

Analyzing the Role of Film Viewing in Increasing Language Awareness and Enriching Vocabulary of ESL Learners

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Abstract - For many years, numerous teachers have been using films and film viewing in language teaching. They have personal and professional reasons why such strategy is being employed. However, when teachers use film viewing in the classroom, there should be valid and relevant reasons for their choice and action. This paper examined and described how and why language teachers use this strategy in their classes. The researcher with rich and vast experience in teaching, gathered his reflections, observations, and compared his literature in dealing with the main concerns of this study. The facts and insights coming from scholarly sources helped the researcher form timely and relevant conclusions to address the main concerns of his study. The focus of this study is supported by Perennialism, a philosophical thought which emphasizes knowledge that has been carried through the years. Perennial subjects cover classical literature, philosophy, science, history, and the fine arts. The goal of this philosophical perspective is to develop and challenge the mind and to prepare students for life by teaching them to analyze and reflect critically.

It was found out in this study that film viewing accompanied by effective instructional strategies can be used to increasing language awareness and enriching the vocabulary of ESL learners. Furthermore, language teachers need to be creative, reflective, and innovative in inserting film viewing in the language and literature lessons. Careful planning is a must for the success of any task in the language classroom.

Keywords - Film Viewing, Instructional Strategy, Motivation, Vocabulary, Language Awareness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language and literature teachers employ the most appropriate instructional strategies to motivate students to participate and learn. The use of films has its place in language and literature instruction for many decades but is it really effective and reliable? A language teacher does not only give film viewing sessions for fun and for time-consumption, rather he should have clear objectives of implementing such task aligned with the lessons and skills indicated by the course syllabus.

The researcher answered the set of questions he raised through assessment of his own experiences, reflective analysis of situations, careful observations, and literature

review. His main purpose is to describe and analyze the functions of film viewing (and the film) in teaching English as a second language. He also observed how ESL learners behave and respond in a classroom instruction when a specific lesson is aided by film viewing.

How does film viewing in English language teaching work? Donaghy (2014) explained how film viewing can be exciting and excellent teaching and learning tool. She detailed that for many decades language teachers have been using films in their classes and there are many great reasons why films are essential in language and literature classes. Motivation is one of the most important factors in ensuring successful second language learning. Films and TV shows

are imperative part of students' lives so they can make learning process more entertaining and enjoyable.

She also stated that films provide authentic and varied language. Films expose students to natural expressions and natural flow of speech. Also, films give a visual context where students can understand and interpret language. Learners can develop comprehension easier by trying to listen to the language exchanges and see facial expressions and gestures simultaneously.

The researcher is narrating some of the classroom instructions he had in his fruitful years of teaching. Before teaching the concept, the film can serve as springboard for the learner to analyze the structures of the dialogues. Perhaps a better term to use is warmer in which the language teacher can play the film for analysis and examination. It may not be a piece of cake for the learners to do the task of analyzing it especially if the language may be new for them but this simple warmer can expose them to the target language. The teacher can ask the students to write down important information and details about the film they watch. From this point, learners can follow directions and recognize the use of imperative sentences which is also about language structure. One of the useful lesson plan formats is adapted from Teflen Training College (2019). It details all steps which the teacher can apply in teaching reading and literature. From this lesson plan, the components are warm-up where the teacher provides a review of the past lesson; introduction/skimmming where the teacher provides short tasks to lead the students to the lesson or topic; scanning where students go directly to the handouts or modules; vocabulary presentation where the learners unlock difficulties; critical awareness is the stage where intellectual questions are discussed and explained; and the last part is evaluation and homework where the learners do pedagogical tasks that serve as continuing framework of their learning experience.

As students, try to understand the plot of the film and the different scenes in it, they are gaining vocabulary from the words or discourses of the characters. Something new for them may leave a lasting mark. Unfamiliar and high sounding words would challenge them to search for the lexicons and study their meanings. Another advantage of film viewing is creating an opportunity for learners to twist their thoughts and get involve in critical and analytical thinking. They attempt to imagine and visualize the next scenes answering the question "What will happen next?" and "How will the protagonist survive the trial?" these are but only few of the questions that may test the reflective

thinking skills of the students. The tasks assigned by the language teacher to the students should be authentic and functional. When experts say authentic it means the task can make the learners realize its importance in the real world or all tasks should prepare them for future activities and events. When they try to quote or record the expressions and dialogues, they will learn how to use those in meaningful ways or manners. They could also get vocabulary items necessary for their everyday interactions with other people. These sets of word or lexicon they collect from the film can be very useful in communicating their thoughts and persuading others. Functional is best described by practicality of usage or function in various situations. Moreover, successful people should have a clear and huge storage of vocabulary that will sustain and maintain their language competence.

Film viewing connects the thoughts of the students to the target language and topic. The stories and lines will only serve as a bridge that will link the message and meaning to what the learners has in their minds. The relevance of this point lies on the fact that if students watch films, most likely they can achieve a wide picture of what the lesson is or what will be the possible points of the lesson. From this task of providing a film viewing, the teacher becomes more prepared and more importantly, he can impose less talk in the class, the ratio can be 20/80. Students can interact and brainstorm after the activity, while the teacher serves as facilitator only.

Other than concepts and ideas, students will also learn practical applications of the realities they see from the video itself. The different contexts and situations presented can help the viewers compare and understand the deeper social thoughts of life where they are a part of. Although students have not yet visited another place, motion pictures will bring them anywhere with emotions, thoughts, and scenes. They do not only see the different sides and ways of life, but they live it.

This study used phenomenology as an approach to answer the questions stated earlier. Phenomenology is a form of qualitative approach which studies and explores human experiences. Using his own perspective and observations from his colleagues and students, the researcher formed insightful strategies and techniques on how film viewing could properly and effectively be used in the language classroom. Other important and imperative ideas popped out from the main thrust of the study. It was discovered on the latter part the invaluable outcomes of

using film viewing to facilitate learning of ESL students in the Philippine setting.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main objective of this reflective article research is to analyze and describe the main functions of film viewing in language instruction.

Specifically, this study has attempted to address the following questions:

1. What kinds of film are used by the language teachers for viewing?
2. How do teachers use films for language instruction?
3. Why should teachers use films and film viewing in language teaching?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher intentionally reviewed materials that have close connection to the main focus of this study which is film viewing in second language classrooms. Several resources and references have diverse views as regards the use of films in the classroom. Although different ideas were seen by the researcher, a good number of parallel thoughts were synthesized and collected to explain the emerging phenomenon or practice. According to Freiberg and Driscoll (2000), films, videotapes, and videodiscs are stimuli which have appeal to students and can support motivation. They added that technology has manifested the practical application of equipment and advance the quality of programs. Videodisc technology has positive effects to the classroom environment especially to the motivation, interest, emotions, and achievement of the students. This was based on the work of Rock and Cummings (1994) in which they further opined that bar codes were being matched to the textbook and curriculum.

Robertson (1999) stated that videodiscs are very much efficient for the teacher when the latter locates an appropriate segment for the lesson swifter than a video. But Dolby (1993) argued that the teacher has a key role in the successful use of videodiscs, films, and videos. The fluency and familiarity of teachers play significant role in the success of the tasks and use of the mentioned stimuli, he added.

Meanwhile, Freiberg and Driscoll (2000), suggested smart and insightful ways on how the language teachers can make the most out of the film viewing as a productive

activity in the second language classroom. If the video footage is short, the teacher can ask his class to supply the film with dialogue (the silent mode is on). They can also predict the next scenes or act out the next events. After some scenes are played, the film will be stopped and learners can come up with a short play in line with their predictions and expectations. Another worthy activity can be students will watch another film of the same genre or topic but they have to compare the two films in terms of structure and contents. Finally, the teacher can task the class to create their own films in groups related to a current issue or topic in the community or in the country at large. Students can also present their projects, investigation, and advertisement using their own produced-films. After the presentations, questions and suggestions can be raised by the members of the class for a meaningful and productive evaluation.

In using films, videotapes, and videodiscs, the author advises language teachers to follow same guidelines regarding vision and volume for learners to apply. The topmost guide in using the stimuli according to Freiberg and Driscoll is to make learners interact not just to watch and listen. That will only happen if the teacher will combine other elements and tools such as questions, organizers, and discussions.

A trailer can also be exciting and unforgettable task for many students. With this, learners can do group planning and can actually create a trailer for a novel or short story they have read in the class. Odell, Vacca, and Hobbs (2001) suggest a short clip in the form of a trailer which presents few pivotal scenes from an upcoming movie to capture viewers' attention making them eager to see the movie.

In addition, they recommend a one-minute promotional trailer for a short story in which students can plan a trailer based on the literary pieces they read in the classroom. The authors also emphasized important elements for the preparation of movie trailer such as telling moments, adept adaptation, story boards, and production notes. It is essential that in a one-minute trailer, students will include intriguing, exciting, and dramatic moments that make viewers want to read the story. Most of the studies conducted by experts only offer subjective procedures on how to do film viewing in their own classrooms. They also described preparation and presentation of films even those personally produced by their students. This study had to prove how film viewing can enhance language awareness which is also called grammar competence and enrichment of lexicon or vocabulary. Furthermore, the value of organized planning for film viewing was also detailed in this study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language teachers use films that may spark interest and motivation of ESL learners. In the language class, only English films are suggested for viewing since the subject is English and the primary goal is to enhance language awareness and increase vocabulary items. However, language teachers have to filter and examine the contents of the film as well as their relevance and connection to the lessons intended for classroom discussions.

In using films and film viewing, there is a need for the language teacher to anchor the theme of the films to the specific lessons required for the sessions. It is not enough that films are only given for the sake of entertainment and so on. As mentioned in the literature and studies, the language teacher has to be guided by the lesson or learning plans so that he/she can justify the rationale and relevance of the films in the classroom instruction. The language teacher has to connect the experiences, capacities, and needs of the target students to the instructional objectives set for future discussions and activities.

Films are invaluable in the ESL classroom because they serve as motivation and springboard for the learners to analyze dialogues and discourses shown by the footages and scenes. Learners are able to absorb and study varied terms and concepts they can use in different situations and contexts. As revealed by the cited sources, language teachers are able to apply film viewing productively and effectively if they will follow the appropriate strategies, techniques, and approaches.

Of course, in the implementation of the film viewing, the creativity, resourcefulness, and prudence of the teacher are very pivotal as the procedures are to be met step by step by the teacher in his classes. The learning environment should be cozy and conducive for similar tasks performed in the venue. As much as possible, everybody in the place is relaxed and comfy.

Primary consideration in the practices and strategies of the teacher is the characteristics of the learners because everyone in the classroom is unique and diverse. This thought requires the language teacher to be sensitive to variables and factors that may promote or hamper learning in the class, among these are needs, experiences, mental capacity, motivation, attitude, and beliefs. Not to forget another crucial factor is socio-economic status because in some schools, classrooms are not equipped with adequate facilities and materials. Hence, creativity and reflection are shield and guide to teachers in their quest for excellence and

quality. From the thoughts reflected in this study, it can be justified that film viewing is effective in increasing the vocabulary of the learners at the same time, it further enhances the language proficiency and awareness of the learners. This is more evident if the language teacher himself will guide and direct the learners on what and how to do the pedagogical tasks.

Recent studies cited by this investigation helped set directions and organize plans in conducting film viewing. There are plenty of useful and relevant ideas that can assist the language teachers in employing this strategy effectively. However, results of this study showed that a mix of other strategies can be fruitful and pleasant if the language teacher knows how to adhere to his instructional objectives in doing film viewing in the ESL classroom.

V. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

Language teachers should find ways and means to facilitate learning of their students. They can employ varied strategies that may connect and respond to the existing needs and diversities of the learners. Film viewing is one of the authentic tools that can be useful in the language classrooms. Not only it does help learners develop listening and viewing skills but it also enhances both language proficiency and vocabulary.

Prior to the film viewing schedule, the teacher has to prepare guide questions that can help the learners find out the plot of the story with other essential elements. It is worthy to note that class discipline, cleanliness, and orderliness have to be demonstrated by the class while they are participating in this activity. Indeed, film viewing is very effective and useful to our EFL and ESL classes if we, as teachers, are able to employ or practice it properly and carefully following our target instructional objectives.

Through conduct of film viewing, learners can understand the discussions because they develop motivation and interest; further, they can improve their language competence and earn more vocabulary items that can make them more aware in many aspects. It is recommended by this study that if learners want to achieve fluency in English language, they have to watch sensible and educational English films only. Only through consistent exposure to the language that learners can realize the colossal benefits they can get from learning English not only in the Philippines but around the globe.

Film viewing is a must in language teaching to deviate from tedious and monotonous learning environment. Visual and auditory learners feel more interested if there is a

motion picture being watched and heard by them. This technique serves many purposes and functions which include motivation, warmer, schema and so on. When language teachers employ this strategy, they have to consider ventilation and set up of the classroom. Students should get the chance to watch the film clearly and conveniently otherwise, they will just chat with one another. It is suggested that only films related to the topics or lessons in the syllabus are used or played in the classroom.

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