

英語教育における映画の利用法

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The Use of Movies in EFL Tuition

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Introduction

In the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language, teachers have, for many years, strived to bring authentic material into the classroom, so that the students may be prepared for what they will encounter in the real world beyond their sheltered EFL environment. When speaking of authentic material, one usually envisions newspapers, advertisements, and novels. These materials, however, are used most often in classes teaching Reading or Writing skills. Generally speaking, it is more difficult to get authentic material that can be used for conversation or communication classes. For the majority of Speaking and Listening classes, the teacher is expected to become a “one man band,” providing the student with ideal models, as well as being the ideal conversation partner. Realizing the difficulty of this, videos have, for over ten years, been used as an alternative resource in these classrooms.

In this article, I wish to pose that movies can assist with the tuition of all four skills (Speaking and Listening as well as Reading and Writing) as well as the fifth skill of interpreting and translation. Not only are movie videos and DVDs one of the best sources of authentic material, they can also be instrumental in increasing student motivation towards learning English.

Listening

Previously, the video had occasionally been used in literature classes as a “visual wrap up” for a novel studied. At times, in other English content subjects, the whole movie was shown as a “time fill-in.” However, in the mid-eighties, Sony Cinex began to commercialize what some teachers were already doing on a smaller scale. The company produced exercise books which provided listening exercises for grasping key words and concepts, cloze exercises, exercises to match the speaker with the words spoken, and exercises to put selected sentences in their correct sequence. The videos that were provided showed time codes, one copy being with, and the other being without, English sub-titles. It was recommended

that one full video, broken up into over ten short clips, be used over a full semester, thereby treating the movie as a useful teaching tool, in preference to the previous view of them being predominantly just for entertainment. The popular titles available at the time, *Karate Kid* (1984) and *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979) ensured that the student did not get bored, while the teacher could see clear progress amongst the students' understanding of spoken English.

The Cinex text was not, however, a completely new concept, as some teachers had already been focusing on using videos in place of tapes for cloze listening exercises. Recently, focus has been given on the regular use of short video clips (rather than long full videos) to give "authentic" examples of even simple cultural situations, for example: greetings between old friends, new acquaintances, business connections, and so on. Furthermore, with the increased opportunities for non-English speakers to hear model English conversations, the continued use of videos as follow-ups to famous novels and plays such as *Anne of Green Gables* (1934) and *Macbeth* (1971) has become more significant.

In order to effectively evaluate the worth of movies for Listening, one must realize that no other resource can give the student speech at natural speed and with completely natural content in such a variety of accents, dialects and situations. Tapes attached to text books are most often "read" at a pre-decided, often slow, speed, while the content is regulated to the vocabulary and grammar content of the chapter being studied. On the other hand, natural experience cannot always predict what type of speech will come next. This natural experience is duplicated in movies. In addition, the repetition of visual scenes accompanying the appropriate dialog assists in the retention of the target language.

Speaking

In the past, movies were not often used in the conversation and communication classroom. Some teachers were apt to think that the time spent on viewing movies could better be spent on doing repetitive drills. Recent scholars, however, prefer to use video dialogs as examples of natural speech and conversation patterns which should be, preferably, shown during the conversation class.

In the natural sequence of acquiring a language, speaking follows listening. Furthermore, the initial experiments of the young child largely contain repetition of words and phrases heard. Model conversations shown in movies can be effectively utilized as role-play exercises, allowing students not only to imitate the words and phrases, but also to experiment with dialects, personalities, and situations. Such exercises also provide students with training in pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, and usage of abbreviations. Because of their clear enunciation, older movies such as *Sabrina* (1954) and *Little Women* (1933) can be more effectively used by students.

Beyond direct role-play and repetition exercises, students are often motivated to try to understand the content of some movies when the songs used in the film become popular record shop hits. The Disney movies encouraged many students to try to learn phrases from the movies along with the words from their theme songs.

Furthermore, the audio-visual stimulus of ideas presented in movies can give rise to class discussions and debating topics as well as topics for class speeches. Some movies may also provide examples

of specialized skills such as news reading, or corporate negotiations. *Broadcast News* (1987) gives excellent examples of news reading, as well as the compilation of news programs, while the *Negotiator* (1998) shows the various stages of negotiations and debates.

For these reasons, videos are now regularly accompanying new conversation and communication orientated textbooks. In the same way, extracts of popular movies are constantly appearing in the conversation and communication classrooms.

Reading

As previously mentioned, students of literature classes are often told to watch the movie adapted from the novel. American Literature classes have long used the video of the television drama *Little House on the Prairie* (1989) to explain to foreign students the subtleties of early American history and culture. Watching the movie after, or before, reading the novel, has been a regular part of some reading classes.

However, students should not be limited to viewing movies related to works by the same name. Much of the popularity associated with the modern movie *Romeo and Juliet* (1996) comes from the interest in how a “classic” can be depicted in today’s modern society. *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) whet the interest of hikers as well as historians. Similarly, *Dances with Wolves* (1990) caused quite a stir because of its portrayal of the white man as intruders upon the native-American’s land, a hitherto unthinkable treatment of the historic “Indian Wars.” These movies, by becoming popular, have encouraged students to increase their knowledge in these fields, and have lead many to read articles on similar topics in both their mother tongue as well as the target language of English. Some movies mention popular book titles, motivating students to seek out these books for extra pleasure reading - an important aspect of improving one’s reading ability of the target language.

Global Education can also benefit from the showing of such movies as *Gandhi* (1982) and *Cry Freedom* (1987) (learning about discrimination, and peaceful protesting), *Roman Holiday* (1953) (European studies), *Forrest Gump* (1994) (anti-Vietnam War campaign in America), etc. Again, the student can grasp a better understanding of particular eras and the life styles, customs, and clothing connected to those eras, by watching movies set in those times. The great classics of *My Fair Lady* (1964) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939) are particularly good examples here.

Screenplay Publishing has an extensive range of movies transcribed with vocabulary lists and annotations to facilitate personal study and in-class usage. These scripts conveniently provide the student with extra reading, and thereby assist in improved listening and understanding of the movie content.

Writing

Cloze exercises, of course, give the student exercises in writing out the specific vocabulary pertaining to the movie content. However, there are two exercises which allow the student to much more readily improve their writing (and listening) skills. The first of these two exercises is dictation. Dictation was a method used regularly in the first language and second language classrooms of yesteryear, but is

not used very often in the modern day English classroom. It is, however, an excellent exercise in that it requires intense concentration, not only in order to hear what is being said, but also in correctly recording what was heard. Furthermore, immediate spelling checks and grammar checks can better stabilize the balance between fluency and accuracy. Appropriate dictation passages also increase the student's awareness of idioms, abbreviated terms, and jargon usage, items most often given as difficult for non-native speakers to understand and use.

The second writing exercise which can be very beneficial for students is the movie journal. *English in the Movies* (2001) gives several examples. To compile the book, a number of authors gathered to glean memorable phrases from some fifty recent movies. Record was kept of the main characters, the storyline, and the memorable phrase or phrases. This effort required the authors to watch and listen to several movies repeatedly. The multi-viewing, often just to discover what might be "important," becomes an invaluable listening experience, and the required background research into the movie becomes a project about the beginnings of the movie, or the complexities of the lifestyles of the characters. These journals can also range more widely than what is provided in the classroom, delving into themes such as Education (*Dead Poets Society*, 1989 and *Lean on Me*, 1989), Religion (*Seven Years in Tibet*, 1997), Government Diplomacy (*Anna and the King*, 1999), Stereotypes (*Crocodile Dundee*, 1990), etc. Journals also allow the budding engineer to be challenged by writing on how the special graphic effects were done (*Titanic*, 1997).

At the university level, movies are gaining as much "literary weight" as novels, and are increasingly the subject for a graduation thesis or scholastic magazine article (AAALS publication *Antipodes* featuring Australian Films). Recent study areas include the portrayal of "youth", "family", and the "portrayal of good and bad." Student movie appreciation journals naturally contain personal anecdotes, comments based on personal experience, and opinions, which are very important in improving self-expression amongst the young.

Translating and Interpreting

The translation method of teaching a language is as old as the scholars of ancient Greece and Rome. Considering how foreign language entered Japan through the Buddhist and Jesuit priests, it is not surprising that Japan should rely so heavily on translation as a means of passing on the teachings of another world to its own. In the meantime, it is the explicit wish of many Japanese students to be able to watch movies without the necessity of depending on the Japanese subtitles, i.e. translation.

In recent years, many tutors of English have been adamant that the translation method hinders, rather than helps, the acquisition of the target language. However, if looked at in more detail, and in correlation with movies, one can find various circumstances where the two compliment each other successfully.

Firstly, when students study English or American Literature, they will often become discouraged by long sentences and unfamiliar terms and will tend to run to the library for a translation of the original. However, awkward or unprofessional translations, or lack of knowledge of the period in which the novel

was set, or history of the background of the novel, may render the translation useless to the student. On the other hand, movie scripts contain shorter sentences with more familiar terminology, and the lack of knowledge of the period is made up for by visual aids, thereby making it easier to translate and understand. Experience through movies will also assist the student in real life situations at a later date.

Secondly, professional interpreting requires an extremely high level of accuracy. Furthermore, communication between the parties involved must be clear in order for the messages to be relayed properly. When lower-level or intermediate-level students experiment amongst themselves with interpreting exercises, certain problems arise. There is usually a lack of speed, a lack of depth in the content, and a very low vocabulary level. It is difficult to improve one's interpreting skills in this type of situation. However, using movie conversations or dialogs means that the teacher can choose from a variety of different content topics, gradually increasing the difficulty of the chosen pieces so as to challenge the student and expand his or her vocabulary. Furthermore, although most interpreters are asked to interpret into their mother tongue, the opposite may also be required when there is a lack of professional personnel in the area. Training for this can be done with bi-lingual movies, as an ever increasing number of Japanese movies are also now available in dubbed English and/or with English subtitles. Therefore, the teacher is free to use both Japanese and English language videos in the English classroom.

Most difficult in the field of interpreting is simultaneous interpreting. Many hours of practice are required, which are rarely available to the student or teacher of English. Topics vary widely, and the speed and idiosyncrasies of the speaker often impair even a seasoned interpreter. Again, movies can provide the student with a wide variety of topics, accents, and speech speeds, and allow the students to practice both inside and outside the classroom.

Finally, one can evaluate the sub-titles of movies as a beneficial teaching resource. Both the reading and the composition of sub-titles can help students become more proficient at English. Reading the English sub-titles whilst listening to the spoken English, or later muting the sound, can help students with bettering their reading speed, as well as accuracy. When having the students do written exercises, limitations in the space available for the sub-titles, requires the translator to focus on vocabulary. This means that not only is the student required to increase his or her knowledge of the various idioms and terms used in various situations, but also to grasp the appropriateness of such words and phrases depending on the circumstances of their use. The student has to think about the suitability of certain vocabulary to fit the nuance of the situation, as well as the actual space available in which to write the words. Sub-titles also pinpoint the difficulty of translating humor and cultural idiosyncrasies.

Teaching Process

When the instructor has decided to use a video to teach a class English, there are three particular areas which need to be considered. The first is the choice of movie or movies. The students' level of English and their specific field or interests will often influence the teacher's choice of genre, content, and conversation speed. Next, there should be a choice of how many videos are to be used in class. Some teachers prefer to use sitcoms because of their overall brevity, while others prefer to use small segments

of many films, recommending that the student watch to rest of the movie in their free time, but the majority of teachers follow a system similar to the Sony Cinex text. In other words, choosing one video to be covered during the 13-15 weeks of a semester.

If the teacher prefers to include various cultural scenes in the English classroom, s/he may prefer to do this by choosing short three to five minute segments from a large number of movies. Movies would be chosen to match the topic of the week, and would most likely focus on a minimum vocabulary accompanied by viewing exercises geared to understanding the finer cultural actions and taboos. The difficulty for the teacher here lies in the volume of videos or DVDs which the teacher needs to prepare and carry with them to class.

If the teacher uses only one or two movies over a single semester, short segments of about 10 minutes are shown each week. Coupled with each segment, viewed 3 or more times, are dictation exercises, grammar exercises, culture points, and role play activities. With this method, the class is kept in an on-going flow, both with storyline, as well as increased listening and understanding of the language and content.

Whichever way the daily viewing routine is conducted, it is imperative that the students are encouraged to increase their listening and comprehension skills by viewing other movies. This is where the introduction of assignments focusing on memorable expressions found in the movie can be beneficial. Personally chosen movies will motivate the student to listen more intently, and accurately record the chosen expression.

Introduction of DVDs

With the recent popularity of DVDs, an increasing number of teachers are starting to use them in the classroom. In many ways, the use of DVDs facilitates English learning, and can be a very convenient resource for the teacher. To begin with, the movie can be viewed chapter by chapter, making winding forward or back a much easier task. Further, there is the advantage of freely choosing which language medium to listen to, and which sub-title language to use. Previously, special, costly de-coding equipment was required before the class could view the English subtitles of videos bought in Japan or overseas.

Perhaps the most attractive aspect of the inclusion of DVDs in the classroom is the additional chapters which offer clips on how the movie was made, interviews with the cast on how they portrayed their assigned character, and movie production crew on what special effects were required in order to make the movie a success. These additional chapters are without subtitles, and can be considered much more demanding of the EFL student, but the motivation of the student to try to understand the content seems to be quite high.

In contrast with these advantages are certain disadvantages. The biggest hurdle would seem to be the extra cost of buying DVD equipment, or setting up a computer, projector, and screen with which the class can view the DVD. The prevalence of VTR machines in most classrooms also keeps many teachers from bringing in extra equipment. Many teachers also find it more convenient to be able to “go on where they left off” rather than searching anew for the chapter or passage dealt with the previous week.

Final comments

Throughout this paper I have shown how beneficial the use of videos can be to acquiring the four basic skills of Listening and Speaking, Reading and Writing, as well as improving the fifth skill of Translating and Interpreting. Where the teacher may make allowances in their speech for the fact that the audience is made up of non-English speakers, the movies make no such modifications. The dialogs of the characters in the movies appear as natural discourse in natural conversation settings. This presentation of multi-faceted authentic speech is essential for the language learner.

Guided video viewing can also give meaningful experience to those who would otherwise not have extensive contact with the target language or culture. Even those who live and study in very provincial areas have access to a wide range of movies. Movies also give essential cultural background to eras, concepts, or literary works being studied.

Finally, by enhancing student motivation, guided video viewing assists in expanding each student's knowledge of the target language. This type of learning has the potential to continue far beyond the classroom. With these advantages in mind, it is hoped that the effective use of videos in the classroom will continue.

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