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Video Component of Media Education in Direct and Reverse Acculturation at North Carolina State University and Texas Christian University

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Abstract

The article studies the practical application of the video component of media education in direct and reverse acculturation activities. It highlights that audiovisual aids may be used in the formation of educational and cultural competence, which includes skills such as critical thinking, building interpersonal relationships with representatives of other social and cultural groups and spontaneous communication. Two types of video content used by higher educational institutions and potentially designated as a means of developing acculturation skills — namely, feature films/documentaries (as part of the Global Film Series at North Carolina State University) and amateur videos (One Student One Voice Program at Texas Christian University) — were considered in the research. It was emphasised that in most cases the feature films/documentaries under study were produced in a language other than English, which required the use of subtitles that might be considered as the text component of media education. Thus, the application of the video component is directly related to video, audio and text components. The full-length films in question were shown in order to help understand the principles of interpersonal interactions between representatives of different countries (in geographical, cultural and linguistic terms) as well as to show the importance of mental resilience. The additional elements of acculturation — namely, discussions of issues outlined in the viewed film and cultural elements such as organising the tasting of national dishes of the country of origin—should also be mentioned along with the use of the video component. It was noted that amateur video content provides an opportunity for remote interaction between campus representatives.

Keywords: media education, video component, direct and reverse acculturation, foreign student, host country representative, critical thinking.

1. Introduction

The internationalisation of the educational system has a direct impact on the practical application of adaptation activities, which may also be characterised as acculturation activities, as a student undergoes adaptation academically as well as socially and culturally. At the same time, acculturation may proceed in two directions. By learning how to build interpersonal interaction with representatives of the host country, a foreign student experiences direct acculturation, where representatives of other social and cultural groups receive educational, cultural, psychological and linguistic support. However, this process is accompanied by reverse acculturation: representatives of the host country should also develop necessary social and cultural skills and overcome existing prejudices regarding certain nations or foreigners in general. Hence, their personal preparation has

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the “reverse” status, because this situation requires representatives of the host country to build interpersonal contacts with foreign students.

The two-way acculturation may be implemented using various techniques, one of which is media education. It should be noted that the use of media education may be relevant both in education (during the academic process) and for acculturation activities. Among the media education components that may be put into practice (such as video, audio, text and Internet components), we would like to highlight the video component, which is applied in the form of showing feature films and amateur video content.

Taking into account, according to UNESCO (Global..., 2020), the largest number of foreign students study in the United States, we have chosen this country to study the application of the video component of media education in direct and reverse acculturation.

Given the importance of this issue, *the goal of our research is to study the aspects of the practical application of video content of media education in direct and reverse acculturation.*

2. Materials and methods

The research used a set of methods that allowed for the comprehensive study of the indicated issues. First of all, the *comparison method* was used to consider the films that, despite having been shown under the same program, stood for somewhat different ideas and influenced different aspects of direct and reverse acculturation. For instance, the ideological component of one type of films contributes to the formation of skills needed to build interpersonal interaction with the immediate circle of people; while the other type contributes to the formation of skills needed to build interpersonal interactions with representatives of a different social and cultural and linguistic group. Thus, the comparison method facilitates understanding of these differences, regardless of the fact that the aim of all films is acculturation activities.

Since the films under study are of different genres, the *abstraction method* was applied. Its main objective was to focus on the acculturation value of films and the need to show them to foreign and local students in order to help them develop skills of interpersonal contact with representatives of other social and cultural groups. Therefore, in this case, the genre component of the video content of media education was not critical. Thus, the abstraction method allowed us to highlight the characteristics under study in these films.

Since direct and reverse acculturation is a multicomponent process, the *analysis and synthesis methods* were required. The analysis method was applied to understand the need for foreign and local students to develop certain skills that are important for building interpersonal interactions. To this end, the scope of research—acculturation—was divided into the linguistic, psychological, educational and cultural components. On the other hand, to study the role of these skills for academic and social processes, all the elements in question had to be combined into a holistic acculturation process, which required the synthesis method.

The research also used the *induction and deduction methods*. It should be noted that direct and reverse acculturation is a prerequisite for effective academic and social interaction between representatives of the higher educational institution. In turn, the programs considered represent special cases of individual universities applied in specific institutions. Their general concept, however, is applicable to all universities and colleges where foreign students study. Thus, the study of this transition—from the studied programs (specific) to the general problem of developing acculturation skills (general)—was possible only using the induction method. On the contrary, it was the deduction method that allowed us to designate those programs that used the video content of media education as elements of the general process of direct and reverse acculturation.

3. Discussion

The system of direct (foreign students) and reverse (students of the host country) acculturation should constantly undergo a transformation, which increases the number of methods used for adaptation, thereby contributing to the positive dynamics of the effectiveness of acculturation measures. The use of media in education, which may also be used in adaptation for the development of critical thinking in particular (Bazalgette et al., 1992) (which may be implemented through participation in discussion events), is currently becoming more and more relevant. For instance, the well-known American researcher of media education K. Tyner reasoned that audiovisual aids may be used to conduct analytical actions and study the information component (Tyner, 1999: 186-187). This activity enables the critical evaluation of a particular

media product, regardless of its definition as a literary work or a film. Critical skills may be developed in group classroom sessions where a media piece is discussed and social and cultural aspects of the society of the host country are considered; as well as by conducting a personal analysis of media content, where a foreign/local student can independently analyse certain cultural aspects highlighted in the consumed media product.

First and foremost, it should be noted that there are many studies of media education and its impact on society and education. Scientists such as D. Buckingham (Buckingham, 2013), A. Fedorov (Fedorov, 2008), V. Biletsky (Biletsky, Onkovych, 2019), W. Christ (Christ, 1996), J. Gómez-Galán (Gómez-Galán, 2015, 2020), T. Alruwaili (Alruwaili, 2019), S. Kim (Kim, 2019), S. Kubitschko (Kubitschko, 2018), S. Mihelj and J. Stanyer (Mihelj, Stanyer, 2018) and others comprehensively studied different aspects of media education.

The effectiveness of media education for the adaptation of foreign students was analysed by B. Hendrickson and D. Rosen who focused on the video component that might be presented online. The researchers came to the conclusion that “online interaction with host nationals represents an avenue for international students to better understand their communication behavior and subsequently communicate more effectively during intercultural interactions” (Hendrickson, Rosen, 2017: 100). Thus, for example, amateur video content distributed on the Internet on platforms such as YouTube (Vlassis, 2021) may also be designated as online interaction of foreign and local students if there are no other options for building direct interpersonal connections due to the quarantine restrictions.

In this regard, it is important to read the findings of E. Nikolaeva and P. Kotliar who studied the aspects of “new electronic media.” It may be noted that the use of amateur video content in media education may be designated as “new media.” Thus, the researchers note that this type of media “made a user an active participant of information exchange, who, unlike their predecessor – the recipient of such communication channels as print media, radio and television, can not only absorb and retransmit the received information, but also to independently produce a full-fledged information product” (Nikolaeva, Kotliar, 2017: 133). Since amateur video content may be developed by both foreign and local students, a case can be made that its potential consumers are able to produce this product, which means that amateur videos may be considered as “new media.”

The issues of learning a foreign language (linguistic element) using media education have been studied by many scientists, with a special focus on the use of listening exercises (Nunan, 1997; Rost, 2013). Some researchers have developed methods of teaching a foreign language based on the use of video and audio aids, thereby characterising language learning as a set of media education tools that might be applied by educational institutions. For example, Nunan & Rost considered the effect of using video content during foreign language classes. Thus, film screenings may also have the linguistic component, which is also part of direct and reverse acculturation.

This aspect is relevant to our research in case of showing films produced in a language other than English and requiring subtitles. As a result, a feature film may be both an acculturation and educational element, because it contributes to the increase in communication competence (Simamora, Oktaviani, 2020). This is also confirmed by the conclusions of S. Sari and D. Aminatun that “watching movies can enhance English skills” (Sari, Aminatun, 2021: 17).

The use of subtitles, in turn, leads to the text information component of media education. The use of reading as a method of obtaining text information, which may contain data on the cultural aspects of a particular country, has been studied by M. Simons and T. Smits (Simons, Smits, 2020), K. Koda (Koda, 2005) and was defined as an interlinguistic method.

It should be noted that acculturation measures are aimed primarily at adjusting social and cultural perceptions of foreign students and representatives of the host country. The former, finding themselves in the country of study, feel the effects of culture shock, while the latter should take into account cultural differences in interpersonal interaction. Therefore, the issues of adjustment and culture shock are also important in the study of direct and reverse acculturation.

Let us consider the meaning of the concept “adjustments” in terms of the adaptation process. According to the academic explanatory dictionary, to adjust means “to make adjustments or amendments to something” (Slovník..., 1973: 287). Encountering a new culture, a foreign student consciously or subconsciously compares the principles of their own and foreign culture while showing existing disagreements, which leads to culture shock. The adjustment provides for the gradual overcoming of prejudices and reconciliation of cultural and behavioural norms of the native culture of a person and the culture of the host country, as well as helps reduce the impact of culture shock and facilitates the adaptation.

On the other hand, representatives of the host country should also adjust certain cultural biases for effective interpersonal contact with representatives of another country. Thus, the adjustment includes the psychological, social and cultural as well as academic measures that contribute to certain changes in the social and cultural views of a person.

As for culture shock, it is worth determining this effect using the social identity theory, which focuses on the cognitive aspect of adaptation. Based on the conclusions of Berry (Berry, 1994, 1997), H. Tajfel and J. Turner (Tajfel, Turner, 1986), a person experiencing culture shock tends to perceive themselves in more unusual conditions. This changes self-perception, which leads to the identity transformation. Thus, taking into account the above definition, a foreign student, when interacting with a new cultural environment, undergoes a phase of change in self-perception, under which new ideas may transform their cultural foundations and prejudices. As a result, the identity of a person is being changed, which leads to the realisation that their own culture is not unique as it is, and representatives of other cultures have their individual aspects. Hence, the cultural identity is being changed at the level of awareness of equality between their own and other cultures as well as understanding that they are a representative of one of the world cultures. This means that interactions should be conducted on the principles of respect for the aspects and foundations of the host country culture, which is a prerequisite for effective interpersonal interactions.

Based on the analysed aspects, the definitions of culture shock by researchers and ways to overcome it using the video component of media education (Tab. 1) are as follows:

Table 1. Definition of culture shock and ways to overcome it using the video component of media education

No	Researcher(s)	Definition of culture shock by the researcher(s)	Ways to overcome culture shock using the video component of media education
1	A. Furnham, S. Bochner (Furnham, Bochner, 1986)	A driving force for the acquisition of culture-specific skills needed to interact in a new cultural environment	The video component allows acquiring both linguistic and interpersonal skills, which are a prerequisite for communication in a new society, by obtaining information about such experiences in viewed media materials and during follow-up discussion events.
2	T. Holmes, R. Rahe, R. Lazarus, S. Folkman (Holmes, Rahe, 1967; Lazarus, Folkman, 1984)	A basis of stressful changes in people involved in interacting with new cultural environments for the development of overcoming techniques	Video content such as feature films/documentaries, amateur videos, etc. allows students to change their personal strategy of the interaction with representatives of the host country (direct acculturation) or foreign students (reverse acculturation) by overcoming interpersonal and linguistic barriers.
3	D. Meintel (Meintel, 1973)	Mostly shock of self-cognition rather than the shock of perception of another culture	Watching video content with the follow-up discussion of the social problems and issues identified therein has a direct impact on potential personal transformational changes in both foreign students and representatives of the host country, which contributes to the awareness of problems; and being aware of problems leads, in turn, to the possibility of overcoming them.
4	J. Berry, H. Tajfel and J. Turner (Berry, 1994, 1997; Tajfel, Turner, 1986)	A change in self-perception, which leads to the identity transformation	Correcting personality problems related to their perception and acceptance contributes to a person's self-awareness as a representative of the multicultural society, where existing differences are advantages rather than a dividing factor.

4. Results

When considering acculturation of foreign students and reverse acculturation of local students using the video component of media education, it should be noted that video content may be bi-directional depending on the initial characteristics of a video product. The first direction is represented by cinematography, i.e. films screened in theatres or available on streaming services (regardless of their type: feature films, animated films or documentaries). This type of video content is artistic and explores in more detail social aspects of the lives of individuals (characters), their interactions both with each other and with their social environment, which may be traced in the study of C. Bucciferro (Bucciferro, 2021). These aspects, which require the development of film characters and their diverse interactions, increase the total duration of a video product.

As for the second direction of the video component of media education, it may be represented with amateur videos created, among others, by students of an educational institution, including foreign students. In most cases (excluding students of departments of film studies at colleges and universities), these videos do not have an obvious artistic value, but they are valuable in terms of the social and cultural aspect and, moreover, in the aspect of interpersonal interaction remotely. In order to understand the specified directions of the video component of media education more clearly, we will consider activities of this kind at American universities, specifically North Carolina State University and Texas Christian University.

Practical application of the video component of media education in direct and reverse acculturation is well established at North Carolina State University, namely at the Office of Global Engagement, which holds the Global Film Series, an initiative aimed at screening international films for the teachers, staff and students of the campus. The films selected for the Global Film Series have a strong social awareness component and raise issues of life and interpersonal interactions in modern societies. As the films presented under this initiative are feature films, they fall under the first direction of video content for direct and reverse acculturation. Acculturation skills are developed in the course of discussing the viewed films, where, in addition to raising awareness of social issues, communication and interpersonal skills are developed, which is crucial for the adjustment of social and cultural perceptions by foreign students. As a result, we can identify the conditions for having direct acculturation (foreign students are able to communicate with representatives of the host country, which allows them to form linguistic and cultural patterns, which is a prerequisite for interpersonal interaction) and reverse acculturation (local students are able to discuss social aspects as indicated in the viewed film) within the Global Film Series. Let us consider its nature in more detail.

The films presented in the program are often produced in a foreign language (therefore, they are shown with English subtitles, which constitutes the text component of media education; this, in turn, has a direct impact on the linguistic training of foreign students), which is part of reverse acculturation in a greater degree. For example, the presence of students from Japan at the university and the screening of a film produced in Japan or about Japan is an element of reverse acculturation, as local students may both be introduced to the cinematic vision of certain social and interpersonal issues and discuss them with representatives of the country after the screening and learn which of the things shown are exaggerated and which are really relevant for a specific society. This type of discussion is particularly important for feature films, which often distort shown social relationships for the sake of creating scenarios appealing for distribution.

Thus, on 17 September 2019, the Global Film Series screened the Argentinean film *Un Cuento Chino* (Global..., 2019), which showed all the dramatic and comedic elements of translation difficulties where an Argentinian and a Chinese try to build a semblance of a relationship despite the language barrier. It should be noted that this film is very important for reverse acculturation, as local university students may also face interpersonal situations where communication goes awry and requires corrective measures. The comedic elements of the film show that in case of unsuccessful communication, it is necessary to reduce the psychological component and develop a more casual behavioural attitude towards this kind of problem. Thus, this film may be recommended to local students so that they can develop their ability to establish interpersonal connections with foreign students even in case of low-quality communication interaction.

The social and cultural aspect of acculturation activities may be traced in the Turkish-made film *Ayla: the Daughter of War* (Dinner..., 2019) screened on 22 October 2019. The film, which is based on real events, showed the aspects of the relationships between representatives of different cultures, the serviceman and the Korean girl he saved, as a period piece. However, the real

challenge did not appear to be cultural or linguistic barriers, but the social aspect, unwillingness of the society (represented, among others, by bureaucratic institutions) to make decisions that are right in viewers' opinion. Yet, are they really right when it comes to granting this serviceman the right to adopt a girl while he is unable to provide her with a proper family? By screening this film, the Global Film Series raises the question whether the society's actions in relation to representatives of other countries are right in certain situations. In addition, the message on reducing the importance of the language barrier for building intercultural interactions underlines the narrative once again. Rather than the refusal to conduct comprehensive linguistic training for foreign students, it indicates the importance of building interpersonal connections with representatives of other cultural groups (foreign students) even in case of an insufficient level of understanding at the communication level and the possibility of using non-verbal means.

In addition to the possibility of discussing the above issues after watching a film, the event also included a food element of the social and cultural training, as the participants were able to taste Turkish dishes. It should be noted that many American universities and colleges that ensure adequate direct and reverse acculturation organise events that allow foreign students to share cultural characteristics of their countries. Representatives of other countries often opt for the food element. That is why this initiative is a quality addition to the video component of media education.

Adaptation to a new social and cultural and linguistic environment requires foreign students to be mentally resilient and able to overcome difficulties, as well as not let them influence their academic and social activities. In this regard, on 19 November 2019, the Global Film Series screened the Finnish documentary *Entrepreneur* (Global..., 2019). The discussion and understanding of its messages may help foreign students realise the possibility of overcoming the problems that at first glance seem insurmountable. Films of this kind have a clearly pronounced motivational and psychological effect and are important for those who face difficulties in psychological and social acculturation.

One of the most significant psychological problems (relevant to foreign students) is a long stay abroad, which includes both the impossibility of direct communication with family and the desire to return to the familiar social and cultural environment. Ignoring such feelings negatively affects the general mental state of a foreign student and, as a result, acculturation as a whole.

This problem was indicated in the Indian film *Hotel Salvation*, screened on 14 January 2020 as part of the Global Film Series (Global..., 2020). Just like the protagonist of the film, foreign students were deciding whether it was reasonable to stay in a specific place or return home. Although in the film, the choice was being made by the son in relation to his father — to stay with him or return to his family — certain parallels may be drawn with foreign students. Solving this personal psychological problem will contribute to the successful adaptation of a student to the new academic and social environments and ensure their behavioural stability.

Since foreign students have different cultural ideas and views, there is a matter of the tolerant attitude of both local students to foreigners and foreign students to representatives of the host country, as their beliefs may not be appropriate in the country of study. Thus, the issue of tolerance is directly related to direct and reverse acculturation. The video component of media education is also used as a means of developing a tolerant attitude towards other people. One example is the Kenyan film *Rafiki* screened on 11 October 2020, which drew a wide response, including after the screening at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival. It was the first Kenyan film to be shown at this festival (Global... 2020). The story of the protagonists intertwines political, personal and LGBT agendas, but the cornerstone is the importance of a tolerant attitude towards others even in case of personal disagreement with their choices or ideas of life. This film is important for overcoming culture shock and developing an understanding of the importance of a tolerant attitude towards the opponent, regardless of whether it is a foreign or local student. *Rafiki* has a significant direct and reverse acculturation value.

Being in a new social and cultural environment requires foreign students to be able to communicate with representatives of the host country, which increases the importance of both linguistic training (vocabulary, grammar, listening skills, etc.) and the ability to build interactions. This requires the introduction of both foreign and local students to the aspects of interpersonal interactions. One example is the screening of the film *After the Storm* (9 to 13 November 2020) by the Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda (Global..., 2020), who focuses on interpersonal relationships, including within the family. Since the performance of a team (including an academic group) is directly related to the quality of interpersonal relationships, considering the concepts

brought up in this film is important for both direct and reverse acculturation. *After the Storm* shows the relationship of family members who, due to weather conditions, find themselves in a confined space, which obviously leads to the manifestation of both positive and negative factors. The film screening was supported by the North Carolina Japan Center, which indicated the collaboration of national centers and the university on the issues of the adaptation of students (including Japanese ones) and improvement of interpersonal interaction quality both in the academic environment and “confined spaces” of the dormitory in order to minimise the likelihood of conflict situations associated with linguistic and interpersonal barriers.

The 2020-2021 quarantine restrictions negatively affected the Global Film Series. The screening of the films socially significant for both foreign and local students who study at North Carolina State University will resume at the end of August 2021 with *Sun Children* (Global..., 2021) and continue on 9 November 2021 with *Shoplifters* by the aforementioned director Hirokazu Kore-eda (Global..., 2021). Both films raise the issue of personal transformation in certain circumstances, form the ability to understand the opponent and, if not understand the reason for their behaviour, then at least attempt to establish a certain contact by adjusting your behaviour. These films are important for acculturation activities since foreign students meet in the format of direct acculturation and are able to discuss certain situations that may arise during academic or social interaction with representatives of the host country. This will help them understand the need for personal transformation (behavioural, social, cultural), which is a necessary element of the adaptation. As for local students, they should also change their views and overcome prejudices about representatives of other nationalities.

Thus, the first direction of video content of media education is represented by feature films and documentaries produced professionally. Their screening under the Global Film Series aims at raising the issue of interpersonal interaction both within the team and in the social environment and drawing attention to the importance of personal transformational changes when communicating with foreign students (reverse acculturation) or representatives of the host country (direct acculturation).

However, as mentioned earlier, the video component of media education also has a different direction characterised by amateur content. One example is the Texas Christian University’s One Student One Voice initiative. The program is aimed at international campus students as well as local students who work at the Office of International Services. The purpose of the videos (a few minutes each) is to show the life of a student during quarantine measures in order to unite the community of foreign and local students when having proper interpersonal contacts is impossible (Amber, 2021; Hailey, 2021; Jesse, 2021; Kira, 2021; Shriya, 2021). This initiative contributes to the interpersonal understanding between students, seeks to show that global challenges affect both foreign and local students and facilitates mutual understanding between them.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the video component of media education has a bidirectional structure characterised by feature films/documentaries and amateur videos that may be used in practical acculturation. Taking into account that acculturation may be directed towards both foreign and local students, who should also be adapted to potential interactions with representatives of other social and cultural groups, we have identified the directions of direct and reverse acculturation. Higher educational institutions may use the video component of media education to develop these directions.

The above experience of North Carolina State University allows us to assert that the media component at this educational institution is used when showing feature films/documentaries to both foreign and local students. In summary, this type of acculturation allows for the following:

1. Holding discussions after watching films where all participants of the media initiative can consider socially and culturally significant issues. This allows overcoming (adjusting) stereotypes on both sides (foreign and local students) through interpersonal communication, which may be more effective than obtaining cultural information during standard adaptation training.
2. Films shown under the Global Film Series have a different genre component. However, they are united by a single basis, i.e. the aspects of interpersonal communication and ways of overcoming social problems. These issues are relevant in the interaction of foreign and local students since such interaction (between representatives of different social and cultural and often linguistic groups) is associated with problematic situations of culture shock. Therefore, screening this kind of films and follow-up discussions of potential problems has a pronounced psychological

and behavioural effect, which allows students to prevent negative interactions in real-life situations;

3. Taking into account that the Global Film Series films are often produced in languages other than English, they are subtitled. Considering that Japanese films may be viewed by students from Japan and Turkish films by students from Turkey, we can identify the linguistic aspect of the video component of media education, where a film in one's native language may be dubbed in English. This simultaneously leads to two components of media education, video and text, which contribute to the formation of interpersonal interaction skills incorporating the social and cultural and linguistic elements. In addition, the discussion of certain issues after watching a film also has a linguistic value, since participation in the impromptu discussions helps overcome the language barrier.

As for the amateur video component of media education, the One Student One Voice program at Texas Christian University was chosen as an example of its application. Its importance for direct and reverse acculturation activities is based on the following:

1. Possibility to present a foreign/local student as a single element of the academic university community through the creation of videos showing how a student is dealing with quarantine measures, which contributes to the unification of the campus in overcoming certain situations;

2. Building interpersonal contacts between students in the context of compulsory distance learning, in order to minimise the loss of communication in an academic or social community.

Thus, the video component of media education may be used in the acculturation of foreign students and students of the host country, development of the ability to overcome language and intercultural barriers, situations where direct contact with the other parties is impossible (remote means of transmitting video content), development of linguistic skills and overcoming social and cultural prejudices.

The follow-up research on direct and reverse acculturation using the video component of media education may be aimed at studying the practices of using films at other higher educational institutions in the United States as well as in other countries; conducting relevant comparative studies; considering the possibility and feasibility of screening films of various genres (including animated films), etc.

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