching the film, I agree that it is no good. It is necessary to make something out of it. (Teacher B)

Sometimes film is an easy solution if I have to go to a meeting or something. I give the students a film to watch and then I ask them to write about it. (Teacher E)

In the end of the year, when I have no more ideas, I have to admit that I sometimes show a film in class even if I don’t really know what the aim is. (Teacher D)

3.2 Reasons for using media and film in teaching

When the teachers were asked why they use film and media in their teaching, the responses were rather different. Some teachers pointed at the importance of listening to the target language while others found the audio-visual media as a good complement to written texts. Another motivation for the use of film was to find a link between school and the life of the students out of school.

I use film a lot in my teaching since the students get to hear spoken English that is different from the English that I speak. They get another “input”. It is not only for the language though, it is possible to look at cultural differences or use a film as a starting point for a discussion. (Teacher A)

The benefits are that it is possible to get close to the linguistic reality. Within a project of watching film it is possible to practice many different abilities. (Teacher F)

Written texts are the worst enemies for some students and for those students, film works great. For them it is much easier to get the language and message presented in a different way. (Teacher E)

It is important to connect what we do in school with the students’ activities out of school. One teacher in our school has just finished a project about facebook and youtube in one of her classes. It is necessary to look at what they do out of school to find ways to reach out to them but also to enable them to look, for example at interactive media, with new eyes. What are the dangers of facebook and what can the consequences of a youtube-clip be? (Teacher A)

4.3 Ideas about what students can learn from watching film

All the teachers believed that students can learn very much from looking at film. According to the teachers, students can improve their receptive skills by listening and by reading English subtitles. If there is a discussion after the film, they also improve their communicative skills as they talk about a common experience with their classmates. Students also learn about cultural differences and get different perspectives of their experiences.

I think they pick-up phrases that can be used in specific situations. They also get to hear how to use different types of expressions and speech in different situations and to different people. They understand if some expressions are rude or if they are informal or formal. It is also important to discuss different issues with them after the film. (Teacher B)

It’s a listening comprehension exercise really, but they can also look at the body-language to try to understand what the characters are saying. (Teacher G)
By just watching you practice your ability to understand spoken language even if you do not analyze the film. If you also make a thorough analysis of the content and the message of the film you can learn several new things such as cultural differences for example. (Teacher F)

I think they learn a lot by watching movies and I recommend to students who have difficulties with the grammar to watch the same movie several times to learn grammatical structures, for example. Teaching grammar is good for students who are already skilled since it helps them to improve even more, but for those who are not skilled, teaching grammar only makes things more complicated. Some grammatical rules can be simplified but I am convinced that they learn more by watching soap-operas or a favorite movie over and over again with English subtitles. That is the way people have learned languages for ages, by listening and repeating, not by studying. (Teacher E)

They are really good at interpreting the language of film. Especially in classes where there are several students who have difficulties concentrating and sitting down. Students with a predominant visual-spatial intelligence or musical intelligence are usually really good at interpreting film and it is also possible to see that they are used to watching film. They learn more by watching a film than by reading a book. (Teacher E)

Last year, we read Robinson Crusoe in class and then we discussed the Age of Enlightenment. We finished of the project by watching Cast Away with Tom Hanks. After watching it, we had a very interesting discussion since many of the students had already seen the film before. Several students commented that they had seen and understood it differently since we had discussed the theme beforehand. It was like a “wow” experience to them. One boy said “ I never thought about that before, that there was some connection to Crusoe”. They really saw it with “new eyes”. (Teacher F)

I think they learn a lot from film, Internet and computer games. That is the only way of explaining why some students who have never opened a book, can be so good at English. I have also taught some students who, because of religious believes, never listened to English music or watched film or TV. They had a really hard time getting the pronunciation right even if they studied a lot. (Teacher C)

I think they learn English from watching film but if we are to talk about vocabulary for example, it is much better reading books than watching film. The language used in a film can never be as complex and nuanced as the language of a well written novel. (Teacher D)

3.4 Identified difficulties and negative aspects

Many teachers expressed their belief that the greatest difficulties and negative aspects of film in teaching are linked to the students’ behavior and habits. Since most students are used to watching film in their spare time, they adapt the same habit while watching film in the school environment. One teacher stated that there were no negative aspects of using film in teaching and another teacher found that it was difficult to go against the requests of the students.

The disadvantage is that the students feel that they don’t have to do anything since they are watching a film. They sometimes become too passive and lean back and put their feet on their desks. The relax a little bit too much… Since watching film is something that they do in their spare time to relax. They make a connection between watching film and doing nothing which is not correct in the school context. (Teacher G)

The difficulties are that the students, at first, do not see film as part of school and teaching. When a film is presented they expect to watch it in the same “lazy” way as they do at home. They are used to watching film without thinking and without analyzing what they see. It is difficult in the beginning to make them realize that we are working with film and not just watching it. After a couple of times they understand what it is all about. (Teacher F)

I don’t think there is anything negative or difficult connected with the use of film in teaching. It depends on how the teacher organizes the situation. It is necessary to motivate the students to participate in whatever the activity might be. (Teacher A)
A problem is that I sometimes let the students decide too much. If they come with a suggestion, I find it hard to refuse, even if I sometimes realize that it would have been better if I had chosen the film. (Teacher D)

Some teachers also found that there are some difficulties connected with the technical equipment that is necessary to show films or streaming media. They found that the equipment was difficult to get hold of and manage. The possibility to use streaming media directly from the Internet was described as limited by some teachers. A few teachers also found it difficult to find good films that can be used for teaching purposes.

3.5 Ideas about student reception

The teachers generally thought that students appreciate watching films since it is something they are used to doing. Some of the teachers said that the students enjoy watching film but that they are not always happy to get assignments of questions that are linked to the viewing of the film.

The students enjoy watching film and it is an enjoyable way to learn since they do not thing about the fact that they are learning. It is an easy way of learning at the same time as I believe that it is very efficient. They are generally also very good at participating in discussions after watching a film. (Teacher B)

Most students watch film in their spare time, so it is something that they are already familiar with. (Teacher A)

It is not so popular among the students to give them assignments to do while they watch the film or after the film since a many students regard the viewing of a film as some kind of reward. The students often almost demand to choose the film they want to watch. (Teacher G)

3.6 Descriptions of how film is used in teaching

When the teachers were asked how they work with film, they all described thoroughly different types of projects and assignments. All teachers mentioned that it is possible to work with film in several different ways and many teachers answered that they often use film as part of a project.

I have tried to integrate films in larger projects as when we work on a theme, for example. We have worked with the “civil rights movement” and we read a novel and watched a film in line with the theme. (Teacher G)

There are so many different ways to work with film in English teaching. I prefer using film as part of a project. It is important to vary the methods and the material so that all students can find something that they like and can learn from. Some students learn by listening and watching, some by reading and some by discussing with other students. (Teacher D)

We are reading Goodnight Mister Tom at the moment in one of my classes and my plan is to show them the film when we have finished reading the book. Firstly because many of the students find it difficult to understand the dialogs when they are written in slang and secondly because it is interesting to compare a book and a film and look at the differences and similarities. It is also possible to talk about how they imagined the different characters. (Teacher B)

When film is not part of a project, many teachers described how they analyze films in different ways together with the students. Discussions were mentioned as very common and, according to the
teachers, discussions or written assignments are most often based on a number of different questions that regard, for example, the plot, the message, the characters and the setting.

If the students are to analyze the film I usually prepare a large number of questions that regard different aspects of the film. More or less in the same way as when we analyze novels. After that we use these questions when we discuss the film and sometimes they get a written assignment that is connected to some of the questions. (Teacher F)

The questions might be rather simple but they can also be more analytical, it depends on the level of the students. (Teacher G)

The assignments that we do in connection to films varies very much. It depends on what type of film it is. Sometimes we have a classroom discussion, sometimes they do written assignments, sometimes I ask them to describe the characters. (Teacher A)

Recently I wanted the students to work with different documentaries but they did not like the idea. I really tried to convince them but finally I had to give in and let them choose any film they wanted. I let them choose the film, but I decided what they had to do after the viewing. I let them work with different connections; movie to self, movie to movie, movie to story, movie to world connection. So that they realize that the story of a film does not exist in a vacuum but that it is connected to society in different ways. It worked out really well. (Teacher E)

Several teachers also described how they use shorter video-clips as part of their teaching and in many of the cases the assignments that are used in connection with the shorter clips are similar to those used in connection with the viewing of an entire film.

I’ve also tried using shorter film clips, for example 4-5 minute long clips from Mr. Bean, and then we used that clip as a starting point for a discussion. That method can be used in many different ways; choosing just a scene or a shorter clip from a film and then work with that in different ways. (Teacher F)

Sometimes I’ve let the students choose a 5-10 minute long clip from one of their favorite soap-operas to show in class; then I’ve asked them to discuss the characters of the soap-opera and how they are portrayed in the clip that they have chosen to show. Usually, they can speak for a long time since some of them are really into soaps. I did that when we worked with adjectives and words that can be used for describing a person and it worked out really well. (Teacher F)

I use a lot of commercial spots since they are easy to discuss and short. What are they? About a minute and a half? We discuss the commercial spots and sometimes they get writing assignments to do. (Teacher E)

Sometimes I have showed a trailer and we have discussed different things in connection to that. (Teacher E)

One teacher also mentioned that she uses film to practice pronunciation and a couple of teachers mentioned that they sometimes look at film technicalities or work with different film genres. All teachers said that when they show films in class, they show them in English and often with English subtitles. According to the teachers, the use of English subtitles makes it possible to watch rather difficult films. All teachers also stated that they use different types of films in their teaching; movies, documentaries and shorter film-clips. All teachers said that they tend to choose the films that they show, but that they sometimes let the students choose between a selection of films.
3.7 The use of streaming media

The teachers’ answers in regard to streaming media were rather diverse. Some teachers use streaming media frequently while other teachers rarely or never use streaming media.

I have started to use streaming media quite a lot, but I’m not quite sure about what the regulations are. I believe that it is ok to show streaming media since it is available on the Internet. It should be ok. (Teacher G)

I use the new technology and youtube but I wouldn’t be honest if I told you that it always turns out well. (Teacher E)

Sometimes I use streaming media in my teaching, as for example video-clips from youtube. News? No never, that is something that they can watch during their social-science classes. (Teacher B)

We also listen to music especially in connection to poetry. Song texts are often rather poetic. (Teacher B)

I haven’t used streaming media but I agree that it would be really good to look at the latest news on the BBC, for example. But it takes time, it takes time for teachers to learn how to use the new technology. (Teacher F)

The use of streaming media seemed to be linked to personal competence and interests rather than to age or working experience. It is possible to think that younger teachers might use streaming media more but it was not possible to notice such a pattern in this study.
4. DISCUSSION

In this section the validity and the reliability of the study is discussed as well as the interview results in connection to theories of learning and earlier research.

4.1 Validity and reliability

The concepts of reliability and validity are necessary to assess how well questions used for a study measure what they have been aimed to measure. Oppenheim (1992) describes the terms in this way:

Reliability refers to the purity and consistency of a measure, to repeatability, to the probability of obtaining the same results again if the measure were to be duplicated. Validity, on the other hand, tells us whether the question, item or score measures what it is supposed to measure. For instance a clock is supposed to measure “true” time and do so continuously. If it were sometimes slow and sometimes fast we could call it unreliable. It is possible to have a measure that is highly reliable yet of poor validity; for instance, a clock that is precisely eighteen minutes fast consistently. (Oppenheim, 1992:145)

In an interview study, the term reliability refers to the degree of consistency that the interview has for the respondents. The question to ask is if the same interview could be repeated with the same responses or if the same responses could be obtained by asking the same question in a different form. In research interviewing, the reliability of the interviewer or interviewers is of critical importance. Is the single interviewer able to keep to the questions and does a team of interviewers use the same approach when they interview? Recording the interviews and interview training help improve the reliability. (Keats, 2000)

In this case, all the research interviews were recorded. The main questions that were asked were the same but since the respondents answered differently, the probing questions differed. The aim of the interviews was to ask essential and open questions in as simple and impartial a way as possible, following the recommendations of Trost (2005), Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Keats (2000). Generally, the interviews went well, but during the transcription of the interviews it became clear that some of the probing questions might have been formulated in a different or clearer way to obtain more complete answers. This affects the reliability and validity of the study. Keats (2000) describes how important it is to make the respondent relaxed and comfortable during an interview, in order to make him or her answer in an open and honest way. Some respondents initially showed signs of uneasiness, especially since the interview was recorded, but they soon relaxed. The respondents’ nervousness may have influenced the validity and reliability of the study to some extent. When it comes to validity the aim was to ask essential questions. It is, nevertheless, initially important to ask some more general questions to establish a relationship between the interviewer and the respondent.

As mentioned before, the recording of interviews improves the reliability. However, important information might be lost during the transcription of a recording. When spoken language
is turned into written language, mistakes might occur. It is up to the transcriber to interpret and analyze the material in a correct way. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)

The choice of analyzing approach was made to improve the validity of the study. The content analysis approach is according to Keats (2000), a good alternative for inexperienced researchers since the focus is on the meaning of words, phrases and themes. Large amounts of transcribed material from the interviews were included in the results section, in line with this approach, which improves the reliability.

The teachers’ answers are generally in line with the steering documents for the Swedish school system and not in line with some of the earlier research presented, which might be a sign of poor validity. The teachers might have answered as they know they are supposed to answer instead of answering truthfully. In any case, the teachers gave the impression of answering openly and it might be that their personal opinions and experiences are in line with the steering documents.

4.2 Discussion

As mentioned, the aim of this study is to look at the didactic potentials of film and streaming media in English teaching and also give a picture of how teachers use film in the classroom and how they regard film in teaching. The results of the study suggest that film can be a resource in language teaching and also that teachers generally are positive to the use of film and that they use film and streaming media in their teaching in several ways. Some negative aspects of film in education have also been identified.

If a teaching method or certain teaching material, is to be regarded as valuable and significant in education, it is necessary to be able to link the method or the material to theories of learning. In this case, some important theories are presented in the background which can also be linked to the use of film and streaming media. The social theory of learning presented by Wegner (1998) focuses on learning in a social context and underlines that learning is not an isolated activity but an ongoing process. Students who watch and discuss a film are most certainly in a social context and a film discussion can be seen as a moment of social interaction from which students can learn numerous things. Furthermore, Dewey (1998) claimed that reflective thinking is essential for learning. The watching of a film or a sequence can encourage reflective thinking if used correctly. Dewey also believed that school had to be brought closer to society; something that can be done by building bridges between the informal learning outside of school and the formal learning in school, by using material that the students are already familiar with. The teachers interviewed for this study also answered that they feel that a “film experience” can be a starting point for a discussion and most teachers believe that a discussion or assignment used in connection with the film is as
important as, or more important than the actual viewing. Many of the teachers’ answers can be associated to learning in a social context and reflective thinking.

The theory of multiple intelligences, proposed by Gardner (1984), can also be linked to the use of film in education since students with different intelligences have different learning styles. As mentioned in the introduction, teachers predominantly use written texts in English teaching and especially students with verbal-linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical intelligence are advantaged by this. The use of film in education is likely to be found more appealing for students with visual-spatial intelligence and musical-rhythmic intelligence. One of the interviewed teachers explicitly talked about these two intelligences and stated that students who have strong visual-spatial intelligence and musical-rhythmic intelligence often are very good at understanding and interpreting the language of film. Some other teachers said that “students learn in different ways” which can also be connected with multiple intelligences and learning styles.

The theories of second language acquisition that are presented in the background can be used to explain several aspects of language learning. The theories explain the mental processes in different ways but all theories have one aspect in common and that is that the environment in which a language is learned is important for the result. Chaudron (1995) also comes to the conclusion that the learning outcome is affected by the “availability of authentic target language input” (Chaudron, 1995:185) Film and streaming media can be part of the target language input. Some of the teachers interviewed for this study claim that they use film in their teaching because it is a good way of exposing the students to the target language. One teacher said that she uses film in teaching since it gives the students the opportunity to listen to a spoken English that is different from hers. Furthermore, many of the teachers regarded film in the teaching of English as a good listening comprehension exercise.

Furthermore, research on second language teaching and learning show that there are several factors that affect language acquisition. Lightbown and Spada (2006) find the social and cultural environment important, as well as personal characteristics of the learner. Chaudron (1995) also claims that learner behavior is important. In addition, motivation and learner behavior are discussed by Chambers (1999). If personal characteristics such as behavior, attitude and motivation are vital for language learning it is important to look at how film and streaming media can have an effect on these factors. According to Kraucher (1973), the specific features of film can make it a very powerful tool in teaching and it is also stated in the syllabus for compulsory school that “films […] open new worlds and communicative experiences of excitement, humor, tragedy and joy.” (NAE, 2000:97) The fact that young people often watch film and streaming media in their spare time, as statistics show (Nordicom-Sweden, 2009), also indicates that it is something they are motivated to
do. In this study, the teachers stated that the students enjoy watching film and that it is easy to get a good relationship with the students by using film in teaching even if the students sometimes are reluctant to do some of the assignments. Positive student response to film and a teaching situation that is regarded as enjoyable are likely to benefit language learning.

Several didactic potentials of film in English teaching are, hence, suggested by this study. To summarize, it is possible to say that a “film experience” is part of a social context and can be a starting point for a discussion. It can also trigger reflective thinking. Film is also a good tool for students who have different learning styles, since the image and sound offer something different than a written text. With regard to second language learning, the availability of target language input is important and film can be part of this language input. According to research, second language acquisition is affected by personal characteristics such as attitude and motivation. It is, therefore, likely that students’ positive perception of film in teaching benefits language learning.

The second and third questions at issue for this study were aimed at exploring how teachers use film and streaming media in the classroom and how they regard film and streaming media as teaching resources. Earlier research shows that teachers often focus on written texts as teaching material and that film is used occasionally as an alternative. (NAE, 2004a, 2006a) Ohlin-Sheller (2006) also comes to the same conclusion in her study and she also argues that there is a discrepancy between the experiences of the students and the texts and material used by teachers in school. The results of this study are not in line with earlier research since they suggest that English teachers use film in teaching in various ways and for a number of different reasons. All teachers interviewed for this study have described thoroughly how they have used film in teaching. The teachers have, for example, explained that they have used film as part of projects, to practice listening comprehension and to give students insight into other cultures and social conditions. The teachers who participated in this study, all use film to some extent while the use of streaming media varies more. Some of the teachers said that they use streaming media more than they use film and some teachers said that they never or not very often use streaming media.

The teachers generally have great belief in what students can learn from watching film and they are positive about the use of film in teaching if it is used in a good way. They all underline that it is necessary to make something more out of the viewing of a film and that it is the responsibility of the teacher to take the students’ experience one step further.

The conflict concerning the use of high culture and popular culture discussed by Rönnberg (2006) can be recognized in some of the answers about how other people regard film but is not reflected in any of the answers about the teachers’ own ideas and opinions. The idea of film as something less valuable or only for amusement seems to be out of
touch with contemporary thinking. The teachers expressed that they find the quality of a film or video clip important and that they prefer to choose what to show.

Ohlin-Sheller (2006) found in her study that film is often used as a time-filler or for amusement on a Friday afternoon. Some of the teachers who were interviewed for this study confess that they occasionally use film as a time filler or when they have run dry of ideas even if they generally expressed well thought-out ideas about the use of film in teaching.

As mentioned in the background, negative effects of film and television are more often mentioned in the media than positive ones. Gunter and McAleer (1997) conclude in *Children and Television* that the general image of the relationship between children and TV is misleading and that it is important to recognize positive as well as negative effects. However, they mention that some children might feel anxious or get more aggressive and that passivity and laziness can be the results of overindulgence. The teachers interviewed for this study mainly found that the greatest difficulties and negative aspects of film in teaching were connected to the students’ passive behavior. Several teachers described how young people are used to watching film and that it was sometimes difficult to make the students realize that watching a film can be part of school in the same way as reading a book is. One teacher described how she avoided watching films that kept the students passive for a long time but preferred shorter clips that she regarded as more efficient. The passive nature of film watching can also be seen as negative from the perspective of Dewey’s theory about learning by doing which emphasizes physical activity. People with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are also disadvantaged since their learning style require physical activity.

The results of this study, hence show that teachers generally regard film as a resource in English teaching. The possibility to watch, listen and read is perceived as positive for language learning. Most teachers also find that it is good to use films as the base for a discussion or as part of a project. The passivity that is connected to film-watching is regarded as the most negative aspect of the use of film in education.
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study regards the role of film and streaming media in English teaching. The aim of the study is to look at why film and streaming media can be seen as resources in teaching and also find out how teachers use and regard film and streaming media in education. Seven secondary and upper secondary school teachers were interviewed for the study.

The results of the interviews are presented under different headings and furthermore discussed in connection to theories of learning and earlier research. The results of this study suggest that film can be regarded as a resource in teaching for several reasons. According to the interviewed teachers, a “film experience” is regarded as a powerful tool for starting a discussion or introducing a theme. The use of film can also be good for students with different learning styles. The teachers also expressed that film offers authentic target language input. It is also likely that students’ positive perception of film in teaching has effects on language learning since motivation and attitudes, according to research, affect language acquisition. The results also suggest that teachers generally are positive to the use of film in education and believe that students can learn many things from audio-visual media. The interviewed teachers use film in their teaching in several ways and point out that, in this context, the role of the teacher is very important.

To conclude, it is possible to say that there are several didactic potentials of film and streaming media in English teaching and that it is up to the teacher to make something more out of the material that is available. “Film is no magic stick” as one teacher expressed it. Film and streaming media can be complements and alternatives to written texts in the teaching of English since it is important to emphasize variation in teaching, whatever the subject might be.

The starting point for this essay was the curiosity to find out how film is used and regarded by teachers and the results suggest that teachers generally regard film as more valuable and important than expected and suggested by earlier research (Ohlin-Sheller, 2006). There are several ways of working with film and many teachers give the impression that they really have made an effort to use film and media in their teaching in a good and thought-out way. Even if the use of film as a time-filler or as a reward is rather uncommon, it is necessary to point out that these occasions harm the reputation of film as teaching material and send out the wrong signals to students. If film is to be regarded as valuable in teaching, it has to be used in a professional way.

It is interesting and important to follow the developments of technology and teaching and look at how different methods can be used to encourage and stimulate language acquisition. Further research is necessary to obtain a more in-depth picture of how media, Internet and popular culture can be used in language learning and teaching. A case study of a teacher who has focused
specifically on any of the above-mentioned areas could offer more insight into the didactic potentials of technology. It would also be interesting to study language learning in relation to interactive media.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX 1

Interview questions

What is your idea about the use of film in English teaching?

Can you describe how you have used film in teaching?

What do you think students can learn from watching film?

Do you use streaming media in your teaching?

What approach do students generally have to the use of film in teaching?

What are the negative aspects of using film? Are there any difficulties?