Developing Language Skills with the Help of Movies

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Annotation: This article deals with one of the most essential issues in methodology. Modern a foreign language classroom should contain the latest IT tools to make lesson more interesting and involving. Movies aren't just for entertainment in a foreign language class; they also give you a cultural education that enriches your language comprehension. Movies also expose you to a more natural form of the language with authentic vocabulary and slang, and they teach you to connect words with associated body language. This article focuses on a number of characteristic features of films as a foreign language teaching material and shows some ways to use it to develop language skills of learners.

Key words: educational resource, audio-visual format, requisite facilities, language environment, audiovisual methods, cross-cultural communication, comprehensibility of the film, infusing films, sustained learning.

The widespread availability of online video has been one of the most visible manifestations of the internet as a daily presence in our lives. On the other hand, authentic video – video originally created for purposes other than education (most typically, for information or entertainment) – has not yet been widely exploited as an educational resource. One field, that of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), is changing all that, with the usefulness of authentic video being acknowledged by language-learning experts, teachers and learners alike.

For many years, teachers of English – to the extent they used video materials at all – relied on a small number of available "graded" video series (collections of video scenes created specifically for language learning) featuring situations and dialogue carefully scripted to address one or two learning objectives[1]. At a time when English-language media was largely inaccessible to learners living outside of an English-speaking country, this was often learners' only exposure to English in an audio-visual format. With the advent of satellite television and especially of the internet, however, authentic English-language audiovisual entertainment and media became available to nearly everyone, and online services like YouTube quickly became hugely popular on a global scale. The result has been to make made-for-learning English video seem stilted, outdated and even condescending to today's English language learners.

Authentic video has many advantages over graded video beyond its comparative attraction to learners, however. The first is that authentic video – a scene from a blockbuster film, or a hit comedy TV series, or a popular music video – directly engages a learner's emotions, which in turn creates the predisposition for effective learning. Secondly, if the video material is current, learner engagement is further enhanced by its direct relevance to the learner's interests, its reflection of the prevalent zeitgeist, and the buzz - magnified greatly by social media - which accompanies such content. Learners thus attribute a value and significance to authentic video material that artificial material simply cannot match.

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[1]Allan, M. (1985). Teaching English with video. London: Longman.

Third, the use of authentic video from the world of English-language entertainment and news media achieves wonderful language-learning context, in that it familiarizes learners with cultural and societal norms of English-speaking countries - both generic (commonly used cultural references, collocations and expressions across the language) and specific (such as regional accents, region-specific idioms or slang). In this way, the use of authentic materials helps reinforce the essential positioning of English, for the learner, as far more than just a language to be mastered, but rather as a culture and mental framework to be absorbed and in which to participate.

Finally, what is sometimes portrayed as a weakness of authentic English language video is actually an advantage. Precisely because producers of entertainment video strive to accurately reproduce how English native speakers actually speak, authentic video is ideal for acclimatizing learners to the types of speech speeds and cadences, prosody, use of informal speech, and evolving conventions of usage that they will encounter when they actually need to communicate with a native speaker of English, or need to comprehend the language swirling around them in an English-speaking environment. And if the exercises built around authentic video are structured correctly, this huge range of inputs will help learners with the essential notion that it is not necessary to understand every word in a dialogue, or every reference in a conversation, in order to negotiate meaning from it and conduct a communicative exchange.

Today foreign language teaching methodology is developing day by day. New activities, technologies guarantee learners have a good opportunity to master the language. Language learners should practice language skills for long time to master a foreign language. The moving image is rapidly becoming the primary mode of communication in the world. The ascendance of the moving image has important consequences for society and education. After examining the changing nature of literacy in the 21st century and the importance of film in society and education we look at the benefits of using film in language teaching and examine how we can successfully integrate film into the language classroom. In doing so, we can offer guidance on using feature-length films, film clips and, in particular, short films, in critical and creative ways in language education. In addition, we consider the increasingly important role of student-generated media.

Films are a very valuable medium in the teaching of a foreign language. Our research and experience indicate that in the foreign language classroom films offer an opportunity for students to learn not only the target language and its culture, but also new words, new terminologies and new phraseology, as well as their proper usage-activities which would not be achieved in a normal language classroom. Films can also create a forum for students to practise using the language through class discussions, especially at the advanced level. It is for this reason that many language-teaching institutions have multi-media rooms with the requisite facilities such as television sets, video cassette players, CD and DVD players[2]. However, the successful use of films depends on many factors, including the preparedness of the instructor and the right approach, and perhaps these considerations account for their virtual absence from classrooms in many countries. In this work we analyze the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages. We focus on the importance of films, the mode of their selection and the appropriate timing for their use[3]. We also outline a methodology and recommend exercises at each stage of the teaching process in order to provide a point of reference for instructors.

Films portray the socio-cultural background of a people and provide information about the reality of appearances, about language and speech and about character. They communicate this information not only through what the actors say but also through what the film "shows" its audience. For example, when we watch a Ghanaian film, it captures areas of the country and the lifestyles, mannerisms, morals, religion, beliefs, values and dreams that pertain in these places.

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[2] Goldstein, B., & Driver, P. (2014). Language learning with digital video. Cambridge University Press

[3] Bahrani, T., & Tam, S. S. (2012). Audiovisual news, cartoons, and films as authentic language input and language proficiency development. The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 11(4)

To know these is to know the people of Ghana and their socio-cultural and socio-economic environment. The same argument applies when we use foreign films in the teaching of a foreign language. There is a wealth of non-linguistic and cultural information in films from countries whose-languages we teach. Asamoah-Gyedu remarks that African films and TV drama have become means of moralization. Language structures and lexical items used in communicative situations provide rich examples of the use of the language in everyday life. According to Massi and Merino, "film is an excellent medium for the explicit teaching of syntactic, morphological, semantic and pragmatic aspects of a foreign language". Films thus help to create the appropriate "language environment" in the classroom. Some Universities provide a study abroad programme that is designed to help students to understand the use of the language in everyday life, among other things. However, very often the programme does not provide students with the opportunity to visit traditional families, and to some extent students do not get to see the traditional setting of the country and to have a feel of the everyday use of the language. An understanding of the traqitional setting and everyday life through films is a great step for students towards understanding the country and adapting well, should they have the opportunity to visit that country through the study abroad programme or other means.

There can be found a number of positive stimulus that movies can bring to foreign language learning process. Motivation is one of the most important factors in determining successful second-language acquisition. Films and TV shows are an integral part of students' lives so it makes perfect sense to bring them into the language classroom. Film, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable.

Another benefit of using film is that it provides a source of authentic and varied language. Film provides students with examples of English used in 'real' situations outside the classroom, particularly interactive language – the language of real-life conversation. Film exposes students to natural expressions and the natural flow of speech. If they are not living in an English-speaking environment, perhaps only film and television can provide learners with this real-life language input.

The visuality of film makes it an invaluable language teaching tool, enabling learners to understand more by interpreting the language in a full visual context. Film assists the learners' comprehension by enabling them to listen to language exchanges and see such visual supports as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously. These visual clues support the verbal message and provide a focus of attention.

Film can bring variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of teaching techniques and resources, helping students to develop all four communicative skills. For example, a whole film or sequence can be used to practise listening and reading, and as a model for speaking and writing. Film can also act as a springboard for follow-up tasks such as discussions, debates on social issues, role plays, reconstructing a dialogue or summarising. It is also possible to bring further variety to the language learning classroom by screening different types of film: feature-length films, short sequences of films, short films, and adverts.

Given the benefits of using film in the language learning classroom, it is not surprising that many teachers are keen to use film with their students, and an increasing number of them are successfully integrating film into the language-learning syllabus. Until quite recently it was difficult to find pedagogically sound film material to help students improve their language through watching film, and teachers had to spend many hours creating their own materials. However, with the advent of the internet there is now a wealth of online resources for both language teachers and their students. With so many resources, it's sometimes difficult for teachers to see the wood for the trees.

Vocabulary plays a vital role in communicating well in a foreign language. Teaching or learning vocabulary requires a great amount of dedication and hard work. Learning vocabulary in a foreign language is not as easy as learning words in Language.

Lot of practice and repetition goes into it. According to Rosenweig, there are two uses of vocabulary exists in any language: Active use of vocabulary and Passive use of vocabulary. In active use of vocabulary, one can recall the vocabulary and produce it. In passive use of vocabulary one can recognize it and comprehend. However, both active and passive uses of vocabulary are very important in learning a foreign language. According to Yuksel and Tanriverdi using of subtitles or captions while watching a film aids a lot in attaining vocabulary, subsequently, they aid the learner integrate a word into a situation. In addition, instance vocabulary can be learned by watching films which revolves around a certain theme. With enough practice and repetition even a slow learner can acquire good amount of vocabulary. While watching the film teacher can point out at certain vocabulary related to the social context in the film. By doing so the learner can be in a position to use the vocabulary in their social life. However, the learners may not acquire 100 % of this vocabulary correctly, but it will be good enough for them to use when the social situation arises. Finally, word lists and gap fills can also help in learning vocabulary while watching films. In order to teach this, the teacher can pick a specific scene which may be related to a social setting and then prepare a worksheet with some missing vocabulary and ask the students to fill in the missing information while watching the film. Thus films help in teaching vocabulary in a simplest way to the students in General Foundation Programs.

In general there are two approaches to teach grammar. The first one is Deductive approach and the second is Inductive approach. As per Larsen – Freeman, the facilitator in deductive approach gives the rule and asks the students to frame examples. This approach is rather guided and conventional. On the other hand, in inductive way, the teacher illustrates some examples in the class and then asks the students to predict the rule for the given examples. This way of teaching grammar is more apt and novel, which inturn involves students and encourage their active participation. According to Van Abbe, using audiovisual methods makes teaching and learning interesting than just in the conventional style. He points out that students can learn grammatical structures more effectively by watching films rather than attending traditional grammar classes. Finally, grammar based activities from a specific scene can be of good practice for students[4].

There is a saying that every language has its own culture.Inorder to learn a new culture one must learn its language. A broader picture of English-speaking countries' culture can be taught to students by using films. As each film reflects the culture of its own country so it's important to teach the students that culture is always embedded in the language. By showing genres like drama and historical, students will have a big picture of the culture variation. Teacher can ask the students to compare their own culture with the culture shown in the film and initiate a debate or ask students to write an essay. By knowing other cultures students become cultural literates.Finally, by introducing various cultures to students through films we can make students tolerant, liberal and sensitive to other cultures and respect them. Films can trigger culture discussions among the students. Films can be a good source to raise questions and discussions. Various written and verbal assignments can be given to students based on the cultures they have encountered in various movies. Cross-cultural communication can also be possible by using films in the classroom.

Stoller says that preparing the lesson well in advance is considerably significant. Though films bring variety and flexibility to the classroom, one must take enough precautions in choosing the right films to the students in General Foundation Programs in this part of the world. As Oman is a conservative country, not just any film can be shown in the classroom. So the films should be selected and previewed carefully[5]. The teacher must do a lot of homework before showing the film.The teacher should make sure that the students understand the instructional objectives of a film lesson and emphasize that the designed pedagogical goals are accomplished

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[4] Heinemann Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. Language Teaching 40 (2)

[5] Carroll, S. (2001). Input and evidence: the raw material of second language acquisition. Philadelphia

at the end of watching film. Allan says that the films should be relevant to the students and make them stay motivated. Stoller highlights that a film chosen should complement instructional and curricular objectives. The comprehensibility of the film is one of the important factors while choosing a film to show to the GFP students. As the overall comprehension skills of GFP students are above average, so the teacher must take enough care while choosing a film. The students should comprehend the film and accomplish related tasks[6]. The comprehensibility of a film can bring the students together to work on the related tasks. Moreover, it should not be a burden on the teacher to help students understand the language of the film. Secondly, the films have to facilitate the learner with sufficient pictorial support. The visual images in the film should support the verbal messages so that the students can comprehend what is going on. For students with good comprehension skills less visual images with more verbal messages can do the trick. Then, the delivery of dialogue also plays an important role in choosing the films. In some films, based on their culture the artists use slang which may not be comprehensible for students. Again this is another challenge for the teacher while choosing a film. The accents and the pace of dialogue delivery must be kept in mind while choosing a film. Any extremes may become difficult for students to keep the pace while watching the film. So the teacher should be wise enough to take all these into account and choose the right film to derive the required output from the students. In addition, the teacher should choose the film which complements classroom activities[7]. Pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing activities better facilitate the learners in comprehension as well as to achieve desired pedagogical goals. Stoller points out that before actual viewing of film, students should go through previewing activities. These activities make them ready for the actual viewing. Pre-viewing activities includes vocab exercises, brainstorming, discussions etc...Pre-viewing helps students to be at pace and comprehend the story and characters involved in it. While viewing activities make the students focus on the film and aid them in understand the twists and turns in the film. Post viewing activities are very important because with those activities the teacher can assess whether the efforts put in showing the film is fruitful or not. Post-viewing activities enhances written and oral skills. Students can be asked to write about the summary or gist of the film or describe their favorite character and also they can be given a chance to add specific details to their favorite character. When it comes to oral skills, students can make presentations about the film or about the climax or about their favorite artist in the film. They can also have debates or discussions. Debates and discussions aids in students improve their public speaking skills. Gathering information exercises can be a good task in all these activities. Though most of the students in general as well as in General Foundation Programs like action movies, but in my opinion, action movies are not a good source in teaching language because of various reasons. One of the reasons could be they have more action and less room to dialogues, besides violence. Hence some animated films, historical films, educational films, dramas, social issue films and documentaries can be of good source in teaching language while watching[8].

According to Stoller, using films in the class is a time consuming act since the teacher has to view it couple of times before showing to the students. By doing so, the teacher has to keep aside all her other works and has to spare her time in watching and preparing the tasks related to the film. Hence, the teacher has to solely focus on the activities related to film and ignore some other classroom activities. Secondly, the teacher has to do a lot of homework before showing the film. As the students in this part of the world are conservative, every detail of the film must be watched and listened to very judiciously. Unfortunately, if the teacher does not do the homework carefully, then it will be chaotic while watching the film. Next, it's very important to note the mood of the students while watching the film because certain scenes may distract the students and may demotivate them while watching. Then, the various slangs and accents used in the film can also be one of the challenges while watching. Most of the Scottish films use the local slang

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[6] Y. & Freeman, D. (1998). ESL/EFL teaching: principles for success. Portsmouth

[7] J. Benjamins. Cham poux, J.E. (1999). Film as a teaching resource. Journal of Management Inquiry 8(2).

[8] Mishan, F. (2004). Designing authenticity into language learning materials. Bristol: Intellect Books.

so it becomes very difficult for the students at General Foundation Programs in Oman to comprehend and continue watching. So films with neutral accent which can be comprehended by even the weaker students must be chosen. Choosing an accent depends upon what variety of English language is being used in your country i.e.American English or British English. Most importantly, the level of students can be a big challenge. As we all know that a class comprises of students with various level of comprehension so it's a big challenge for the teacher to get desired output equally from all the students. In addition, using films to teach Level 1 students is also a big challenge due to the fact that they are very slow learners and it will be complete waste of time to invest such enormous time and preparation. On the other hand, the teacher can introduce films once a while in the class room to get the Level 1 students slowly on the track. There should not be any mode of assessment while this has been introduced to encourage the students. Later stages, when the teacher is confident about the students' comprehension skills related to English language, can introduce some gap fill exercises or information gathering exercises[9].

Infusing films into education serves a variety of purposes in language teaching. The observation of cultural aspects such as customs and humor or culturally specific use of the language such as idioms help to understand the function of the language. An innovative and a resourceful teacher can yield meaningful results in not only developing students' linguistic competence but also promoting their higher order critical and reflective thinking skills. Hence it is suggested that a judicious selection of films along with several learner-friendly tasks should be incorporated in the curriculum of language teaching. Sustained learning can be fostered by making students more aware of language resources available outside the classroom and comfortable, using the authentic materials. Multi-sensory input is likely to assist in more effective memory retention. The observation of cultural aspects such as customs and humor or culturally specific use of the language such as idioms helps to understand the function of the language. Humor in films seems to relax nervous learners and enhance their language learning.

Films provide real-life context for language learning, helping learners understand how words and phrases are used in different situations. Vocabulary expansion: By watching films, you can learn new vocabulary and common expressions in context, making it easier to remember to use the words in the future.

Overall, we can state that teachers of foreign languages should take into consideration some issues before choosing films into their classes. Firstly, difficulty level of the movie should meet with the knowledge of language learners. Secondly, a movie that is chosen for a class should be appropriate to the mentality and culture of the class as well, films with some themes that cannot be suitable to this or that auditorium should not be accepted to the class. Thirdly, film content should not contain too much vocabulary that are not used to be active. If these issues are taken into consideration movies can really be a rich source of vocabulary, real grammar, cohesion and coherence of the language. Movies do not only supply the class with enough knowledge of the language but they also provide it with special positive mood and atmosphere.

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3. Carroll, S. (2001). Input and evidence: the raw material of second language acquisition. Philadelphia

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