

Film Translation: an Antidote to Sounding “Bookish”? A Pilot Experimental Study to Assess Naturalness in EFL Learners' Productions

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Abstract: Previous research in the didactics of languages has warned about how traditional materials and methods are failing to provide EFL learners with the ability to achieve naturalness in their own speech. This work proposes a teaching approach based on the translation of film scripts to favor mastery of spontaneous language. For this purpose, a pilot experiment was carried out to assess naturalness of learners' productions through the use of Conversational English (CE) prior and after a training session. Results from both a control and post-training sessions were compared. The pre-test revealed deficiencies in terms of the participants' familiarity with CE. After the training session, an increase of naturalness through a higher number of CE units was observed. These preliminary findings suggest that the translation of movie scripts may be an effective teaching tool to foster naturalness in learners' L2 productions.

Key words: conversational English (CE), EFL, translation, film scripts, naturalness.

La traducción fílmica como antídoto contra el “inglés de manual”. Un estudio piloto para evaluar la naturalidad en la producción de aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera

Resumen: La literatura previa en la didáctica de las lenguas ha venido advirtiendo sobre la ineffectividad de los materiales y métodos tradicionales a la hora de que los aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera alcancen la naturalidad idiomática en sus propias producciones. El presente trabajo propone un enfoque didáctico basado en la traducción de guiones cinematográficos para favorecer la espontaneidad al expresarse en lengua extranjera. Para ello se llevó a cabo un experimento piloto en el que se evaluó la naturalidad de las producciones de los aprendices mediante el uso del inglés conversacional (CE) antes y después de una sesión formativa. Posteriormente, se compararon los resultados de la sesión de control con los de la sesión post-formativa. El test inicial reveló deficiencias en cuanto a la familiaridad de

los participantes con el inglés conversacional. Tras la sesión formativa, se detectó un incremento de la naturalidad a través de un mayor número de expresiones conversacionales. Estos resultados preliminares sugieren que la traducción de guiones puede constituir una herramienta efectiva para promover la naturalidad en el discurso de los aprendices en L2.

Palabras clave: inglés conversacional, inglés como lengua extranjera, traducción, guiones cinematográficos, naturalidad.

Sumario: 1. Conversational English: concept and typology. 1.1 Pragmatic and lexical traits. 1.2 Phonetic and grammatical traits. 2. Teaching CE in the EFL classroom: relevance and challenges. 3. Audiovisual translation: an ally for CE teaching and learning. 4. Objectives. 5. Participants. 6. Materials. 7. Methodological procedure. 7.1. Pre- and post-training sessions. 7.2. Training session. 8. Results and discussion. 8.1. Familiarity with CE expressions. 8.2 Influence of previous contact with native speakers. 8.3 Influence of viewing habits in original version. 8.4 Benefits of AVT activities. 8.5 Level of satisfaction with the task. 8.6 Subjective perception about level of naturalness achieved. 9. Conclusions.

1. Conversational English: concept and typology

Despite any speaker may have an intuitive idea about what conversational English means, casual conversation has not traditionally received much attention from linguists (Eggins & Slade 1997), as opposed to academic discourse. The study of this dimension of the language is relatively recent and terminological and typological systematization are still needed. If we were to provide a definition of conversational English (CE), we could refer to the two basic pillars upon which this concept is rooted, namely, orality and colloquiality (see De Bustos 1995).

Orality is associated with the channel by which conversation usually occurs. As opposed to written speech, the oral discourse is featured by the following traits: pauses, hesitations and repetitions, due to its immediate and spontaneous character (Calsamiglia & Tusón 2007); deixis and ellipsis derived from the lack of need of using explicit references due to the physical co-presence of speakers (Carter & McCarthy, 2006); fragmented syntax and microtexts; turn-taking structure organized in adjacency pairs (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974: 23), such question-response or offer-acceptance/refusal; back-channelling to encourage the speakers to extend their turn (e.g., 'right', 'uh-huh', 'that's interesting'). On the other hand, the colloquial character of conversational language is related to the concept of linguistic register, i.e., the degree of formality of the discourse, which mainly depends on the role of participants and the relationship among them. Other features of colloquial conversation that have been pointed out also include

the absence of specialized topics and its social purpose, which are related to the interactional function of language.

Traditionally, orality and colloquiality tended to go hand in hand; however, with the emergence of new communication technologies, which allow conversation in real time, colloquial and orality traits can frequently be observed in written screen discourse as well. In the following lines, based on the typology we already proposed in Naranjo (2014), we offer here a simplified TEFL-oriented classification of the most representative phenomena of conversational English based on three linguistic levels (pragmatic, lexical and grammatical):

1.1 Pragmatic and lexical traits

This category includes utterances whose function and meaning are primarily determined by the context of use in conversation, among which we can distinguish interjections (some of them with phonological alterations), such as 'hey!', 'Oh, Gosh!' (instead of 'God') or 'Jeeez' (instead of 'Jesus'); onomatopoeias, such as 'eww', 'oh-oh' or 'wow'; vocatives, such as 'guys', 'mate', 'man' or 'honey'; fillers, such as 'um', 'er', 'well'; and discourse markers, such as 'you know', 'I mean', 'sort of' or 'like', which are words deprived from their original semantic content whose main function is to signal transitions between the speakers and the message.

Moreover, the conversational lexicon of a language mainly involves idioms (e.g., 'put someone on the spot', 'get something straight'), phrasal verbs with metaphoric content (e.g., 'catch up', 'space out', 'crack out') and multipurpose words with generic semantic content, such as 'thing' or 'stuff' (e.g., 'do your thing') or emphatic particles such as 'just' (e.g., 'just shut up!').

Finally, other traits such as the use of routine formulae would also be envisaged under this category. Routines can be defined as highly conventionalized pre-patterned expressions associated to a given illocutive function such as denying or persuading (Ruíz 1998). The acquisition of these repetitive interactional routines is of paramount importance since people constantly encounter situations which involve routine and predictable language use. Therefore, learning them will also prevent misunderstandings and communication breakdowns in social situations. They include closing and leaving formulas such as 'hi, there!', 'see you around', as well as expressive and clarification expressions, such as 'no way!', 'are you kidding me?', 'gotcha', 'you know what I mean?', among others.

1.2 *Phonetic and grammatical traits*

From a phonetic and grammatical point of view, it is particularly difficult to refer to general features of conversational English without considering the different geographical varieties existing among the English-speaking communities. As it also occurs with most languages, sociolectal and dialectal traits are usually associated with the oral and colloquial dimension of the language. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to include a detailed analysis of all English varieties, it is still possible to find some commonalities that we could envisage as being part of the ‘conversational’ domain, regardless of the geographical origin of the speakers. In this sense, we can include here suffixes such as ‘-ish’ in words like ‘reddish’, or ‘-o’ in words like ‘kiddo’ or ‘weirdo’; contractions and shortenings, such as ‘sec’ from ‘second’, ‘cause’ from ‘because’, ‘gotta’ from ‘got to’ or ‘em’ from ‘them’; double negation, usually marked with contraction ‘ain’t’ (e.g., ‘I ain’t see nothing’); glottal stopping or non-standard pronunciation of final ‘-t’ sound between vowels in words such as ‘be’uh’ (‘better’); or softening of preceding consonant in words such as ‘ya’ (‘you’), ‘doncha’ (‘don’t you’) or ‘ahright’ (‘alright’), among others. Most of them could be considered as a by-product of relaxed pronunciation, even if some of them, such as glottal stopping, may also have some sociolectal connotations (see Brown 2006).

2. Teaching CE in the EFL classroom: relevance and challenges

More than 30 years ago, the traditional model of foreign language teaching deeply founded in a purely formal linguistic perspective started being replaced by what we know nowadays as the ‘communicative approach’. With this shift of paradigm, the importance of the functional and communicative competence was fostered in the language classroom, where the emphasis was placed on the ability to effectively use the language in socially-relevant contexts (Calsamiglia & Tusón 2007: 30-31). Within this context, the relevance of the ability to effectively use the language in a variety of contexts justifies the need to also learn how to communicate in informal situations. Indeed, some authors had warned about the importance of teaching conversational English. With its thought-provoking title, Engkent’s work (1989) reminds us that “real people do not talk like books”. This phenomenon is referred to as “sounding bookish” by Fernández-Gavela (2012), who reveals that materials used in the EFL classroom may be at least partly to blame. In agreement with this author’s work, we believe that, beyond linguistic and situational adequacy, the social factor plays a decisive role in terms of successfulness in foreign language acquisition. Neglecting

the conversational sphere of a language may lead to a certain rigidity, tension and misunderstandings among learners and native speakers, which does not favor feeling at ease during conversation. On the contrary, a good command of the conversational conventionalities may even foster the social acceptance within the target language community in a real-world scenario.

Nowadays, the importance of learning spoken English is widely acknowledged. However, despite the constant proliferation of new teaching and learning methods, updating of textbooks by publishing houses, video tutorials and infinite online resources, it still seems that learners experience some difficulties when they try to engage in casual conversation. Beyond the actual difficulty of learning English as a foreign language, some extra-linguistic factors seem to be hampering the acquisition of conversational skills. As already discussed previously, the epistemological confusion and the lack of theoretical systematization that still prevails around the concept of CE can make it difficult to adopt a clear approach from the didactics. In fact, in the absence of consensus from the academic sphere, building a didactic model can become a real challenge for teachers, whose available hours to come out with innovative practices has been drastically reduced with the countless tasks that an ever- more demanding administration and society require from them.

Another limiting factor is the deeply-rooted emphasis on formal accuracy which seems to be still dominating as the top-ranking criteria when assessing learner’s degree of linguistic proficiency. This may be partly due to the little specific weight that conversational English has traditionally had within the legislative framework that regulates EFL curricula in some countries. These curricula usually tend to be rather vague and fuzzy when dealing with the communicative aspects of the language to be taught, whereas they are usually much more specific when addressing the formal and grammatical contents that need to be covered in each learning stage.

One more noteworthy obstacle is derived from the physical and psychological boundaries of the classroom itself. It seems clear that teaching how to engage in conversation needs a context of use in which learners fully understand the role of the speakers, their relationship and all the proxemic and situational elements that surround the communicative exchange; however, the cloistered environment of the classroom is often insufficient to reproduce all these extra-linguistic aspects.

3. Audiovisual translation: an ally for CE teaching and learning

Nowadays, using the listening exercises inserted in textbooks as the main source of materials to practice oral comprehension and foster

naturalness has been subject to criticism. Even if the quality of the tracks has notably improved in the last years, in an attempt to adapt to the new demands of the teaching and learning community, they are still straitjacketed products which are far from faithfully representing spontaneous real talk (see Goh & Burns 2012: 75-76). Despite the efforts of publishing houses in trying to artificially insert elements of real communicative interactions— such as dialectal and sociolectal traits, hesitations and some discourse markers—they are still adapted, 'voice-acted' recordings by native speakers who recite a previously prepared script and do their best to mimic a fake orality.

Considering that the classroom fails to provide full-immersion experiences, films and other audiovisual products may be the closest we can get, since actors are usually instructed to try to attain the highest possible degree of naturalness in their performances. Even if screen dialogues are subject to the constraints of pretended orality (i.e., imitations of spontaneous speech), they make it possible to show students how people actually talk and behave in different communicative situations. In fact, some authors (see, for example, Canning-Wilson & Wallace 2000) have already pointed out the effectiveness of watching films in OV due to their stimulating potential, which usually favors motivation and students' engagement with the task. More specifically, some studies (Kabooha & Elyas 2015) have revealed the efficiency of Youtube videos for the acquisition of vocabulary in EFL contexts, as well as the use of intralingual subtitles for informal vocabulary learning (Frumuselu et al. 2015).

Audiovisual products offer countless possibilities to design different types of activities in the classroom, allowing to practice both active and passive skills (Neves 2004: 130), but in this paper we propose to use AVT as a tool with which learners may achieve a more active and cognitively comprehensive approach to conversational English.

While translation-based exercises used to be old-school teachers' preferred practice with the so-called grammar-method, translation seems to have gained a bad reputation among teachers and scholars nowadays. The widespread repercussions of the communicative approach, together with the concerns about interferences from learners' mother tongue or L1, have led many academics and teaching professionals to discourage or even forbid translation. However, we believe that favoring an immersion-like learning environment to foster the use of L2 as a working language, is not necessarily incompatible with using translation as an additional helping tool. In fact, from a cognitive point of view, the benefits of translation practice, as an activity that enables learners to establish parallelisms between L1 and L2 have also been brought to light in recent literature, specifically with regard to metalinguistic and intercultural awareness, as well as metacognitive and

compensation strategies (see, for example, Källkvist 2004; Pokorn & Koskinen 2013; Ustaszewski 2014). In Translation Studies, some authors (Chiu 2012; Ibáñez & Vermeulen 2013; Krajka & Lewicka-Mroczek 2014; Incalcaterra & Lertola 2014; Talaván & Rodríguez-Arancón 2015; Bolaños 2017) have also pointed out the beneficial effects for foreign language acquisition of using AVT-related practices such as dubbing, subtitling, fansubbing or even audiodescription.

Based on these premises, our teaching proposal in this work attempts to foster naturalness by overcoming the barriers of the traditional EFL classroom and moving a step closer to real English-speaking contexts through audiovisual translation. While it is true that professional AVT is far from being an easy practice due to its inherent semiotic multidimensionality, the didactic purpose of this work justifies to sideline attention to the technical restrictions and rather place the emphasis on the real linguistic challenges.

4. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to determine whether a training session based on AVT-based activities can be effective to increase naturalness in EFL learners' productions through the use of CE. Accordingly, four objectives were formulated:

1. Determine participants' initial level of familiarity with conversational expressions in English.
2. Determine the potential relationship between the frequency of contact with native English speakers and the amount of conversational expressions in participants' own productions.
3. Determine the potential relationship between the viewing habits of audiovisual products in English and the use of conversational expressions in participants' own productions.
4. Determine the potential benefits of an AVT-based training session for increasing the number of conversation structures produced by participants in their own productions.

5. Participants

Six EFL students from the University of Murcia (1 male and 5 females) participated in this study. All of them were in their second year, with an age range of 19 to 22 years old. They all belonged to the same academic program with French as their first and English as their second foreign language. Only two participants claimed to be in possession of an EFL official certificate demonstrating B1 (Cambridge PET) and B2 (Cambridge FIRST) level of competence. Viewing habits in OV varied among participants

with only one of them reporting a relatively high exposure ('quite often'). Three of them claimed to watch them 'sometimes' and the remaining two only 'occasionally'. Frequency of contact with native speakers was also heterogeneous. Two participants reported a 'very frequent' contact; however, one of these two claimed that her native contact was her private tutor. Among the three students that indicated an 'occasional contact', one of them specified having had frequent contact in the recent past. Only one of them selected the option 'no contact'.

6. Materials

With the aim of assessing students' prior knowledge and level of familiarity with conversational expressions, a pre-test was to be completed. For the pre- and post-intervention sessions, two worksheets with prompts and instructions were used for students to carry out a creative writing task. Written prompts were also complemented with pictures that reflected the situation portrayed in the texts (see Appendix 1). Finally, four short scenes from well-known sitcoms that were currently aired at the time of the experiment were used for the training sessions. All scenes showed a conversation containing a high number of CE traits by the characters (see Appendix 2). Participants were also provided with the scripts so that they could easily follow the dialogues and work on the text. Right after completing the writing tasks, participants were asked to fill in a retrospective questionnaire in which personal data as well as their own impressions about their performance in the tasks were collected (see Appendix 3).

7. Methodological procedure

The pedagogical intervention was partially based on the didactic methodology proposed in Naranjo (2014) and carried out in three sessions: one training session, a pre-training session and a post-training session. All tasks proposed to participants in these sessions were presented as independent activities to avoid that participants could guess the purpose of the study. Both written productions and questionnaires filled in by our participants were collected in paper. The use of Internet or dictionaries was not allowed to complete the tasks in order to verify whether an actual acquisition of conversational structures was attained. The order of the tasks was sequenced as follows:

7.1. Pre- and post-training sessions

- 1) Creative writing exercise (45'). The participants were asked to write a short script containing a dialogue between two characters. Scripts were to be handwritten in paper and a minimum and maximum number of

words was requested. Scene prompts were first read aloud in class, making sure that participants understood all the relevant information about the contexts and conditions in which the portrayed situations take place. Pre- and post-intervention scenes were very similar in terms of the topics and emotional content, both reflecting a situation in which tension was built up, eventually giving rise to a conflict between the characters. In the pre-training scene, a future bride and her maid of honor realize they have been dating the same man at the same time. Similarly, the post-intervention scene shows a situation of mistrust and jealousy between a young couple after one of them reads a suspicious message on the other's phone.

- 2) Retrospective questionnaire (10'). Through this questionnaire participants provided personal information about their age, sex and certified level of English, OV viewing habits in English as well as contact with native speakers of English. Pre- and post- intervention sessions took place a month apart from one another. Texts produced by the participants were collected and assessed according to the number of CE expressions used in each task.

7.2. Training session

- 1) Pre-test (10'). Pre-test consisted in trying to define, explain or translate some conversational expressions of different kinds into participants' mother tongue. Some of them were embedded in dialogues to ensure a more accurate comprehension.
- 2) Workshop on Conversational English (1 h.). The workshop was divided into four sections. First, results of the pre-test were discussed aloud in class and awareness was raised toward the importance of CE expressions in everyday communication. Then, some theoretical notions about CE, its contexts of use and typology with specific examples were shared with the group. Finally, participants were presented with the videos and were then asked to identify CE traits in the scripts, as well as translate some parts of the dialogues into their mother tongue.

The analysis of data was carried out by following a previously designed rubric in which types and examples of conversational traits were classified. For each task, one point was assigned for every conversational expression used. Values for the final score were therefore expressed in absolute terms instead of using a scale.

8. Results and discussion

Results are offered by following each one of the objectives formulated for this pilot study:

8.1. Familiarity with CE expressions

The threshold to pass the initial test to verify previous knowledge of Conversational English was set in 7.5 points out of a total of 15. Accordingly, as shown in Table 1, only one participant passed the test obtaining 9 points. Four out of six participants were far from the minimum required with scores ranging from 0 to 2. Therefore, a general lack of CE knowledge was found.

Table 1. Pre-test scores (minimum score to pass: 7.5 points)

PRE-TEST SCORES	
PARTICIPANT 1	1
PARTICIPANT 2	0
PARTICIPANT 3	2
PARTICIPANT 4	6
PARTICIPANT 5	1
PARTICIPANT 6	9

Only participant 6 pass the pre-test with a score of 9 points

8.2 Influence of previous contact with native speakers

Objective 2 aimed to find out whether participants with a stronger contact with native speakers of English would use more CE expressions in their own productions. For this analysis we used the texts produced in the pre-training task to make sure that participants were still not conditioned by the training. According to the results displayed in Table 2, two participants reported 'very frequent contact'. One of them was the participant with the highest number of CE structures (4); however, that was not the case for the other who informed that this very frequent contact was held with her private tutor. The participant with the second highest number of CE units reported having 'occasional contact'. The two highest scores coincided with participants whose native contacts were friends even if frequency of contact was not exactly the same in both cases (occasional and very frequent).

Table 2. Comparison between CE-related performance and frequency of contact with native speakers of English

	FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS	NR. CE STRUCTURES (TASK 1)
PARTICIPANT 1	No contact	1
PARTICIPANT 2	Occasional contact	0
PARTICIPANT 3	Occasional contact (friends)	3
PARTICIPANT 4	Very frequent contact (friends)	4
PARTICIPANT 5	Very frequent contact (three days a week with a native teacher)	2
PARTICIPANT 6	Occasional contact	0

The two highest scores (4 and 3) correspond to participants with a close personal relationship with native speakers).

8.3 Influence of viewing habits in original version

Objective 3 intended to assess whether stronger viewing habits of audiovisual products in English would result in a higher spontaneous production of CE expressions. In this case, as displayed in Table 3 the participant with the highest number of CE structures (4) was also who reported the highest frequency of viewing habits in English ('quite often'); however, one participant who informed watching audiovisual products in English only occasionally was the second highest score (3). Three of them who chose the option 'sometimes' and the remaining one reporting an occasional frequency all rendered a low production of CE structures ranging from 0 to 2.

Table 3. Comparison between CE-related performance and viewing habits in English

	FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS	NR. CE STRUCTURES (TASK 1)
PARTICIPANT 1	Sometimes	1
PARTICIPANT 2	Occasionally	0
PARTICIPANT 3	Occasionally	3
PARTICIPANT 4	Quite often	4
PARTICIPANT 5	Sometimes	2
PARTICIPANT 6	Sometimes	0

Participant with the highest score in Task 1 also reported the highest frequency of viewing habits in English.

8.4 Benefits of AVT activities

Finally, objective 4 was aimed at determining whether the training session based on AVT activities would help participants produce a higher number of conversational expressions. As we can see in Table 4, all participants produced a higher number of CE expressions in the post-training task. Only in one case, the production of CE units was discreetly improved (from 3 to 5); the rest of participants, however, seem to have significantly increased their production of CE expressions with 9.83 points of difference in the means for the two conditions:

Table 4. Comparison between CE-related performance in the pre- and post-training sessions

	NR. CE STRUCTURES (TASK 1)	NR. CE STRUCTURES (TASK 2)
PARTICIPANT 1	1	16
PARTICIPANT 2	0	9
PARTICIPANT 3	3	5
PARTICIPANT 4	4	17
PARTICIPANT 5	2	13
PARTICIPANT 6	0	9
MEAN	1.67	11.5

All participants' scores were higher after the training session

8.5 Level of satisfaction with the task

In Table 5 we collect data from the retrospective questionnaire that show the level of satisfaction of each participant with their own performance in both tasks in relation to the number of CE structures used. If we compare the level of satisfaction experienced, we can see that most participants remained with the same impression about their performance in both tasks. Only one participant informed about a higher level of satisfaction in the post-training task. Also, no potential correlations seem to be observable between high or low levels of satisfaction and high and low number of CE structures used.

Table 5. Comparison of level of (dis)satisfaction with performance in the tasks

PARTICIPANT	NR. CE STRUCTURES (TASK 1)	T1_ SATISFACTIO N	NR. CE STRUCTUR ES (TASK 2)	T2_ SATISFACTI ON
1	1	Very satisfied	16	Very satisfied
2	0	Very satisfied	9	Very satisfied
3	3	More or less satisfied	5	more or less satisfied
4	4	More or less satisfied	17	More or less satisfied
5	2	More or less satisfied	13	More or less satisfied
6	0	More or less satisfied	9	Very satisfied
MEAN	1.67	Very satisfied	11.5	Very satisfied

No potential correlations were found in terms of scores achieved and level of satisfaction with the task

8.6 Subjective perception about level of naturalness achieved

Through the retrospective questionnaire, we also asked participants about their impression with regard to the naturalness achieved in their dialogues. In this case, no differences were generally found in their personal impressions in terms of naturalness achieved in their dialogues before and after the training session, despite having produced a higher number of CE expressions in the second task. Only one participant reported having produced a more spontaneous text the second time.

Table 6. Comparison of level of naturalness achieved in pre- and post-training tasks according to participants' subjective perception

	NR. CE STRUCTUR ES (TASK 1)	T1_ NAT URALNE SS	NR. CE STRUCTURE S (TASK 2)	T2_ NATUR ALNESS
PARTICIPANT 1	1	Yes	16	Yes
PARTICIPANT 2	0	Yes	9	Yes
PARTICIPANT 3	3	Yes	5	Yes
PARTICIPANT 4	4	Yes	17	Yes
PARTICIPANT 5	2	No	13	Yes
PARTICIPANT 6	0	Yes	9	Yes
MEAN	1.67	Yes	11.5	Yes

No observable differences were found when comparing participants impressions about naturalness achieved in their productions before and after the training session.

Our results so far point to an increase in naturalness through the use of a higher number of CE expressions after an induction training session which includes a formal theoretical introduction and AVT-based activities. However, no differences were observed between the pre-and post-training tasks in terms of the level of satisfaction or participants' perception about the level naturalness achieved in both tasks. Since one month had passed between the first and the second task, participants may not remember how they did the first time and did not assess the second task in relation to the first. This also suggests that they may have increased the number of CE units without being fully aware of it.

The questionnaire revealed that other factors inherent to the individuals that may also play a role when assessing the level of naturalness of their productions in English. Accordingly, results in objective 2 seem to suggest that, even though, frequency of contact with native speakers can be a predictor, the closeness of the personal relationship between speakers could also be relevant. While strong viewing habits of audiovisual products in English may not be a predictor for using a high number of CE structures, low frequency habits do seem to correlate with a weaker use of CE.

Similarly to other previous studies (Chiu 2012; Ibáñez & Vermeulen 2013; Krajka & Lewicka-Mroczek 2014; Incalcaterra & Lertola 2014; Talaván & Rodríguez-Arancón 2015; Bolaños 2017), this work seems to reveal a beneficial effect of Audiovisual Translation for foreign language acquisition. More specifically, our results are aligned with the conclusions reached by Frumuselu et al. (2015) about the benefits of translating audiovisual products to enhance learners' linguistic competence in informal discourse.

9. Conclusions

This study has aimed to assess the effectiveness of an AVT-based training session to increase naturalness in EFL learners' productions through the use of CE expressions. For this purpose, a pre- and post- intervention sessions were used to compare learners' performance in a creative writing task where they were instructed to produce a script for two previously described scenes. The situations described in the prompts were designed with the aim of stimulating the use of expressive language in the dialogues, being both similar in terms of the relationship between the characters and emotional tone.

Although bigger sample sizes and use of inferential statistic tests would be necessary to attain conclusive results, our data point to a beneficial effect of the AVT-based pedagogical intervention in the acquisition of

conversational structures. Also, a more extended and carefully planned methodological design may be useful to tell us more about what specific activities or parts of the training sessions are more effective to our main goal. Finally, the production of fictional texts in writing may be a too limited resource to evaluate mastery of spontaneous language in EFL contexts, which is why in further studies naturalness in speech may be most accurately assessed through learners' oral performance in immersion-like settings that enable casual conversation.

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Appendix 1. Pre- and post- intervention prompts**Task 1 (pre-intervention)**

Rose and Emily are best friends. They live in different countries but they are still very close, since they went to school together. The scene takes place in a coffee shop. After an emotional reunion at the airport, both friends are chatting excitedly about the ‘big’ event coming up: Rose is getting married the following week. Emily will be her maid of honor, even if she has not met her friend's future husband yet. They are both thrilled. After a while, Emily starts telling Rose (the future bride) about her first date with a boy she just met. She is super excited because, after 5 failing relationships, she has finally met the man of her life. At a certain point, Emily excuses herself to go to the toilet leaving her phone on the table. Suddenly, the phone screen lights up and Rose sees that Emily has a background picture with the face of a boy. When she sees the picture, she freezes in pain: she realizes that the boy is her future husband. They have been dating the same person! She starts getting very anxious.

When Emily comes back, Rose tells her friend about what she just found out. Emily gets pale and remains quiet, shocked by the news. Watching her friend's reaction, Rose starts getting suspicious and paranoid. She starts thinking the two of them have had a love affair at her back and they plan to ruin the wedding and run away together. Even though Emily tries to convince her that it is not true, Rose gets very nervous, starts crying and shouting accusing her friend of being a traitor. She makes a phone call to cancel the wedding.

Task 2 (post-intervention)

A British girl, Emma, and an American boy, Jacob, have started a long-distance relationship. After 6 months of not seeing each other, they have a very emotional reunion at the airport. The scene takes place at Jacob's apartment. They are cosily cuddling on the sofa. They laugh, play and tease each other. Sometimes Emma gives Jacob this flirty, naughty look and he likes her even more... They can't take their eyes away from each other. After a while, Jacob gets up to go to the toilet leaving his phone on the table. The phone buzzes and Emma sees a message with the words 'I miss you already' from someone called 'Vicky'. This name sounds familiar to her. She remembers a girl named Vicky from when she went to visit him to the States. It was one of Jacob's friends. She remembers getting shocked by how extremely smart and beautiful this girl was. She was even very nice to her, as she took her shopping and showed her around the city while Jacob was working. During the tour of the city, Vicky told Emma that she had recently lost her dad. Emma had lost her dad too when she was very young and she decided to give Vicky a good-luck charm her father had once gave her as a gift. They both got emotional with tears. As Jacob comes back to the kitchen, Emma does not want to act like the typical jealous girlfriend but she cares too much to ignore the message. She starts asking subtle questions and making acid sarcastic comments to see how he reacts. He repeatedly denies that there's another girl in his life. She doesn't believe him. They end up breaking up.

Appendix 2. Scenes scripts used in training session

Scene 1. Friends (season 1, pilot)

MONICA: (to All) Okay, everybody, this is Rachel, another Lincoln High survivor. (to Rachel) This is everybody, this is Chandler, and Phoebe, and Joey, and- you remember my brother Ross?

RACHEL: Oh God... well, it started about a half hour before the wedding. I was in the room where we were keeping all the presents, and I was looking at this gravy boat. This really gorgeous boat. When all of a sudden I realized that I was more turned on by this gravy boat than by Barry! And then I got really freaked out, and that's when it hit me: how much Barry looks like Mr. Potato Head. Y'know, I mean, he always looked familiar, but... Anyway, I just had to get out of there, and I started wondering 'Why am I doing this, and who am I doing this for?'. (TO MONICA) So anyway I just didn't know where to go, and I know that you and I have kinda drifted apart, but you're the only person I knew who lived here in the city.

MONICA: Who wasn't invited to the wedding...

RACHEL: I was kind of hoping that wouldn't be an issue

Scene 2. Modern Family (season 1, pilot)

CLAIRE: Kids, breakfast! Kids? Phil, would you get them?

PHIL: Yeah, just a sec.

CLAIRE: Kids!

PHIL: That is so,..

CLAIRE: Okay...

PHIL: Kids, get down here!

HALEY: Why are you guys yelling at us, when we're way upstairs, just text me.

CLAIRE: Alright, That's not gonna happen, and, wow, you're not wearing that outfit.

HALEY: What's Wrong with it?

CLAIRE: Honey, do you have anything to say to your daughter... about her skirt?

PHIL: Sorry? Oh yeah, that looks really cute sweetheart!

HALEY: Thanks!

CLAIR : No, it's way too short, people know you're a girl, you don't need to prove it to them.

ALEX: Luke got his head stuck in the banister again.

PHIL: I got it. Where's the baby oil?

CLAIRE: It's on our bedside tip... I Don't know, find it. Come on!

Scene 3. Bojack Horseman (season 5, episode 10)

DIANE: Hey. Did you really mean what you said, before the screening? About how Philbert made you feel okay, about yourself?

BOJACK: I don't know...

DIANE: Because, you know, that's not the point of Philbert...For guys to watch it and feel okay.

BOJACK: Diane, it's a compliment. You did a good job. Relax.

DIANE: I don't want you, or anyone else, justifying their shitty behavior because of the show.

BOJACK: - Excuse me?

DIANE: What is going on with you? You're a mess.

BOJACK: Am I?

DIANE: I feel like I barely know you anymore.

BOJACK: Bullshit. Don't give me that.

DIANE: - It's true. I don't know you.

BOJACK: No. You know me. You do.

DIANE: And I know you went to Oberlin during your bender three years ago because a bunch of students posted pictures of you on Facebook.

BOJACK: What I don't understand is why you feel like you deserve to know every shitty thing I ever did.

DIANE: I don't deserve anything. I would like to know when you've done shitty things.

BOJACK: Why is that your business?

DIANE: Because I'm your friend, and I care about you. So if it gets out that you're doing

creepy stuff, that makes me look bad.

BOJACK: Wanna know about New Mexico? You want to know about the one little thing that I did in New Mexico, which, by the way, wasn't even really a thing?

DIANE: You know what? Spare me.

BOJACK: No, I'm gonna tell you.

BOJACK: Or the dozens of other shady things that may or may not have occurred in my life that I can barely even remember 'cause I was high or drunk or it was 30 years ago?

DIANE: And you don't feel bad, about any of this stuff?

BOJACK: Yeah, of course I do!

DIANE: No, I wanna know how you're the victim of the Sarah Lynn story. I'm serious. Explain to me...how Sarah Lynn's overdose was really rough for you.

BOJACK: Shut up.

DIANE: And then when she was sober, you took her on a month-long bender? And then she died. And she is dead now.

BOJACK: Why are you bringing this shit up? Is this fun for you?

BOJACK: You win! You scored all the points in the argument! But you know what? I don't care.

Because I'm trying to move forward.

DIANE: You haven't changed at all.

BOJACK: Yes! Congratulations! You are the last person to get that. I'm not gonna change. When I met you, I was depressed because I didn't like myself. And when you wrote that book and sold a bajillion copies, you taught me that as screwed up as I am, that's okay.

DIANE: I think you want me to tell you that you can be better. And even though you're being a total asshole right now, I still believe it. I don't think this is a good relationship for either of us.

BOJACK: Diane, come on.

DIANE: I'm going home.

BOJACK: No, Diane, we're saying things, but let's just go back to the party.

DIANE: I'm done... with all of this.

BOJACK: That's the dumbest part of all of this! I didn't do anything. I mean, the fact that this has turned into such a thing for you... You know, maybe I didn't tell you because there was nothing to tell.

Scene 4. Bojack Horseman (season 5, episode 10)

GINA: So, tonight, are we, like, together-together at this thing? Oh, uh, well I mean, I know we're together. I just meant publicly. Like, are we gonna introduce the world to "BoJina"?

BOJACK: Well, yeah, I just I'm not sure the world is ready for, um, BoJina.

GINA: Oh, yeah, you're probably right.

[phone chimes]

BOJACK: [sighs] What do you want, Mr. Peanutbutter?

MR. PEANUTBUTTER: Gotcha! It's not Steven Spielberg. I changed my name in your contacts.

Appendix 3. Post-task questionnaire

INITIALS: _____

ENGLISH CERTIFICATES: yes/no

TYPE: Cambridge/Trinity/EOI/Other Others: _____

CERTIFIED LEVEL: A1/A2/B1/B2/C1/C2

1. Considering the scene will be performed by actors, how satisfied are you with your script?

No satisfied at all More or less satisfied Very satisfied

2. Why?

3. Did you manage to make your script spontaneous, as you were requested?

Yes No

4. How often do you watch movies in English?:

never occasionally sometimes quite often always

5. How often do you engage in casual conversation in English with foreign people?

- I have very frequent contact with foreign people in English (everyday/almost every day)
- I have some regular contact with foreign people in English (once a week/month)
- I have occasional contact with foreign people in English (once every 4-6 months)
- I do not have contact with foreign people in English at this moment