

TV and Film as Didactic Tools in Teaching Italian Language and Culture A Review of Practice

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Abstract The study reviews existing practices that use TV and film in the teaching and learning of Italian in the University through qualitative meta-analysis. The studies were selected through keyword collocations, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and time restrictions which yielded to ten articles. Two central themes emerged: the use of TV and film for developing linguistic competence and for improving intercultural communication. Results revealed that TV and film as didactic tools offer relevance in real-world contexts, and that success in learning calls for student empowerment and independence. Recommendations include replication of similar studies and the creation of an open-access comprehensive database for audiovisual clips in the Italian language.

Keywords TV. Film. Didactic tools. L2. Foreign language. Italian. University.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Literature Review. – 3 Method. – 4 Findings and Discussion. – 5 Conclusion.



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1 Introduction

Audiovisual materials are highly valuable resources in teaching language and culture because of their multimodal nature. Historically, there has been a shift in the preference of the materials from written texts to images and sounds, which Kress (2003, 1) succinctly describes as “the move from the dominance of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen”. This shift has led to the foundation of more novel pedagogic ideas that promote multi-literacy, challenging the existing practices that depend heavily on printed texts (Bonsignori 2018). With the current technological developments, conventional reading and writing activities must now be reinforced with the more updated forms of media as these go beyond mere exposure to verbal language. Audiovisual realia are pragmatic means of exposing foreign language learners to non-verbal cues that may help deepen the understanding of the more articulated verbal language in action. The quality of authenticity of TV and film may be vouched for as they are intentionally created with the linguistic capacities of the native speaker audiences in mind and not necessarily for the foreign language learners (Kaiser 2011). The dialogues used in the production of TV and film, while scripted, are made to imitate how spontaneous quotidian conversations sound like (Bednarek 2013) and provide learners the opportunity to experience how the language is being used in naturally occurring contexts. The importance of audiovisual materials, such as TV and film, was immediately recognized for its pedagogical merit, as evidenced by the proliferation of literature regarding its didactic use in second and foreign language learning as early as the 1980s (Diadori 2011a).

2 Literature Review

Television and film are rich sources of content in teaching both language and culture. In the context of second language learning, the Content-based language teaching approach (CBLT) is habitually adopted to ensure immigrant learners gain proficiency in a new language together with academic content (Cinganotto, Cuccurullo 2015). In Italy, the more common acronym is the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), which was introduced by a Reform Law (Ministerial Decree 88/99 of 2010), and has since been stated as the mandatory methodology in upper secondary school curricula, highlighting the international dimension of the educational system by means of the ‘4Cs’ model (Coyle 2007): content, cognition, communication, and culture. Among the benefits of CLIL include the development of intercultural communication skills, the provision of opportunities to learn content via different cultural perspectives, the

improvement of overall target language competence, the diversification of methods and forms of classroom practice, the increase in learner motivation, and similar (Dalton-Puffer 2007 quoted in Cinganotto, Cuccurullo 2015). The CLIL approach allows for easy incorporation and adaptation of television programs and films in its lessons (regardless of phase or level), ensuring the student's motivation, engagement, and responsibility for creating their own knowledge, thus promoting a learner-centred perspective (Keddie 2014).

Previous research on the use of television programs and films has reported positive results in the teaching and learning of foreign languages and their respective target culture. Weyers (1999) conducted a longitudinal study on the use of a television program in a language class and concluded that it aided in providing language input when adapted as a fraction of a designed structured activity. Consistent exposure to a television program in the target language resulted in a significant improvement in listening comprehension, oral production, and overall linguistic confidence. In a study related to teaching culture, Herron et al. (1999a) stated that learners were able to easily recall quotidian social patterns from viewing pedagogical videos that were integrated into a foreign language class. Balboni (2006 quoted in Maugeri 2021) also affirms that using films as a pedagogical tool develops both cognitive and intercultural competences in the learner through the analysis of the verbal language (accent, dialectal and linguistic variances), non-verbal language, sociolinguistic variations, regional variations, and cultural models and values.

While there is much evidence banking on the effectiveness of utilizing television programs and films in the foreign language classroom, these have to be used alongside proper scaffolding and organization from the end of the teacher. Borghetti and Lertola (2014) mention the teacher plays a highly important role in mediating the entire learning process with the aid of audiovisual materials. Similarly, Balboni (2006 quoted in Maugeri 2021) narrates that the use of such modalities requires the teacher to possess critical judgment in the selection of corpus for analysis, must be methodical in weaving the flow of activities, and must have organisational capabilities in order to maximize and optimise the pedagogical benefits of film and television for language teaching and learning.

3 Method

The present study utilized a qualitative meta-analysis of existing practices on the teaching and learning of Italian through TV and films in the University setting. The implemented keyword collocations included the following: 'cinema/film', 'audiovisual texts', 'FL learning/teaching', 'FL acquisition', 'university', 'Italian' which were searched from the databases of Google Scholar, ProQuest, ERIC, JSTOR, and Taylor & Francis. To guarantee consistency and quality, only published articles in peer-reviewed journals were considered for analysis.

The exclusion criteria include a time restriction and a specific set of participants. The time restriction was set from 2009-24, spanning a total of fifteen years. Other related research on teaching and learning Italian through film and TV which did not involve University students as participants were duly eliminated.

The data-gathering process proved to be complex and challenging due to the scarcity of published articles that categorically adhered to the requirements of the study (i.e., didactic use of audiovisual texts specifically designed for teaching and learning Italian for university students). Recognizing the heterogeneity among the assembled articles, the authors employed textual narrative synthesis as proposed by Lucas et al. (2007), which is a useful tool in synthesizing different types of research evidence and grouping them into more homogenous groups. This type of approach is better suited for reviews whose objectives include the description of an existent body of literature, with particular emphasis on the scope of what has been investigated in the field, the evidence, and the knowledge gaps that need to be addressed (Lucas et al. 2007).

The three-step process employed by Lucas et al. (2007) was followed to efficiently review the existing literature on the subject: Step 1. Study grouping; Step 2. Study commentaries produced; and Step 3. Subgroup synthesis produced. The studies in this paper were therefore classified according to the main competencies the use of audiovisual texts aimed to develop, mainly linguistic competence and intercultural communication. These two subgroups were further subdivided into smaller groups according to the specific language goals of the studies in relation to the subgroup in which they were incorporated. Finally, syntheses and analyses for the two major subgroups were produced, as Section 4 of this paper elaborated. A visual representation of the outcomes of the textual narrative synthesis is found in Chart 1.

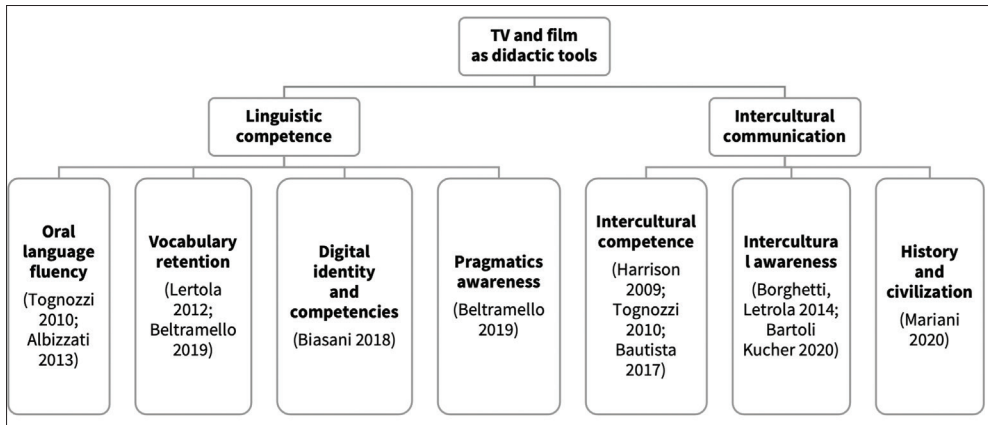


Chart 1 Subgroups of studies focusing on TV and film as didactic tools in Italian language learning. To ensure ethical research considerations, the researchers affirm that the analysis is free of any outcome and confirmatory biases. The present study is only descriptive and is not confirmatory of any research hypothesis

Table 1 An overview of existing research on Teaching and Learning Italian through TV and films as presented in chronological order

Author and Year	Study Title	Modality	Objective	Method	Group	Subgroup
1 Harrison 2009	Foreign films in the classroom: Gateway to language and culture	Film	To use feature films in their entirety to provide a variety of motivating pedagogical options for fostering cultural competence.	Intensive study of the feature film, <i>La vita è bella</i> , ¹ with pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities carried out in 3-4 weeks that transitioned from guided to independent work. The film is expected to be viewed outside the classroom.	Intercultural communication	Intercultural competence
2 Tognozzi 2010	Teaching and Evaluating Language and Culture through Film	Film	To increase language fluency (both interpretative and presentational), cultural knowledge, and sensitivity.	Viewing of film clips from <i>Il vestito da sposa</i> ² – for intermediate learners – and <i>La meglio gioventù</i> for advanced learners – were accompanied by activities carried out in two phases. Phase 1 involved scripted activities, while Phase 2 involved spontaneous and more independent activities.	Linguistic competence	Oral language fluency; Intercultural competence

Danica Anna Guban-Caisido, Naidyl Isis Bautista
TV and Film as Didactic Tools in Teaching Italian Language and Culture

Author and Year	Study Title	Modality	Objective	Method	Group	Subgroup
3 Lertola 2012	The effect of the subtitling task on vocabulary learning	Film	To investigate on the effect of exposure to novel words and their retention through subtitling activities.	Use of a contemporary Italian movie to be translated into English. Utilized a quasi-experimental design using both quantitative (pretest, post-test, Vocabulary Scale Knowledge Test) and qualitative (subtitling, comprehension tasks) methods.	Linguistic competence	Vocabulary retention
4 Albizzati 2013	Il film a lezione di Italiano L2: Gli esami al cinema	Film	To improve oral production via the development of communicative and sociocultural competences; To give learners the necessary skills in getting through oral exams in Italian universities.	Use of selected film sequences from <i>Vado a vivere da solo</i> , ³ <i>La meglio gioventù</i> and <i>Grande Grotto e Verdone</i> with guided activities before, during, and after viewing.	Linguistic competence	Oral language fluency
5 Borghetti, Lertola 2014	Interlingual subtitling for intercultural language education: a case study	Film	To investigate whether the creation of subtitles can offer language students opportunities for developing cultural and intercultural awareness.	Use of a 7-minute clip from the movie <i>Tutta la vita davanti</i> ⁴ for subtitling. For data gathering, a multi-method approach was employed involving initial and final questionnaires, interviews, class audio recording, teaching forms/notes, and outputs.	Intercultural communication	Intercultural awareness
6 Bautista 2017	La contestualizzazione dell'apprendimento della lingua italiana nelle Filippine: didattizzazione di una puntata di "Radici - l'altra faccia dell'immigrazione" sulle Filippine	TV	To create materials using a contextualized and humanistic approach to FL learning; To investigate whether this type of material can lead to the development of intercultural competence.	Use of selected film clips from an episode of <i>Radici - l'altra faccia dell'immigrazione</i> ⁵ to create a learning unit with (primarily oral) activities carried out before, during, and after viewing.	Intercultural communication	Intercultural competence
7 Biasani 2018	The digital world as a topic: Developing digital competences in the Italian language class	TV, videos, other forms of media	To develop linguistic and digital competencies; To improve transferable skills through self-development and shaping digital identity; To approach media literacies and technology-enhanced learning.	Weekly seminars around thematic topics of the target culture. Lab seminars where students access authentic materials at their own pace at their own disposal. Oral seminars verifying online presence through a program linked to the Italian talk show <i>Reputescion</i> . ⁶	Linguistic competence	Digital identity and competencies

Author and Year	Study Title	Modality	Objective	Method	Group	Subgroup
8 Beltramello 2019	Exploring the Combination of Subtitling and Revoicing Tasks: A Proposal for Maximising Learning Opportunities in the Italian Language Classroom	TV	To use video clips as a context-rich scaffolding, on which students can build up vocabulary and develop L2 pragmatics awareness.	Translation of episode clips from the series <i>Zio Gianni</i> ⁷ using the VisualSubSync app. The process includes media-text analysis, script analysis, translation/editing, spotting/cueing.	Linguistic competence	Vocabulary retention; Pragmatics awareness
9 Bartoli Kucher 2020	Neoplurilinguismo e didattica integrativa della lingua, della letteratura e del cinema nella classe di lingua straniera	Film	To develop plurilingual competence and promote language and cultural awareness through a text that integrates language, literature, and cinema.	A juxtaposition of Laila Wadia's novel <i>Amiche per la pelle</i> and its consequent film adaptation <i>Babylon Sister</i> . ⁸ Use of choice board for oral and written reflections.	Intercultural communication	Intercultural awareness
10 Mariani 2020	An Analytical Approach to the Italian Renaissance through Popular TV: The case of "Medici"	TV	To learn history and civilization (Renaissance) in FL and culture classes.	Use of the TV series <i>Medici: The Magnificent</i> ⁹ as a pedagogical tool for understanding Renaissance Italy	Intercultural communication	History and civilization

- 1 *La vita è bella* (1997), Roberto Benigni.
- 2 *Il vestito da sposa* (2003), Fiorella Infascelli; *La meglio gioventù* (2003), Marco Tullio Giordana.
- 3 *Vado a vivere da solo* (1982), Marco Risi; *Grande Grosso e Verdone* (2008), Carlo Verdone.
- 4 *Tutta la vita davanti* (2008), Paolo Virzi.
- 5 *Radici – l'altra faccia dell'immigrazione. "Filippine"* (2017), Rai3.
- 6 *Reputescion* (2012), La3.
- 7 *Zio Gianni* (2014), Rai2.
- 8 *Babylon Sisters* (2017), Gigi Roccati.
- 9 *Medici: The Magnificent* (2016), Rai1.

4 Findings and Discussion

A close reading of the primary materials was needed for the relevancy evaluation process. Considering the exclusions, ten published articles remained for full-text analysis. Textual narrative synthesis as defined by Lucas et al. (2007) was then employed, which surfaced the following themes: the use of TV and film for developing linguistic competence and the use of TV and film as a didactic tool for intercultural communication.

While the majority of the research reflected a clear demarcation in terms of the purpose of their study, some also have a two-fold objective, maximizing the use of TV and film for developing both linguistic and cultural competencies.

4.1 TV and Film for developing linguistic competence

Three of the ten studies used film and television as tools for developing linguistic competence. These studies mostly focused on vocabulary learning (Lertola 2012; Beltramello 2019) and oral production (Albizzati 2013).

The use of audiovisual tools for linguistic pedagogical purposes is greatly supported by previous studies. Exposure to authentic visual and aural properties in film and television aid in the expansion of vocabulary (Kaiser 2011; Sherman 2003; Webb, Rodgers 2009), in the incorporation of pragmatic expressions (Lin 2014; Bruti 2015), and in general oral production capacities (Dikilitas, Duvenci 2009).

For vocabulary development, Lertola (2012) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a subtitling activity in the facilitation of language learning, with particular emphasis placed on vocabulary. Employing a mixed-method approach including a pre and post-test for vocabulary testing, the participants were divided into Experimental and Control Groups which had different tasks: subtitling of a contemporary Italian film clip for the Experimental, and task-based activities for the Control. All participants were made to watch the same clip three times. Results show that both conditions showed improvement in vocabulary, with the Experimental Group displaying a more significant incidental vocabulary acquisition compared to the Control Group.

Similar to Lertola's (2012) research, Beltramello (2019) conducted a non-experimental study on vocabulary with the added dimension of L2 pragmatics, in particular, the acquisition of multiword expressions. A mixed-method was likewise employed involving both quantitative data such as questionnaire and post-test, and qualitative data in the form of classroom observations. Through the free subtitling software Visual SubSync (VSS), the participants were tasked to write subtitles for and revoice the Italian sitcom *Zio Gianni*. The post-test results reflected vocabulary retention not only on the meaning of the language-related items but also in the recall of the contexts in which the words were used.

The first two articles focused on both subtitling and vocabulary retention through the use of video clips. While there is still much to be known about the extent to which subtitling affects vocabulary expansion and recall, the limited studies available lean towards positive pedagogical benefits (William, Thorne 2018). Talaván (2010) noted that the use of authentic video clips such as those taken from TV series and/or films together with the additional task of subtitling is beneficial to students learning a foreign language. Among the aspects to be defined for the activity to be pedagogically beneficial, Talaván (2010, 290) cited the importance of the video clip features, stating that these must be "useful, interesting, and self-containing" in order to reflect the communicative and linguistic objectives.

The main objective of the third study (Albizzati 2013) under this theme was to make use of film in the L2 classroom in order to improve students' oral production through the development of their communicative linguistic and sociocultural competencies. The target learners in this study were those attending Italian universities via the Erasmus Mundus program. It was therefore essential that these students were equipped with the necessary skills to pass oral exams, the conventional examination method used in Italian universities. Through selected film clips, the teacher should be able to showcase the language's authentic and natural usage within real contexts, including all components necessary in communicative events (verbal and non-verbal language, discourse markers, using the correct register, among others). While there was no mention that the proposed activities were experimented on a group of students, it was clear that they were created to cater to the target learners' specific needs: incorporating activities that encouraged a greater ability in oral production and interaction, and equipping them with the capacity to resort to specific strategies in managing their discourse during oral exams (Semplici, Tronconi 2011). Apart from the activities centring on morphosyntactic and lexical elements, explanations on pertinent aspects of Italian culture and society (the Italian university system, teacher-student relationships, loan words) were also taken into account.

4.2 TV and Film as Didactic Tools for Intercultural Communication

Audiovisual materials such as television and films are also an abundant source of cultural pedagogical knowledge because of their vibrant representations of the target language and culture (Shrum, Glisan 1994). Bajrami, Ismaili (2016) describe the use of videos as advantageous in learning both language and culture because of their originality and authenticity given that they are primarily produced for mother tongue audiences.

The majority of the studies in the present analysis utilized film and television to improve intercultural awareness and communication. The foci of the said research include the teaching of Italian history (Mariani 2020; Harrison 2009), intercultural competence and performance (Harrison 2009; Bautista 2017), plurilingualism and cultural identity (Bartoli Kucher 2020), and cultural knowledge and sensitivity (Borghetti, Lertola 2014).

In exploring the potential of using audiovisual materials to aid in the teaching of history and civilization, Mariani (2020) utilized the television series *Medici: The Magnificent* in the teaching of Italian Renaissance, emphasizing that the consumption of information via media-related adaptations enables students to generate new forms of

understanding through aural and visual prompts. The author reported that the screened adaptation of a historical text allowed for a more active engagement through “affective experiential modes” (Landsberg 2015 quoted in Mariani 2020). Aside from empathizing with the historical characters, the learners were also exposed to the dynamics and interactions of the said characters through the world-building process of the screen: camera angles, lighting, montage and musical scores (Mariani 2020).

Unlike the other studies in this paper that preferred the utilization of short video sequences, Harrison (2009) proposed the viewing of an entire feature film (*La vita è bella*) several times. It was expected, however, that the initial viewing with subtitles be done outside the classroom. Making use of the entire film as opposed to just snippets was done to provide a variety of motivating pedagogical options, carried out in three to four weeks. These activities gave students opportunities to demonstrate process, performance, and knowledge that the educator could easily assess. Harrison noted that immediately after the initial viewing session, students were already able to retain some details and idioms with the help of pre-viewing activities, such as reading the synopsis, reading about the Holocaust, the deportation of Italian Jews, and other historical details, and some vocabulary work addressing historical and political terminology, dates, and facts. After the initial viewing, guided class discussions followed where students talked about the historical context (timeline creation and character encounters), plot summary/description, character analysis, and the differences between the movie’s first and second parts (Italian cinematic style). Independent or small group work began after the students had become reasonably familiar with the film, and had been equipped with the necessary vocabulary and cultural-historical information. In this phase, the students were asked to explore stories Italy tells about itself through the film from different critical points of view: aesthetics, anthropology, communication, sociolinguistics. Post-viewing activities called for reflections on the Italian lifestyle in the Thirties and Forties, adding to it a U.S. perspective in English to further develop their intercultural understanding. Harrison concluded that an intensive study of a feature film laid

the groundwork for fostering cultural competence: [placing] language in context; [giving] students an in-depth understanding of an important chapter in Italy’s history, [sparking] interest for a study abroad trip; [maintaining or even generating] interest in further study of the language. (2009, 92)

Bautista (2017) noticed the need for the creation of materials that better suited the needs of a specific audience, in this case, Filipino students learning Italian as a foreign language. The prevalence of

didactic materials created for a general audience posed consequences in the FL learning process, since these failed to tap into the human being's potential for multidimensional processing by minimizing the student's ability to learn through doing things physically, feeling emotions, and experiencing things through the mind (Tomlinson 2003 quoted in Bautista 2017). The creation of a learning unit was based on selected scenes from an episode of the Italian TV program *Radici - l'altra faccia dell'immigrazione*, which focused on the lives of immigrants in Italy. Since the target learners were Filipinos, the chosen episode centred on the stories and experiences of Filipino immigrants. Audiovisual materials are a key component in contextualizing and humanizing FL learning because they provide numerous points of reflection, both on language learning and the student's knowledge of oneself and the world (Guidi 2010 quoted in Bautista 2017). Due to the chosen video's relevance to the learners' reality, the students became emotionally and intellectually stimulated. As a result, they were able to increase their self-esteem and independence, participating freely and spontaneously during discussions (both as a class and in smaller groups). The creation of tasks that offered space in addressing and negotiating cultural differences further developed their intercultural and communicative competencies, validating the role of educators and students alike in crafting and shaping FL materials that encourage authentic and meaningful dialogue (Cabling et al. 2020).

A similar study created for the FL classroom was conducted by Bartoli Kucher (2020), which made use of Laila Wadia's 2007 novel *Amiche per la pelle* and its film adaptation *Babylon Sisters* in offering an abundance of authentic opportunities for oral and written production in the plurilingual space. Set in the imaginary via Ungaretti in Trieste, *Amiche per la pelle* tells the stories of characters from different cultures living in a plurilingual space, characterized by the presence of Italian, dialects, foreign languages, and interlingual variations of Italian spoken by immigrants (Vedovelli 2017 quoted in Bartoli Kucher 2020). Some scenes from the film adaptation also showed that the alternation of codes (switching from Hindi to Italian and back) in the daily multilingual interaction between the husband and wife characters Ashok and Shanti were charged with cultural and social values. Bartoli Kucher noted the importance of giving space to the learners' respective mother tongues in multilingual classrooms as a way of preparing them on how to interact in plurilingual and pluricultural societies. It was therefore important that awareness was raised towards the plurality and hybridism of cultures, languages, and identities brought about by the migratory process. For the didactic activities, Bartoli Kucher made available a choice board with twelve different oral and written activities to develop the learners' plurilingual competence, such as: writing a

letter to an Italian teacher from the perspective of one of the residents of via Ungaretti; changing the novel's genre into a fable with a happy ending or a thriller; role-playing a scene from the movie and recording it; selecting a character from the novel or film and writing a sequence that involves standard Italian and one's mother tongue, among others. Like with Bautista's (2017) study, Bartoli Kucher found that choosing a theme close to the learners' realities and experiences, resulted in the emotional involvement of the students, enabling them to increase their motivation and actively participate in the construction of meaning from the texts. This resulted in a productive dialogue between theory and practice, which reconceptualized culture, identity, and diversity.

Borghetti and Lertola's (2014) research focused on using interlingual subtitling as a pedagogical tool for cultural and intercultural awareness development. Through a multi-method approach consisting of both quantitative (initial and final questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews, class recordings, teaching notes, students' outputs) data gathering methods, information was collected and analysed through thematic analysis. A seven-minute clip extracted from the 2008 Italian comedy film *Tutta la vita davanti* was chosen as the corpus for subtitling purposes. The subtitling exercise was reinforced by answering forms related to cultural and intercultural awareness, followed by focus group discussions. Three typologies (1-before viewing, 2-during subtitling, 3-class discussions) were designated to pinpoint the instances in which awareness development took place. The majority of the learning opportunities peaked at typology 3 which refers to the class discussion phase. The researchers highlighted the value of the mediating role of the teacher in fostering cultural awareness through discussions, but also affirmed that the subtitling activity was beneficial for autonomous and authentic learning.

Among the ten studies that were analyzed, the research conducted by Tognozzi (2010) and Biasani (2018) are among the studies that optimized the learning opportunities provided by audiovisual materials by establishing two-pronged objectives for linguistic and cultural competence.

Tognozzi's (2010) dual objective aimed to develop both language fluency and cultural knowledge and sensitivity in two phases. Audiovisual texts are an overflowing source of linguistic and extra-linguistic input: idiomatic expressions, accents, linguistic and dialectal variations among different regional groups and social classes, as well as vestemics, kinesics, objectemics, and proxemics (Maugeri 2021). In developing language fluency, Tognozzi made use of a scripted activity (Phase One) that tasked students at the intermediate level to memorize and recite the dialogue from a film clip taken from *Il vestito da sposa*. Through this phase, they were able to analyse and then imitate the native speakers' pronunciation, intonation, and gestures

as best as they could. Soon after, the exercise was recorded, which allowed them to evaluate their performance and develop a greater self-awareness of their own pronunciation and gestures. A similar activity was employed for advanced learners of Italian, which involved more creative writing. Unlike with the intermediate group, this advanced group viewed the selected film sequence (*La meglio gioventù*) with no access to the audio until the project's completion. Instead of memorizing the script, these students were asked to create the script themselves, which they based on the "lip movements, gestures, mood, rhythm, and speech acts of the actors" (Tognozzi 2010, 77). Like with the first group of students, these students were also required to record their performance in order to evaluate it. Tognozzi found that the students became more involved (both psychologically and physically) when they were given permission to be creative with the text and transfer their linguistic and cultural learning from the original scene to role-playing. The author concluded that role-play enabled students to become more familiar with the rhythms and patterns of the language, providing connections between the different communicative components. Increased engagement also empowered them to develop their interactional skills, which added to their enjoyment of the activity.

The second phase for both levels, which featured a more spontaneous activity relative to the first, allowed the students to dig deeper into the cultural aspects they observed from viewing the film clip. Upon choosing and researching a cultural theme associated with the video, such as "geography, [...] regional pastries, the history of *babà*, the history of different pastries from different regions, among others" (Tognozzi 2010, 76), they wrote a composition, which they then presented in an oral presentation in class. The results of the pre- and post-surveys indicated better cultural knowledge was obtained, as well as students' motivations related to participation, creativity, and comments. According to the researcher, embedding instruction into real communicative contexts closed the gap between understanding and practice and enabled students to experience moments of discoveries in real-world discourse, which gave way to their development of linguistic expression and absorption of elements of culture.

On the other hand, Biasani's (2018) more recent study aimed to explore the possibilities of enhancing both linguistic and digital competences in the Italian classroom by means of thematic modules centred around the target culture. As such, receptive and productive skills such as familiarity with linguistic structures, reading and writing, listening comprehension, and oral production were given emphasis in every learning unit. Each learning unit was deliberately crafted to relate to an aspect of Italian culture. The first learning unit dedicated to reading and writing utilized videos as the engagement and primary didactic material, supplemented by other forms of media such as CDs,

DVDs, blogs, and chat rooms, among others. For the unit dedicated to comprehension skills, audiovisual resources were made accessible to students for their own perusal, prompting autonomous reflection. The oral production learning unit developed the learners' communicative competence through an assessment of their own online reputation by means of a website linked to the Italian TV programme *Reputescion*. Feedback from students showed that the variety of activities implemented in the learning units incited engagement and were beneficial for the target areas of development. The emphasis on acquiring digital literacy skills expected the students to be critical of the form of media they consume as these may have implications on the manner by which Italian culture and society may be perceived.

5 Conclusion

After employing a keyword collocation search, establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria, implementing a textual narrative synthesis approach, and a relevancy evaluation process of close reading, ten studies involving the use of TV and film in the teaching of Italian language and culture were included for full-text analysis. Results yielded two main themes: (1) TV and film for linguistic competence (three studies); and (2) TV and film as didactic tools for intercultural communication (five studies). The remaining two studies that did not belong to either category were more holistic, making use of both themes in setting their learning objectives, and confirming the inseparable nature of language and culture. Whether the focus is on language or culture, what the data revealed is that the learning outcomes of activities based on audiovisual materials offer relevance in real-world contexts (for example, widening vocabulary to ease discourse, performing well in University oral exams, and obtaining the necessary cultural sensitivity in negotiating differences in the modern pluricultural world), and that success in obtaining these outcomes is owed to the motivation brought forth when learners are stimulated emotionally and are empowered to be responsible for their own learning process.

With regards to future studies, it has been observed that despite the time span of the studies in question, research on the area (at least those published) remains scarce. Because there is much to discover and the research ground is fertile, it is recommended that the replication of these studies be carried out in as many contexts, learner types, and levels as possible. It would also be beneficial if an open-access database of extracted video clips from film or TV for didactic use were created for units and institutions that teach Italian. This could encourage more educators to create and adapt their own materials themselves to suit the diversity of their students, and ensure

a learner-centred perspective. It also goes without saying that critical judgment must be practiced to sort and filter for relevance and timeliness. As a final recommendation, it is of the essence to document existing practices that will help future educators and researchers in mapping the trends and developments of the use of TV and film in teaching and learning Italian.

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