

Efficacy of Movies as Supplementary Instructional Materials in English Language Classroom: A Theoretical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The Initial purpose of movies in society was solely to provide entertainment, but with time, they have evolved and are now utilized as pedagogical resources. In language education, there are various other sources, such as multimodal and technological tools, that can be used in the language classroom, but empirical evidence over the years states that movies offer effective exposure to a diverse range of language components, including verbal and non-verbal communication, and provide audio and visual stimuli. The current study centers on the importance of films as a pedagogical tool and illustrates their implications within the English language classroom. The study presents a theoretical perspective towards the appropriate utilization of movies as instructional aids, the criteria for selecting a film for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, designing activities, and analyzing the benefits and drawbacks of movies as supplementary multimodal tools.

Keywords—Movies, Pedagogic aids, Activities, Language skills, Language Classroom

I. INTRODUCTION

Movies are a valuable tool for language acquisition, helping instructors and learners comprehend the use of authentic language in everyday contexts. Most educational institutions in India have language laboratories that are technically equipped, but they often use them for teaching subjects like math, science, and literature. The use of movies in educational settings offers simulation, enjoyment, authenticity, and visual engagement to the learners (Donaghy, 2015) and is more efficacious in comparison to other educational tools. Incorporating movies in an ESL classroom enhances both learning outcomes and language proficiency.

Importance of incorporating movies in English language teaching

Teachers in English language classrooms often face a range of challenges and issues. Tricia Hedge (2014) in their book *“Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom”*, states that there are several variables that need to be considered in the context of language teaching. These include the difficulty of sustaining the learners’ motivation and engagement, the technicalities of error correction within the language classroom, the importance of cultural sensitivity, challenges associated with utilizing digital resources, and the diverse learning styles, needs, and backgrounds of the learners. Today’s learners spend more time watching movies and videos on YouTube, playing video games, and engaging with digital interactive technology. A greater number of teachers believe that it would be beneficial to use the learners’ preferred areas of interest in academic settings as well. According to Shyamlee (2012), using multimedia and technology in the classroom has a positive impact on the learning process, which contributes to an increase in teaching efficiency. Whereas it is not possible to educate the learners just by using technology, it requires an instructor who is able to create structured learning objectives, has knowledge of the curriculum, is competent in teaching strategies, efficient in using the ever-upgrading technology, and provides the learners with learning opportunities (Ghafar and Mohamedamin, 2022).

Blok et al. (2020) present six fundamental principles pertaining to teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). While originally designed for ESP settings, these principles also hold relevance and applicability within general English, English as a Second Language (ESL), and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as well.

- Understanding the characteristics and needs of the learners.
- Establishing a suitable environment for learning.
- Developing standard lessons and materials
- Modifying instructional methods as necessary
- Monitoring and assessing language development
- Fostering active engagement and promoting collaborative learning among the learners

Kieran Donaghy (2015), says that incorporating movies as teaching aids is highly advantageous due to their visual nature, which enhances the learners' comprehension and interpretation of language. It facilitates "*verbal messages*" and guides the learners' focus of attention towards watching and listening. They enhance the learning process through tasks such as predictions and inferring based on contextual clues and activate the learners' prior language knowledge. The incorporation of authentic situations and simultaneous visual supports such as non-verbal communication (facial expressions and gestures) aids the learners in processing language in a meaningful manner. The visual stimulus is helpful for learners who may be academically low achieving as it facilitates the integration of various sources of input. This medium enables them to engage in activities that enhance their Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) skills. It facilitates classroom conversations and discussions by providing the instructors with a wide variety of activities and tasks, allowing them to engage the learners with multiple skills and language aspects.

Benefits of using movies as language learning resources

Numerous studies provide empirical evidence that watching movies is a highly effective method for acquiring and enhancing language competence. Using films can accelerate the process of language acquisition by providing learners with competent input, which is crucial for the development of spoken language skills (Bahrani & Tam, 2012). According to Krashen (1985), watching movies can facilitate the subconscious acquisition and enhancement of language skills. The learners are encouraged to acquire proficiency in the English language, and the use of visual aids facilitates the development of cognitive abilities in individuals who may require more time to comprehend and retain information. Goldstein and Driver (2014) imply that utilizing films in an ESL classroom is an exemplary approach to including students in various tasks. Based on a comprehensive analysis of existing studies, it can be concluded that using movies to teach English is an effective strategy with many advantages over more conventional approaches (Alluri P., 2018).

Selecting Appropriate Movies

Mishan (2004) states that the utilization of film for language learning poses the greatest challenge among all the multimodal tools. One potential drawback is the association with watching movies as an activity for entertainment. However, this disadvantage must be weighed against the positive qualities of watching a film, such as language acquisition, verbal and non-verbal social behavior, emotional engagement, etc. A significant problem faced by educators is the difficulty of creating appropriate instructional activities to complement the cinematic and academic elements. According to Donaghy (2015), film as a video stimulus in a language classroom has four primary functions: serving as a valuable supplementary instructional resource, offering stimulus for learning, facilitating skill development (specifically in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and emphasizing language and vocabulary within various contexts. When choosing a movie for screening, one needs to consider the following criteria.

Criteria for movie selection

There are various factors to be considered before choosing a movie for screening in an English language classroom. The Syllabus, language level, length, relevance and interest, task potential, genre, copyrights, fair use policy, cultural sensitivity and age appropriateness, censorship rating (Donaghy, 2015).

Considering the syllabus, language level, and learners' interests

The movies chosen for screening in an academic setting need to adhere to a prescribed set of guidelines. The instructor needs to verify whether the syllabus mandates the inclusion of any screenings of a film, documentary, or video. Verify whether any textual or print material is accompanied by an alternate digital or multimodal supplement. For instance, numerous literary masterpieces have been adapted into cinematic renditions. It is important to ensure that the language level of the material is suitable for the learners' language

profile. Fu (2021) suggests that the “*expertise reversal effect*” is a phenomena that demonstrates the varied effectiveness of audio-visual learning resources depending on the language proficiency of learners. Learners who possess limited language proficiency may encounter “*cognitive overload*” in their working memory when confronted with new knowledge. Consequently, instructional materials that are designed to be effective for learners with low language knowledge may not provide the same level of effectiveness for learners with high language knowledge. The selection of movies for screening might be based on the preferences of learners, as this would enhance their interest and motivation. For example, empirical research conducted by Aziz and Fathiyyaturrizqi (2016), Borque (2022), Tabatabaei and Gahroei (2011), and other numerous studies has demonstrated that the success rate of language learners can be influenced by the selection of movies based on their language profile and interests, as monitored by the instructor.

Length, Relevance, task potential

The length of the movie to be screened depends on the time constraint of the academic setting. A full movie, clippings of a single movie appropriate to a particular context, clippings from multiple movies based on a particular context, and trailers of the movies can be screened. The content of the movies must be relevant to the topic discussed in the classroom following a prescribed syllabus. For instance, in an English for Business and Commerce (EBC) classroom, meeting etiquette can be taught by screening clippings from movies within the context. The task potential of the movie is the designing of appropriate instructional activities from the movies that are related to the topic of discussion and engage the learners in the classroom productively. Donaghy (2015), Film in Language Teaching Association (FILTA) have developed film guides with proper instructions. The activities need to be designed to develop language competency focusing on major English language skills such as LSRW, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and their subskills. The Manchester Metropolitan University has an association called FILTA formed by language educators and researchers working on the use of film in language teaching. It implies that activities should be designed focusing on the target group (varying from their diverse age groups or language proficiencies), the aim of the activities (what skills or abilities the learners would learn), activities, their objectives, materials required for the activities, procedure and potential outcome (response to the stimuli).

Copyrights, fair use policy, cultural sensitivity, and age-appropriateness

Copyrights and fair use policy are to be considered seriously by the instructors and researchers for some movies are not to be used for educational purposes without legal permissions. Whereas some movies are available for instructional purposes with appropriate subscriptions. Sometimes, depending on the age of the learners one must get approval from the learners' parents/legal guardians before screening. Censorship rating of the film is vital while screening a movie in an academic setting. Movies are given ratings by the censor film board, after looking at the film and award ratings according to the content and the appropriate age limit and guidance required to watch the film. The instructor needs to be considerate of diverse cultured learners before the screening and might have to skip the sensitive parts of the movie addressing any culture, community, race, or political group.

Screening Movies for language teaching

In reference to a plethora of empirical studies, it is determined that screening of movies and designing of the activities is conducted in three stages. Pre-Viewing, While-viewing, and Post-viewing.

Pre-viewing:

The pre-viewing stage involves the instructor delivering appropriate instructions to the learners regarding the screening process and learning objectives. At this point in the intervention, the learners are provided with an introduction to the film, an explanation of the rationale behind its selection, and instructions on what aspects to observe throughout the screening. Pre-viewing activities encompass several elements, such as making predictions regarding the movie's content, initiating discussions, and engaging in warm-up activities. The activities can be designed to emphasize a single skill or a combination of skills simultaneously. The instructor has the option to provide a pre-test in order to assess the progress of the learners upon completion of the intervention.

While-viewing:

The while-viewing phase will have the learners actively participating in activities that involve pausing the movie at any point in time. At this step, they are engaged in language activities such as predicting subsequent actions, dialogues, and interaction among learners in individuals or groups. During this part, it is progressive tests can be conducted to evaluate the progress. In the case of using clippings of movies for the screening, it is possible to engage in several skill-based activities after screening each clipping.

Post-viewing:

This phase of the intervention is of utmost importance, as it provides an opportunity to conduct various language exercises and engage in conversations that guide the learners towards the main area of focus. Many language activities can be employed to facilitate learning, such as engaging in discussions, participating in role-play, public-speaking activities, debates, listening comprehension, and vocabulary activities, administering quizzes, fostering creative thinking through brainstorming, and honing writing skills. A post-test after the completion of the screening and activities to evaluate the overall competency of the learners and specifically measure their progress can be conducted. The analysis of the pre-test, progressive tests, and post-test examines the efficacy of integrating movies as auxiliary instructional tools in the English language classroom.

Benefits and drawbacks of movies as pedagogic aids

According to Ismaili (2013), their study suggests that the incorporation of movies in the context of EFL instruction presented notable benefits in enhancing the learners' listening and communication skills and proved effective in gaining the learners' attention and presenting language in a more authentic manner compared to traditional course books. Movies provide a multitude of benefits encompassing elements such as authenticity, engagement, contextually rich content, cultural knowledge, and the development of language skills, especially listening, speaking, vocabulary, and non-verbal communication (Sari & Sugandi, 2015; Li & Wang, 2015). These resources offer opportunities for practical application of language skills, foster instructor-learner engagement, and present situations in various contexts to enhance understanding and improve vocabulary.

According to Nath et al. (2017), watching movies has the potential to reduce the "affective filter" experienced by learners with lower academic performance, facilitating the acquisition of new language skills. Moreover, the fact that learners enjoy watching movies encourages the instructors to use English movies as an enticing pedagogical approach (Kusumaningrum et al., 2015). However, they also have drawbacks such as complexity of language, time constraints, and linguistic variation. Movies have the potential to overwhelm individuals engaged in the learning process due to time constraints in an academic setting and the challenges faced due to the diverse accents, dialects, and variations of the English language. According to Sari & Sugandi (2015), movies might limit the learners' "active time", making it challenging for them to finish the whole movie. Some learners may be reluctant to watch English movies with English subtitles since they require more time and effort to comprehend. Students may get diverted from the core pedagogic content and focus more on actors, which also leads to them copying negative aspects such as violence, mature content, smoking, and substance abuse.

Conclusion

The comprehensive study concludes in general that movies provide a captivating educational experience compared to traditional pedagogic practices. The effectiveness of the movies depends on the instructors' ability to formulate suitable learning objectives and audio-visual interactive activities, implement them, monitor, and support the learners, and evaluate the efficacy of the movie on the learners' linguistic proficiency.

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