

COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES TO WORK WITH CUBAN CINEMA: AN
EXPERIENCE IN THE SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

*ATIVIDADES COMUNICATIVAS PARA TRABALHAR COM FILMES CUBANOS:
UMA EXPERIÊNCIA NA SALA DE AULA DE ESPANHOL COMO LÍNGUA
ESTRANGEIRA*

*ACTIVIDADES COMUNICATIVAS PARA TRABAJAR CON PELÍCULAS CUBANAS:
UNA EXPERIENCIA EN EL AULA DE ESPAÑOL COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA*



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ABSTRACT: The aim of the study is to demonstrate the importance of integrating some Cuban films in the teaching-learning process of reference level C1 of the discipline Integral Practice of Spanish as a Foreign Language in the Language Centre of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Oriente, Cuba. The specificities of these audiovisual materials make them motivating resources for language users, as they facilitate the contextualisation of the pragmatic component. A qualitative and exploratory literature review study was carried out. Observation of Spanish as a foreign language classes with students at level C1 was applied. We propose communicative activities aimed at developing pragmatic competence, based on the potential of using the Cuban film *Habana Blues* (2005). In conclusion, we recognise that the inclusion of film as a useful didactic resource contributes to the development of pragmatic competence in non-Spanish-speaking students.

KEYWORDS: Communicative activities. Pragmatic competence. Pragmatic-discursive contents. Spanish as a foreign language. Cinema.

RESUMO: *O objetivo do estudo é demonstrar a importância da integração de alguns filmes cubanos no processo de ensino-aprendizagem do nível de referência C1 da disciplina Prática Integral do Espanhol como Língua Estrangeira no Centro de Línguas da Faculdade de Línguas Estrangeiras da Universidade do Oriente, Cuba. As especificidades destes materiais audiovisuais os tornam recursos motivadores para os usuários da linguagem, pois facilitam a contextualização do componente pragmático. Foi realizado um estudo qualitativo e exploratório de revisão de literatura. Foi aplicada a observação de aulas de espanhol como língua estrangeira com alunos do nível C1. Propomos atividades comunicativas destinadas a desenvolver competência pragmática, com base no potencial de utilização do filme cubano Habana Blues (2005). Para concluir, reconhecemos que a inclusão do filme como um recurso didático útil contribui para o desenvolvimento da competência pragmática em estudantes que não falam espanhol.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Atividades comunicativas. Competência pragmática. Conteúdo pragmático-discursivo. Espanhol como língua estrangeira. Cinema.*

RESUMEN: *El objetivo del estudio es demostrar la importancia de integrar algunas películas cubanas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del nivel de referencia C1 de la disciplina Práctica Integral del Español como Lengua Extranjera en el Centro de Idiomas de la Facultad de Lenguas Extranjeras en la Universidad de Oriente, Cuba. Las especificidades de estos materiales audiovisuales los convierten en recursos motivadores para los usuarios de la lengua, pues facilitan contextualizar el componente pragmático. Se realiza un estudio de revisión bibliográfica de tipo cualitativa y exploratoria. Se aplicó la observación de las clases con estudiantes del nivel C1. Proponemos actividades comunicativas encaminadas al desarrollo de la competencia pragmática, a partir de las potencialidades del uso de la película cubana Habana Blues (2005). A modo de conclusión, reconocemos que la inclusión del cine como un recurso didáctico útil contribuye a potenciar la competencia pragmática en el alumnado no hispanohablante.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Actividades comunicativas. Competencia pragmática. Contenidos pragmático-discursivos. Español como lengua extranjera. Películas.*

Introduction

The integration of audiovisual materials supports the presentation of various socio-cultural contents in the language learning process. This line of research has been enriched by the increase in publications that reveal the relevance of the use of audiovisual materials, with the objective of promoting the contextualization of sociocultural aspects in the teaching of foreign languages and second languages (CASTRO VIÚDEZ, 2002; PÉREZ SINUSÍA, 2015; ROSES NIEVES; VILLAVICENCIO SIMON; BARRIEL GUEVARA, 2017).

We consider that the didactic treatment of sociocultural contents related to daily life, personal relationships, values, beliefs and attitudes, body language, social conventions and ritual behavior, according to the *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas: aprendizaje, enseñanza, evaluación* (from now on, MCER, CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2002) and the *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (hereinafter, PCIC, INSTITUTO CERVANTES, 2006), allows the development of communicative competence.

The study aims to demonstrate the importance of the inclusion of Cuban films in the teaching-learning process of the reference level C1 of the discipline Integral Practice of Spanish as a Foreign Language at the Language Center of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the Universidad de Oriente, Cuba. The specificities of these audiovisual materials make them motivating resources for language users, as they facilitate the contextualization of the pragmatic component.

A qualitative and exploratory bibliographic review study is developed that allowed the analysis of the theoretical-methodological sources on the proposed theme. We focus on the practical implications of pragmatic competence, based on the foundations of the field of didactics of Spanish as a foreign language / ELE (BACHMAN, 1995; CASTRO VIÚDEZ, 2002; CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2002; GUTIÉRREZ QUINTANA, 2005; QUERALTÓ, 2005; INSTITUTO CERVANTES, 2006; ROSES NIEVES; VILLAVICENCIO SIMÓN; BARRIEL GUEVARA, 2017; SOCORRO CASTILLO; VILLAVICENCIO SIMÓN; DUCASS ORUE, 2018; SIMÓN *et al.*, 2021).

Participant observation of Spanish as a foreign language class with students of various nationalities at the C1 level was applied. We present communicative activities for the use of the Cuban film *Habana Blues* (2005), by virtue of improving the different competencies in the Spanish language student, through some pragmatic-discursive contents from the

contextualization of sociocultural aspects in the process of learning the language in the Cuban environment.

Theoretical framework

The analysis of the bibliography in relation to the integration of audiovisual materials in the process of learning foreign languages makes it possible to appreciate the existence of several works on the advantages of their use, as it favors an interactive and effective process by improving the appropriation of knowledge, communication skills and attitudes (BRANDIMONTE, 2003; ÁLVAREZ GIL; ALONSO ALMEIDA, 2017; ROSES NIEVES; VILLAVICENCIO SIMÓN; BARRIEL GUEVARA, 2017). The inclusion of audiovisual materials such as films, music videos, news reports, television series, trailers, advertising scenes and short films in the classroom of foreign languages and second languages fulfills several didactic and pedagogical functions.

Brandimonte (2003) emphasizes that the psychological influence of audiovisual material as a pedagogical resource, activates the student's attention to meaningful learning, can model their behaviors in the face of the culture where it arises and also avoid stereotypes. The specificities of the different audiovisual materials make them motivating resources for language users, as they facilitate the contextualization of sociocultural content in the educational environment, as they are an evident representation of the close connection between culture, language and society.

It is essential, therefore, the insertion of audiovisual materials to instill timeliness, naturalness and authenticity to the teaching-learning process of Spanish as a foreign language, in addition to demonstrating and modeling phenomena that otherwise cannot be observed directly in the classroom or in their contact with the natives in the midst of immersion. It was found greater fixation of content or information when accompanied by visual support, because this allows students to be framed in a situational context that arouses their interest and motivation to learn another language, in addition to facilitating the teaching of new content by the teacher (ROSES NIEVES; VILLAVICENCIO SIMÓN; BARRIEL GUEVARA, 2017).

In other words, the audiovisual materials provide the identification and reconstruction of the socio-cultural elements of the target culture that appear in it, according to the attitudes of the learners in relation to the linguistic reality and their previous knowledge pertinent to their culture, which makes the cinematographic text more accessible. Likewise, the cinematographic

language is a tool that allows to contextualize the textual and the sociocultural through the use of the Spanish language. We assume, in this order, the approach of Castro Viúdez (2002, p. 223, our translation),

[...] it is feasible to introduce written and audiovisual texts of all kinds [...] that have relevant sociocultural content to help build the schemes that the natives of a culture possess. In this sense, series and movies are very useful [...]. Although it is difficult to select, it is important that the text is rich enough to give rise to the discussion of the contrast between cultures.

For the purposes of this work, we adopted the contributions of previous studies with an intercultural approach in an environment of linguistic-cultural immersion, because they analyze that in the integrative pedagogical practice it is necessary to recognize the similarities and differences between the new sociocultural reality and the one of origin, from the programming with flexible application character on the linguistic contents, sociocultural and pragmatic (VILLEGAS PAREDES, 2016; SIMÓN *et al.*, 2021). For this reason, it is also necessary to implement a pragmatic approach in the teaching-learning process of Spanish as a way to resolve interferences or pragmatic errors, based on the "[...] treatment of the pragmatic categories that govern the L1 of the learner, in contrast to those of L2, so that a conscious analysis of the languages involved can be made for a reflective and meaningful learning" (VILLEGAS PAREDES, 2016, p. 77, our translation). In this sense, the use of authentic materials enables awareness of the strategies of speech acts as components of a pragmatic-discursive nature, which vary in the communicative interaction with situational and contextual particularities that negotiation, argumentation, control and the task of cooperation with the interlocutor imply (GUTIÉRREZ QUINTANA, 2005; SIMÓN *et al.*, 2021).

Roses Nieves, Villavicencio Simón and Barriel Guevara (2017), state that non-Spanish speaking students at the Universidad de Oriente feel motivated to know the referential and differential particularities that have been shaping Cuban culture:

[...] The courses generally use didactic materials that focus their contents on linguistic aspects with little integration of sociocultural aspects; there are a limited number of audiovisual materials that reflect the being and work of Cubans, the ones used are anecdotal-historical, which facilitate communicative practice in the classroom, but do not enable sociocultural interaction in the contexts of action of students (ROSES NIEVES; VILLAVICENCIO SIMON; BARRIEL GUEVARA, 2017, p. 479, our translation).

Thus, it is possible to see didactic proposals to work with audiovisual materials that demand the sociocultural understanding of the product by the student in the learning of the Spanish language. However, there are still few studies that highlight the selection of Cuban films to favor the treatment of pragmatic-discursive contents from the contextualization of sociocultural aspects in the process of learning Spanish as a foreign language in conditions of immersion, such as Cuban. Thus, the possibility arises of motivating the conscious exploration of Cuban films with the intention of improving the pragmatic competence in the apprentices. For these reasons, we suggest the implementation of communicative activities aimed at the development of such competence in the ELE classroom through the exhibition of Cuban films, which contribute to guide the development of communicative skills and critical and constructive thinking of students, linked to decision-making through observation, participation and reflection.

Bachman (1995) considers that pragmatic competence includes sociolinguistic and functional or eloquent. This competence is interrelated with the functional use of linguistic resources, that is, it deals with the performance of speech acts and how they are linked in conversation or text, which is also called functional competence. It also includes discursive competence and the ordering of sentences and texts. It refers to the student's ability to order sentences in sequences producing coherent fragments of language, cohesive, with logical order, and to the use of language to perform specific actions such as greeting, saying goodbye, giving information, apologizing, begging, inviting, rejecting, asking permission, among others (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2002).

Methodology

A qualitative and exploratory bibliographic review was used, which allowed the analysis of the theoretical-methodological sources on the proposed theme, data collection and analysis. Based on participant observation of classes with students of various nationalities at the reference level C1 of the discipline Integral Practice of Spanish as a Foreign Language of the Language Center of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the Universidade de Oriente, Cuba, during the academic period of 2018-2019, it is manifested that the didactic use of Cuban films to deepen the interpretation, appropriation and functional use of linguistic expressions according to the Cuban reality is still limited.

At the C1 level, the student has achieved an optimal degree of communicative competence and meets the necessary conditions to deepen the functioning and complexities of the Spanish language in the usual uses of the speaker, so that attention is given to very specific grammatical objectives. It revises, consolidates, deepens and enriches the linguistic contents seen in the previous courses. Likewise, emphasis is placed on correcting the most common errors or failures of students, so that the student acquires a sufficient degree of fluency, precision, spontaneity and effectiveness in habitual situations with natives, and more specific, which require understanding and production of oral and written, conceptually and linguistically complex texts on various topics, in a variety of standard languages, with a wide lexical repertoire and showing a correct use of the mechanisms of organization, articulation and cohesion of the text (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2002).

Findings

Pragmatic errors are evident by students that can give rise to cultural misunderstandings during communicative interaction in the classroom, even if they master the lexical, grammatical and stylistic aspects at this level (SIMÓN *et al.*, 2021). According to Villegas Paredes (2016), this is caused by pragmatic-linguistic interference or transfer of speech act strategies from the language of origin to the mother tongue and by interference or transfer of behaviors from the language and culture of origin to the target language.

Communicative activities for the development of pragmatic competence in ELE students: Inclusion of the Cuban film *Havana Blues*

As an example, we present a sequence of communicative activities for the reference level C1 in the Cuban educational context of immersion, taking as references the guidelines pointed out by the MCER (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2002) and the PCIC (INSTITUTO CERVANTES, 2006), with the objective of promoting pragmatic competence and resolve misunderstandings in the various communicative situations. In accordance with the general and specific objectives that are intended to be achieved in the course with a view to the student coming into direct contact with the uses of the Spanish language, communicative activities are designed that guarantee the systematization and deepening of the pragmatic-discursive contents that acquire complexity progressively in the formative process, from the use of the selected Cuban film: *Havana Blues* (2005). This audiovisual exhibition promotes the contextualized

study of phraseological units, such as conversational markers and sayings that represent the use of language for different purposes, among the contents that deserve special attention at this level and motivate learning due to their daily nature.

Working with the sequences of colloquial conversations of this Cuban film, as a textual variety, facilitates the reflective analysis of the characteristics of the colloquial discourse of Cuban Spanish as a national variant in cultural interaction. In the same way, one can introduce the study of the courtesy strategies that characterize the behavior of the Cuban as demonstrative sociocultural content.

The activities of understanding, expression, interaction or mediation acquire a pragmatic-linguistic dimension from the practice of listening comprehension of the selected film, based on the identification with the sociocultural aspects of Cuban culture that appear in them, and their reconstruction, depending on the attitudes of the students towards the linguistic reality and their previous knowledge according to the culture of origin, which makes cinematic text more accessible. Therefore, they involve the practice of reading comprehension, lexicon expansion, grammatical feedback, oral debate and creativity in writing, to evaluate the student's progress.

Its configuration provides total freedom of action for the teacher, both from the point of view of the content and in relation to the linguistic structures, according to the requirements of the program corresponding to the C1 level of the center, and to the communicative needs of the students or to their own beliefs as a teacher. This specifies that the student can interact with fluency, spontaneity, precision and correction strategically, both orally and in writing, on the pragmatic-discursive contents, in order to overcome the deficiencies in communicative interaction.

Objectives of communicative activities

- ✓ Analyze and value family and extra-family sentimental relationships.
- ✓ Deepen information about behaviors and conventions between parents and children, friends and neighbors.

Socio-cultural contents

- ✓ Conflicts in sentimental, family and friendship relationships.
- ✓ Parent-child behaviors and relationships. Bonds between children and parents or other relatives.
- ✓ Social conventions and behaviors when dealing with relationships between family and friends. The friend, sentimental counselor.
- ✓ Activities in which Cubans preferably gather with family, friends and neighbors: celebrations, birthdays, end of the year, graduations, significant days.
- ✓ Relations between neighbors of the neighborhood. Rules of fraternal coexistence in the community of Santiago. Solidarity between neighbors. Are we all the same? Ostentation.

Pragmatic-discursive contents

Functions

- ✓ Valuation: *It's/I think it's good/bad/bad taste, I find your comment in very bad taste.*
- ✓ Opinion: *(For me) it gives me the feeling/impression that. In my understanding/apparent/way of seeing. In my opinion. In my modest/humble opinion.*
- ✓ Present a counterargument: *You are not without reason, but / nevertheless / on the contrary. I don't say (no)..., but / nevertheless / now.*
- ✓ Agreed / disagreement expressed: *Yes, me too, no, neither do I, I share your idea/position, I agree with what (of) that.* Partial agreement: *(I) don't say that..., but... I don't agree with you.* Express total disagreement: *Of course not. That doesn't make any sense. Who has neither feet nor head.*
- ✓ Express fear, anxiety, and worry: *I worry, I'm horrified, I'm afraid.*
- ✓ Express nervousness: *It drives me crazy. My nerves are on edge. I'm looking forward to it.*
- ✓ Express anger or outrage: *Damn! I get / It makes me sick / from a dog mood...*
- ✓ Aversion expresses: *I don't like / Disgusts me. It's disgusting. / disgusting / abominable...*
- ✓ Express tiredness: *I'm fed up so far /up to the nose.*

Discursive resources

Argumentative and counter argumentative connectors:

- ✓ Justifications: due to, because of, *thanks to*, *by virtue of*, *given that*.
- ✓ Consecutive: *therefore*, therefore, *therefore*.
- ✓ Inserting a counter-argument: *Although*, *now then*.

Structuring of information:

- ✓ List topics: *First of all*, *well*.
- ✓ Continuity: *in the same way*/*way*/*mode*.
- ✓ Closing: *by way of conclusion*.
- ✓ Explanatory words: *In other words*.
- ✓ Recaps: *In a nutshell*, *after all*, *at the end of it all*, *after all...*
- ✓ Rectify: *preferably*.
- ✓ Degressive: *In this regard*, *anyway*.
- ✓ Mitigation: dissent in a debate or discussion, mitigation.
- ✓ Uncertainty in expressing the dissenting opinion: *I think you're wrong*.
- ✓ Dissent as partial conformity: *I'm not saying this is wrong, but I wouldn't say it*.
- ✓ Approach to disagreement from an impersonal point of view: *It may be suggested that the theory lacks originality...*
 - ✓ Stereotypical formulas to mitigate dissent: *I don't want to interrupt, but..., I'm sorry I have to bother you, but..., in my humble opinion..., I may be wrong...*

Discursive genres and textual products

Cinematic text.

Text of the song.

Strategy

Review and comment on a video.

Lexical content

- ✓ Lexicon related to parental-filial and friendship relationships.
- ✓ Treatment formulas referring to extra-family relationships (*wild, compadre, asere (in Cuba), millet, brother, nagüe (in Cuba)*)
- ✓ Lexicon related to neighborhood behaviors: *home alone, gossiping, brejeiro, being aware of the lives of others*
- ✓ Idioms full of affection typical of familiar and extra-family sentimental relationships. The insult.
- ✓ Emblematic cultural gestures, aggressiveness and others (mockery, groping, smiling).

Grammatical content

- ✓ The imperfect of the callsign. Values and meaning: descriptive. *He already knew that;* by surprise: *Go, you were here;* Censorship: *Didn't you have to do the duties?*
- ✓ The imperative: Values and meaning. Conditional value: *Dare to do it and you will see (threat nuance). Approve and buy you the bike (promise)* Ironic nuance: *Look how good!* Discomfort or irritation: *OK!* Of request or petition: *Walk!... Go you.*
- ✓ Relative and interrogative adverbs and adverbial locutions: *as followed by what Value of surprise or disapproval. How are you not going to eat?*
- ✓ Adverbial subordinate clauses:
Causalities: causality links and connectors: *Because of this, thanks to this, because of this.*
Consecutive: consecutive links and connectors: *Well, then, yes, that's it.*

1. Watch the Spanish-Cuban film *Habana Blues* of the year 2005, directed by Benito Zambrano and lasting 2 hours and 35 minutes.

Observation Guide:

- i. What does the title suggest?
- ii. Summarize the argument in a 300-word paragraph.
- iii. Point out the themes that appear in the film. What is the main issue in your opinion?

iv. Throughout the screening, take note of words or expressions whose meaning you don't understand. Write down the forms of treatment used by the characters and their function.

v. What are the differences between the Spanish spoken by the Spanish characters that appear and that of the Cubans? Extracts the expression to show these differences.

vi. What cultural behaviors are surprising or new to you?

vii. Valuing the non-verbal behavior of young Cubans, the forms of treatment and the colloquial expressions used by the characters.

viii. Explain whether the problems or conflicts raised in the film may occur in your sociocultural environment.

A) Write a text where you express your critical opinion about the film. Use the argumentative bullets and connectors discussed above.

B) Some characters in the film *Habana Blues* use colloquial expressions for various situations. For example: *Dead dog, the anger is over; Get right to the point; Don't warm your head anymore; The sparrow falls on you.*

a) Explain the meaning of each expression.

b) Choose the appropriate level of speech at which these phrases are used: formal, informal, familiar, vulgar.

c) Tell if you know other expressions related to the meaning of the above.

d) Create a dialogue with your partner in which you use two of these expressions. You can choose one of the following situations:

1. You are in a hurry and worried about getting to university because you have a Spanish exam and you meet a friend on a street in Santiago. He, at that moment, begins to tell details about the last Cuban film that you haven't been able to see yet.

2. You have been studying Spanish for a year in Cuba and on the beach, you just met a citizen of your country, you talk about the nostalgia you feel for your country.

The implementation of communicative activities allowed to approach the idiosyncrasy of Cubans, from the debate on the film as a means of reflection, dialogue and interpretation of the cultural patterns represented in it. The motivation and interest of the students for learning the different contents worked was confirmed, which facilitated the group collaboration for the realization of the activities from the didactic exploration of the film. Most students recognized it as attractive, despite some difficulties encountered in understanding certain linguistic expressions during screening and then in the ability to perform some activities properly.

However, it was possible to observe the viability of the activities designed from its organization and the logical sequence to encourage the active participation of students in the teaching-learning process of the Spanish language.

Final remarks

We proposed communicative activities for the integration of the selected Cuban film in the teaching-learning process of the reference level C1 of Spanish as a foreign language at the Universidade de Oriente, Cuba. Cinema is an appropriate alternative to contextualize sociocultural content in the educational environment, as it is an evident reflection of the close connection between culture, language and society.

As a conclusion of what has been said so far, it can be argued that it becomes essential to expand the sociocultural competence of non-Spanish language students in the context of Cuban immersion, taking into account the transmission of significant knowledge about Cuban culture, by virtue of an effective communicative exchange during their stay in the country. The methodological experience provided clarifies the need for an adequate inclusion of communicative activities in the teaching-learning process of Spanish as a foreign language, based on the potentialities of the use of some Cuban films as useful didactic resources for the contextualization of the sociocultural aspects in ELE in the university institution.

It is evident that the use of these materials contributes, to a large extent, to the development and evaluation of each of the subdivisions of communicative competence: linguistic, discursive, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, strategic and sociocultural competence. Although the activities proposed in the article were initially conceived for the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in the Cuban immersion environment, it is considered that its logic of presentation and its didactic principles can be generalized and adapted to teaching in other sociocultural contexts to develop the pragmatic perspective of the use of the language.

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