



Evaluating the Use of Novel and Film in the Language Classroom

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Abstract

This research is an evaluation of using the novel and the film clip (hereafter N/F) in the language classroom. This may be done through selecting a passage from a novel, and the film clip that corresponds to it. The extract chosen in this research is taken from Charles Dickens's novel Oliver Twist, and the film is David Lean's Oliver Twist. The subjects for this study were fourth year university students and native speakers of Arabic, studying English as a major subject of specialization in the department of English Faculty of Education, University of Al-Mergeb during the academic year (2012/2013).

The findings of the study showed that students find this technique novel/film (N/F) more helpful and it enhances both their linguistic and metalinguistic features. It is also interesting to note that 60% of the participants prefer to begin with the film clip, claiming that this leads to save both time and effort ,while, 30% of them agree to start with reading passages . This is because the participants think that starting with the book will prepare them to understand the images on the screen. The other 10% of the participants gave no answer.

Interestingly, it has been observed that most of the participants of this study have found some differences between the extracts from the novel and the images from the film with respect to the dialogues and the description of the characters.

Introduction

One of the aims in teaching literature is to encourage students to feel that they can read and enjoy books on their own. Because literature is a language. Accordingly, students who read literary text spend a lot of time looking at language and aesthetic and moral values of that literary text. Carter, R. and Long, M.(1991) argue that there are three main reasons for the teaching of literature and each reason embraces a particular set of learning objectives for the students of literature. These are: (1)the cultural model,(2)the language model,(3)and the personal growth model. For example, teaching literature within the culture model helps students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space. However, teaching literature with in language model is important because it enables students promote language development. Thus, it is important for a teacher of English to help his/her students understand and analyse the literary text in terms of linguistic features. Then he/she can also make the students watch the film clip that corresponds to the literary text and help them to analyse closely the images on the screen. This technique of course makes the learning style more interesting and useful and the students will show a tendency to read more about the author or about the same literary genre.

Why using extracts and films in the language classroom?

Many methodologies and techniques are introduced to the teaching process. Some of these techniques which have become fashionable is the use of novel and film in the language classroom. Of course literature can open our eyes to new ways of looking at experiences, emotions people, everyday objects, and more. It takes us with literary devices such as imagery, metaphor, rhythm, and rhyme. Thus, the best way of taking the advantages of teaching literature in the classrooms is to use the extracts from the book and film clip. This is simply because the use of films in learning process makes the environment of the classroom more interesting and the teacher will be sure that all the students become involved. Lazar (1994) states that there are many advantages of using extracts from books and films. First, it provides students with a fascinating glimpse of the conventions and conflicts of another culture. Second, it encourages meaningful language practice. For example, through images on the screen, students will have chance to express their feelings and opinions about the book and the film. Students will also be engaged with the filmmaker's interpretations of the novelist's craft. Lazar(1994) also adds:



"This approach can be exploited in a number of ways. It can be used over an extended period of time to focus on selected extracts and film clips from a whole novel. Or it can be used on an occasional basis on literature courses that take in selected writings. Finally, it can be used on general English courses."

The Study

Research Questions

This research seeks to find answers to the questions which are raised to examine the actual utilization of the extracts from the book and film in the language classroom among university students.(UN)

- Do students find big differences between watching film and reading the extracts from the book?
- Can reading the extracts from the book and watching film enhance students' understanding?

Research Objectives

This research aims at investigating the value of using the extracts from the novel and film in language classroom.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects for this study were native speakers of Arabic. They were studying English as a major subject of specialization in the department of English Faculty of Education, University of Al-Mergeb. They were fourth year university students of the academic year (2012/2013). The total number of the subjects was (90) students. The reason behind choosing this level was based on the assumption that students at this stage were expected to be exposed to the many literary texts; such as, Great expectations, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield and so on, during the third and fourth years of their study. The activities done in this research were based on some extracts from Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist, retold by Rogers, R.(1999).

Research Tools

The tool used in this study was a questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of four questions. The mode of the questionnaire used in this study was a paper-and- pencil questionnaire administration where the items were presented on paper. The purpose of these questions was to gather information from the participants. For reliability the questionnaire was calculated by the computer programmer. For validity the questionnaire was given to a number of professors of English language to examine them and to give comments on the questionnaire statements. The subjects were also asked to write their own comments on their answers.

Findings and discussion

1. Does the film interpretation help you understand the novel more?

In responding to this question, 90% of the students insisted that viewing the film makes them understand the novel more. They commented that reading the extracts from the book is not enough to enhance both the linguistic and literary understanding. In other words, the students panic of the literary texts because of the linguistic complexity of these texts. However, 5 % of the participants assured that reading the extracts from the novel is effective and fruitful for their own imagination. They also claimed that watching films on screens may contradict their culture, whereas, 5% of the participants agreed that depending on the reading passages is easier to manage because some of the classrooms have no TVs and computers.

2. Do you think that the technique of using the novel/film (NF)is preferable and more effective?

Findings of this part have indicated that 90% of the students find this technique(N/F) more helpful and it makes them enhance both the linguistic and metalinguistic features. This is because the use of (N/F) makes the environment of the classrooms enjoyable, motivating and effective and it leads to good analysis and judgments. It also makes some students admire some characters in the film clip, then some of them start repeating and imitating these characters' expressions and pronunciation. These



findings resemble some research conducted by Ross (1991) and Lazar (1994). Astonishingly, 10% of the participants provide no answer to this question.

3. Which do you prefer to be first- the extract from the novel or the clip from the film?

It is interesting to note that 60% of the participants preferred to begin with the film clip, claiming that this leads to save both time and effort; while, 30% of them agreed to start with reading passages. This is because the participants have found that starting with the book will prepare them to understand the images on the screen. However, 10% gave no answer.

4. Does the film present details in the book the way you imagined reading it?

Interestingly, it has been observed that most of the participants of this study have found some differences between the extracts from the novel and the images from the film with respect to some of the dialogues and the description of the characters. Most of them agreed that the film maker focuses on the most important actions and he does not go deeply in detail as a novelist does.

Conclusion

The technique of using novels and film in language classroom helps students to be engaged in a never-ending process of interpretation and evaluation. For example, students will have chance to know both the novelist's idea and the filmmaker's idea. Students will also have chance to analyse passages from novels and their cinematic equivalents in an enjoyable classroom task. Thus, the approach to teaching literature in a language classroom should focus on certain features of language in order to generate an appreciation of the style, effects and techniques of writing in addition to carrying out language activities that help develop language competence and literary appreciation in relation to each other.

Direction for further Research

This paper is limited to investigate the value of using the extracts from the novel and film clip in the language classroom. The researcher has used Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* as a sample and the research project has been conducted on the fourth year university students of English department, Faculty of Education, Khoms- Libya. This research paves the way to a number of researches that might be worth of investigation. For example, the N/F technique can be applied to other authors work. In addition to this point, a bigger number of participants might give clearer results about the use of N/F technique. Another point of view is that this research project can be conducted on students from other discipline or on other levels.

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