

Audiovisual translation: A reception study on Bilingual child language brokers' linguistic and cultural competences

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents an empirical pilot study conducted from July through September 2019 at César Chávez Elementary School, a public, bilingual English/Spanish primary school in the city of San Francisco (California, USA).

The research was based on the hypothesis that children enrolled in such bilingual educational programs are exposed to linguistic and cultural content in English and Spanish and will therefore differentiate the contents of the bilingual audiovisual products they consume both linguistically and culturally.

The aim was to assess the possible impact of audiovisual translation as a didactic tool on the acquisition of linguistic and cultural competences by bilingual child language brokers. For this purpose, we developed a qualitative and quantitative research method built upon a set of interviews and experimental tests, respectively, which may be applicable to the study of similar situations in other educational systems.

The results obtained after data collection and analysis will allow us to test the initial hypothesis and draw relevant conclusions on the role that audiovisual products, original and translated, can play in the development of linguistic and cultural competences of bilingual child language brokers.

Key words: audiovisual translation, bilingualism, child language brokering, linguistic and cultural competences, reception studies

La traducción audiovisual: estudio de recepción sobre las competencias lingüísticas y culturales de los intermediarios lingüísticos infantiles bilingües

RESUMEN: Este artículo presenta un estudio piloto empírico realizado de julio a septiembre de 2019 en el centro público bilingüe inglés/español de Educación Primaria César Chávez Elementary School, en San Francisco (California, EE. UU.).

La investigación parte de la hipótesis de que los niños que se inscriben en estos programas educativos bilingües están expuestos a contenidos lingüísticos y culturales en inglés y español, por lo que diferencian por lengua y cultura estos contenidos en los productos audiovisuales bilingües que consumen.

Nuestro objetivo es evaluar el posible impacto que el uso de la traducción audiovisual como herramienta didáctica puede tener en la adquisición de las competencias lingüísticas y culturales de los niños intermediarios lingüísticos bilingües. A tal fin, se desarrolló una metodología investigadora, de enfoque cualitativo y cuantitativo, basada en el uso de entrevistas

y pruebas experimentales, respectivamente, que se podría aplicar al estudio de situaciones similares en otros sistemas educativos.

Los resultados obtenidos tras la recogida y el análisis de los datos nos permitirán comprobar la hipótesis inicial y extraer conclusiones relevantes sobre el papel que los productos audiovisuales, originales y traducidos, pueden desempeñar en el desarrollo de las competencias lingüísticas y culturales de los niños intermediarios lingüísticos bilingües.

Palabras clave: traducción audiovisual, bilingüismo, intermediación lingüística infantil, competencias lingüísticas y culturales, estudios de recepción

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the pedagogical impact of audiovisual translation (AVT) on children's linguistic and cultural competences. More specifically, it presents the contents and results of an empirical pilot study conducted at the César Chávez Elementary School, a state-run school in San Francisco (California, USA). San Francisco has a longstanding history of child language brokering (CLB) and bilingual educational programs.

The study was conducted from July through September 2019 under the authorization of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and as part of a research stay organized through the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California, Berkeley. The SFUSD (2022) was established in 1851. It is the only public school district within the City and County of San Francisco and the seventh largest school district in California, and it currently encompasses 140 prekindergarten-through-12th-grade public schools (School & College Listings, 2022).

The starting hypothesis of the study was that Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students who are enrolled in bilingual educational programs in the USA and who regularly serve as language brokers for their families and other people in their country are exposed to linguistic and cultural content in both English and Spanish and are therefore able to differentiate the content of the audiovisual products they consume both linguistically and culturally.

Our aim was to determine whether the use of AVT as a didactic tool in Bilingual Elementary Education Programs could help enhance the linguistic and cultural competences of child language brokers (CLBs), and, at the same time, to assess the potential applicability of the research methodology proposed for this purpose to other educational systems.

To establish the theoretical basis for the empirical research work described and discussed later, we will first review the SFUSD bilingual educational context in which the study was conducted as well as a number of earlier studies on the acquisition of linguistic and cultural competences through AVT in relation to CLB.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. A Brief Overview of the Bilingual Educational System in the USA-SFUSD. Instrumental Motivation

LEP students' use of their native language has been the object of intense debate since bilingual educational programs were first implemented in the USA.

The 1968 Bilingual Education Act (Title VII), passed as an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Punches, 1985), emerged as a response to the learning difficulties detected among LEP students when their academic performance was compared with that of their native English-speaking peers (Punches, 1985). Since its implementation, the Act has undergone a series of substantial amendments (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). The basic goal, however, remains the same: to provide LEP students with access to bilingual instruction so that they can achieve academic success in mainstream classes.

The first amendment to the Act was made in 1974. This modification recognized that those children whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds are different from those of native English-speaking students need to learn the content of mainstream classes using their own language and culture (Punches, 1985). Despite this recognition, however, the Act ultimately states that its main goal is to make LEP students competent in the English language, implying their adaptation to English-language educational programs (Punches, 1985).

Previously, in March 1970, the parents of around 1,800 non-English speaking Chinese American students had sued the SFUSD on the grounds that its educational policies were violating those students' right to an inclusive education because they were receiving instruction in a language that they were unable to either understand or speak (Dong, 2019; *Steinman*, 1975).

In January 1974, in the *Lau v. Nichols* case, the US Supreme Court unanimously ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and mandated that all LEP students in California should have access to bilingual education. It was a verdict that would revolutionize the educational system all over the country (*Steinman*, 1975).

The *Lau v. Nichols* case did not, however, prescribe a specific bilingual educational policy: each school district would be responsible for taking specific measures to ensure the academic success of all LEP students. Since then, the SFUSD has implemented and regularly revisited an equal access instructional plan—the so-called *Lau Plan*—to guarantee optimal learning pathways for all LEP students (Wang, 1974).

To guarantee LEP students' access to a quality educational system, the SFUSD offers the following four different learning pathways: the Newcomer Pathway, the Biliteracy Pathway, the English Plus Pathway and the Dual Language Immersion Pathway (SFUSD, 2021a). Different combinations of these four pathways are available depending on school levels—elementary, middle or high school—and on the foreign language programs involved (out of a total of twelve: Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Filipino, Japanese, Arabic, Italian, French, Hebrew, Latin and Vietnamese) (SFUSD, 2021b).

According to the SFUSD (2021c) as well as to the principal of César Chávez Elementary School Jennifer Freeman (personal communication, September 5, 2019), and focusing specifically on Spanish language programs from pre-kindergarten through 5th grade—the context in which this study was conducted—the SFUSD assures LEP students' access to quality education by providing two of the four learning pathways mentioned above, specifically the Dual Language Immersion Pathway and the Biliteracy Pathway.

The Dual Language Immersion Pathway is open to LEP students who are native Spanish speakers, bilingual students who speak both Spanish and English, and English proficient students. English proficient students and LEP students can therefore find themselves together in the same class. This pathway is designed to help students develop proficiency and academic competences in both English and Spanish (Freeman, personal communication, September

5, 2019). In kindergarten and 1st grade, 80-90% of the instruction is in Spanish, but the instruction in English is gradually increased each year so that by 5th grade, instruction is 50% in English and 50% in Spanish. Depending on their proficiency levels, elementary-level LEP students receive English Language Development (ELD) each day, while other academic courses are taught either in English, using Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) methodology, or in their primary language (SFUSD, 2008; SFUSD, 2021d).

Whereas ELD consists of “the teaching of language through content” (Genzok, 2011, p. 6), SDAIE methodology refers to “the teaching of grade-level subject matter in English specifically designed for speakers of other languages,” meaning that “language is viewed as the vehicle for content instruction and content instruction as the vehicle for language instruction” (Genzok, 2011, pp. 6-7). ELD can involve two types of instruction: Integrated ELD and Designated ELD. Integrated ELD corresponds to the academic instruction provided throughout the instructional day and across all subjects, which can be taught either in English or in the LEP students’ primary language. Designated ELD requires all LEP students to receive a minimum of 30 minutes of ELD instruction per day, in line with the SFUSD’s regulations. Consequently, students are all divided into different groups based on their levels of proficiency in English (SFUSD, 2014).

On the other hand, the Biliteracy Pathway is open to LEP students who are native Spanish speakers and bilingual students who speak both Spanish and English (Freeman, personal communication, September 5, 2019). Biliteracy instruction is similar to that of the Dual Language Immersion Pathway (Freeman, personal communication, September 5, 2019), as in both kindergarten and 1st grade 80% of the instruction is received in Spanish and instruction in English is increased each year so that by the 5th grade instruction is 50% in English and 50% in Spanish. However, the Biliteracy Pathway is more specifically designed to help Spanish speaking LEP students achieve proficiency and literacy competences in English and academic and literacy competences in Spanish (Freeman, personal communication, September 5, 2019). For this purpose, elementary level students receive Designated ELD every day (on the basis of their proficiency levels), and all other academic courses are taught either in English—applying SDAIE methodology—or in the primary language (SFUSD, 2008; SFUSD, 2021e).

In summary, the major difference between the Dual Language Immersion Pathway and the Biliteracy Pathway is that “Dual Language Pathways serve a blend of English Learners, pathway Language Learners, and students who are emergent bilinguals in both” whereas “Biliteracy Pathways serve only potential English Learners who are proficient in their primary language” (SFUSD, 2019, p. 28). According to Freeman (personal communication, September 5, 2019), the difference is almost philosophical in the sense that “Dual Language Immersion programs are designed to teach Spanish as a target language and Biliteracy programs are designed to use Spanish to teach English as a target language.”

2.2. The Acquisition of Linguistic and Cultural Competences through Audiovisual Translation

In such a complex educational system, LEP students following bilingual educational programs in SFUSD are likely to serve as language brokers at some point. Antonini (2015, p. 48; 2016, p. 713) defines CLB as those “interpreting and translation activities carried out by

bilingual children who mediate linguistically and culturally in formal and informal contexts and domains for their family, friends as well as members of the linguistic community to which they belong.” CLB is a practice indissolubly linked to migration movements (Antonini, 2016) and the institutional starting point where migrant children begin to absorb the new language and culture of the society of which they are going to become part is the school environment. In the context in which this study was conducted, many teaching strategies are available to help such children become linguistically and culturally competent in English and Spanish while at the same time learning the contents of the mainstream classes. Here, bilingual audiovisual products can play an important role due to their intrinsic characteristics.

Chaume (2012, p. 100), for example, describes the audiovisual text as “a semiotic construct woven by a series of signifying codes that operate simultaneously to produce meaning.” This meaning “can be transmitted through the acoustic (linguistic, paralinguistic, musical, special effects and sound position codes) and the visual channels (iconographic, photographic, shot, mobility, graphic and montage/editing codes)” (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021, p. 4). More specifically, an audiovisual text comprises four different types of signs, namely audio-verbal signs (words heard), audio-nonverbal signs (music and special effects), visual, verbal signs (words read) and visual-nonverbal signs (pictures and photographs) (Zabalbeascoa, 2008).

An audiovisual text is not created in a vacuum; on the contrary, it is the result of human action performed in a specific linguistic and cultural context, and, as such, it is susceptible to being used as a means of communication between different cultures. Audiovisual texts thus become the working objective of AVT, defined as “a mode of translation characterised by the transfer of audiovisual texts either interlingually or intralingually” (Chaume, 2013, p. 105). Many taxonomies have been developed regarding the umbrella term *audiovisual translation*, including the more recent, more complete ones proposed by Chaume (2013) and Díaz Cintas (2020). The principal modes of AVT as listed by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021) are interpreting, voiceover, narration, dubbing, fandubbing, audio description, audio subtitling, subtitling, surtitling, subtitling for people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and live subtitling.

Due to its particular features and its wide variety of modes, AVT requires the translator to possess certain competences. Based on an analysis of previous literature in the field, Cerezo Merchán (2018) identified these competences as contrastive competences, extralinguistic competences, methodological and strategic competences, instrumental competences and translation problem-solving competences. Mastery of both target and source languages and a good knowledge of the cultures involved in the translation process constitute key elements of contrastive and extralinguistic competences, respectively.

If then, audiovisual texts and AVT are deeply rooted in linguistic and cultural premises, it is logical that they would stand out as suitable didactic tools with which to work towards the acquisition of linguistic and cultural competences in an educational environment, and this is precisely what has been done recently: “AVT has been used extensively in language teaching and learning ever since technology first enabled the projection of audiovisual material in combination with some form of translation, usually intra- and interlingual subtitles, and dubbing” (Incalcaterra, 2018, p. 483).

Scholars have been testing and demonstrating the benefits of using AVT to help language learners develop their linguistic competence, especially their receptive and productive skills (writing

and speaking) (Incalcaterra, 2018; Talaván, 2020). But their attention has also been drawn to the favorable effects of AVT on learners' cultural awareness in the same language learning context.

The impact of AVT on language learning has also been examined by specialists in the intercultural dimension of language pedagogy, who have studied how learners manage the opportunities for immediate cultural transfer afforded by the interplay between the different semiotic channels found in audiovisual texts (Incalcaterra, 2018, p. 489).

Cultural and intercultural awareness go hand in hand with linguistic issues during the language acquisition process, so it can be justifiably affirmed that audiovisual texts and AVT are a "valuable resource for the promotion of bilingualism and multilingualism in countries with more than one national language" (Incalcaterra et al., 2020, pp. 1-2).

Empirical reception studies in the field of AVT are steadily gaining more support. Needless to say, such research follows a natural course: first describing the facts, then studying their reception, and finally implementing results. Examples of this transfer route can be found in recent literature (Di Giovanni & Gambier, 2018), but fresh, compelling, highly promising research is also being carried out on didactic AVT (TRADIT research group, 2022). Equally current and active is the attention being paid to CLB and its connection with bilingualism and interpreting (Antonini, 2010, 2015, 2016; Antonini et al., 2017).

The present study takes into consideration all this preceding literature and aspires to combine the different studies' strengths in order to implement solutions from a holistic, innovative, empirical research perspective.

3. METHOD

3.1. Context

While in pre-kindergarten César Chávez Elementary School offers the Dual Language Immersion pathway, from kindergarten through 5th grade it offers the Monolingual English Pathway and the English Biliteracy Pathway. The only Spanish/English bilingual program offered by the school from pre-kindergarten through 5th grade is therefore the Biliteracy Learning Pathway, and the students participating in our study were all in a 1st grade class.

This meant that they would be either native speakers of Spanish or bilingual speakers of Spanish and English enrolled in a program designed to help them develop, on the one hand, bilingualism and biliteracy and, on the other, intercultural competence. In other words, the program was designed to help them achieve optimal academic performance through a combination of different types of instruction: some of the courses would be taught completely in Spanish, others would be taught using SDAIE, and the students would also receive Designated ELD—specifically, 45 minutes of English for Academic Purposes every day—.

3.2. Objectives

The main objective of the study was to determine whether the use of AVT as a didactic tool in Bilingual Elementary Education Programs could help enhance the linguistic and cultural competences of CLBs and, in doing so, to assess the potential applicability of the research methodology to other educational systems.

For this purpose, based on the information collected from the students' experimental tests, we set the two following objectives: (i) to determine the level of acquisition of linguistic competences of the students participating in the study and (ii) to determine the level of acquisition of cultural competences of the students participating in the study.

3.3. Participants

Although the main participants in our study were the students, there were also two other participants whose contribution was fundamental to the purposes of our research since they both helped us contextualize the research objectives: the principal of César Chávez Elementary School, Jennifer Freeman, and the teacher of the group of students, Roberto Marosi. While Freeman helped us confirm and better understand the information previously collected from the scientific literature consulted on the bilingual educational system implemented in both the SFUSD and César Chávez Elementary School, Marosi provided us with relevant information about the didactic tools and methodologies he used in the classroom with the students participating in our study.

At the time when the study was conducted, Freeman (personal communication, September 5, 2019), born in the USA, had been the principal of the school for three years. Prior to this, she had spent eighteen years alternating work as a principal and as a Spanish/English bilingual teacher in both bilingual and immersion schools. Marosi (personal communication, September 5, 2019) is a Spanish-English bilingual teacher, born in the USA, who considers himself a 100% native English speaker and a 90% native Spanish speaker. He holds the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential (Clear Credential) required by the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2018), and at the time when the study was conducted, he had worked in the school as an English/Spanish bilingual teacher for twelve years (after working in other schools for seven years). At César Chávez Elementary School, he had been teaching 1st graders for eight years.

The group of students was made up of 22 children, which is the maximum number of students allowed per class in the school. Most of them were six years old; the percentage of girls and boys in the group was very balanced, as was the number of students born in the USA and those born in Latin America. All of the students' parents came originally from Latin American countries.

With regard to the students' primary language, there was a significant difference between the percentage of students whose primary language was English (about a third of the total) and the percentage of students whose primary language was Spanish (the remaining two thirds).

Around 40% of the students consumed audiovisual products in English, a slightly lower percentage consumed audiovisual products in Spanish, and approximately 20% consumed audiovisual products in both languages.

Little more than a quarter of the students had attended pre-kindergarten. Those who had attended kindergarten had all received instruction completely in Spanish, plus 45 minutes of Designated ELD per day.

All this information was collected by means of an initial questionnaire comprising 8 closed questions, designed to be answered by the students with the help of their teacher in our presence. The specific data collected about the students is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. *Description of the group of students*

STUDENTS	22 STUDENTS IN 1 ST GRADE	
Age	95.4%: 6 yo	4.6%: 7 yo
Gender	54.5%: female	45.5%: male
Place of birth	54.5%: USA	45.5%: Latin America
Family origins	0%: USA	100%: Latin America
Primary language	27.3%: English	72.7%: Spanish
Audiovisual language	41%: English	36.4%: Spanish 22.6%: both
Previous education	27.3%: prekindergarten (optional, 3-4 yo)	100%: kindergarten (compulsory, 5 yo)
Previous instruction language	100%: Spanish (45' English/day in K)	

3.4. Materials

Firstly, to properly contextualize the research objectives, we created two research interviews, one for the principal of César Chávez Elementary School (Freeman, personal communication, September 5, 2019) and one for the teacher of the group of students (Marosi, personal communication, September 5, 2019). The fully structured research interview conducted with the principal of the school (9 open questions) allowed us to (i) learn about her academic, professional, linguistic and cultural background, (ii) confirm the information previously acquired about the bilingual learning pathways offered by the school, and (iii) know her viewpoints on the strengths and weaknesses of the Dual Language Immersion Pathway and the English Bilingual Pathway. The interview held with the teacher (6 open questions) provided us with information about (i) his academic, professional, linguistic and cultural background and (ii) the didactic tools and methodologies he used in the classroom with the students participating in our study.

Secondly, to collect the data, we designed two experimental tests for the students, one of which was focused on linguistic aspects and the other on cultural aspects.

The results obtained from the experimental test focusing on linguistic aspects allowed us to assess how audiovisual content influences language skills, while the results obtained from the experimental test focusing on cultural aspects allowed us to assess how audiovisual content influences cultural identity.

To conduct the experimental test focusing on linguistic aspects, we used an audiovisual product for children, and we designed two different questionnaires. Since we wanted to use a culturally neutral audiovisual product for this part of the experiment, we selected episode 44 of season 2 of the popular animated television series *Super Wings*: “Blockosaurus Park”. More specifically, we used its original American English version and its dubbed Latin American Spanish version, “*El parque de los dinosaurios mecánicos*”. The questionnaires were

divided into two main sets of questions: (i) 6 multiple choice W-questions (2 who, 1 what, 1 when, 1 where and 1 why) and 1 multiple choice How-question, aimed at analyzing the students' level of understanding of both visual and auditory coherence and cohesion (images and words/sounds/music) with reference to the plot of the episode, and (ii) 6 right/wrong questions on the vocabulary used by the animated characters (terminology, common nouns, colloquialisms, phraseology and puns), designed to determine the students' level of understanding of lexical items through both text and image (words and context).

For the experimental test focusing on cultural aspects, we used two other episodes of *Super Wings*: episode 21 of season 2 ("The Super Seven") and episode 24 of season 1 ("*Fiesta! Fiesta!*"). These two different episodes were deeply imbued with references to the US culture and the Mexican culture, respectively. In both cases we used only the dubbed Latin American Spanish version of the videos ("*Los supersiete*" and "*¡Fiesta! ¡Fiesta!*"). On this occasion, we created two different questionnaires. The first was designed to assess the students' level of knowledge about specific aspects of US culture using text and images before and after watching "*Los supersiete*" (the students were asked to relate a set of images to specific places, people, objects, animals, means of transport and actions). The second questionnaire was designed to assess the students' level of knowledge of specific aspects of Mexican culture using text and images before and after watching "*¡Fiesta! ¡Fiesta!*" (this time the students were asked to relate a set of images to specific places, objects and games).

3.5. Procedure

The two research interviews with the principal of César Chávez Elementary School and the teacher were both conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded, and then transcribed for their subsequent analysis.

To fully contextualize the procedure followed in the two experimental tests conducted with the students, some preliminary considerations should be taken into account: we worked with the students *in situ*, in their usual classroom; to collect the students' answers to the questionnaires, we asked the questions aloud, the students answered by raising their hands, and we ourselves then filled in the questionnaires; more than one answer was allowed for every question, and not all of the students answered all of the questions; viewing of the videos prior to filling in the questionnaire was always guided, and although there was no control group, for each of the two experiments two different experimental groups were formed as explained below.

For the test focusing on linguistic aspects, we first divided the students into two different experimental groups according to their level of English. Eight of the 22 students had an advanced level of English, and the remaining 14 had an elementary level.¹

¹ Nowadays, all applicants to either the Bilingual Pathway or the Dual Language Immersion Pathway must sit two different English language tests: an initial placement test (around the month of August) and an annual test (approximately between February and March). Depending on the results obtained, and in line with California ELD standards, LEP students can be classified (through the initial test) or reclassified (through the annual test) according to the system referred to as ELPAC (English Language Proficiency Assessment for California), which comprises four main language proficiency levels, namely: "Emerging", Low-to midrange of the "Expanding", Upper range of the "Expanding" through the lower range of the "Bridging" and Upper range of "Bridging" (SFUSD, 2019, p. 6). Although ideally all the students in the same group would have the same level of English, in practice it is actually

First, we played the original American English version of the *Super Wings* episode entitled “Blockosaurus Park”, and we administered the two questionnaires described in the previous section: one based on the episode plot and the other focusing on the vocabulary used by the animated characters. We then played the dubbed Latin American Spanish version of the same episode, “*El parque de los dinosaurios mecánicos*”, and we repeated the procedure, administering the same two questionnaires on the plot and on the vocabulary, respectively.

In order not to bias the results of the second viewing, since the students were watching the episode in Spanish immediately after having watched it in English, we did not provide them with any information between the viewings. Also, we played the video first in English and then in Spanish because we knew the students’ proficiency level was higher in Spanish than in English.

For the test focusing on cultural aspects, we again formed two experimental groups, but this time according to the students’ place of origin. Twelve students had been born in the USA, and ten students had been born in Latin American countries.

As explained in the previous section, we started with a questionnaire aimed at evaluating the students’ initial knowledge of US culture, and for this purpose, the students were asked to relate a set of images to a group of specific cultural concepts. The images were shown on a flat screen. Although the questions had all been written in English, since we were the ones reading the questions aloud, it was eventually necessary to formulate them in a mixture of English and Spanish because the students had a higher proficiency level in Spanish.

After this initial activity, we played the dubbed Latin American Spanish version of the *Super Wings* episode entitled “*Los supersiete*”. We let the students watch the whole video, with no pauses, and then asked them the same questions they had been asked before watching the video.

Afterwards, we repeated the procedure, this time focusing on the students’ level of knowledge of Mexican culture. We first administered the initial questionnaire before playing the video, then we played the dubbed Latin American Spanish version of the episode of *Super Wings* entitled “*¡Fiesta! ¡Fiesta!*”, and finally we asked the students the same questions they had been asked before the guided viewing.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the interviews held with Freeman (Freeman, personal communication, September 5, 2019) and Marosi (personal communication, September 5, 2019), in addition to talking with them about the SFUSD educational system and the didactic tools and methodologies used in the classroom, respectively, they expressed their valuable opinions on biliteracy and immersion programs in terms of CLBs’ linguistic and cultural development and school outcomes.

Freeman strongly supported immersion programs, stating that it is mainly students of a higher socioeconomic level—that is to say, native English speakers—who choose such programs when, in her opinion, they “should really be treating all their students as immersion

very hard to arrange students according to levels, which is what we had to do with the group of students participating in our study. Fortunately, we were able to confirm with their teacher, Marosi (personal communication, September 5, 2019), that there were two well differentiated levels in the group.

bilingual students” since “there are no monolingual native Spanish students (...). More and more of (their) students actually are either bilingual or speak more English and Spanish.” Moreover, when enrolling in biliteracy programs, students who are not native English speakers are expected to be proficient in English by the 3rd grade despite being taught in Spanish, which constitutes something of a paradox.

Contrary to Freeman’s opinion, however, Marosi believed biliteracy programs were working. In his opinion, Latino kids’ academic outcomes in biliteracy programs are better than their outcomes in immersion programs, while their linguistic level probably improves in immersion programs just because they have more exposure to English in class. He also mentioned that the results obtained from a statistical study that had been conducted in the school that year revealed that bilingual kids in the 4th and 5th grades were outperforming the English-only kids in their biliteracy programs.

The following results reflect an objective research reality that, nevertheless, cannot be understood without the subjective visions of the mediators that act in between the educational system and the students.

4.1. Audiovisual Translation as a Didactic Tool

For the group of students participating in our study, Marosi (personal communication, September 5, 2019) used the textbooks provided by SFUSD, but he also created his own teaching material. Particularly relevant to our study, and partially differing from Incalcaterra’s assumption (2018) on the main AVT modes used for language teaching and learning, was the fact that when he used videos from YouTube, he never used subtitled videos, but either dubbed videos in Spanish (for example, for Science) or original videos in English (for example, for teaching English in ELD). Equally interesting was the discovery that the teachers at César Chávez Elementary School were all specifically required not to code-switch or translate. Accordingly, when conducting an audiovisual activity in the classroom, Marosi never code-switched or translated from Spanish into English or vice versa.

4.2. Acquisition of Linguistic Competences through Audiovisual Translation

After conducting the first experiment focusing on linguistic aspects, we extracted data related to the acquisition of linguistic competences through AVT, including comprehension of both the overall plot and specific lexical items in the audiovisual product viewed.

The results of the first part of the experiment are shown in Figure 1 below:

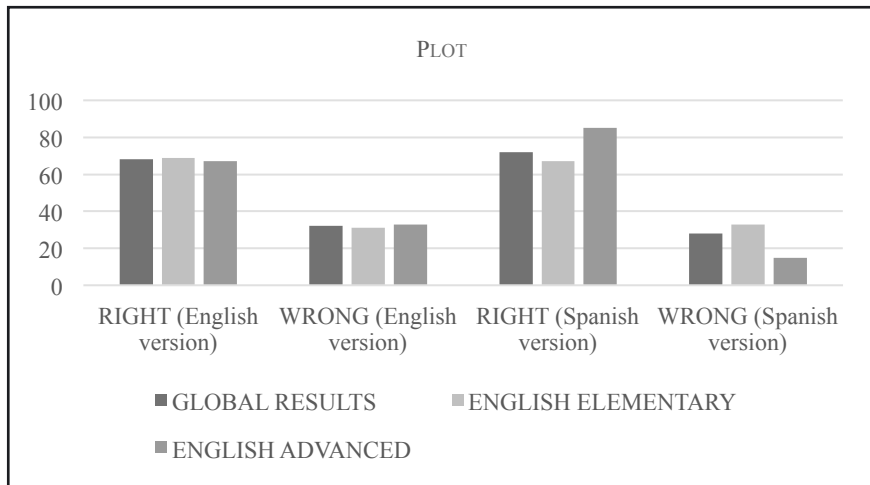


Figure 1. Results of the experiment on linguistic aspects: plot

The global results comprise data for both of the experimental groups of students: those with an advanced level of English and those with an elementary level. The two groups' comprehension of English and Spanish was quite similar, based on their percentages of correct answers to the questions formulated in the questionnaires (68% and 72%, respectively). In general, their understanding of the product was quite good in both languages, with only 32% of the questions being answered incorrectly after viewing the English version and 28% of the questions being answered incorrectly after viewing the Spanish version.

With regard to comprehension of the English version, the partial results confirmed these tendencies in both groups independently. In other words, the students' comprehension of the English version was similar (the English elementary group answered 69% of the questions correctly while the English advanced group answered 67% of them correctly). However, while comprehension of the English version was good (only around 30% of the answers were wrong in both groups), we see a discrepancy in the students' understanding of the Spanish version where, surprisingly, the English advanced group performed better (85%) than the English elementary group (67%).

Recalling the information on their background, 27.3% of the total group of students had stated that their primary language was English. We, therefore, assume that these students belonged to the English advanced group. One explanation for their better results in Spanish could be that their bilingualism may have a positive effect on their comprehension of audiovisual products in Spanish. This bilingualism would, above all, have been fostered by the language of the instruction they have been receiving since pre-kindergarten (100% Spanish) and the audiovisual language of the products they have been consuming at home or in other contexts (English and Spanish alike), supporting in this sense the idea that audiovisual texts, as hubs of different semiotic channels, nurture an immediate cultural (and linguistic) transfer (Incalcaterra, 2018, p. 489).

The results of the second part of the experiment are shown in Figure 2 below:

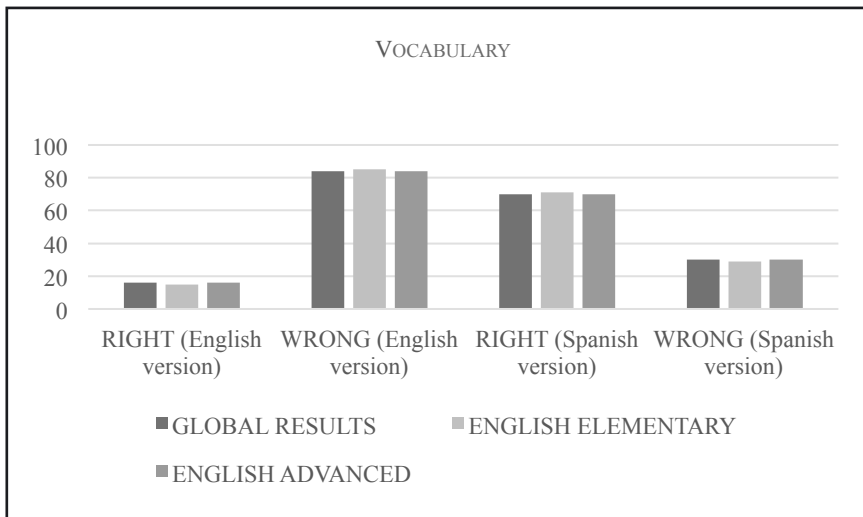


Figure 2. Results of the experiment on linguistic aspects: vocabulary

In this case, there is no significant difference between the global results and the partial results. With regard to the vocabulary questions included in the questionnaires, the performance of both experimental groups of students was almost identical. On the whole, their comprehension of certain items of vocabulary in the English version was somewhat deficient (84% wrong answers), marking a considerable difference with their comprehension of the same vocabulary in the Spanish version (30% wrong answers).

As can be seen in Figure 3 below, the items that produced more correct answers, both in English and Spanish, were terminology, common nouns and colloquialisms, as opposed to phraseology and puns. This may reflect the young age of the students (95.4% were 6 years old at that time).

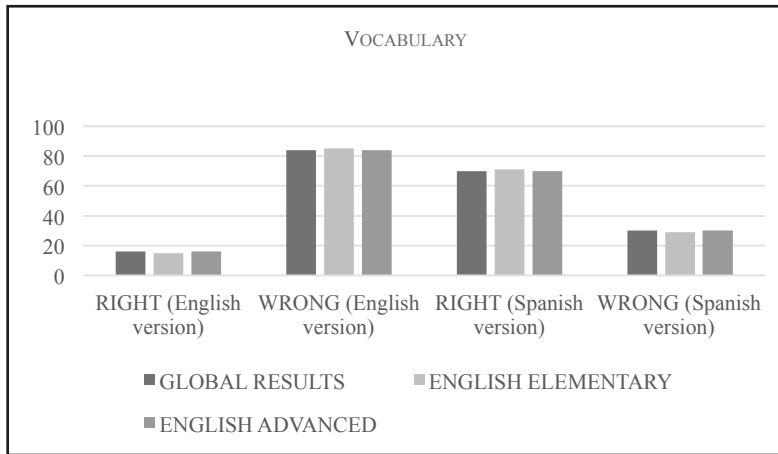


Figure 3. Global participation in the experiment on linguistic aspects: vocabulary

4.3. Acquisition of Cultural Competences through Audiovisual Translation

The data extracted after the second experiment indicate the level of acquisition of cultural competences through AVT. Since the USA was the host country of all the students and Mexico is the country of origin of most Latin American immigrants in San Francisco, questions were asked about aspects of US and Mexican culture.

The results of the first part of the experiment, focusing on US culture, are shown in Figure 4 below:

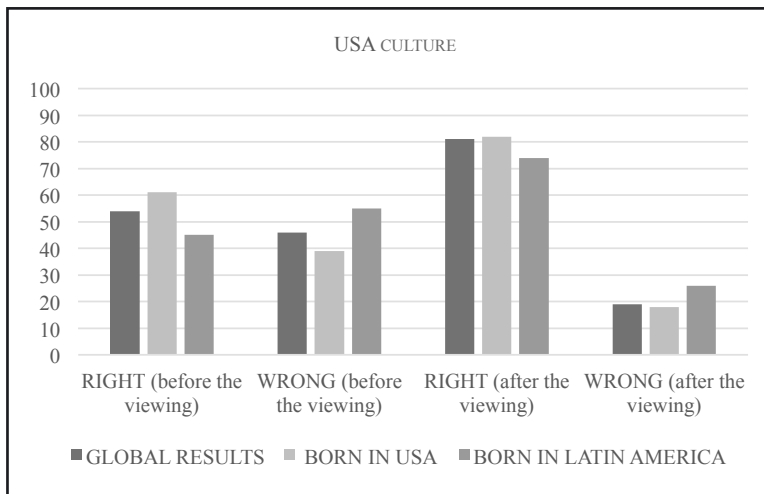


Figure 4. Results of the experiment on cultural aspects: US culture

The global results show that half of the students (54%) had a pretty good knowledge of the aspects of US culture asked about in the initial knowledge questionnaire. After viewing the audiovisual product in Spanish, this percentage rose to 81%. The audiovisual product therefore proved to be a meaningful channel of cultural transmission.

In the partial results, we see that both experimental groups diverge from the global percentage in different ways. 61% of the students born in the USA answered the initial knowledge questionnaire correctly, but only 45% of students born in a Latin American country did the same. After viewing, the percentage of students born in a Latin American country who answered correctly rose to 74%, but this was still below the 82% of their USA-born peers.

This comparison of results reveals that the initial knowledge of US culture in the global group correlates with the students' places of birth (54.5% in the USA and 45.5% in Latin America). The positive impact of the audiovisual products on the students' cultural knowledge was also stronger among those born in Latin America, with 29% of them improving their knowledge as opposed to 21% of USA-born students.

The results of the second part of the experiment, focusing on Mexican culture, are shown in Figure 5 below:

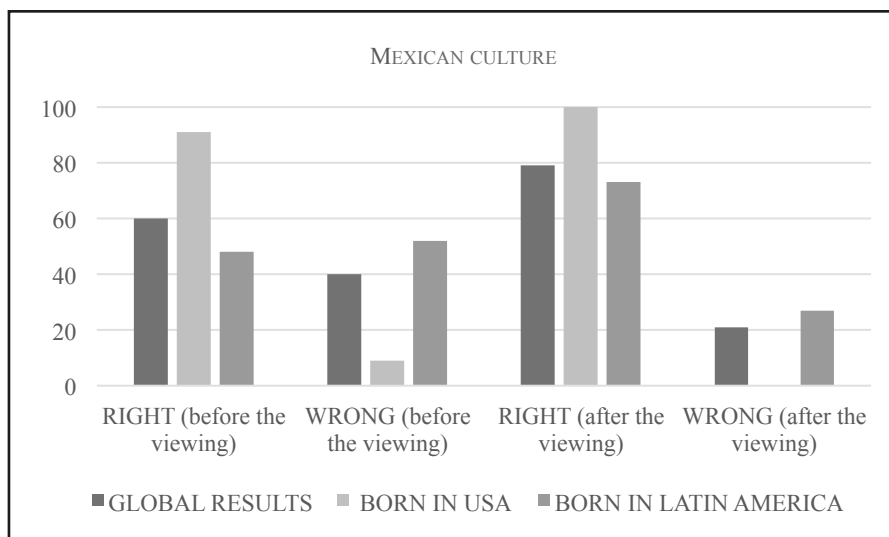


Figure 5. Results of the experiment on cultural aspects: Mexican culture

The global results show that 60% of the students had good initial knowledge of Mexican culture. This percentage rose to 79% after the viewing of the audiovisual product in Spanish. If we compare these results with those obtained for the US culture part of the experiment, we can affirm that previous knowledge of Mexican culture was 6% higher than that of US culture, but that the audiovisual product nevertheless also had a positive impact on the transmission of Mexican culture.

The partial results, on the other hand, reveal an unexpected fact. Before viewing the video, 91% of the students born in the USA gave the right answers as opposed to only

48% of the students born in Latin America. After viewing, these percentages increased to 100% and 73%, respectively. As happened before, the impact of the audiovisual product was stronger in the case of students born in Latin America.

The deeper knowledge of Mexican culture among those students born in the USA may be explained by the need to adhere to their roots at home, while the lesser knowledge of this culture among students born in Latin America may be explained by their need to quickly integrate into the host country or by their having been born in Latin America countries other than Mexico. These inferences may explain why audiovisual texts and AVT can be used as a productive means of researching cultural and intercultural awareness in bilingual and multilingual contexts (Incalcaterra et al., 2020, pp. 1-2).

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have presented an empirical pilot study conducted at César Chávez Elementary School in San Francisco (California, USA), with the aim of assessing the potential usefulness of AVT as a didactic tool for the acquisition of linguistic and cultural competences by CLBs and, consequently, to assess the potential applicability of the research methodology to other bilingual educational systems.

Although this study adhered to a quantitative methodology as its dominant research framework, qualitative research tools like the interviews conducted with the school staff allowed us to better contextualize the research objectives, to analyze and discuss the results and to infer meaningful conclusions. Thus, we found out that: (i) audiovisual products seemed to be used effectively as a didactic tool at César Chávez Elementary School, (ii) audiovisual products were used in both the courses taught in Spanish (dubbed videos) and the ELD classes (original videos in English), and (iii) subtitled videos were never used, only dubbed or original audiovisual products.

As for the results obtained from the students' experimental tests, we concluded that:

(i) the students' level of acquisition of linguistic competences differed according to whether we assessed the plot or the vocabulary of the audiovisual product. In the first case, the students had a generally good understanding of both English and Spanish versions of the audiovisual material (with a surprisingly better performance by the English advanced group in the viewing of the Spanish version), while their comprehension of the vocabulary in the English version was generally quite improvable in comparison with their comprehension of the Spanish version. Visual and auditory elements such as images, sounds and music may have helped facilitate understanding of the plot, serving as coherence and cohesion features in both languages, whereas the context may have been useful for the understanding of lexical items in English but not quite so much in Spanish.

(ii) the students' level of acquisition of cultural competences was significantly improved after viewing the corresponding audiovisual products in Spanish, with regard both to US culture and Mexican culture. Starting from an initial deeper knowledge of Mexican culture than of American culture (especially among those students born in the USA), students were able to acquire a better understanding of their cultural contexts (whether native or adoptive) thanks to the texts and images in the videos.

Our results definitely confirm the starting hypothesis and enlighten us about the crucial role that audiovisual products can play in improving the second language proficiency levels of CLBs and their related culture; the main contribution of this work to the field of study being, therefore, the research methodology proposed itself since we find it applicable to other educational systems.

Despite of the difficulties that empirical studies may pose with regard to the participation of minors (permissions, special procedures, level of attention, etc.) and the subsequent limitations of our study due to the sample size, we nevertheless foresee a substantial field of study for the research of AVT in combination with bilingualism and CLB from a reception perspective (bilingual or multilingual educational systems, different educational levels, online versus face-to-face educational methods, etc.).

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