Teaching and learning English in a Swedish school -
A case study of television media usage
Title: Teaching and learning English in a Swedish school – A case study of television media usage

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Abstract: The purpose of this essay was to investigate how films and TV-series were used in a Swedish lower secondary school, but also the pupils’ and teachers’ attitudes towards using television media. A questionnaire was handed out to 49 pupils asking them, for example, if they thought they learned grammar from watching films. In addition two teachers were interviewed and asked questions about what they thought about using television media in their teaching and how often they used it in their teaching. The results showed that both teachers and pupils were positive towards television media. The pupils thought they learned grammar, pronunciation, improved their listening comprehension and learned new vocabulary. They also stated that a lesson based on television media was more fun than a usual lesson and something they would like to see more of. However, the pupils were doubtful whether they learned more during such a lesson than a lesson based on the textbook. Copyright problems were an issue for the two teacher and they also stated that it requires more time to plan a meaningful activity involving television media compared to the traditional teaching. However, they felt that when they took the time to plan such an activity, it was worth it and the pupils reacted in a positive way.

Keywords: English grammar, film, pronunciation, pupil attitudes, second language learning, teacher attitudes, teaching, TV-series, television media, vocabulary.
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1 Introduction

American and English television media (henceforth TM) programmes are frequently broadcasted by Swedish television companies. In contrast to other countries almost everything is translated using subtitles instead of dubbing the voices. Translation by means of subtitles might, of course, not be suitable for everyone but it does improve the English proficiency of non-native speakers (Talaván Zanón, 2006:43). Slow readers and the elderly, who have not had the benefit of today’s school system, would perhaps have an easier time following TM if the programmes were dubbed.

In Sweden, as in some other countries, it is today possible to make your way without knowing Swedish. English is widely spread and the Swedes are so used to it that foreigners have no problems making themselves understood.

Pupils pick up a lot of words and expressions from watching TV or reading books and as a teacher it might be hard to keep up. New expressions are coined and the pupils expect the teacher to be able to answer any question they ask. One way to keep up with the pupils would be to actually use TV programmes in the classroom. Using material that is part of the pupils’ everyday life is a great way of showing them that learning English actually is useful.

However, just turning on the TV and letting the pupils watch it does not make it a good lesson. The teacher must, of course, make sure that it turns out to be something useful with appropriate pre-work and follow-ups. This is done in Swedish schools today but the question is how and to what extent?

1.1 Aim

The aim of this study is twofold. The first aim is to investigate pupil’s attitudes, at a lower secondary school in southern Sweden, when it comes to learning English by watching TM. The second aim of this study is to sort out how teachers at the same school use TM in their teaching. Different teachers might have totally different methods and intentions when using TM in their teaching.

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:
1. What are the teachers’ and pupils’ general attitudes to using TM in school?
2. What do the pupils think they learn from watching English TM?
3. What do the teachers intend their pupils to learn from watching TM?
4. To what extent are TM used in this school?
2 Theoretical background

2.1 The media’s role in society

Today’s generation of teachers has the opportunity to take advantage of all the technology and the media that surround us in society today. Never before has a generation of teachers had so much to choose from when it comes to the media and television programmes (Gregori Signes, 2001:123). It would be wrong not to take advantage of all the possibilities the media bring.

Moreover, the media are more or less impossible to avoid and the pupils are fed with them in their everyday lives. A Spanish study, conducted in 1998, shows that after work and sleep, watching TV is the activity that occupies most of our time (Gregori Signes, 2001:124).

2.2 The media as language developer

After establishing that the media has a strong position in society it would be correct to say that it plays a role in language development as well. Language use in today’s media affects and inspires the language people speak on the streets (Gregori Signes, 2001:14). The English spoken on television is the language spoken in English-speaking countries today and teachers should not ignore the possibility to gain from this.

Films are today one of the most accessible language teaching tools, available to students and teachers of English. However, this has not resulted in an escalation of TM being used by teachers. Teachers wary about using TM, since films are often seen as “fun”, but few have discovered their pedagogical uses (Voller & Widdows, 1993:342).

2.3 The media in the classroom

Using the media to teach the pupils grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc, might seem a bit modern for many teachers but it should not (Gregori Signes, 2001:14). Instead it helps to highlight the ongoing changes in the English language and also provides the cultural aspects of the English speaking countries. Textbooks are a great tool for teachers but the students, being surrounded by technology in their everyday lives, might feel that they are a bit old-fashioned.

For example, instead of plainly reading Romeo and Juliet, the teacher could show scenes from the film as a compliment (Trier, 2006:434). This opens up doors and gives the teacher enormous possibilities. However, the teacher has to do something useful and have a clear purpose with the activity. Just showing a film because it is fun is not something to recommend. It might be easier to just follow the text book from a teacher’s point of view, but
the media used in the right context could make teaching more varied and much more interesting for the pupils.

As mentioned earlier, TM are seen as “fun” which is something teachers can take advantage of. Students associate TM with entertainment instead of study, which makes it an excellent teaching tool (Voller & Widdows, 1993:342ff). The authors also advocated that TM are texts and just like any other texts they can be used in the classroom. Furthermore, TM adds a visual dimension which normal texts do not. Voller & Widdows (1993:343) also state that TM are filled with unspoken contextual clues which allows learners, fairly new to the English language, to carry out simpler tasks. Another aspect is the stressing of authentic material and TM gives the opportunity for the learners to develop their imaginative skills.

2.4 Suitable TM, preparation and follow-up

Voller & Widdows (1993:343) give a few pointers when it comes to what kinds of films are suitable for classroom activities. Teacher should avoid using films with a lot of dialect, monologues or slow-moving films in general. Films which require a lot of background knowledge should also be avoided. They do not clearly motivate why the teachers should do this, but the most likely interpretation is that they want to keep their pupils focused. For example, slow moving films would most likely cause the pupils to lose interest. Instead they advocate films with a strong story line. Clearly drawn main characters also make it easier for the students to follow the plot and keep up with the story.

In preparation the teacher should view the film and note down important aspects such as themes and main character characteristics, taking notes and thinking through the main purpose of the activity before constructing worksheets and other material. Voller & Widdows (1993:344) also recommend that the teacher hands out the worksheet before the class start to watch the film. Handing out the worksheets before the film gives the students the opportunity to take notes that they will use in the follow-up activities.

2.5 Teaching by scaffolding

It is important for teachers to plan the activity very carefully so that they do not lose the pupils half-way through the exercise. Pupils need support and help for their language to develop (Lundahl, 1998:12). For example some pupils can benefit from reading an extract in their mother tongue before watching English TM. The support has to be adjusted to the pupil in question and has to be adjusted as he or she progresses. For example, if the teacher plans to show an episode of the sitcom *Friends* he or she has to think about the special needs of his or
her pupils. Some pupils might need to be told the story in their mother tongue in advance to be able to follow. Others require help in explaining what they just have seen, in their mother tongue or in English, while a third group will grasp the plot without any difficulties.

### 2.6 The usage of subtitles

When subtitles have been used as a support in language learning they have been targeted by criticism. They have been considered to slow down the development of proficiency skills, such as listening, and make learners rely on the text instead of the actual speech. However, many studies have shown that subtitles are not a source of laziness or a distraction. Instead subtitles have been shown to have a potential value when it comes to helping in the English language acquisition process, by giving comprehensible language input (Talaván Zanón, 2006:42). Talaván Zanón (2006:43ff) summarises her thoughts on what subtitles help learners with in the following way:

> With the appropriate guidance and training, subtitles give learners a subjective support that they need many times to feel more comfortable and motivated when learning a foreign language, and an objective aid in terms of recognition, maintenance, and production of new and already known linguistic items, thanks to multiple associations they provide, together with the context and the environment in which they appear.

Furthermore, it has been shown that subtitles help language learners to monitor speech and that TM that are not subtitled cause insecurity and anxiety among the learners. Experiments have shown that subtitles provide instant feedback and contribute to the process of making the learners feel more secure when watching foreign TM (Talaván Zanón, 2006:42ff). In addition, the usage of subtitles also speed up the process of making the learners feel ready for watching foreign TM without subtitles (Talaván Zanón, 2006:42ff). Talaván Zanón (2006:43) lists the following major benefits of using subtitles when learning a foreign language:

- Their use bridges the gap between reading and listening skills.
- Students can learn to process text in the foreign language rapidly and improve rapid reading, by trying to keep up with the subtitles that accompany the dialogues.
- Students can learn how to pronounce many words, consciously and unconsciously.
- Subtitles allow learners to follow the plot easily.
- Learners can develop word recognition skills.
- Captions can reinforce the understanding of English context-bound expressions, and help learners to acquire new vocabulary and idioms.
- Students can understand humour (such as jokes) that would be hard to recognize without the help of the captions. Humour can be a difficult, but rewarding subject for the language classroom, and subtitles help to understand it, enhancing the enjoyable character of the activity.
- Subtitles can enhance students’ concentration in following lines.
- Finally subtitles can motivate students to study English outside the classroom context, especially by watching TV and cinema, listening to the original dialogues.

However, subtitles are usually a summary of the textual information and not an exact copy of the actual speech. The reason for this is that the viewer should have time to read the subtitles without missing any visual information (Talaván Zanón, 2006:44). In other words learners who rely on subtitles do not get the exact same information as learners who watch TM without subtitles. This is good for the weak learners who would not understand the plot without the subtitles, but on the other hand it might make learners, who would understand the plot without subtitles, lazy.

2.7 Earlier studies on student attitudes towards TM

At the Chinese University of Hong Kong a study was conducted in the late 90s (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:6), in which the students were asked what they thought they had learned after participating in a course based on films. The course, which this study was based on, was held in an attempt to find new ways of making meaningful connections between the English language and the students’ own experiences. It was a one-semester, 13-week-long course and the students attended two different classes each week, in total 135 minutes per week.

Student brainstorming of questions for whole-group discussions, worksheets and brief quizzes are examples of classroom activities during this course. Eight different films were discussed during the semester, of which seven were chosen by the teachers and the last one by the students.

When the course was finished the students were asked how far they thought their English language skills had improved in six areas (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:6):

1. confidence in expressing themselves in English
2. ability to express their ideas when speaking English
3. ability to express their ideas when writing English
4. English listening skills
5. Knowledge and use of English vocabulary
6. English presentation skills

More than half of the students rated that they improved their writing skills (58.1%) and vocabulary knowledge (51.6%) “a great deal” or “quite a bit”. Listening and speaking skills were even higher rated, with 67.8% and 67.7% of the students answering that they had improved “a great deal” or “quite a bit”. The highest percentage was found when it comes to confidence, since as many as 74.2% of the students rated that they had improved their confidence “a great deal” or “quite a bit” (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:7ff).

In the conclusion, Chapple & Curtis (2000:9 ff) bring forward the overall positive responses they have received from the students. The students clearly state that they have developed their skills in all six areas mentioned above, with quotes such as; “the course widens my horizon” (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:9).

3 Method and data

The data analyzed in this study were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A quantitative method, a questionnaire, was used when studying the attitudes of pupils at the lower secondary school in southern Sweden. The reason for using a quantitative method when asking the pupils is that the study wishes to present as broad a survey as possible. The quantitative method gives an opportunity to study the general opinions of a group of pupils (Bryman 2001:36).

The reason for the use of a qualitative method, used in a teacher interview, was that the study wanted to investigate the reasoning behind the teachers’ use of TM. The interviews leave room for follow-up questions and the interviewees are given the option to motivate their answers. Both the questionnaire and the teacher interview were conducted in Swedish, in an attempt to avoid misinterpretations (see Appendix 1.1).

The data were gathered at a lower secondary school in southern Sweden. The school is not a city school and has pupils from different towns. Therefore, the pupil group could be described as very heterogenous. All the pupils were in the 9th grade and a total of 49 pupils from six different English classes answered the questionnaire. Also two of their teachers were interviewed. In addition the author was asked to jump in as a substitute teacher in one lesson in which TM were used and observations from this lesson are included in this study. This lesson was with one of the classes who had participated in the questionnaire.
Moreover, informal discussions took part with one additional teacher, who showed interest in this study. The teacher briefly shared his views on how TM should be used and how his students reacted.

3.1 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was handed out in person by the author to a total of 49 pupils. It consisted of ten questions focusing, among other things, on attitudes (see Appendix 1.1). The pupils were asked about their age, how often they watched TM in their spare time and in class. Gender was not asked for, since that would have added another aspect which this study did not intend to investigate. They were also asked a couple of questions concerning their attitudes towards using TM in the classroom. Finally, the pupils were also asked in which areas/proficiency skills they thought they had developed by watching TM.

3.2 The teacher interview, informal talks and classroom observations

As mentioned earlier two teachers were interviewed and asked to give their views on TM used in their teaching. They were, for example, asked what they intend the pupils to learn by using TM and how often they used it in their classes (see Appendix 2.1). The two teachers were both female, one was 58 years old, henceforth referred to as teacher A, and the other teacher was 30, henceforth referred to as teacher B. Together they are responsible for three of the grade nine groups at the school. As mentioned earlier, one additional teacher was interested in the project and gave his views on certain aspects of this study. His opinions along with the classroom observations were also presented in the results and discussion section as a complement.

The observations during the one lesson, was nothing that was planned or prepared. The author was asked, on short notice, to jump in as a substitute teacher and was told to show a film. However, the battery in the remote control did not cooperate and it took about five minutes to get the subtitles going. No notes were taken during this lesson, instead they were taken afterwards. The pupils were not informed that observations would take place during this lesson, for obvious reasons, and they might have acted unnatural if they were told that they were going to be observed. Because of the fact that these pupils already had agreed to take part in this study, when taking the questionnaire, it was decided to include these observations in this study.
3.3 Limitations

This study was conducted in one school in which pupils and teachers, of course, affect each other in one way or another. Teachers share ideas and if one good idea comes up other teachers will follow. Another question is how aware pupils are at lower secondary school of their own learning? Most likely they have not started to reflect much about their own learning and a study at upper secondary school would perhaps give totally different results.

An important factor to take in consideration was that the students were not given the opportunity to motivate their answers. Interviewing the students would possibly have given additional data to answers research questions 1 and 4, but it was decided that this study would only include a quantitative of the pupils.

However, this study focuses at the lower secondary school pupils and their teachers, since the author works as a substitute teacher at a lower secondary school and intends to use TM in his teaching. The results this study yields cannot, of course, be seen as a general overview of the use of TM in all Swedish schools. It is a small case study which together with similar studies in other regions would produce an overview of the use of TM in Swedish schools.

4 Results and discussion

The results of the qualitative and the quantitative study are presented below in the form of running text complemented by figures. All questions except question 1 of the questionnaire are presented in the results, because it has already been stated that all pupils were in the ninth grade. It is advised to have Apendices 1.1-2.2 accessible when reading through this section. To separate the questionnaire questions from the teacher interview questions, the questionnaire questions are henceforth called Q1, Q2, …., Q10 and the interview questions I1, I2, …., I6.

4.1 Answers to Q2: how often do the pupils watch TM?

The answers to the question how often the pupils watch English TM in class differed a bit. Most pupils, 35 out of 49, answered that they watched TM once a month and one pupil claimed that they watched it once a week. However, given that this student had classmates participating in the study, who provided totally different answers, this student’s answer could be ignored. The teachers’ answers, presented further down in this study, will also support that decision. Four pupils answered that they watched TM once a week, which indicates that one of the groups watch TM more frequently than the other groups. Another interpretation is that
the actual truth is somewhere between once a month and once a week. The remaining nine pupils answered that they almost never watched TM in class (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Answers to Q2](image1)

4.2 Answers to Q3: the pupils’ spare time TM watching habits

The reasoning behind asking this question was to investigate whether pupils’ spare time habits affected their attitudes towards TM in the classroom or not. A majority of the pupils, 35 out of 49, answered that they watched English TM every day and 13 claimed that they did it at least once a week. Out of the 49 there was one pupil who checked the alternative that he or she only watched TM once a month. The results can be seen in Figure 2 below.

![Figure 2: Answers to Q3](image2)
These results seem to confirm Gregori Signes’ (2001:124) claim that the youth of today are fed with TM. The English language clearly surrounds the pupils at the Swedish school too. Backed up by the results of Chapple & Curtis’ (2006) study, it seems that TM-based teaching would be beneficial to the students at the Swedish school. Even though this Hong Kong study was conducted on a totally different population, when it comes to age mainly, parallels could be drawn between these two studies. Obviously parallels involving watching habits, but also student attitudes which will be presented further down.

It is important to note that not all pupils watch TM regularly and the pupils who do not might experience it harder than the other pupils. If the pupil is not used to watching TM regularly the whole idea of connecting the pupils’ spare time activities to school activities is lost. Therefore, some pupil groups might not be suitable for TM-based teaching.

On the other hand, it could be seen as a way to integrate those pupils and increase their general knowledge. Maybe using TM in the classroom will inspire them to watch TM at home and improve their English even outside of school.

4.3 Answers to Q4: fun or not?

The answers to Q4 have a strong connection to the results of Q3 as one can see in Figure 3 below. The pupils who answered that they watch TM every day also thought that the lessons involving TM were more fun than lessons without TM. It should be mentioned that there were a few exceptions as one pupil who watched English TM at home every day still thought it was boring when it was used in the classroom. However, the results clearly show that the pupils like watching TM in class and they do find it more fun than the usual lesson.

Figure 3: Answers to Q4
The results presented in Figure 3 can be linked back to Voller & Widdows (1993:342), who claim that because of the fact that TM is seen as fun it also becomes a great teaching tool. In other words, once teachers have established that their groups of pupils enjoy working with TM they should investigate the possibilities of using it in their teaching.

Having the pupils come to class with a smile on their faces instead of the troubled looking faces many teachers face when welcoming the pupils, would not that be something all teachers should strive for? Hopefully most teachers do and using TM in their teaching seems to be a possible aid in this aim.

4.4 Answers to Q5: do the pupils want to see more TM in class?

This question yielded almost identical answers compared to Q3 and Q4 in the sense that 35 out 49 pupils wanted to see more TM in school, while 13 wanted to keep it at the level it currently is and one pupil wanted to see less TM during the classes. However, it was not the same 35 pupils who thought it was fun who answered that they wanted more of TM. Six of the pupils who thought a lesson with TM was just like any other lesson wanted to see more TM and five of those who thought a lesson with TM was just like any other lesson answered that they wanted to have it more often.

This indicates that just because a pupil likes to watch TM, it does not mean that the pupil wants to see it more often in class, although that is the most common case. The most surprising answer came from the pupil who thought TM were boring, s/he answered that s/he wanted to see it more often in the classroom. What the students thought of having more TM in the classroom can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Answers to Q5

![Bar chart showing answers to Q5](chart.png)
Once again one can draw the conclusion from Figure 4 that pupils enjoy watching TM. However, not all pupils are head-over-heels when it comes to TM. 13 pupils do, as mentioned above, like it the way it is and seem to be more comfortable with the traditional teaching, or they simply do not like watching TM.

4.5 Answers to Q6-Q9: what do the pupils think they learn?

The three questions about vocabulary, pronunciation and hearing comprehension yielded very similar results. While fewer pupils believed that they learn grammar from watching TM, 33 pupils believed that they learned grammar, but 16 pupils were doubtful or disagreed (see Figure 5).

For pupils in grade nine it might be hard to evaluate whether they learn grammar or not from watching TM, but it is interesting to see what they believe. In fact it is hard even for the teacher to evaluate this as it is hard to measure progress in areas such as grammar. One way of doing it could be having the same type of grammar test before and after a project based on TM.

However, at this lower secondary school the two teachers did not have any big TM projects, only shorter ones, and it might be difficult to see a change after just a week or two. Another factor is that the two teachers, as you will see further down, did not have grammar proficiency improvement as their main aim when using TM. Therefore, they did not really test grammar proficiency in connection with TM teaching.
As many as 25 pupils were very convinced that they learned new vocabulary from watching TM and answered that they totally agreed on Q7. The count of pupils who agreed with the statement was 18, four were doubtful and one pupil totally disagreed (see Figure 6). It should be mentioned that this pupil answered that s/he totally disagreed with all four statements. It is possible that this pupil thought that TM gave him or her absolutely nothing and felt that it was useless, which would have shown if the pupils were asked to motivate their answers.

However, in this quantitative study the most likely conclusion was that this student did not answer seriously, and the interpretation was that s/he just tried to point out how boring school was and that s/he did not learn anything at all.

In the Hong-Kong study the answers to a similar question were that 51.6% of the students chose one of the two agreeing alternatives (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:8). Comparing this with the results of this study shows that the Swedish pupils from the ninth grade believed in TM as a tool for learning vocabulary to a higher degree. The 14 doubtful pupils to the grammar question have now been reduced to four, in other words they really do believe they learn vocabulary from watching TM.

The two questions regarding pronunciation and listening comprehension had identical answers. Therefore, they are presented in only one table. A big majority, 40 pupils, believe that they improve both their listening comprehension and their pronunciation by watching TM. Both questions had only three pupils disagreeing or being doubtful (see Figure 7).
Compared to the two questions about grammar and vocabulary these results end up in the middle when comparing the number of agreeing answers. The pupils believe that they learn more vocabulary than listening comprehension, in contrast to the study in Hong Kong (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:7). These questions touched three of the six main areas of improvement from the Hong Kong study (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:6): English listening skills, knowledge of English vocabulary and ability to express their ideas when speaking English. The other three areas: confidence in expressing themselves in English, ability to express their ideas when writing English and English presentation skills were not touched at all in the questionnaire.

Confidence and the other two areas could be studied in a complementary questionnaire to make a wider survey of the Swedish pupils and what they believe they learn from taking part in TM-based teaching.

4.6 Answers to Q10: comparing TM with traditional teaching

After asking the pupils to rate what they thought they learned from watching TM in class, it was time for them to compare it to a lesson where they work with the textbook. In this question 24 pupils chose the two agreeing alternatives, 5 pupils one of the two disagreeing alternatives and 20 were doubtful (see Figure 8).
When comparing the results of this question to the proficiency questions it is obvious that the pupils believe that they learn a lot from watching TM, but many are still in doubt that it is better than using the textbook. However, the attitudes of the pupils show that using TM more in the classroom is something many of them would appreciate.

It is interesting to see how doubtful the pupils become when they are asked to compare TM to traditional teaching, it seems that this question really made them think. The textbook might feel like a security net for some pupils and replacing it with TM sounds scary. However, TM should be seen as a compliment to the traditional teaching, at least at a Swedish lower secondary school. Textbooks might seem old fashion but they are being improved and adjusted as society develops.

The real question here is why do the pupils appreciate TM, is it because of laziness or do they actually see the benefits? A question more or less impossible to answer in this study, but opens up for future studies in which the pupils are given the opportunity to motivate their answers. As mentioned in the Method section this study gives no such opportunity.

4.7 Answers to I1: how often do the teachers TM in their teaching?
Both teachers answered that they used TM in their teaching once every semester on average, the same answer as most of the pupils gave. However, this does not mean that the teachers only use it during one lesson each semester since for example watching and working with a film takes quite some time. They usually worked with TM for a number of lessons to make the effort planning the project worth it. Even though they admitted that they could throw it in
just to fill up a gap in their planning. The teacher who showed interest in the study also mentioned that TM often was used when the school had to put in a substitute teacher as some kind of last resort when the teacher did not have time to plan the lesson.

However, the two teachers’ answers indicate that the usage of TM is increasing and as more teachers share their ideas and lesson plans on, for example the Swedish website lektion.se, one would think that the usage will keep increasing.

### 4.8 Answers to I2: the purpose and aim of using TM

Teacher A answered that the main purpose when using TM was to improve the pupils’ listening comprehension, but that it also could help the pupils develop their pronunciation. Teacher B also considered listening comprehension to be the main purpose when she used TM, but also to teach her pupils realia knowledge. When faced with the fact that the pupils thought they learned vocabulary and grammar as well, both teachers agreed that they might learn some of that as well but as mentioned earlier that was not their main purpose.

The main purpose to improve the pupils’ listening and speaking skills finds support, not only from the questionnaire answers, but also in the study from Hong Kong (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:7ff). In both studies those two proficiencies are the ones provided the highest number of agreeing answers. Based on the above mentioned data TM-based teaching seem to be a suitable tool for a teaching who wants to improve the listening and speaking skills of his or her pupils.

As mentioned the two teachers answer that vocabulary and grammar are not included in their main purposes when using TM in their teaching. However, the answers to the questionnaire clearly states that the pupils think they learn, for example, grammar by watching TM. Furthermore, the Hong Kong study (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:7ff) shows an increase in areas such as the students’ confidence.

This indicates that TM have many uses and that it is a matter what the teachers wishes to achieve when planning the activity, that leads to what the pupils learn. Another possible conclusion could be that as the teacher aims for, for example, listening and speaking skills he or she improves a whole lot of other areas of the pupils’ English skills and even their confidences.

### 4.9 Answers to I3: the pupils’ reactions

Both teachers said that they experienced a very positive reaction from the students when introducing a TM project. Teacher B said that many of her pupils saw it as lighter school
work and therefore the positive reaction. This supports the interpretation that the pupils are lazy, mentioned in section 4.6. Teacher A had also experienced this but answered that even though her pupils felt more relaxed she felt that they still learned a lot.

Voller & Widdows (1993:342) wrote about TM being seen as fun yet few had discovered their pedagogical values. Judging from teachers’ observations in this study, it is clear that TM are seen as something fun, but also that the pupils learn from it. In other words, the teachers who participated in this study seem convinced that TM have clear pedagogical values.

4.10 Answers to I4: preparation and follow-up

Teacher B mentioned, as an answer to this question, a type of scaffolding to help the weaker students: she sometimes lets them read a text in Swedish before watching the film. Both teachers also mentioned reading extracts in English as suitable pre-work. These types of pre-work provide the support for the weaker students that Lundahl (1998:12) talks about.

When it comes to follow-ups teacher A had quite a few suggestion that she frequently uses in her teaching, most of them written assignments. The examples she gave were; summaries, questions about the content, reviews but also oral discussions. The interview also touched upon the use of English subtitles when using TM; both teachers used them as a support for their pupils.

As mentioned earlier observations were also made during one lesson, in which TM were used. During this lesson, mentioned in the method section, it took a while before the substitute teacher, the author, managed to get the subtitles going. Immediately insecurity was spread throughout the classroom and the pupils became anxious, they were looking at each other and could not focus on the film at all. A girl was screaming out that she did not understand anything without subtitles and others followed. This, of course, ruined for the pupils who actually were trying to watch the film. However, once the subtitle problem was fixed the pupils quickly calmed down and sat down quietly during the rest of the lesson.

This reaction confirms what Talaván Zanón (2006:43) wrote about when she, for example, listed that subtitles help English learners to follow the plot easily. She also listed that subtitles can enhance pupils’ concentration, which was quite obvious at this specific occasion. Her claim that learners can learn how to pronounce many words, consciously and unconsciously also found support during this lesson. As a few pupils could not stop repeating words which they found funny. The pupils could, of course, repeat the word without the subtitles but now they were also provided with the spelling.
4.11 Answers to I5: advantages and disadvantages of TM

Teacher B answered that TM speak to the youth of today, the media that are part of the pupils’ everyday lives. According to teacher A TM help to develop the pupils’ general knowledge, which she found very important.

However, neither of the teachers agreed that TM are easy accessible as Voller & Widdows (1993:342) claimed. Instead they mentioned the lack of accessibility as one of the disadvantages because of copyright issues. In other words films are everywhere and easy to access, but copyright laws prevent the teachers to show, for example, a film that a pupil has brought to school.

There are, however, some accessible films that the teachers are allowed to show, but the both teachers mentioned that these films often were a bit old fashion. Changing the copyright laws would be a solution but then that would also open up for loopholes which the film companies would not approve of. If it is legal to show a new film in school that would also make it legal for a person to rent a film and show it to thirty of his friends? Something the film companies never would agree to.

Instead the solution to this problem has to be something else, but what? The actual solution, as observed at this school, is to ignore the law. It seemed that teachers or pupils bring their own films is not that uncommon at this school. A qualified guess would be that they have the same problem at other Swedish schools and most likely the solution is the same.

The two teachers, however, were overall positive to using TM in their teaching as it could help them reaching goals listed in the syllabus. For example, the Swedish syllabus states goals such as “The school in its teaching of English should aim to ensure that pupils deepen their understanding of spoken English in different situations and contexts” (Skolverket, 2001:11) a goal which TM clearly could be used as an aid when reaching.

4.12 Answers to I6: planning an activity including TM

That using TM requires more planning than usual was something both teachers agreed upon. However, both felt that it was worth the extra effort. Teacher A mentioned that TM bring variation in teaching and as mentioned earlier the pupils react positively. They also talked about cooperation with other subjects such as Swedish, where they thought TM were suitable.

That it requires more planning can be read between the lines when reading what Voller & Widdows (1993:343) advocate. It might be hard for teachers to find the time to sit down, view films and take notes. As noted while being at this school for a couple of days, the teachers’ days are filled with being a mentor for the pupils as well as being their teacher. Lost keys,
personal problems, sorting out struggles and talking to the pupils’ parents take up a lot of the teachers’ planning time.

Furthermore, the reason behind TM being seen as time consuming might be that teachers are not used to work with TM. Sure, teachers throw a film in here and receive a positive reaction from their pupils. The question is how often they actually sit down and properly plan such an activity? The two teachers who took part in this study use it in their teaching once every semester on average, due to lack of accessibility but also due to the time-consuming planning.

However, as mentioned earlier, the teachers’ answers indicate that the usage of TM is increasing and gives opportunity to share ideas between teachers. Hopefully this would lead to making the planning of a TM-activity less time-consuming.

5 Conclusion

The first research question was what are the teachers’ and pupils’ general attitudes to using TM in this school? The pupils also showed positive attitudes, with a few exceptions, towards using TM in their education. They saw it as something fun, but were doubtful when it came to comparing TM with traditional textbook-teaching. An interpretation of their doubtfulness can be that pupils at this school feel secure with the textbook and afraid of change. When using the textbook they know what is coming next, most of times at least. However, using the same teaching method all the time might create security but does it challenge the pupils?

The teachers were also positive and even though TM-teaching required some extra planning time they both felt that it was worth it in the end. Copyright was mentioned as a big drawback when it came to using TM, if the teachers were to obey the law. The selection of modern TM available to the teachers are limited, at least that is what the two teachers of this study had experienced. The two teachers in this study had the same attitudes towards TM and they also gave the impression that TM-activities were shared between teachers in this school.

The second research question was what the pupils think they learn from watching English TM? The results show that the pupils of this specific lower secondary school believe that they improve all skills that they were asked to evaluate. They believe they learn grammar, vocabulary, improve their pronunciation and listening comprehension. Of which pronunciation was the area most pupils thought they improved.

The third research question was what the teachers intend that the pupils learn from watching English TM? The two teachers’ main purpose was to develop the listening comprehension of their pupils, but they were also aware of the fact that watching TM develops other language
skills too. Teacher B also mentioned realia and general knowledge as other purposes with her TM-teaching.

The forth research question was to what extent TM are used in this school? In this school each class, in average, had one activity involving TM in the subject of English each semester. Such an activity could be everything from watching a movie, followed by asking the pupils to an activity which went on for weeks. Both teachers and pupils agreed to this average, even though some pupils decided to answer differently for unknown reasons.

As stated in the introduction the aim of this study was twofold. The first aim was to investigate pupils' attitudes in this specific lower secondary school. An aim which the first and forth research question did answer. However, a qualitative study of the pupils would give more data and give the pupils the opportunity to motivate their answers. This is a clear example of where future research would be suitable. Such a study would give new angles and help to understand how the pupils experiences TM-based teaching.

The second aim was to investigate how the teachers at this school use TM in their teaching. It was also mentioned in the introduction that different teachers might have totally different methods and intentions when using TM in their teaching. However, the two teachers who participated in this study had similar thoughts when it comes to TM and instead of different methods they used the same. An explanation to this could, of course, be that they work close together and share ideas, which they also stated that they do.

A similar study at a different school might yield totally different results when it comes to attitudes, methods and it would also be interesting to compare how often the teachers use TM in different schools. At this school copyright was the big issue while at other schools the teacher might lack equipment to use TM in their teaching.

The study from Hong Kong (Chapple & Curtis, 2000:6ff) showed the potential that films have as a language acquisition tool, but also that with well planned activities can improve the confidence of students. However, one can not state that TM is a great tool for teachers based on just a few studies, but there seem to be great potential in TM-teaching.

In conclusion TM seem to have great potential as a language acquisition tool, but there are obstacles to overcome. Copyright laws and lack of time were the two largest obstacles in this school. However, with the positive attitudes this study has shown and the great potential TM have, I look forward to using TM in my future classes.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1.1 original questionnaire

Hej och tack för att du deltar i den här enkäten. Resultatet kommer att vara anonymt och det kommer ingenstans i min uppsats stå vilken skola undersöknngen är gjord på. Jag skulle vara tacksam om du svarar ärligt och tänker igenom dina svar ordentligt!

Sätt ett kryss för det påstående som stämmer bäst.

1. Vilket år är du född? __________

2. Hur ofta tittar ni på film eller tv-serier under engelsklektionerna?
   (   )      (   )     (   ) (   )
   Någon gång i veckan  Någon gång i månaden  Någon gång per termin  I stort sett aldrig

3. Hur ofta tittar du på engelskspråkiga filmer eller tv-serier på fritiden?
   (   )                 (   ) (   ) (   )
   Varje dag           Någon gång i veckan              Någon gång i månaden         I stort sett aldrig

4. Hur upplever du de lektioner ni kollar på tv-serier eller filmer?
   (   )                     (   )               (   )
   Roligare än vanligt            Som vilken annan lektion som helst              Tråkigare än vanligt

5. Om du fick bestämma skulle ni arbeta mer eller mindre med film och tv-serier under engelsklektionerna?
   (   )              (   )   (   )        (   ) (   )
   Definitivt mer  Det är bra som det är nu  Tveksam  Definitivt mindre

6 Du tycker/tror att du lär dig engelsk grammatik genom att titta på tv-serier och filmer.
   (   )              (   )   (   )        (   ) (   )
   Instämmer helt  Instämmer  Tveksam  Instämmer inte  Instämmer inte alls

7. Du tycker/tror att du lär dig nya engelska ord genom att titta på tv-serier och filmer.
   (   )              (   )   (   )        (   ) (   )
   Instämmer helt  Instämmer  Tveksam  Instämmer inte  Instämmer inte alls

8. Du tycker/tror att du förbättrar ditt engelska uttal genom att titta på tv-serier och filmer.
   (   )              (   )   (   )        (   ) (   )
   Instämmer helt  Instämmer  Tveksam  Instämmer inte  Instämmer inte alls

   (   )              (   )   (   )        (   ) (   )
   Instämmer helt  Instämmer  Tveksam  Instämmer inte  Instämmer inte alls

Appendix 1.2 English translation of the questionnaire

Hi and thank you for participating in this study. The result will be presented anonymously and the name of the school will not be listed in my essay. I would be grateful if you answered honestly and took your time think through your answers.

Check the most suitable alternative.

1. In which year were you born? __________

2. How often do you watch films or TV-series in the English classes?
   ( ) Once a week    ( ) Once a month    ( ) Once each semester    ( ) Almost never

3. How often do you watch English films or TV-series in your spare time?
   ( ) Every day    ( ) Once a week    ( ) Once a month    ( ) Almost never

4. What are your experiences of classes in which you watch TV-series or movies?
   ( ) More funt han usual    ( ) Like any other lesson    ( ) More boring than usual

5. If you were to decide, would you watch more or less TV-series and films during the English classes?
   ( ) Definitely more    ( ) The level of today is sufficient    ( ) Definitely less

6. You believe that you learn grammar when watching TV-series and films.
   ( ) I definitely agree    ( ) I agree    ( ) I am doubtful    ( ) I disagree    ( ) I definitely disagree

7. You believe that you learn new English words when watching TV-series and films.
   ( ) I definitely agree    ( ) I agree    ( ) I am doubtful    ( ) I disagree    ( ) I definitely disagree

8. You believe that you improve your English pronunciation when watching TV-series and films.
   ( ) I definitely agree    ( ) I agree    ( ) I am doubtful    ( ) I disagree    ( ) I definitely disagree
9. You believe that you improve your English listening comprehension when watching TV-series and films.

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
I definitely agree I agree I am doubtful I disagree I definitely disagree

10. You believe that you learn more English during a lesson in which you work with TV-series or films, compared to a textbook-based lesson.

( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
I definitely agree I agree I am doubtful I disagree I definitely disagree

Thank you for participating!

Appendix 2.1 original teacher interview questions

1. Hur ofta använder du TV-serier eller filmer i din undervisning?
2. Vad har ni för syfte med dessa aktiviteter, vad vill ni att era elever ska lära sig?
3. Hur reagerar eleverna när du berättar att ni ska se på film alternativt TV-serier?
4. Vad för slags förarbete och efterarbete använder du dig av?
5. Vad ser du för fördelar och nackdelar med filmer och TV-serier?
6. Hur ser planeringsbördan ut, kräver det mer eller mindre planering än att planera en vanlig lektion?

Appendix 2.2 English translation of the teacher interview questions

1. How often do you use TV-series or films in your teaching?
2. What is your purpose with those activities, what do you want your pupils to learn?
3. What are the pupils’ reactions when you tell them that you are going to watch a film or a TV-series?
4. What kind of pre-work and follow-ups do you use?
5. What do you consider being the advantages and disadvantages with films and TV-series?
6. What about planning a TM-based lesson, does it require more planning than other lesson?