

The Effect of Popular American Films on Taiwanese University EFL Students' Perceptions of L2 Culture

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ABSTRACT

Film has been used for many university-level courses in Taiwan. Extant research, though, is limited regarding how this specific form of visual media may affect EFL students' understanding of foreign or L2 culture. Hence, the purpose of this research is to discover if using this authentic material has significant impact on students' L2 cultural learning. The 52 student participants were enrolled in a junior-level course at a northern Taiwan university. They first completed a quantitative attitudinal pre-test with Likert-type questions at the very beginning of the semester. After two months of instruction, the posttest identical to the pre-test was administered. Next, SPSS software was used to obtain the bivariate statistical data with *t*-tests for comparative analysis. Final results proved overall that popular American films affect participants' L2 culture learning. These results provide EFL educators with an effective option for teaching this subject. In addition to providing the effective aspects of this approach, there are suggestions regarding how to manage some ineffective ones.

Key words: EFL, L2 culture, feature film, Taiwan, university students

INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language (EFL) learners work hard these days to achieve fluency in order to expand their employment prospects, mostly being taught that their achievement can

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simply be measured by testing their proficiency in the four skills. This is apparently true in places like Taiwan (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Lin, 2013). Often times, learners' success on these English language examinations is measured more by their adherence and understanding of the language's structure rather than its actual social contexts. Therefore, a contradiction could possibly exist in declaring high achievement in a language based on test scores rather than test takers' actual abilities to use the language successfully in real situations. These situations in actuality, such as in pursuit of advanced study or professional employment, necessitate English learners acquire informed cultural understandings, along with the more structural areas of English grammar, syntax, and semantics. The English language may be new to the learner; however, the language itself is not. What is said in a statement, announcement, or dialogue, though immediate and either as a native or foreign language, already has a long history of meanings attached to it that has been accumulating throughout a history of the language's usages by various groups in a variety of situations (Hall, 2013). According to Zhao (2010), there is a close relationship between foreign language teaching and cultural instruction. Therefore, the learner of any foreign language must ultimately have cultural understanding to be able to use it successfully.

One of the primary goals of language instruction is to help students acquire proficiency for communication. Many language experts agree that communicative proficiency should embrace two elements: linguistic competence and socio-cultural competence (Abrate, 1993; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). Linguistic competence for cross-cultural communication can be achieved only if the instruction of language is carried out in the context of the foreign culture.

However, inclusion of L2 culture in Taiwan's EFL university environment is uncertain according to research by (Sung & Chen, 2009). Although instructors view it positively and its presence necessary to facilitate learners' communicative competence, they encounter issues regarding its implementation, such as a lack suitable learning materials and a lack of time available to instruct L2 culture related material due to EFL university curricula. Moreover, there is even low prioritization of L2 cultural instruction among instructors and curricula in Taiwan's EFL instruction (Cheng et al., 2007). These oppositions between intentions and actions may lead to an uncertainty that hinders the achievement of ultimate goals in EFL learners' language proficiency.

Actually, one major goal for Taiwan's government is to promote communicative English across the island (Savignon, 2002), including the compulsory instruction of English beginning in elementary schools (Su, 2006). As aforementioned, without the presence of L2 culture in Taiwan's EFL university classrooms, it could be more difficult for learners to acquire communicative competence. Therefore, along with the great strides Taiwan's educational system has made in the promotion and incorporation of reforms facilitating instructors to help English learners achieve communicative proficiency, more must be done according to Wang (2002).

Hence, it is necessary to continue the dialogue regarding the importance of implementation of L2 culture, along with innovative and effective ways of teaching it in Taiwan's university foreign language classrooms. One innovative approach is implementing comprehensible input (CI) or authentic input (Krashen, 1982) into the English foreign language curriculum. Some research on the utilization of authentic input has already been conducted on EFL students in Taiwan's universities, specifically focusing on improving skills (Hsieh, 2001; Jeng, Wang, & Huang, 2009; Kuo, 2003; Lo, 2010; Tsai & Shang, 2010; Wang, 2010). Also, some have focused on improving L2 culture awareness or understanding or knowledge (Hsu, 2014; Liaw & Johnson, 2001; Su, 2008, 2011; Wu, Marek, & Chen, 2013). Others have also utilized the audiovisual media in the form of either film clips or short films or feature films for improving skills (Chen, 2012; Hsu & Lo, 2009; Katchen, 2003). However, there is a lack of EFL research in universities in Taiwan that utilize feature film as the primary material for teaching L2 culture to further students' language acquisition with communicative competence.

This lack of research provides the rationale for conducting this research. First, the purpose is to investigate the viability of using feature films as CI or authentic input for teaching L2 culture to university EFL students in Taiwan. The goal then is to provide an alternative material that could be realistically implemented into Taiwan's EFL university curricula and actively practiced by instructors. Finally, the plan is to achieve this by conducting research on university students in Taiwan in an actual EFL learning environment with the proposed materials, addressing the initial bases of this research. The research was designed to examine the effectiveness of utilizing films as authentic input for instructing L2 culture. It hopes to determine if popular American films affect Taiwanese university ESL students' perceptions of L2 culture.

This paper begins with discussions serving as a context for the research: (a) language and culture, (b) culture's implementation in EFL instruction, (c) authentic input for language acquisition, and (d) popular film's cultural content. Then, the research methodology is revealed. Finally, the results of the study are discussed, showing how the data answers the initial question. It concludes with implications of the study and proposes prospects for future related research in the field of EFL instruction. Through this content, this research aims to contribute to the research conducted on utilizing authentic input in L2 culture instruction in Taiwan's EFL university classroom.

The findings of this research would hopefully facilitate EFL instructors in helping their students achieve English language proficiency. With the increasing demand in Taiwan for graduates with communicative competence, there is a justifiable need for more effective, practicable ways of teaching. As a result, EFL instructors that apply the recommended approach obtained from these research findings could be better able to instruct their students. EFL instructors should be better informed on how to apply and utilize popular feature films

as CI or authentic input for L2 culture learning to improve students' English language learning. The research may then help in discovering critical areas in the EFL educational process of instructing L2 culture with feature films that have not been revealed. For these reasons, it is hoped that a new way of learning L2 culture with feature films in the EFL classroom may be gained.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cultural Instruction

As Brown (1991) stated “[s]econd language learning is often second culture learning” (p. 33). There are significant grounds that support the argument for teaching culture in the language classroom. The particular language or target language must be combined with knowledge of its culture (Jacobs, 1989); when students use newly acquired language in the foreign culture, they come to realize that some miscommunications occur which are not caused by incorrect grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary, but their being unknowledgeable of the target-language culture, something beyond those linguistic errors, according to Brooks (1997). Learning a foreign language, he emphasized, stays incomplete and incorrect unless proper cultural instruction is studied.

Importantly, Damen (1987) conceived one of the major characteristics of culture: “Culture is learned. If it can be learned, it can also be instructed or acquired” (p. 2). Moreover, Seelye (1984) asserted that the study of language cannot be separated from the study of culture and students' awareness of the importance of obtaining knowledge of a culture can motivate them to learn a language and reinforce their ability for cross-cultural communication.

An essential first step is to incorporate goals of cultural instruction. Tomalin and Stempleski (2013) recently modified Seelye's (1984) well-established goals of cultural instruction as follows:

1. To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours.
2. To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
3. To help students to become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture.
4. To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.

5. To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
6. To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.
7. To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people. (pp. 7-8)

This initial step aids in solidifying a language institution's establishment of cultural instruction. Then, promotion and implementation of these goals could be an important means to equipping language instructors with the necessary tools, such as a checklist, for educating their students.

Also requiring consideration are preexisting issues of cultural instruction at the university level, such as those regarding actual implementation. One example comes from Stapleton (2000) who distributed questionnaires to 28 native English speakers who taught at universities or junior colleges in Japan. Participating language teachers' answers reflected that, though considering cultural information important, what they provided in classes was included randomly without advanced planning and more overt culture than covert.

In Taiwan, results from research conducted by Sung et al. (2009) also reflected a difference between EFL instructors' intentions and actual conduct in implementing L2 culture instruction. A large portion of university instructors of English in Taiwan perceive the incorporation of L2 culture into EFL learning positively according to the study. Data were collected from survey questionnaires completed by a total of 146 participants from thirteen different Taiwanese universities during the Fall 2007 semester. According to results, most participants agreed that it is important to implement L2 cultures in EFL learning in order to improve students' English abilities, broaden their perspectives, and facilitate their communicative competence. However, it is difficult for instructors to provide them with appropriate and suitable L2 culture information and materials due to students' varied levels of proficiency. Participants also expressed that there is insufficient time available for incorporating L2 culture learning into the lessons due to time needed for teaching required linguistically-oriented materials. Hence, disaccord exists between EFL instructors' intentions and actual practice.

Moreover, research conducted in Taiwan's universities has shown students favorably perceive L2 cultural instruction as useful. For instance, Sung's (2007) research revealed that Taiwanese university students find providing cultural information in EFL lessons highly appealing. After first identifying six quality attributes of English language instruction, they gave overall top ranking to instructors offering applicable L2 cultural information in class. Sung's research further added that by offering more cultural information in English lessons, students would be more motivated to learn, enabling them to build their communicative competence and expand their worldview.

Research also in universities in Taiwan has indicated that students respond overall favorably to learning L2 culture with authentic input. One example is a quantitative study conducted by Yeh (2015), utilizing a Likert-scale questionnaire to collect data regarding the applicability of authentic materials in an e-learning environment. Based on SPSS data analysis, the 77 advanced level freshmen responded that they felt positively about using authentic material, with TV sitcoms ranking highest of the four types introduced. Furthermore, participants' results showed that they perceived this type of authentic material helped most in their understanding of American culture. However, the majority of participants expressed having various forms of difficulty in understanding the context of the content. The researcher concluded that the unmodified form of the authentic materials portraying real life may have also created obstacles for students' understanding, signaling a need for further study. Yeh continued stating that students found the authentic materials overall richer in cultural content than traditional textbooks, and those formats with visual images motivated them more than those with only aural content.

In addition, studies in Taiwan's universities have utilized authentic input in portfolio-based activities with the more specific goal of improving EFL students' cultural awareness. One example is a study conducted by Wu et al. (2013). Utilizing video lectures and interactions with a native English speaker who focused on cultural topics, students were able to improve their cultural awareness as indicated in their pre- and posttest results and reflective essays. Wu et al. concluded that the presentation of the authentic input allowed students to exercise their critical thinking in processing the differences and similarities between their culture and the foreign one. Another example is Hsu's (2014) study that also included students' interaction with native English speakers through interviews and writing in reflective diaries. Students were also asked to complete writing activities, comparing and contrasting foreign festivals and critical commentaries. Hsu's research results concluded that the authentic input improved their L2 culture learning as well.

Utilizing Film as Comprehensible Input for Teaching L2 Culture

Krashen (1982) has long made it clear that learners must have comprehensible input (CI) or authentic input in order to make progress in their language acquisition. He has further clarified that the input must also be interesting and/or relevant, and natural input that is not sequenced. Additionally, its amount has to be sufficient. For implementation, language instructors' must gauge how they speak, which words they use, and the syntax of those words, according to learners' levels. During the instruction, they should verify students' understanding of the content, making adjustments needed. This type of input then results in students' higher recall and processing of information. Anderson (2009) reported, in reference to cognitive psychology, that students have more complex linkages and better recall to

information learned when the content is logically connected and purposeful and conditions are favorable for expansion of that content. Film as authentic input has long been used in the language classroom for good reasons. With it, according to Knee (2001) and Pincas (1996), foreign language learners have the opportunity to reinforce their connections between previously learned information, including plot structure, and new information with film's visual imagery that provides both relevant schema background and authentic "high-context" spoken language.

From students' perspectives, film could be easily implemented as CI or authentic input in the foreign language classroom. According to Chapple and Curtis (2000), "[g]iven students' experience as film viewers, it becomes possible to develop highly student-centered programs and classroom activities" (p. 421). Additionally, there is little doubt that students enjoy watching films, leading to their value as a motivating learning medium (Magasic, 2015). One example is a study conducted by Xiaoqiong and Xianxing (2008) concluding that university students in China found utilization of films in EFL contexts as motivation to make improvements in their listening comprehension and pronunciation skills. Therefore, regarding university EFL students, including those in Taiwan, the process of incorporating films should be relatively easy, enabling them to reap benefits of film as a medium for language instruction.

With films, viewers have front row seats to the ongoing dialogues between numerous characters. These scripted, spoken words have purpose and function in the film's overall plot. As Sung (2010) stated "[b]y providing an additional source of comprehensible, relevant, and interesting input, DVDs, video sequences and TV programs in a foreign language can prepare the language learner for real native-speaker contact and help to facilitate communication" (p. 148). Muller (2006) added that the medium itself can serve as a catalyst to students' learning stating that "[film] has the potential to bridge students' inherent interest in multimedia with the essential, active, critical-thinking skills that are at the heart of the English classroom" (p. 38).

Eken's (2003) study was in agreement with Muller that feature film improves student's critical and analytical thinking. His research on a 14-week undergraduate course at a Turkish university first focused on teaching students how to analyze popular film through a variety of media sources. Next, a film workshop was completed with students working in four different groups and applying what they had learned in the previous phase to prepare learning activities for examining a specific popular American feature film. After that, each group presented its workshop to the class. Then, Eken interviewed each of the four groups separately. Overall, students responded that the course had improved their critical thinking skills, their language skills, their confidence in speaking publically, their appreciation for the arts, and, interestingly, their critical thinking regarding their own lives.

Also utilizing feature films were Chapple et al. (2000) who conducted a study at a

bilingual (English and Chinese/Cantonese) university in Hong Kong. The study's focus was a one-semester elective course called *Thinking Through the Culture of Film* with junior and senior EFL students over one-semester. A communicative approach was used with eight feature films that were discussed in detail. At the end of the semester, student participants anonymously completed a questionnaire, rating their improvements through the duration of the class regarding English language skills required but not specifically instructed. Stage one results showed students felt most improvement in their English listening and speaking skills. Next, qualitative data from student interviews showed that students felt that they had acquired the highest improvement in analytical and critical thinking skills and English language skills. Chapple et al. opined that, therefore, there could be a link between students being intellectually challenged and advancing in their language development.

Nevertheless, the feature film is not utilized often and to its full potential in the EFL classroom. Some reasons provided by Chapple et al. are as follows:

1. Time and syllabus constraints.
2. Lack of detailed knowledge about film on the part of teachers.
3. A mistaken perception about the lack of pedagogical value of films.
4. Lack of technical equipment and expertise.
5. Availability of suitable films.
6. Cultural appropriateness.
7. Relative difficulty of film texts for language learners. (p. 422)

Voller and Widdows (1993) also provided several elements to avoid in choosing suitable films: (a) a lot of dialects, (b) a long slow pace, (c) a multitude of monologues, and (d) detailed background knowledge unfamiliar to students. Regarding what to actually look for, they added that the film should possess a strong story line with clearly defined main characters.

Cultural Content in Popular Films

The time period a film is created and released provides the opportunity to contextualize it, enabling understanding of what filmmakers felt compelled to choose as their narratives and stories and acknowledgement of how the film was received by audiences or the overall public. In retrospect, this contextualization allows viewers to mine films for all the information they possess. As Hastrup (1992) stated "In order to make the best, the wisest use of any film document which comes our way, we can ask, as a historian would do, for the fullest contextualization of the information the document purports to present" (p. 56). Ultimately, films not only contain information representative of their cultural origin but also become a type of "cultural artefact" through assigned meaning, as expressed by Du Gay, Hall, Janes,

Madsen, Mackay, and Negus (2013):

[An object] belongs to our culture because we have constructed for it a little world of meaning; and this bringing of the object *into* meaning is what constitutes it as a *cultural artefact*. Meaning is thus intrinsic to our definition of culture. (p. 4)

Mainstream popular films, therefore, could be utilized as comprehensive input to teach L2 culture based on their capacity for contextual significance and classification as “cultural artefact.” They also possess audience appeal for university students, making them beneficial to EFL learners’ cultural instruction. Especially with a central theme such as the high school environment and the growing pains of adolescence, which are common experiences of practically all university students regardless of their native language. Taken a step further, these films could introduce L2 students to the concept of how a culture is dynamic, utilizing a collection of films that have common central narratives, yet different release dates spanning over a period of time. As a result, the L2 culture becomes more relatable to learners as they begin to view it as something that, like their own, is continually changing. For example, American culture could be taught from the common perspective of the sixteen-year-old teenage female character with several popular feature films from different decades. Meeting these criteria is the film *Gidget* (Rachmil & Wendkos, 1959) based on Frederick Kohner’s novel *Gidget: The Little Girl with Big Ideas* (1957). The Malibu, California coming-of-age story centers around the author’s daughter Kathy Kohner, who is nicknamed Gidget by Terry Tracy, the quintessential beach bum and inspiration for the film’s character the Big Kahuna (Kaufman, 2012). Though the book was a bestseller, it was the film that ignited all of the enthusiasm, especially the teen surfing subculture in America (Gillogly, 2011). *Gidget* also illustrated how the cultural miscegenation of Hawaiian culture had infiltrated mainstream American life with activities, in addition to surfing, such as luaus and hula dancing (Borgerson & Schroeder, 1997).

Next, in the 1980s, producer, director, and writer John Hughes captured what it was really like to be in high school in those days, along with some exaggerated comedic moments (De Vaney, 2002). According to Leitch (1992), Hughes’ films are “an important departure in the history of relations between commercial American cinema and its audience; they reflect and foster a specifically teen-age sensibility quite without precedent in earlier American films” (pp. 43, 44). *Sixteen Candles* (Green, Manning, Tanen, & Hughes, 1984), one of Hughes’s most successful films, was largely embraced by American teenage audiences. “[F]or teens in search of tips on language, behavior and all the right moves, *Sixteen Candles* functions as a therapeutic documentary, a sort of survival kit of ‘80s cool” (Corliss, 1986, p. 69). It was the first of “the Molly trilogy,” starring Molly Ringwald as teen Samantha (Sam) Baker.

Then, notably, the 2000s, especially 2007, had several prominent films, including *Juno*

(Halfon, Malkovich, Novic, & Reitman, 2007), that focused on young women's unplanned pregnancies. They prompted researchers to, therefore, take notice and analyze how these films' narratives depoliticized women's reproduction in America's post-feminist culture (Thoma, 2009; Hoerl & Kelly, 2010). Interestingly, though, it was actually used in political campaigning, due to its inadvertent connection with Roe v. Wade (1973). With the main character, Juno, choosing to keep her baby after seriously considering abortion, the film's narrative was specifically mined to support the Republican Party in the 2008 U. S. Presidential elections (Thoma, 2009). It also led to the accusation labeled by *Time* magazine as "The Juno Effect" (Kingsbury, June 18, 2008). At the conclusion of one school year, 17 pregnant girls at Gloucester High School were expecting babies. In addition to its unique subject matter, *Juno* had both huge critical and commercial success (Goff, 2008; Marcks, 2008).

Each of the three films fulfills the basic criteria for L2 cultural significance and suitability and appropriateness for the language classroom. Each film also marks and/or incites a distinct change in American culture upon its release, becoming a phenomenon that surpassed its original purpose as just another teen movie. Hence, these combined L2 cultural aspects possess rich content for CI.

METHOD

Participants

The 52 students were both male (10) and female (42), with Chinese as their native language and a minimum high intermediate level of English proficiency. They were all English majors at a university in Northern Taiwan, enrolled in the course Film Literature, the one-semester three-hour course for this research. The first half of the semester was utilized for the research treatment.

Instrumentation

The three aforementioned popular feature films were carefully chosen as CI or authentic input: *Gidget*, *Sixteen Candles*, and *Juno*. They were each shown only with English or L2 subtitles using a DVD player and an overhead projector already provided in the E-classroom.

Regarding supplemental learning materials, handouts for each film were prepared by the researcher, following Krashen's (1982) theory to improve effectiveness of CI by making it more understandable to students. Each contained selected warm-up and discussion questions, with general language for pre-teaching. They also contained vocabulary and dialogue

sections preselected by the researcher after he studied each film with L2 subtitles. Content was later edited down, based on what was deemed significant for students' L2 culture learning and overall understanding of the film's narrative, plot, and story. Content for both sections also provided class activity opportunities for students (Chapple et al., 2000). Moreover, Power Point Presentations (PPT) were utilized by the researcher to introduce, review, and discuss the three films.

Next, actual testing included one purely attitudinal pre-test and an identical attitudinal posttest, each containing a total of 25 attitudinal Likert-type questions. The 7-point Likert-type scales were used along with the questions due to research indicating that Asian students have a tendency to use the midpoints on the scales (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995). All questions were written specifically for this study and firmly based on the content of the three films, with the aim of measuring students' perceptions of American culture. Questions were not categorically arranged on the tests with the intent of adding reliability and validity to the results (see Appendix A for identical pre- and posttest questionnaire). Most questions were regarding the film *Juno* due to it having a large variety of L2 cultural content. Furthermore, the least amount of questions was regarding the film *Gidget* due to it having a limited variety of L2 cultural content.

Procedure

Prior to the treatment, the researcher distributed the pre-test questionnaire for student participants' completion, assuring them that it would not be graded. This allowed them to answer each question without trepidation. Students were further instructed to complete the questionnaire without any external input. After one class hour, the Pre-tests were collected. Next, the treatment began with the most recently released film *Juno*, utilizing the Lesson Plan (see Appendix B for lesson plan). Then, the same lesson plan was used to continue the treatment with *Sixteen Candles*, and *Gidget*, respectively.

One week prior to the posttest questionnaire, there was a three class-hour review session. Students received a full comprehensive review handout that corresponded with a PPT. Each film was thoroughly reviewed in the same aspects, with further comparison and contrast elements between the three films added, allowing students to see the intended "big picture" of the treatment for teaching them L2 culture.

Next, participants took the posttest questionnaire. SPSS software was then used to obtain the bivariate statistical data with t-tests for comparative analysis between the pre- and the posttest questionnaires.

RESULT

This research hopes to ascertain if popular American films affect Taiwanese university ESL students' perceptions of L2 culture. To help answer this question, data are divided into five separate tables of related questions, beginning with Table 1 that compares one specific film time period to another. Then, Tables 2, 3, and 4 are each specific to one of the three films. Finally, Table 5 is nonspecific to any of the three films or time periods. Notably, all student participant posttest questionnaire responses had movement in the desired direction on the Likert point system. However, they did not all reach a level of significance.

Combining films from different time periods for comparison in Table 1 was the research purpose for questions 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25. More than half received significant results, giving this table the highest success, starting with 20 and 21. Both related to change in Americans' acceptance of sexually active teenage girls, each for a different time period. Between the 1950s and 1980s for Question 20, the mean ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .90$) was significantly influenced by the treatment ($M = 4.77$, $SD = 1.59$), $t = -1.31$, $p < .04$. Then, for Question 21, between the 1980s and the 2000s, the mean ($M = 5.21$, $SD = .87$) again received significant influence from the treatment ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 0.88$), $t = -3.96$, $p < .01$.

These time ranges were repeated for Questions 22 and 23, both regarding change in Americans' acceptance of teen pregnancy. First, results for Question 22 indicated that the mean perception for change between the 1950s and the 1980s ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .81$) was significantly influenced by the treatment ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.69$), $t = 2.51$, $p < .05$ (0.048). Interestingly, though, there were insignificant results for Question 23, with $p = .67$. Again, the time ranges were used for Questions 24 and 25. This time, though, it was to measure a change in student perception regarding Americans' acceptance of equality between father and mother. Results were opposite to the previous set, with the time period between the 1950s and 1980s for Question 24 being insignificantly influenced, with $p = .20$. Conversely, Question 25, measuring students' mean perception regarding the same concept ($M = 5.27$, $SD = .93$) from the films between the 1980s and the 2000s, had significant results when compared ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.02$), resulting in $t = -2.87$, $p < .01$.

TABLE 1
Results from American Culture: Specific to *Juno*-2000s and/or *Sixteen Candles*-1980s and/or *Gidget*-1950s

Question	Test	Mean	N	SD	P
20. Americans' acceptance of sexually active teenage girls changed between the 1950s and the 1980s.	Pre	4.48	52	0.90	*0.04
	Post	4.77	52	1.59	
21. Americans' acceptance of sexually active teenage	Pre	5.21	52	0.87	*0.01

girls changed between the 1980s and the 2000s.	Post	5.75	52	0.88	
22. Americans' acceptance of teen pregnancy changed between the 1950s and the 1980s.	Pre	4.23	52	0.81	*0.048
	Post	3.65	52	1.69	
23. Americans' acceptance of teen pregnancy changed between the 1980s and the 2000s.	Pre	5.02	52	1.02	0.67
	Post	5.12	52	1.57	
24. Americans' acceptance of equality between father and mother changed between the 1950s and the 1980s.	Pre	4.38	52	1.01	0.20
	Post	4.44	52	1.53	
25. Americans' acceptance of equality between father and mother changed between the 1980s and the 2000s.	Pre	5.27	52	0.93	*0.01
	Post	5.71	52	1.02	

Note: * $p < 0.05$

Of the seven questions in Table 2 regarding *Juno*, two had highly significant results while one had significant results. First, results for Question 7 indicated that the mean perception for American parents wanting to know about their baby's daily life after they have given it up for adoption ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.36$) was significantly influenced by the treatment ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.51$), $t = 2.03$, $p < .01$. This followed Juno's decision for a closed adoption. Then, Question 17's results highly significantly illustrated a shift from somewhat disagreeing ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.01$) toward mostly disagreeing ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.19$), $t = 6.31$, $p < .00$, in accordance with pregnant Juno remaining single with no opposition from family. Next, the highly significant results for Question 19 pointed out the treatment's influence ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.12$), moving their overall response toward more agreement ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.34$), $t = -.92$, $p < .00$. This complied with the film's narrative, with Juno's parents supporting her to give up her baby for adoption.

TABLE 2
Results from American Culture: *Juno*-2000s

Question	Test	Mean	N	SD	P
1. American life is based on religious beliefs.	Pre	4.79	52	1.04	0.10
	Post	5.27	52	1.24	
7. American parents want to know about their baby's daily life after they have given it up for adoption.	Pre	4.40	52	1.36	*0.01
	Post	3.94	52	1.51	
8. Americans believe women should be able to get an abortion if they want one.	Pre	4.19	52	1.10	0.13
	Post	4.00	52	1.51	
9. American politicians have opinions about women getting abortions.	Pre	4.75	52	1.03	0.83
	Post	5.77	52	1.28	
17. American parents tell their pregnant teenage daughters to get married.	Pre	3.75	52	1.01	**0.00
	Post	2.71	52	1.19	

18. American parents tell their pregnant teenage daughters to get an abortion.	Pre	3.83	52	0.92	0.87
	Post	3.06	52	1.33	
19. American parents tell their pregnant teenage daughters to give up their babies for adoption.	Pre	3.75	52	1.12	**0.00
	Post	3.92	52	1.34	

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Regarding *Sixteen Candles* released in 1984 or the 1980s in Table 3, Questions 4 and 11 provided significant results. Question 4 pre treatment participant responses ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.06$) compared with post treatment responses ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.14$), $t = -2.83$, $p < .02$ reflected more agreement that the L2 culture believed stereotypes of those foreign to their culture. However, foreign culture related Question 5 had insignificant results, with $p = .07$. There was significance, though, for Question 11's final results, with the mean perception for the high school popularity of American teenagers who are known for their talent with computer technology ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.24$) significantly influenced by the treatment ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.14$), $t = 7.17$, $p < .02$. It is worth mentioning that Question 12 regarding the character Jake's popularity due to his parents' wealth also nearly reached significance, with $p = .05$ (0.052).

TABLE 3
Results from American Culture: *Sixteen Candles*-1980s

Question	Test	Mean	N	SD	P
4. Americans believe the stereotypes regarding people from foreign cultures.	Pre	4.94	52	1.06	*0.02
	Post	5.44	52	1.14	
5. American high schools want their students to learn about foreign cultures.	Pre	4.48	52	1.11	0.07
	Post	5.15	52	1.46	
10. American teenagers who are good at sports are popular in high school.	Pre	6.08	52	0.84	0.33
	Post	6.04	52	1.05	
11. American teenagers who are good at computer technology are popular in high school.	Pre	3.71	52	1.24	*0.02
	Post	2.35	52	1.14	
12. American teenagers who have rich parents are popular in high school.	Pre	5.10	52	1.01	0.05
	Post	6.19	52	0.72	

Note: * $p < 0.05$

Table 4 had questions pertaining to the film *Gidget* released in 1959 or the 1950s: 2 and 3. The mean perception for Question 2 was not significantly influenced by the treatment, with $p = .14$. Likewise, Question 3 had insignificant results, with $p = .27$.

TABLE 4
Results from American Culture: *Gidget-1950s*

Question	Test	Mean	N	SD	P
2. American military men chose to fight in the wars to support their country.	Pre	5.10	52	0.93	0.14
	Post	4.69	52	1.78	
3. American life changed as each new state was added to the country.	Pre	4.58	52	1.02	0.27
	Post	4.83	52	1.25	

Table 5 is also comparative in nature, containing five Likert-type questions related to general statements regarding American culture for all three films: 6, 13, 14, 15, and 16. None received significant results, making it the least successful table. Also, Question 15 showed that the mean perception for parents giving their children freedom ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.12$) had the least amount of change post treatment ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 0.86$), with $t = .10$, p value = .55.

TABLE 5
Results from American Culture: General for *Juno-2000s* and/or the *Sixteen Candles-1980s* and/or *Gidget-1950s*

Question	Test	Mean	N	SD	P
6. American fathers and mothers have equality in their home lives.	Pre	5.10	52	1.16	0.83
	Post	4.35	52	1.48	
13. American teenagers care about their physical appearance.	Pre	5.67	52	1.04	0.56
	Post	5.96	52	0.77	
14. American teenagers talk about sex with their parents.	Pre	4.83	52	0.98	0.31
	Post	3.27	52	1.44	
15. American parents give their children freedom.	Pre	5.67	52	1.12	0.55
	Post	5.65	52	0.86	
16. American parents allow their teenage children to have pre-marital sex.	Pre	4.60	52	1.19	0.22
	Post	3.29	52	1.42	

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to support the necessity of integrating the study of L2 language culture with EFL learning as posited by scholars Abrate (1993), Brooks (1997), Cohen et al. (1981), Jacobs (1989), and Zhao (2010). Therefore, the effectiveness of utilizing films as authentic input for instructing L2 culture was examined in hopes of determining if popular

American films affect Taiwanese university ESL students' perceptions of L2 culture. Based on the outcome of the study, some aspects of L2 culture were possibly learned, cohering with Damen's (1987) theory. This current research also unearthed possibilities in assisting EFL instructors in achieving goals of L2 cultural instructions as set by Tomalin et al. (2013) with the treatment.

Results for Table 1 most illustrates that popular American films affect Taiwanese university EFL students' perceptions of foreign language or L2 culture. The first reason it has a majority of four out of six questions with significant results is possibly due to the direct relationship the questions have to the narrative, plot, and story surrounding each film's main character. Then, the specific comparative nature of the questions is also an attributive factor. Each film in the treatment has a central coming-of-age character. Therefore, participants were given ample time to first process the authentic material and then engage more specifically in the comparative format of the cultural instruction. They were then able to apply their critical and analytical thinking (Chapple et al., 2000; Eken, 2003; and Muller, 2006). This is first illustrated with the significant results for both Questions 20 and 21 regarding teenage sexual activity. This topic was primarily positioned in the content of all three films, allowing students to navigate it with ease throughout the complete treatment.

Next is the significant results received for Question 22 and the insignificant results for the related Question 23. This noticeable difference occurred even though both were regarding obvious change in Americans' acceptance of teen pregnancy based on audience appeal (Corliss, 1986; Marcks, 2008). This could be attributed to the more distinctly contrasting main characters for Question 22 and the variety of interpretations of the plots and stories regarding Question 23. Students considered the initially conservative tomboyish character Gidget from the 1950s to the more feminine than Sam from the 1980s who has a boy crush from the onset. Then, for Question 23, Sam and Juno are both interested in boys throughout the plots and stories. This, along with the latter becoming pregnant and receiving judgment from some peers and adults, possibly led to a variety of interpretations, possibly some that were inaccurate.

Question 25 also had significant results. However, its time period and the one for Question 24 had opposite results to the previous set, with parental equality between the 1950s and the 1980s resulting insignificantly and between the 1980s to the 2000s having significant results. The same as above, this could be due to the more distinctly contrasting main characters for Question 25 and the variety of interpretations or even misinterpretations of the plots and stories regarding Question 24. This possibly was due to the characterization of both Gidget's mother and Sam's mother as homemakers for Question 24, whereas Juno's stepmother owns her own small business for Question 25. Some students may have collectively perceived the two housewives as more subservient, even though the one from the 1980s more freely expresses herself and positions herself as more of a partner than a

subservient. No other table reached the same number of significant results as Table 1, though Tables 2 and 3 received a moderate number of significant results, with Table 2 having two with highly significant results.

Specifically regarding the film *Juno*, significant results were reached for Question 7 and highly significant results for 17, and 19 in Table 2. Both 7 and 19 were related to single pregnant teens favoring adoption and 17 to resisting marriage. These elements appear throughout the film's story and are consistent throughout the film's plot. Questions 1, 8, 9, and 18, though, did not have significant results. This was probably due to the questions all relating to Americans' views on abortion, which is highly unfamiliar to the participants and, therefore, more difficult to comprehend (Voller et al., 1993). Perhaps, too, this topic's brevity in the beginning of *Juno* did not leave the impression on students necessary to trigger further cognitive processing (Chapple et al., 2000; Eken, 2003; and Muller, 2006).

In Table 3, Question 11 was regarding the main character Geek who had continuous film presence and was instrumental in the development of *Sixteen Candles*' narrative, plot, and storyline. This inevitably allowed ample time for student analysis (Chapple et al., 2000; Eken, 2003; and Muller, 2006), leading to significant results. There were also significant results for Question 4 regarding stereotypes of those foreign to American culture. This was due to the film's exaggerated portrayal of the Asian Foreign Exchange Student Long Duk Dong, allowing participants to develop more distinct perceptions. However, this exaggerated portrayal of Asian character Dong (De Vaney, 2002) could have negatively influenced students' perceptions regarding Question 5, somewhat hindering it from reaching significant results. Participants could have made assumptions that a country wanting to learn more about foreign cultures would be less likely to promote stereotypes, even though here it was an element of screenwriter's comedic expression.

Neither Table 4 nor Table 5 had questions with significant results. For Table 4, it could have been due to Question 2 being based on a highly unfamiliar topic (Voller et al., 1993), along with the topic's brevity in the plot and story of the film *Gidget*. Next, Question 3 possibly had a variety of interpretations or even misinterpretations as aforementioned. In Table 5, the questions were probably all too broad in nature, lacking the specificity of questions receiving significant results. As with the other questions in Table 5, this possibly resulted in students becoming confused. Question 15 was the most disappointing, with student participants conceivably confused as to which time frame to consider and for which kind of freedom. Therefore, student participants were unable to apply the comparative processing that proved beneficial in some of the questions with significant results in this study.

In conclusion, a pattern is revealed in the discussion of this current study's results. Table 1, the one with the most significant results, apparently has the most specific questions, allowing participants to utilize their abilities for comparative processing. Conversely, Table 5,

with no significant results, appears to have questions that lack specificity. Therefore, it could be suggested that students better develop their perceptions of L2 culture in a more specifically comparative context. This is in agreement with results from previous studies such as those conducted by Hsu (2014) and Wu et al. (2013) in the EFL learning environments in Taiwan's universities, demonstrating the effectiveness of authentic input as a means activating students' analytical thinking and comparative analysis in order to improve L2 cultural awareness.

However, the results of this current study further indicate that the basis of students' comparisons should be kept in check with more directive instruction, helping to alleviate possible misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Hence, participants would be better prepared to make more accurate comparisons.

Furthermore, due to the unmodified nature of authentic films, peripheral storylines or subplots require further instruction by the EFL instructor. This coheres with results from Yeh's (2015) study, showing this type of content could create obstacles for students' understanding. Therefore, this more detailed explanation and description would serve as a way of merely enhancing EFL learners' understanding of the films' main plots and stories, not as an instruction to be later tested.

CONCLUSION

The overall results of this study indicate that popular films as authentic input provide another possibility for instructing L2 culture to EFL university students in Taiwan. The authentic input provides learners with opportunities to both utilize and develop their critical thinking and analytical skills, affecting their perceptions of L2 culture. The films are most effective when instructors focus on topics clearly illustrated throughout their content. Otherwise, students do not have sufficient opportunity to process the information analytically and critically in a manner that instills the information into their long term memory for recall at a later time. Therefore, EFL instructors should base their L2 culture lessons on teaching the primary topics covered in a film. They additionally need to be vigilant in detecting topics that are highly unfamiliar to students. Explanation and further illustrations could be provided for these peripheral or highly unfamiliar topics to ease students' viewing experiences. However, learners should not be tested over these topics. Instructors who follow these basic concepts when utilizing this authentic audiovisual media will help improve their EFL students' experiences in learning L2 culture.

Furthermore, this study could help university EFL instructors begin to deal with issues such as a lack of materials for instructing L2 culture, teaching students with varied levels simultaneously. Then, the instruments for evaluation could be gauged at the average level of

English proficiency.

However, it is only the first step in their acquisition of L2 cultural information and knowledge. Students' further study of L2 cultures is necessary, incorporating a variety of methods, applications and activities. Additional research in these areas could provide a more complete and comprehensive base of data regarding how university EFL students' effectively learn L2 culture. Furthermore, it may help to address the issues arising from lack of time EFL instructors have for instructing L2 culture and how they could implement it into their university's curriculum.

Future studies on the utilization of popular films for instructing L2 culture could place emphasis on EFL students' actual comprehension of the material, learning the depth of their understanding. This could be followed up with qualitative interviews to learn their actual abilities to recall cultural information learned and to glean their opinions regarding usage of popular American films as CI or authentic input for L2 cultural instruction. Additionally, a study comparing this method with another, such as one that is purely textbook-based, could reveal the advantages or limitations of either method in L2 culture instruction for students in the EFL classroom.

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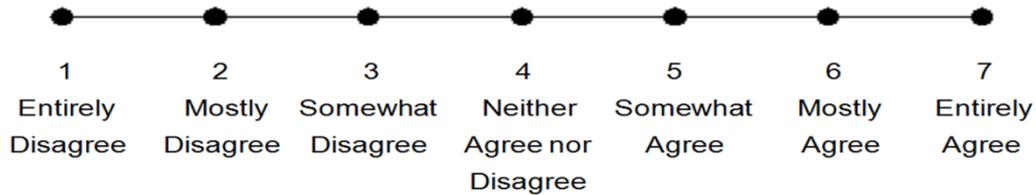
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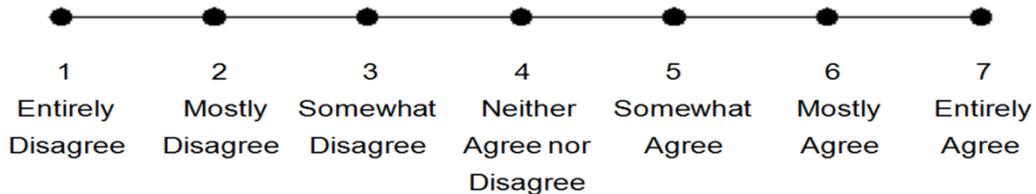
APPENDIX 1: IDENTICAL PRE- AND POST TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Film Literature Class Questionnaire. Please read each statement carefully and circle only one of the numbers from 1-7 that best represents your agreement with the statement.

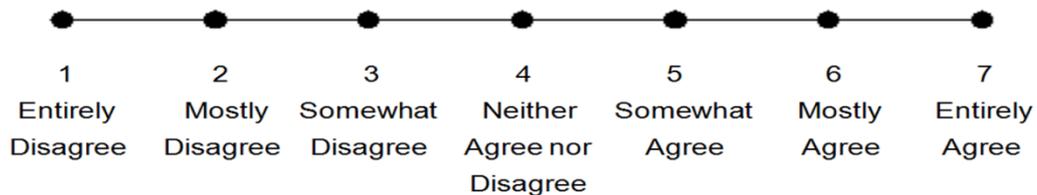
1. American life is based on religious beliefs.



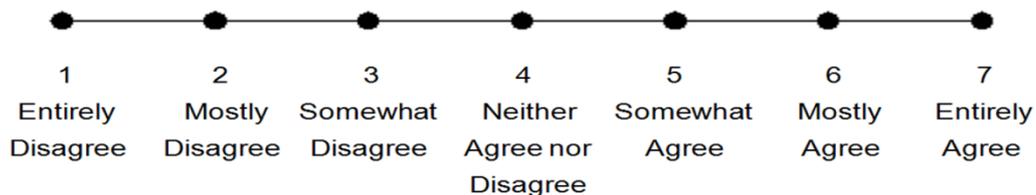
2. American military men chose to fight in the wars to support their country.



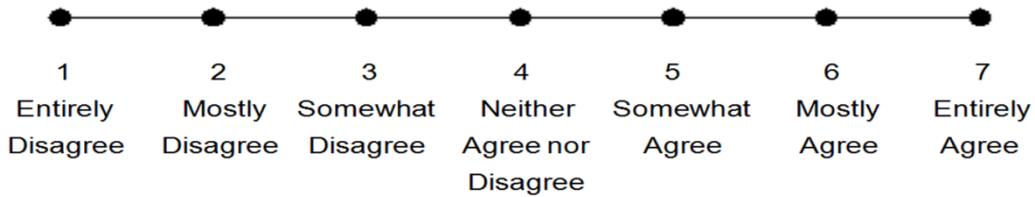
3. American life changed as each new state was added to the country.



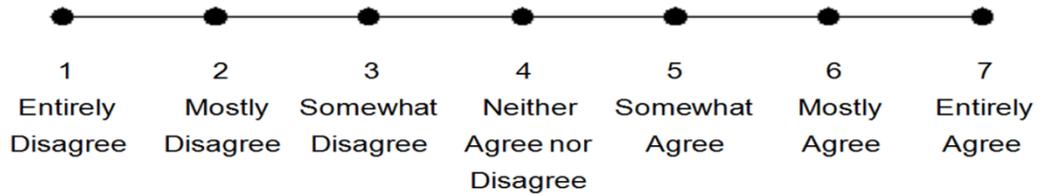
4. Americans believe the stereotypes regarding people from foreign cultures.



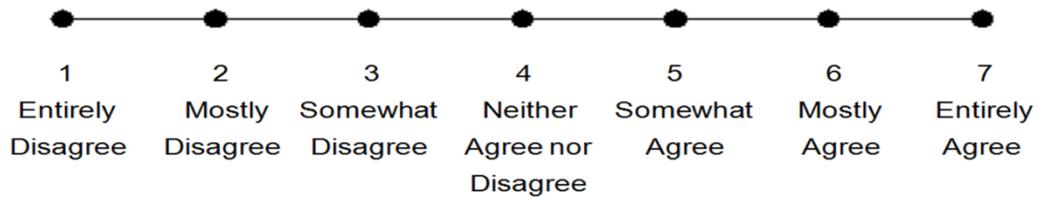
5. American high schools want their students to learn about foreign cultures.



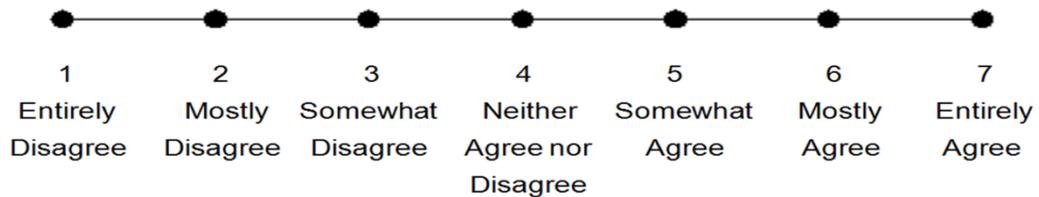
6. American fathers and mothers have equality in their home lives.



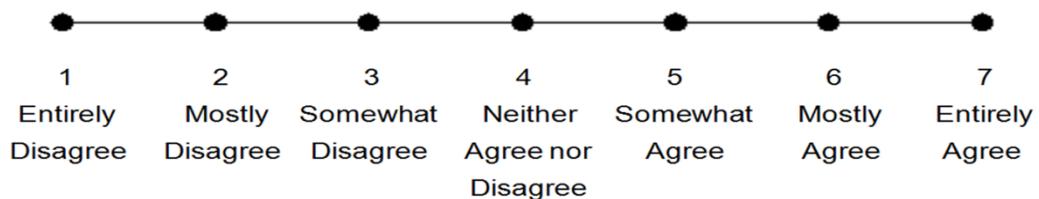
7. American parents want to know about their baby's daily life after they have given it up for adoption.



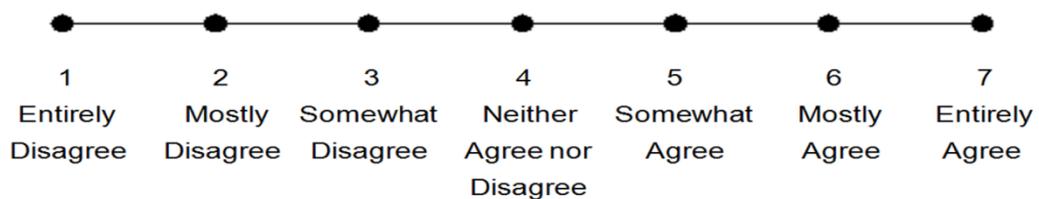
8. Americans believe women should be able to get an abortion if they want one.



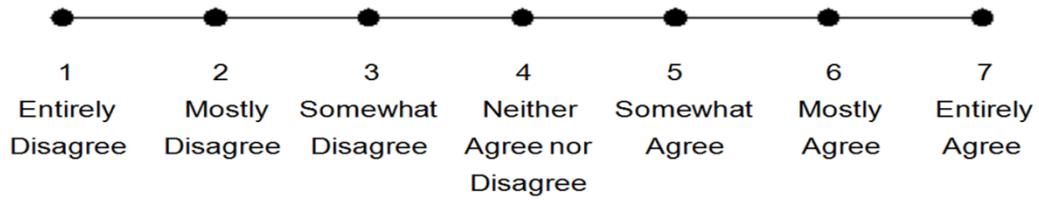
9. American politicians have opinions about women getting abortions.



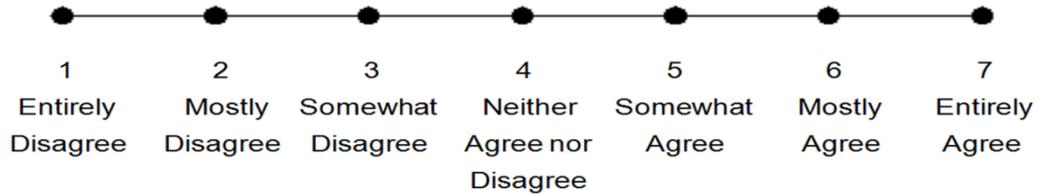
10. American teenagers who are good at sports are popular in high school.



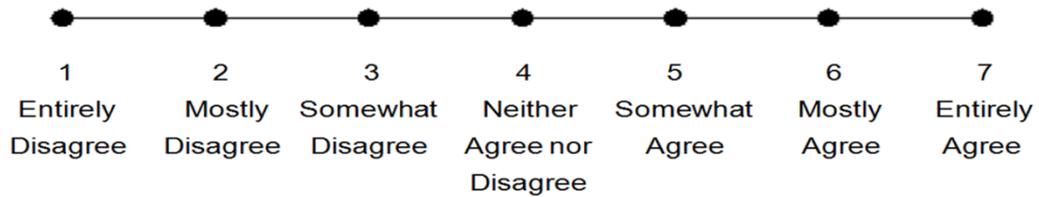
11. American teenagers who are good at computer technology are popular in high school.



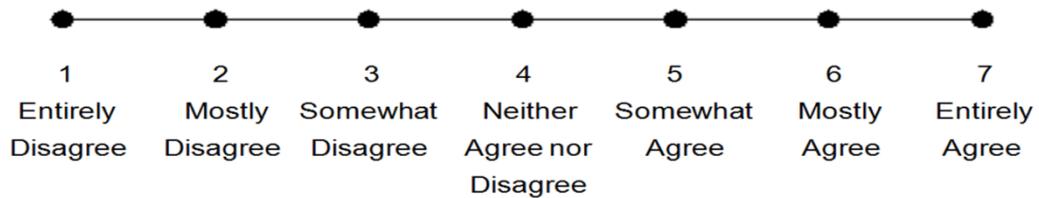
12. American teenagers who have rich parents are popular in high school.



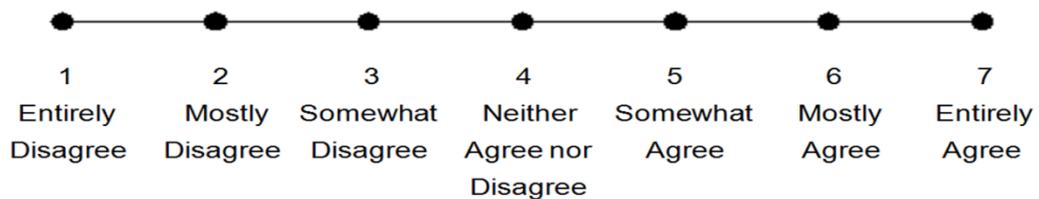
13. American teenagers care about their physical appearance.



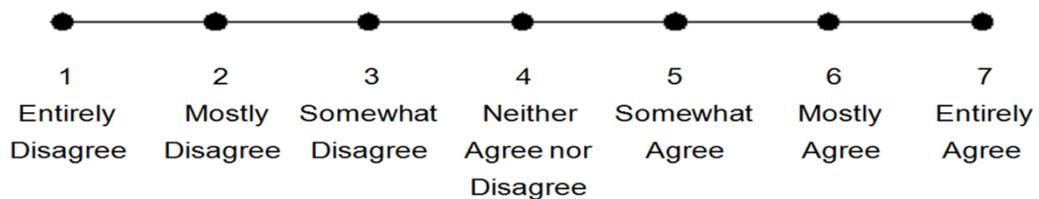
14. American teenagers talk about sex with their parents.



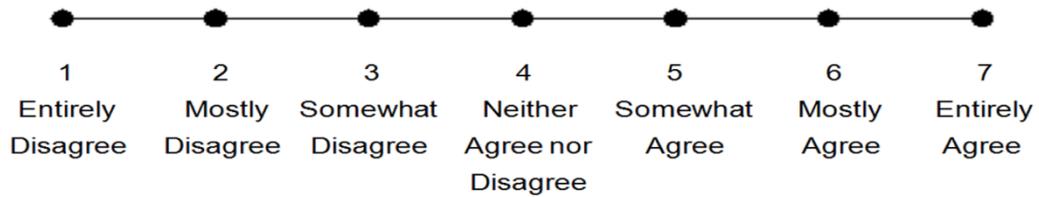
15. American parents give their children freedom.



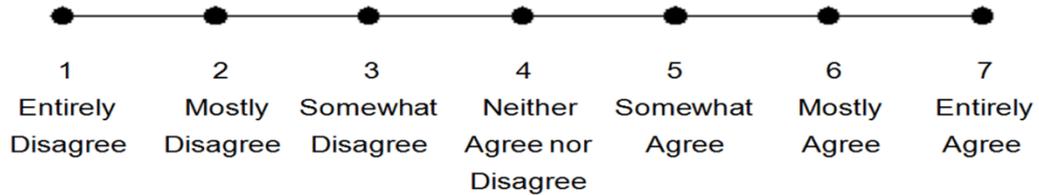
16. American parents allow their teenage children to have pre-marital sex.



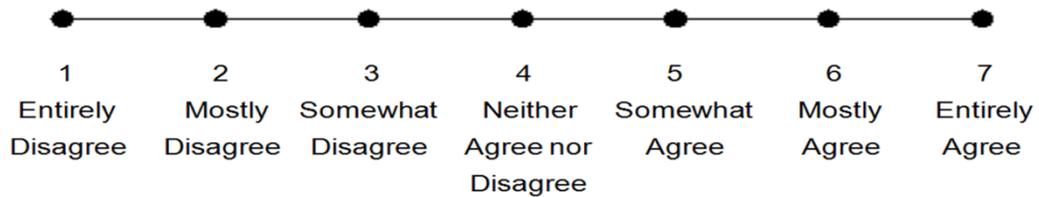
17. American parents tell their pregnant teenage daughters to get married.



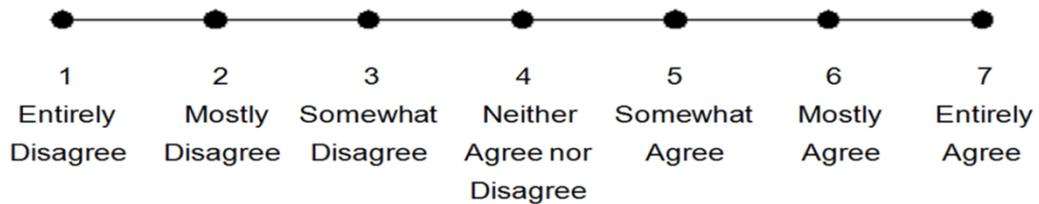
18. American parents tell their pregnant teenage daughters to get an abortion.



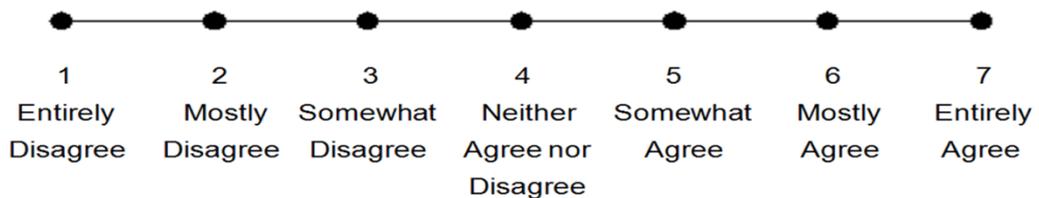
19. American parents tell their pregnant teenage daughters to give up their babies for adoption.



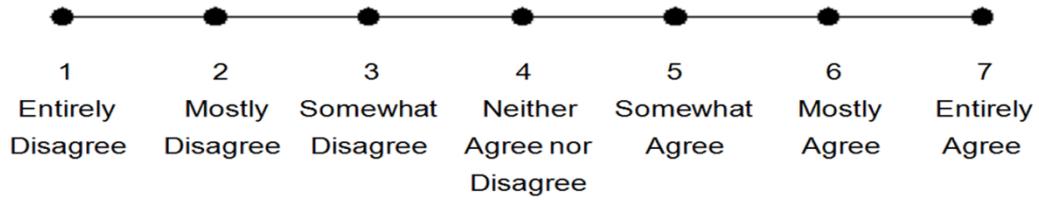
20. Americans' acceptance of sexually active teenage girls changed between the 1950s and the 1980s.



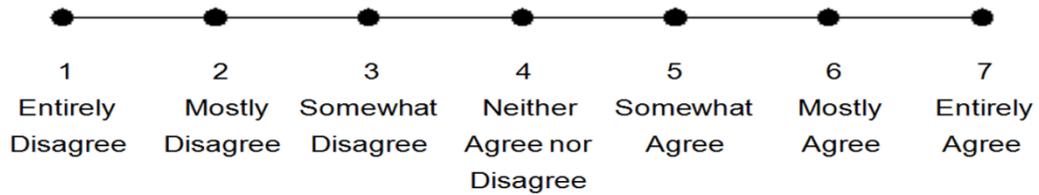
21. Americans' acceptance of sexually active teenage girls changed between the 1980s and the 2000s.



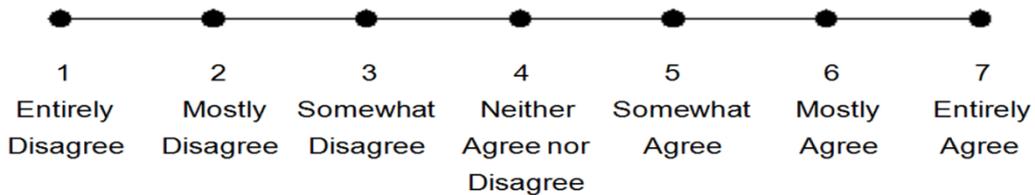
22. Americans' acceptance of teen pregnancy changed between the 1950s and the 1980s.



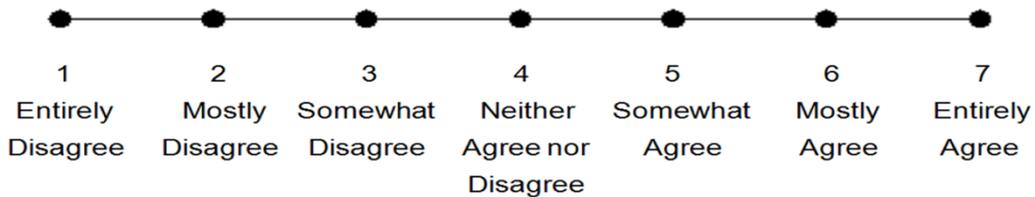
23. Americans' acceptance of teen pregnancy changed between the 1980s and the 2000s.



24. Americans' acceptance of equality between father and mother changed between the 1950s and the 1980s.



25. Americans' acceptance of equality between father and mother changed between the 1980s and the 2000s.



APPENDIX 2: LESSON PLAN

Steps	Instruction Content	Teaching Aids	Time in minutes
Warm up	-Use PPT presentation as introduction. -Distribute film handout, using warm-up questions.	-PPT slides, film handout	Approx. 50
First	-Cover film vocabulary section of handout with	-Film	Approx.

instruction	<p>overhead projector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Drill students on pronunciation, orally and randomly quizzing them over meanings, verifying understanding. -Practice pronouncing film character names in handout, identifying possible relationships. -Assign perusing handout's dialogue section before next class. 	handout, overhead projector	75
Film presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Begin film screening. -Check students' comprehension of material in 10-minute segments, either at the end or beginning of classes, initiating summarizing technique. -Slowly assign summarizing tasks to students, verifying their comprehension, making corrections when necessary. 	Film DVD, DVD player, and overhead projector	Approx. 150
Second instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cover dialogue in handout with overhead projector. -Randomly ask students to read script aloud in class, asking others the meanings and significance in film's overall plot, reinforcing correct answers while discovering misunderstandings. 	Film handout, overhead projector	Approx. 75
Closing	-Present more detailed PPT for review, addressing students' questions asked during the treatment and emphasizing L2 culture.	PPT slides	Approx. 50