

## **The Constraints that Influence the Application of Feature Films in EFL Classrooms in Algeria**

Abdeldjalil Bouzenoun, *University of the West of Scotland, UK*

### **Abstract**

Many learners of English in Algeria struggle with the basics of the language: poor understanding, weak grammar, inadequate vocabulary, and a lack of the four language skills. One of the crucial challenges a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) may face in Algeria is that English is not used authentically in the settings in which learners live, and learners are not motivated to learn in a conventional way. One of the widespread multimedia technologies that have become gradually more common in the teaching of English as a foreign language is film application. The research literature highlights the advantages of using films in language classes and how they can improve students' language skills. This study investigates the constraints that influence the use of feature films in Algeria based on the main findings of a research study that was carried out at one university in Algeria involving teachers of oral expression and first-year EFL students through the use of semi-structured interviews. The findings show that the use of films is, to a great extent, effective in EFL classes. However, a key issue is how teachers can avoid the potential challenges that may influence the whole process.

*Keywords:* English language; feature films; oral expression; EFL

### **Introduction**

There has been a great deal of recent interest in the English language in Algeria. In this sense, Algerians have become aware of the importance of English as a world language, especially for pupils at middle and secondary school levels, most of whom are keen on learning English. This interest may be driven by the employment opportunities available for Algerian English speakers in the gas and oil industries, the exposure of Algerians to social media which, for the most part, they use English as a common language, and the prospect of travelling abroad (Ramaswami, Sarraf & Haydon, 2012).

Teaching English has been in competition with French since 2000, when it was made part of the school syllabus from first year in middle schools (Chemami, 2011). At the policy level, for the Ministry of Education and the government in general, English learning and improving

the quality of English teaching at all academic levels is a priority in order to modernise the social, political (Ramaswami et al., 2012), and academic structure of the country. Therefore, the Ministry of Education is in cooperation with the United States of America, Canada, and United Kingdom, who are supporting this educational improvement policy in Algeria in the form of producing textbooks, training teachers of English, and introducing the use of new technologies in classrooms as teaching materials (Chemami, 2011).

Algerian university teachers and lecturers have expressed dissatisfaction about learners' levels when they first enter university, since students lack so many features of being a good student: autonomy, study and reading skills, and, most importantly, interest and motivation; in addition, they notice that the majority of students tend towards rote learning (Benmati, 2008). To improve this situation, Algerian English language inspectors are encouraging teachers to make English teaching more enjoyable through the use of language games, English songs, English stories, and other methods (taken from the website of English language teachers' in Algeria: <http://www.eslbase.com/countries/algeria>) simply because, with the advent of all types of technology, we can now make English language teaching fun and effective. One of the most common methods for teaching English as a foreign language worldwide is through the use of feature films. This study seeks to explore the opportunities for such a method within the university sector in Algeria.

### **Films as a Teaching Resource**

Many materials are available in the English language teaching field to assist effective language learning. The term 'materials' can refer to anything used by teachers or learners to simplify or enhance the learning process of a language, such as 'videos, DVDs, emails, YouTube, dictionaries, grammar books, readers, workbooks or photocopied exercises [...], newspapers, food packages, photographs, live talks by invited native speakers, instruction given by a teacher, tasks written on cards or discussions between learners' (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 2).

In this sense, material can be anything that is consciously used to raise learners' awareness of a language; they can be

instructional in that they inform learners about the language, they can be experiential in that they provide exposure to the language in use, they can be elicitive in that

they stimulate language use, or they can be exploratory in that they facilitate discoveries about language use (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 2).

Films, as one type of material, can have some of these aspects. Research studies on films with regard to English Language Teaching (ELT) and media studies (Allan, 1985; Tomalin, 1986; Geddes & Sturtridge, 1988; Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990; Hill, 1991; Rivers, 1994; Baddock, 1996) indicate that films, 'along with other authentic media forms and video materials, are used for different purposes, and that when chosen and exploited in principled manner, they have an important role in modern English language teaching' (Eken, 2003, p. 51). Tomalin (1986) states that films 'help bring the outside world into the classroom' (p. 9) and enhance students' motivation and support them to communicate with each other.

It has been suggested that the appropriate use of film in the English language classroom helps students in several ways: it can improve their four key skills (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening); they can become confident in expressing themselves in English in front of others; they can improve their presentation skills (Eken, 2003); they can gather a range of advanced vocabulary in different subjects; and they can learn about English-speaking countries' cultures. In this vein, we consider American and English movies as an example in non-English speaking countries, where English is taught as a second or a foreign language at schools. Over time, English students who watch at least one movie a day, even for entertainment, may benefit in many ways in terms of learning the English language.

### **The Benefits of Films for English Language Teaching and Learning**

With the development of new educational technology, authentic materials have become very popular and commonly used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The use of English films is one of the methods that many teachers use and consider as authentic material to counteract the issue that English language is not used 'authentically in the settings in which students live' (Seferoglu, 2008, p. 1). Therefore, learners do not have the opportunity to use the language in realistic interactions (Seferoglu, 2008). Using English films as authentic material could help learners communicate with each other without being afraid of making mistakes and thus learn from each other (Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990; Hill, 1991) and get an idea of how people use language in their daily lives in different contexts, given that films 'help bring the outside world into the classroom' (Tomalin, 1986, p. 9) and 'present realistic slices of life' (Allan, 1985, p. 48). Through films, students also learn about 'non-

verbal communication, the types of exclamation and filling expressions that are used, how people initiate and sustain a conversational exchange and how they negotiate meaning' (Rivers, 1994, p. 11).

Previous studies on the application of movies in English language teaching reveal that films are very useful resources in EFL classrooms for many reasons. It has been proposed that, compared to other teaching methods, English movies are a very beneficial way to practise students' four skills (Eken, 2003), especially speaking and listening comprehension and pronunciation (Xiaoqing & Xianxing, 2008; Wang & Zhang, 2012), in addition to encouraging motivation (Chambers, 1999). Finocchiaro (1981, quoted in Xiaoqing & Xianxing, 2008, p. 239) states that 'motivation is the feeling nurtured primarily by the classroom teacher in the learning situation', which is one of the main factors that should be provided in EFL classrooms so that learning can take place. Ball (1995) also makes it clear that 'there are only three things of importance to successful learning: motivation, motivation and motivation. [...] any fool can teach students who want to learn' (p. 5, quoted in Chambers, 1999). Therefore, by watching stimulating English films, students can be highly motivated to learn the target language (Ryan, 1998). It has also been suggested that the use of English films helps to expose students to vocabulary that is used in real life, such as idiomatic expressions and phrases, apart from also giving students a feeling of learning satisfaction when they understand a film in English without subtitles as well as native speakers (Xiaoqing & Xianxing, 2008). The use of films also increases students' critical thinking skills (Eken, 2003) and cross-cultural awareness (Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990), since they are provided with a good opportunity to learn about native speakers' lifestyles as well as their past and present cultures, in addition to raising their awareness regarding pragmatic use (King, 2002). According to Wang & Zhang (2012), compared with other types of teaching tools, teaching with films has many advantages. They state that one of the most important benefits in using films for teaching is that it can introduce the target culture to learners; in this sense, they can see the real situation in a country as well as its customs and citizens, which the authors refer to as 'students' ability in cross-cultural communication' (p. 1011). By using English-language films, students can improve their English in terms of speaking and listening skills and build a wide range of advanced vocabulary, differentiate between several pronunciations (e.g. American and British), and learn different idiomatic expressions.

According to the aforementioned benefits, films can be used for different purposes in supporting and improving the modern teaching of English as a foreign or second language in classrooms. Therefore, the successful way of implementing such a teaching resource requires four main factors: (a) careful selection of topic and content; (b) clear pedagogical goals; (c) thoughtful preparation; and (d) staged activities before, during, and after viewing (Donaghy, 2015). However, misusing or overusing films may lead to some problems in EFL classrooms. The following section deals with the potential challenges that may affect the implementation of films.

### **Potential Problems with Using Films**

With the creation of new teaching resources in schools, two groups of people always come into view. There are those who are enthusiastic and eager to work hard and experiment with such resources to make them beneficial, while there are those who doubt such tools and show dislike for them (Allan, 1985). In addition to providing positive contributions to learning, all teaching aids can also be potentially damaging when they are misused or overused (Willis, 1983).

Some people have machine (e.g. DVDs, VCDs, and overhead projector) phobia, in the sense that they do not trust technology because of bad experiences they have had before. One of the problems that most teachers fear is passive viewing. In this regard, students can approach viewing a film in class the same way as they watch TV at home, where they sit on a comfortable sofa, switch off their minds, and let the TV provide them with amusement and enjoyment. However, we have to keep in mind a very important principal: ‘our minds are more active when we view with a purpose’ (Allan, 1985, p. 46). Teachers, therefore, can avoid such problems if they prepare suitable activities and make students realise that they are watching in order to find the answers to several questions and that they are going to have activities to do after viewing. Willis (1983) states that all teaching aids can be dangerous if teachers misuse or overuse them, with no consideration of the learning needs of their students, or if they concentrate too much on their ‘potential for effective student control rather than effective teaching’ (Willis, 1983, p. 17).

In addition, using a movie that is very difficult for students to understand could lead to frustration, disappointment, and students believing that they will never be able to understand English. Sometimes, despite the fact that the plot of a film can be interesting for students, fast

speech and unclear accents may also lead to frustration. Movies may contain some sexual scenes, unnecessary violence, or strong language, which may create problems for individual students in some cultures and religions. Some good-quality dramatic films may be highly entertaining, where actors perform well, but this may lead to students forgetting about the guiding principle of language learning, thus losing educational value by only concentrating on the plot (King, 2002).

Roberts, Dean & Nienhuis (2003) identify several limitations of the use of feature films in class. The authors overheard their colleagues arguing and saying that teaching with the use of film means that the teacher is not really teaching. That can be a serious problem, where people may think that a teacher who is using this resource is simply showing a movie in the vague hope that it will process in the students' brains and facilitate learning. However, teachers who use this method aim for an active rather than passive use of film. In addition, using feature films in teaching may create a problem with regard to time limitations. Some teachers choose to play films during class time and consider the time spent as worthwhile, while other instructors set the film viewing for learners to do outside the classroom (Gregg et al., 1995; Bluestone, 2000; Baker & Lawrence, Groce, Proctor, Tipton & Tiemann, cited in Roberts et al., 2003). If the class timeframe is not long enough, it can be problematic to have a continuous discussion (Valdez & Halley, cited in Roberts et al., 2003), but teachers can overcome this problem of time limitation if they use film clips instead of the whole feature-length movie. Another potential problem is the time taken for the selection of appropriate movies for class teaching (Gregg et al., 1995).

Ryan (1998) argues that developing students' motivation in language learning could be one of the most difficult things for teachers of languages to deal with, no matter which medium they use for language teaching. Some learners may show great interest in using films as a tool for language learning, only to end up becoming disengaged and even sleeping during the process. Boredom, frustration, and a lack of preparation by teachers could be a problem in getting students engaged. Using films without setting some tasks to do during them would automatically lead to negative results. Ryan (1998) also argues that it is the teacher's job to find out how to exploit good intentions with possible tasks, which will help learners get a clear idea of the goal behind using this medium.

Champoux (1999) argues that some students may resist watching a film with English subtitles, while others may make more of an effort to follow the scenes and focus on reading

the subtitles. Therefore, if certain students miss some key words, they will probably not understand the plot, which may lead to frustration. Champoux (1999) also states that some scenes may contain humour, drama, terror, violence, and excessive profanity, which may lead students to becoming distracted from the focus of learning. In addition, the use of movie scenes in class demands a great deal of time, to the point that teachers are not able to do other classroom activities.

In this vein, Wang & Zhang (2012) point out three serious issues with using movies in language classrooms. First, teachers could find it very difficult to select appropriate movies that fit both the students and the classroom. It is very important for teachers to consider three criteria in choosing the right movie, which are 'difficulty, the time length, and the historical and cultural background' (Wang & Zhang, 2012, p. 1011). Accordingly, the movie should not be too easy nor too difficult; it should be helpful to students. The movie should not be too long, as this may affect the teaching plans. The movie should not be violent nor be a horror or action movie. However, social dramas, inspirational movies, or comedies could be good for students because they contain simple and clearer language, no fast speakers, and a richness of idioms and expressions. Second, teachers may find it difficult to plan the necessary matching activities. English movie teaching is not for amusement and enjoyment but for learning English, and therefore exercises to integrate what they have learned in the film are very important so that neither teachers nor students ignore the academic goals and teaching purpose of movies. Third, it can sometimes be very difficult for students to realise the teaching intentions. The plot of the movie may grab the students' attention so much that they forget about the academic aim of watching the movie. Therefore, teachers should introduce the movie briefly in English before playing it, talk about the historical and cultural background, and ask several questions based on its title, actors, and story, which could engage students and encourage them to watch and learn. Wang (2009) highlights that using films in English class should be done by means of the audio-visual method, which may help students enhance their language learning; however, this also has its drawback. Most feature films are one to two hours long, which may make the class seem like entertainment and students could lose their direction regarding the primary goal of using films in class, which is language learning. In some cases, equipment (DVDs, VCDs, etc.) may not work, especially at the point of the class starting, which may create disappointment for both teachers and students. Last but not least, some films are not good enough for students' language levels with regard to different topics, while other films may not provide the correct pictures of the



target language and culture and could therefore mislead students with regard to understanding other cultures.

By bringing together these previous studies, it is easy to see why, compared to traditional teaching methods, implementing films in EFL teaching is a valuable method and has numerous potential advantages. This study, therefore, revolves around the importance of teaching with films to help EFL learners, particularly Algerian learners, to improve their four language skills, build a wide range of vocabulary, and raise their cultural awareness. When teaching oral expression classes in Algeria, it is important to bear in mind that the majority of English language departments have no standardised curriculum to follow, which provides teachers with the freedom to choose what to teach according to their personal experience and preferences with the use of different teaching methods. Some teachers simply focus on more formal language and do not focus on, for instance, genuine speech or conversational interaction, which is what oral expression classes should be about. On the other hand, there are some teachers who are creative in trying new teaching methods, such as the application of films and videos, with the aim of providing learners with experience of the authentic target language. Such teachers, therefore, believe that films can help learners improve their English, but there are some challenges that both teachers and learners face during the application of such a method within the university sector in Algeria. For this reason, the present study sets out to determine how English language teachers apply films in EFL oral expression classes at one Algerian university; primarily, it aims to determine the challenges that both teachers and learners face in regard to the application of films and to address these problems to key officials in the government through this study so as to enable them to intervene and provide EFL teaching in Algeria with the necessary tools for learning in a positive environment.

### **Methodology**

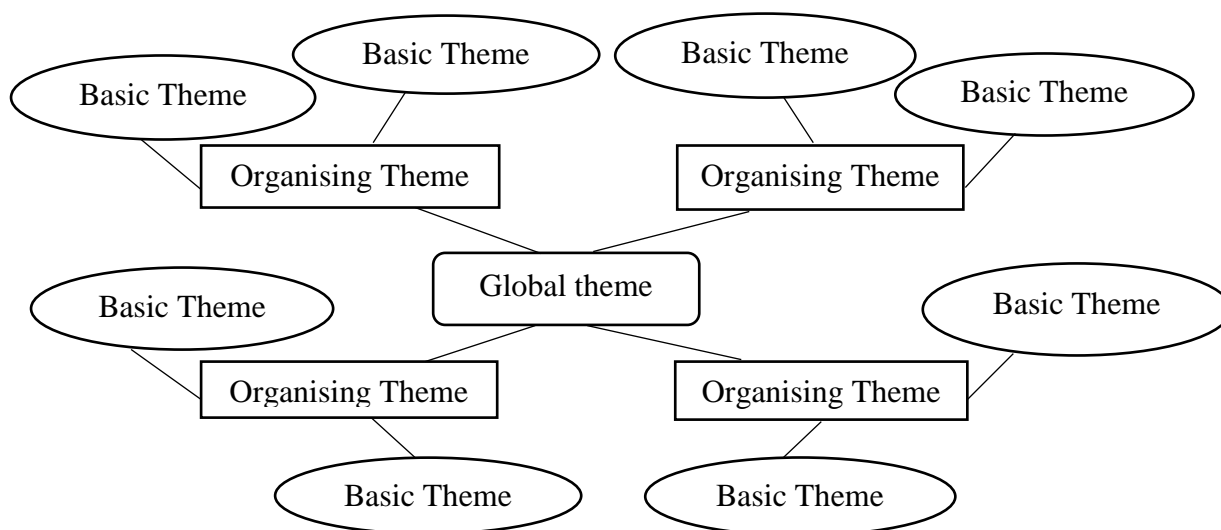
This study focuses on the experiences of both English teachers and first-year English language students at a university in Algeria. The purpose is to investigate the constraints that influence the effectiveness of using short film clips in teaching English as a foreign language. To do so, interviews were carried out with five English language teachers of oral expression and twenty-two first-year English language students, who came from different classes and volunteered to take part in the project and be interviewed after signing consent forms. Confidentiality was assured, since the interview records were stored anonymously in an encrypted laptop to prevent unauthorised access. The interviews were semi-structured and



carried out in English, and the length of each interview was between 8 to 15 minutes. The interview was conducted in English because of the study context and setting. Algerian first-year English language students are able to speak decent English without paying attention to grammatical mistakes, as they have been studying it for seven years before joining the university. In addition, they had the choice to ask for clarification or interpretation if they came across a difficult word. Every interview was then transcribed word by word from the original sources. Regardless of the effectiveness of the application of short film clips in teaching English as a foreign language in Algeria, which was the main aim of the PhD project, this study only focuses on one section of the findings, which relates to the constraints that affect the use of films in Algeria.

The thematic network analysis of Attride-Stirling (2001) was employed, wherein themes are organised into three main levels:

Figure 1: *Structure of a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388)*



The basic steps of the analytic process can be divided into three general stages, which all consist of interpretation: (a) the breakdown of the text; (b) the exploration of the text; and (c) the integration of the exploration. Importantly, these steps may be very common in qualitative analyses, but they are not the only ones. There are many more strategies and techniques, the choice of which depends on the researcher's preferences and selections. The following box summarises the whole process of analysis through applying thematic networks:

Figure 2: *The process of analyses applying thematic networks, adapted from Attride-Stirling (2011, p. 391)*

**Analysis Stage A: Reduction or breakdown of text****Step 1: Code Material**

- a- Devise a coding framework
- b- Dissect text into text segments using the coding framework

**Step 2: Identify Themes**

- a- Abstract themes from coded text segments
- b- Refine themes

**Step 3: Construct Thematic Networks**

- a- Arrange themes
- b- Select basic themes
- c- Rearrange into organising themes
- d- Deduce global theme(s)
- e- Illustrate as thematic network(s)
- f- Verify and refine the network(s)

**Analysis Stage B: Exploration of Text****Step 4: Describe and Explore Thematic Networks**

- a- Describe the network
- b- Explore the network

**Step 5: Summarise Thematic Networks****Analysis Stage C: Integration of Exploration****Step 6: Interpret Patterns**

### Findings

The aim of the research project is to explore the effectiveness of the use of feature films in teaching English as a foreign language in Algeria and to examine both Algerian teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the use of such innovation in oral expression classes. However, as mentioned above, this study deals only with one section of the research project, which is the constraints that influence the application of films in teaching English as a foreign language in Algeria. The interview data from this project is related to the attitudes, feelings, opinions, and educational experiences of both teachers and learners. Teachers' interview data is presented individually, as there were only five participants who signed the consent form and agreed to take part, while a thematic analysis (coding) approach was carried out in order to permit the

strongest and main themes to emerge from the interview data of the learners, as there were 22 participants.

### Teachers' Interviews

Teachers outlined the challenges they face in teaching oral expression classes based on their experience with the use of films.

*Teacher 1* clarified that there is a long list of challenges that a teacher of oral expression faces concerning ICT equipment in language labs. She stated that computers are often not working and have been this way for a long time, so she finds it very difficult to prepare and conduct a lesson using films that need to be delivered through computers. She also declared that learners face the same challenges concerning this issue, and they also have their own challenges with regard to the language diversity and complexity and the use of natural spoken language by native speakers, i.e. language use with complex and idiomatic expressions. She also stated that there are some potential problems that may occur during the use of short film clips, one of which is the different level of students: 'Some students are good at listening to what is being said in a natural conversation, while others are really far from getting what the point is really about' (Teacher 1). She also explained that the length of the material could be an issue, in regard to using a complete film in one sitting. Finding suitable film themes could be an additional problem: 'It is not easy to find suitable materials to bring to the classroom' (Teacher 1). Further, she believed that cultural shock could be a potential problem, i.e. exposing learners to certain things that are very different from their own culture. Finally, she considered that the complexity of the language could sometimes be very tricky for students, with even advanced learners finding it difficult to grasp what was being said by native speakers.

In this sense, *Teacher 1* stated that there are many challenges faced by an oral expression teacher, and *Teacher 2* expressed similar concerns, in particular regarding the problems with the use of ICT equipment, which can be very frustrating: 'Sometimes I plan to do a listening session with the use of films followed by activities, and then I arrive at the lab to find the computers damaged' (Teacher 2). She also made it clear that learners have their own challenges in terms of language complexity and ICT equipment, which can affect their motivation to learn the target language. Moreover, she clarified that she did not have any teacher training concerning the use of videos and films in language teaching, which led her to experience two types of approaches: using the whole film in one session and using short film

clips that last for five minutes. In this regard, she stated that showing the whole film in one sitting created some challenges: ‘Learning was not taking place, learners became passive, there was not enough time to carry out any activities related to the material, and learners did not take it seriously, as they felt they were watching a film at home’ (Teacher 2).

*Teacher 3* stated that his biggest challenge was that ‘not all the students’ levels are the same’, which means that some students could be competent in terms of the target language while others may be very poor. One of the most problematic issues the teacher reported involved the ICT equipment in the department: ‘Our computers and the whole system is just an obstacle either for teaching or evaluation’ (Teacher 3). He explained that learners face the same challenges concerning the ICT equipment, where they become very frustrated and demotivated to learn. Moreover, he shed light on the lack of teacher training regarding the use of film and video in English language teaching. Teachers, specifically new teachers, face the challenge of integrating videos: ‘It would be a great opportunity for us as teachers to have training courses to confidently apply films in our classes with the appropriate approach and activities’ (Teacher 3).

*Teacher 4* stated that her major problem was the lack of visual equipment, which relates to the same ICT issues mentioned by the other teachers above. She indicated that the whole ICT system in her lab does not work, and so she always has to ask to use other labs if they are available. According to her interview answers, it is very frustrating to plan a lesson with the use of films or any authentic material on computers, as she is unable to do what she has planned. She also stated that the majority of learners’ levels do not meet the required standard of a first-year English language student, and they are not interested in learning because of the ICT problems. However, she clarified that she tries her best to make them more engaged and active by doing some extra work on their own.

*Teacher 5* explained that he has faced many challenges, but two major ones have caused him frustration. First are students’ levels, as some of them still struggle with the basics of the language: ‘Sometimes, no matter what we are doing in speaking class, some learners are just not motivated to participate’; when he asked them about the reason, they replied: ‘English language was not our first choice. [...] we had no choice but to study English language. [...] We are very shy to participate’ (Teacher 5). Second is ICT problems: ‘Language labs have everything, but there are many technical problems where they partly work, especially recently, and nobody is doing anything about it’ (Teacher 5). He also said that the language

labs do not have projectors; there is one projector, shared by all the teachers, and therefore they may need it at the same time. Accordingly, learners also get frustrated in terms of ICT problems. In addition, they face challenges with regard to language complexity, a lack of speaking skills, and shyness in participating in the classroom.

### Learners' Interviews

The following two tables show the emergent codes, issues discussed, and themes identified from basic to organising to global themes:

Table 1: *From codes to themes*

Codes (step 1)	Issues Discussed	Themes Identified (step 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems of using films</li> <li>- Carefulness in using films</li> <li>- Conditions in using films</li> <li>- Challenges in using films</li> <li>- Environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language type</li> <li>- Language level</li> <li>- Theme</li> <li>- content</li> <li>- Length</li> <li>- Conservativeness</li> <li>- Lack of experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult language</li> <li>- Fast language</li> <li>- Content sometimes is difficult</li> <li>- Whole film is too much</li> <li>- Poor level of some students</li> <li>- Inappropriate content</li> <li>- Lack of ICT equipment</li> <li>- Insufficient resources</li> <li>- Frequent technical problems</li> </ul>

Table 2: *From basic to organising to global themes*

Basic themes	Organising themes	Global themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fast language</li> <li>- Content sometimes is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pedagogical challenges</li> </ul>	

<p>difficult</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whole film is too much</li> <li>- Poor level of some students</li> <li>- Inappropriate content</li> <li>- Lack of ICT equipment</li> <li>- Insufficient resources</li> <li>- Frequent technical problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ICT challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Constraints</li> </ul>
---	--	---

**Global Theme: *Constraints***

The global theme in this thematic network is ‘constraints’, as presented in **Table 1**, which consists of two organising themes, i.e. pedagogical challenges and ICT challenges, and nine basic themes: difficult language, fast language, content sometimes is difficult, whole film is too much, poor level of some students, inappropriate content, lack of ICT equipment, insufficient resources, and frequent technical problems.

This global theme deals with the potential problems that may occur with the application of feature films in oral expression classes. According to the data, there are two main types of challenges: pedagogical ones refer to how the teacher applies films in his or her classes, what approach is used, the type of language and content, and how learners interact with them, while ICT challenges relate to the lack of equipment and materials in language labs and the technical problems in the existing equipment that affect the implementation of films.

**Organising Theme: *Pedagogical Challenges***

Challenges may occur in every method used and in every class, regardless of its type and the nature. This organising theme investigates the potential pedagogical challenges in teaching with films. According to the data, learners indicated some of the challenges they face while learning with the use of films in terms of the language being used, the content, and the appropriate approach that causes them difficulties and frustration. Films that contain fast and difficult language can be problematic for a majority of learners; they explained that when

their teachers use films with unclear pronunciation and fast speech, this makes them feel frustrated as a result of not understanding what is being said: 'Teachers should be very careful about language selection' (Student 11). Therefore, the level of some students makes the job more difficult for teachers, as one of the learners claimed that 'it would be very hard to apply films in oral expression classes because of the level of students; it may work with good or average students, but not with those who have a low level' (Student 9). Moreover, learners clarified that using the whole film in one session is too much, an approach that was applied by teachers who may lack experience and have not had any teacher training. Learners also made it clear that the use of films without the appropriate activities is not beneficial for them: 'I would like teachers to use short film clips in oral expression with the right procedures' (Student 5). Last but not least, they stated that the content and the type of films should be carefully selected, since unsuitable content may cause some problems in EFL classrooms in Algeria given that it is a conservative society: 'Using films can be an effective method if they are carefully selected by teachers' (Student 8).

### **Organising Theme: *ICT Challenges***

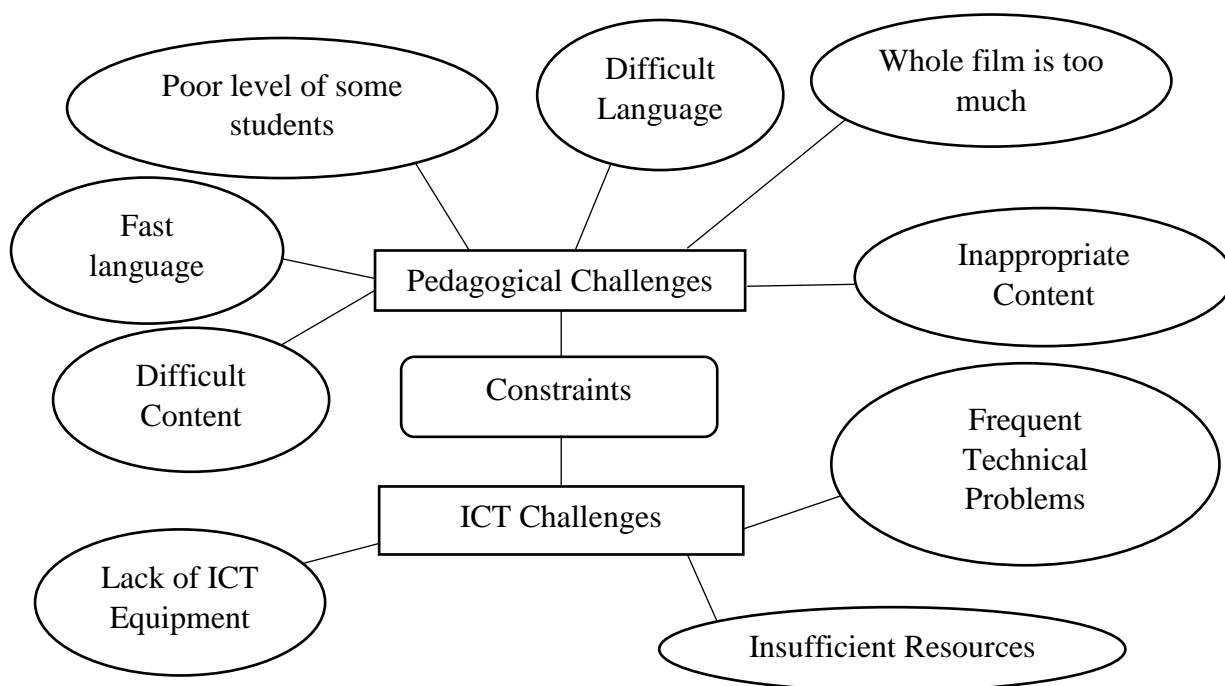
No matter how advanced the world is now in terms of technology and ICT equipment, there will be always a lack of some materials and technical problems. This organising theme deals with the ICT problems faced by both teachers (as stated in the teachers' findings) and learners. Oral expression classes in the university take place in language labs that contain around 30 places, and every place is provided with a desktop that is controlled by the teacher's computer as a server in order to manage access to a centralised resource. According to the data, however, these labs have been witness to many frequent technical problems, and no matter how much teachers complained about it to the responsible people in the English department, nobody has fixed them. These labs do not have a fixed projector as an alternative when there are technical issues with computers. A couple of the labs are useless because the server is not connected to the lab network.

However, while, as outlined above, teachers expressed their frustration and made it clear that students face the same concerns, learners stated that their favourite class is oral expression: 'It is the most entertaining class; it is different from the others. We learn many things about language and how to communicate in real life' (Student 1); 'it is different from other subjects, especially because we get the chance to speak more than in other subjects' (Student 3); 'it is a very entertaining subject, because we get more opportunities to speak and express our ideas



than in other subjects. I also like the methods my teacher uses’ (Student 5). In this sense, all of the students voiced how much they prefer oral expression class as it is more about improving their listening and speaking skills with the use of authentic materials, through which they feel more active and engaged. It is a class where students are more involved and motivated to learn; however, the lack of ICT equipment in all of the language labs is a source of great frustration among students: ‘We get frustrated more than the teacher when computers stop working’ (Student 6). Even the available computers experience so many frequent technical problems that the application of films is affected: ‘Sometimes the sound is working but the screens are off or vice versa, which badly affects the use of films’ (Student 11). In addition, learners stated that there is no fixed projector in the language labs, which could be a solution to the technical problems that computers suffer from. Further, they also clarified that teachers of oral expression have one projector, which they use in turns, although sometimes it is the case that more than one teacher needs it at the same time. ‘There is only one projector for the English language department, and sometimes teachers want to use it at the same time’ (Student 17). Therefore, one teacher would have to sacrifice his or her lesson plan, which was intended to be delivered with the use of the projector.

Figure 3: *Thematic network for constraints*



## Conclusion

The following section discusses the findings in relation to the issues raised in the literature relating to dealing with the potential problems that both teachers and students may face during the application of films and how they can influence the learning process. New perspectives, however, do seem to be offered on some of the main aspects of the topic in order to avoid pedagogical and ICT challenges.

As mentioned before, the main purpose of the research study was to highlight the importance of using films in EFL classes in Algeria, as they can help learners greatly improve their English. However, the purpose of the present study was to determine the constraints that can influence the application of this authentic resource.

Both teachers and learners mentioned challenges faced during the application of films, regardless of their learning effectiveness, which included ICT and technical problems, passive learning, misuse or overuse of films, difficult language, inappropriate language, watching the whole film, difficulty of finding suitable films, and students' language levels. Thus, the research participants pointed out the same potential problems as, for instance, Willis (1983), Allan (1985), Ryan (1998), King (2002), Roberts et al. (2003), Wang (2009), and Wang & Zhang (2012). All of these studies mentioned some potential technical problems that may occur during the application of films, but within the university sector in Algeria, the ICT challenges are unique, i.e. language labs are provided with almost everything, but many of the materials are damaged and repair and maintenance is lacking, thus causing problems for teachers in using a variety of teaching resources and facilitating better learning.

Participants highlight that films are extremely suitable for teaching oral expressions classes, since they can help learners improve their listening, speaking, writing, and vocabulary. However, they did not deny that the aforementioned challenges can affect the whole process. Teachers seemed to be doing their best in regard to making the most appropriate use of films, as some of them provided some suggestions to overcome the challenges; in this sense, they suggested that, in order to avoid passive learning, the use of short film clips is much better than using a whole film, in addition to arguing that teachers have more opportunities to use a variety of activities with short film clips, in which learners will be watching with a particular learning purpose in mind, findings which resonate with Allan (1985), Ryan (1998), and Wang & Zhang (2012). In addition, Donaghy (2015) argues that teachers have been happily using

short film clips in class for many years. More significantly, after the emergence of YouTube in 2005, teachers are able to find suitable film clips that fit with both the theme they want to present and the particular teaching objectives, such as grammar points, listening comprehension, and vocabulary. Donaghy (2015) also points out that using short clips may be easier for teachers than applying the whole film, in addition to being less time-consuming when compared to other film teaching approaches.

Second, learners made a very interesting point, in that teachers should be careful about how to use films in classes, which could be seen as a result of the lack of teacher training. Therefore, teachers need to be provided with such training so as to confidently and effectively apply films in their lesson planning, use the appropriate approach, set pedagogical goals, and carefully select the topic and content, all of which is consistent with the findings of Willis (1983) and Roberts et al. (2003). However, what has not been discussed before is that EFL teachers within the Algerian sector are doing their best to provide learners with new teaching methods, regardless of the lack of relevant teacher training. Teachers who took part in this study showed that they are applying films in their classes using different approaches and activities, wherein some may work better than others. Some teachers failed to use either the whole film or short film clip approach in their classes because they lacked experience and training. It should be clear to experienced teachers that the application of the whole film approach will not be successful in the Algerian setting because of class times, but new teachers in the field may not realise this beforehand. Therefore, organising teacher training or professional development for Algerian EFL teachers regarding the use of films to teach English language would significantly help them apply this innovative method successfully and in pedagogically sound ways within the university sector.

The research literature points to ICT equipment and facilities as the key to successful teaching with films (Allan, 1985; Wang, 2009); despite this, the evidence that emerges from the findings shows that both teachers and learners face many challenges caused by frequent technical problems affecting the application of films. Participants, however, have complained about this issue and suggested that the department of English language should provide the appropriate context for learning to take place in oral expression classes: ‘Responsible people should gather around the table and bear in mind that the lack of ICT facilities is actually a serious problem at the level of the department. Therefore, they need to do something about it’ (Teacher 5); ‘we want to have language labs fully equipped with ICT facilities in order to

apply authentic materials like films more often in our classes' (Teacher 3). Participants suggested that responsible people in the department should renovate the language labs and provide them with good ICT materials in order to avoid the frequent problems that have caused frustration for both teachers and learners.

This study could help teachers in Algeria be aware of the potential problems that may arise during the application of films. According to the findings, teachers want to have teacher training sessions to use films appropriately. In addition, this study summarised the issues that teachers of oral expression go through in Algeria where, despite complaining, their voices are not heard either at the English Language Department level or at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Providing suitable resources, therefore, would help students to learn and communicate more effectively through managing the amount of language they acquire via films. When teachers are trained to apply films successfully with the use of ICT, this can lead to a better learning atmosphere, enhance thinking skills, provide creative and individualised options for students to express their understandings, enable students to communicate freely in front of each other, and leave them better prepared to deal with real situations when travelling and using the English language.

In conclusion, the constraints emerging in this study seem to be very serious and could easily affect the application of films in classrooms. However, they are solvable if the conditions for applying films are taken into consideration. There are two main solutions that can make film implementation successful: teacher training and improved ICT facilities. Providing Algerian EFL teachers with training for film and video in English language teaching could overcome many problems, such as those relating to passive learning, misuse or overuse of films, difficult language, selection of topics, and content; in other words, the pedagogical challenges could be easily overcome. Last but not least, language labs should be fully equipped with ICT facilities in order to facilitate the process of teaching with films as well as to make it easier and less stressful for teachers to use them in their classes, especially for new teachers who are less experienced in the field. This would also make learners more engaged and motivated to learn and improve the target language.

### **Biodata**

Abdeldjalil Bouzenoun is a doctoral student, and works as an associate lecturer and a student mentor based in the School of Education at the University of the West of Scotland. He



completed both his BSc in Applied Linguistics and MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in 2012 and 2014 respectively in Algeria; his research interests lie in the area of TEFL, teaching methods and approaches, and film and video in English language teaching.

### References

- Allan, M. (1985). *Teaching English with video*. London: Longman.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analysis tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385-405.
- Baddock, B. (1996). Using films in the English class. Hemel Hempstead: Phoenix ELT.
- Benmati, K. L. A. (2008). *Is the Algerian educational system weakening? An investigation of the high school curricula and their adequacy with the university curricula*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Constantine.
- Bluestone, C. (2000). Feature films as a teaching tool. *College Teaching*, 48(4), 141-146.
- Chambers, G. (1999). *Motivating language learners*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Champoux, J. E. (1999). Film as a teaching resource. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8(2), 206-217.
- Chemami, M. A. (2011). Discussing plurilingualism in Algeria: The status of French and English languages through the educational policy. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 4(18), 227-234.
- Donaghy, K. (2015). *Film in action: Teaching language using moving images*. Delta Publishing.
- Eken, A. N. (2003). You've got mail: A film workshop. *ELT Journal*, 57(1), 51-59.
- English language schools in Algeria. (n. d.). Retrieved from <http://www.eslbase.com/schools/algeria>.
- Geddes, M. & G. Sturtridge (Eds.) (1988). *Video in the language classroom*. Oxford: Heinemann.



- Gregg, V. R., Hosley, C. A., Weng, A. & Montemayor, R. (1995). *Using feature films to promote active learning in the college classroom*. Paper presented at the Conference on Undergraduate Teaching of Psychology, Ellenville, NY (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 389 367).
- Hill, B. (1991). *Making the most of satellites and interactive video*. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.
- King, J. (2002). Using DVD feature films in the EFL classroom. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 15(5), 509-523.
- Ramaswami, S., Sarraf, I. & Haydon, J. (2012). *The benefits of the English language for individuals and societies: Quantitative indicators from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen*. A custom report compiled by Euromonitor International for the British Council.
- Rivers, W. M. (1994). *Interactive language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, L. C., Dean, E. & Nienhuis, T. (2003). Lights, camera, action: Teaching with feature film in the social sciences. *The International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1), 1-16.
- Ryan, S. (1998). Using films to develop learner motivation. *Internet TESL Journal*, 4(11).
- Seferoğlu, G. (2008). Using feature films in language classes. *Educational Studies*, 34(1), 19.
- Stempleski, S. & Tomalin, B. (1990). *Video in action*. London: Prentice Hall International.
- Tomalin, B. (1986). *Video, TV and radio in the English class*. London: Macmillan.
- Tomlinson, B. (2011). *Materials development in language teaching* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, Y. (2009). Using films in the multimedia English class. *English Language Teaching*, 2(1), 179-184.
- Wang, Y. & Zhang, H. (2012). The application of English movies in higher vocational English teaching. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 9(3), 1010-1014.



Willis, D. (1983). The potential and limitations of video. In: McGovern, J. (Ed.), *Video Applications in English Language Teaching* (pp. 17-27). London: Pergamon Press Ltd and the British Council.

Xiaoqing. H. & Xianxing. J. (2008). Using film to teach EFL students English language skills. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education*, 15(2), 235-240.