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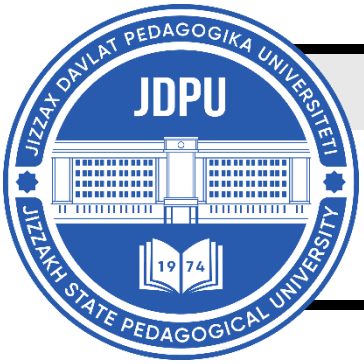

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TEACHING CULTURE THROUGH FILMS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: cross-cultural communication, teaching with films, cultural stereotypes, taboos, national culture, social clashes, discrimination, curiosity, linguistic elements, description.

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Abstract: The present research focuses on the teaching of culture through film in the EFL classroom. Its purpose is to show that films can be exploited in the classroom as a didactic tool to teach culture. Teaching a culture is not an easy task, and it becomes even more difficult when it is not your own culture. For this reason, finding out effective methods such as films to integrate culture in the English classroom is essential. The use of films in education is not a novelty, but sometimes, and due to the fact that films are mostly seen as entertainment tools, their value in educational contexts tends to be underrated. This paper is an attempt to understand challenges coming in way of using popular films in teaching academic subject "Developing cross-cultural communication in teaching foreign languages." One Indian film (2012, directed by Gauri Shinde, producers Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, Radhakishan Damani) was used as teaching cases in the above-mentioned subject. This paper attempts to reflect on subject instructor's perspective on selected films as teaching resource and students' perception on learning effectiveness of popular films in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Films help to create a unique environment for cross-cultural learning because it speaks to our feelings, emotions as well as our intellect. Learning about stereotypes, taboos, social clashes, ethnocentrism, and acculturation in the abstract can be flat and uninspiring. However, if we experience intercultural contact with our eyes and ears, we begin to understand it. Films can

encourage awareness, and interest in other cultures and respect for diversity. They enable students to develop empathy with the protagonist from whose point of view the story is told. Hence, films can help learners to see the world from somebody else's point of view and put themselves into the shoes of people with whom they have few or no opportunities to come into personal contact.

According to Kramsch (1998), language relates to culture in three main functions. The first one is "language expresses cultural reality", speakers or learners can express their ideas, attitudes and beliefs through language, and they can be easily understood within a specific cultural situation. In the second function, "language embodies cultural reality", language is considered as a mean of communication, which enables speakers to use it in various ways of communicative interaction, as well as how speakers interpret the possible meaning depending on certain factors such as the tone or accent of native speakers. The third function, "language symbolizes cultural reality", because language is described as a system of signs with cultural values that helps speakers to identify themselves through their social and cultural identity.

Film helps to understand different cultures all over the world. Not only do filmmakers attempt to immerse the audience into the world of characters, but they also illustrate some of the most complex and grave social issues that are bound to appear in the course of the plot development. The importance of teaching culture in foreign language classrooms is very great. However, effective use of films, TV programs, video clips, music entertainment programs require a careful preparation. Studying culture with a task-oriented and cooperative teaching/learning approach adds a new dimension of achievement.

Culture is important in terms of learning a new language with the aim of increasing learners' communicative competence. Language competence and culture are closely related. If the major purpose of teaching communicative language is to provide students with meaningful interactions in real-life situations with native speakers of the target language, it is necessary to provide learners with new information about the new culture as well, so that students can know how to deal with their communicative challenges (Canale and Swain, 1980). Foreign films are the most effective materials, both in acquiring basic language skills and reflecting the language and culture used in real life. Movies are frequently used in teaching foreign languages and the cultures of these countries that are widely taught. Many scholars have revealed that movies used in foreign language classroom can become an important part of the curriculum. This is because movies provide exposures to "real language," used in authentic settings and in the cultural context which the foreign language is spoken. They also found that movies catch the learners' interest and it can positively affect their motivation to learn [4,p24]

According to the increasing importance of visual and media images, films have a great potential in the language classroom, as they bring together a large variety of modes. Films

are rich multimodal texts containing linguistic meaning, but they also contain other modes that are sometimes more difficult to illustrate or provide in the standard language lesson, such as the gestural component. Films are perfect vehicles for introducing students to different types of popular culture and engaging them with critical questions about the relationship between information and power, through the critical analysis of sociopolitical issues and intercultural relationships, [2, p56]

We put the aim to develop our students' critical thinking about cultural stereotypes, and develop tolerance with the help of films, such as documentary films, cartoon films or movies. Cultural awareness raising is an aspect of values education. In learning and teaching cultural awareness and developing intercultural competence, we can gain the awareness of our own culturally induced behavour, the awareness of our own culturally-induced behavour of others, and the ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint. In EFL classrooms, as we teach the language, we would automatically teach different culture.

Before demonstrating the film in class, teachers should give some tasks in addition, homework related to the movie before class to help the students understand the movie better. Teachers should bring all the materials about the film such as the photos of film stars, the important information about the important facts about the country, poster and pictures. All the activities should be ready before watching the film by teacher such as predicting, guessing, introduction of the topic, cultural background, key words of the film, and discussion. In this way, teachers may activate students' background knowledge on the topic, introduce the main characters, and teach necessary new vocabulary related to cultural awareness.

Films are very effective means of language teaching and have a positive role in developing foreign languages, different cultures. Films increase language learners' interest and improves the teaching process. It keeps the element of curiosity alive during the learning process, encourages listening / watching by guessing some small details in films, and try to understand different customs, traditions and manners.

Films have a great impact on people of all ages, everybody can relate to the characters portrayed by the actors in the movies. Films present a wide range of content ranging from the relationship between mother and son, parents and children, famous love stories, friendship, ideal families, ideal son, social realities, bringing social change, happiness and joy, creating a fictitious and ideal personality or macho man, depicting beauty of women, symbolizing money, status and power, there are various movies on political space which invokes the sense of patriotism, history etc. Films help students to realize non-verbal linguistic elements appropriate to the context by comparing their own non-verbal elements. Movies/films can be used as a tool to help students acquire knowledge about everyday living, food and drink, meal times, table manners, public holidays, working hours and

practices, leisure activities, living conditions, interpersonal relations, values, beliefs and attitudes, body language, social conventions and ritual behaviours of other nationalities.

In addition, it is good for conducting classroom activity, practicing students' speaking, and listening abilities and of course, it helps to develop learners' intercultural competencies. It provides examples of using the target language in social life and allows students to develop their communicative skills in the target language. By watching the films students link their own culture with the target culture, recognize and use different strategies to gain cultural sensitivity and to relate to those from other cultures.

A film-based activity can be used as a springboard to train communicative language strategies. Films are multimedia products and, due to the combination of image, sound and possibly text, they can aid listening comprehension. In addition, a film can be a stimulus for other communicative language activities and strategies to be practised in pre-viewing and post-viewing activities, such as production, interaction and mediation. Choosing appropriate films for learners is also one of the remarkable factors in terms of accomplishing the expected objectives. Teachers have to select films related to the students' age, gender, level of their knowledge and their interest. The pre-listening/watching activity "guessing" is important in determining the level of students and preparing them for film and lesson before watching. It also provides the opportunity to make comparison, since the questions will be responded after the film. The activity covers making predictions as well.

MATERIALS, METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

There are various films which have a social orientation and are based on true reality, and gives a sense of understanding to the viewer, sometimes leaves individual on a clear note of understanding directing towards a general picture and on the hand, leaving the individuals with a question, so that the viewers can perceive what they feel like and keep it open for the interpretation. In short, Movies have a great and deep impact on people and their thought process. Students are asked to inform the main idea of the film to the class discussion by answering context questions. Where and when is the film set? How do the films represent their time and place? (Consider body language, national clothes, decor, and music, reference to important events or figures). Students are asked to describe the genre of the film and what the characteristics are of the genre. Language learners should compare their own culture with foreigners' while watching the films and make some notice on their papers.

Students might be asked to analyze the dramatic significance of the scene, the context of the film. They have to notice about the language paying attention to the use of slang or expletives and clarify the usage of humour/sarcasm, dialects, and jargons in the scene. We have to find some films which describe different society, history and culture, people, places, periods, events in order to let our students be entertained and engaged in genuine, meaningful communication.

Film is often used in liberal arts education as a tool for teaching about different cultures. A good film can keep us engaged and entertained while enriching our understanding of the world, challenging us to understand how others think and live their lives. Films are a great medium to use not only to practice English, but also to facilitate intercultural learning. Learning the ways of working with films, we have created some techniques of watching and discussing the films. We found a particular movie for the 3rd course students of our English and Literature Faculty that fit well in our lesson plan. In advance, we created a worksheet specific to that film. We announced them to watch the movie themselves in advance to determine the sequence of events, including general information, such as the title of the film and the director, the time of events, as well as specific questions that the students should answer as they watch the movie. Students were asked to note the most important aspects of the movie and allowed them time to fill in their answers. We included space on the worksheet for open-ended questions about major plot points in the film. A cause-and-effect worksheet asked students to analyze specific plot points in the movie. We started them off with an example, providing them with the cause, and then explain how that affected the story, also called the effect. A basic cause-and-effect worksheet might start with an event and then include a blank space where the students can fill in the effect of that event. We distributed a cause-and-effect worksheet on the Indian film "English" with a description of the main characters of the film. This film goes much deeper, exploring cultural differences across religions and generations. The story is told with humor and a certain sweetness that will keep your attention throughout.

By stopping the movie to discuss it, we could take advantage of teachable moments that arose in the film. This method was effective for our class. Among 34 students, 31 students were ready to give their own personal ideas related to the main plot of the film.

By organizing the game “How observant are you?” we asked them questions about a specific item in a room, or a character’s words or actions. We organized a group exercise, getting teams to write their answers together. What Happens Next?

It was very exciting when students used their powers of deduction and observation to predict the next part of a movie. In addition, we created multiple choice answers let the students come up with their own ideas. We played a short (2 minutes) clip of the movie, then pressed pause and had students guess what happened next—either in teams, as a whole group or as individuals. Students tried to predict the film concerning to Indian culture.

Film is a rich resource for the language-learning classroom, especially at the advanced level, when students can appreciate and benefit from the complex themes and resulting discussions. Instructors who use film in the classroom will find that the use of authentic language combined with thought-provoking drama broadens cultural competence and improves the learning of English. The

next step was to ask students to describe what the place looked like, giving as much detail as possible. This could be a room, a street, a café or the outside of a palace by comparing with ours.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Content Analysis of Student's Reactions with specific reference to Indian film "English."

N	**Theoretical concept cited with specific reference to the movie**	**Types of activities**	**Students' gained results (100 %)**
1	Identifying Indian/American stereotypes, taboos and culture clashes	Oral discussion	Approximately 85 %
2	American and Indian language and culture (greetings, ways of expressing politeness, ways of addressing, idioms)	By demonstrating and performing ways	Approximately 90 %
3	Culture and intercultural communication	Oral performance	Approximately 90 %
4	Cultural adaptation	By debating and discussing	Approximately 65 %
5	Cultural adjustment	By debating and discussing	Approximately 60%
6	Acculturation process	Oral explanation	Approximately 70 %
7	Sashi's family culture/ habits/manners	Working with the questions	Approximately 90 %
8	Influence of family culture on self and personality	By demonstrating and performing ways	Approximately 80 %
9	Cross-cultural competence, cultural intelligence	Filling the blanks activity	Approximately 90 %
10	Differences between American and Indian Cultures	By debating ways	Approximately 90 %
11	Culture Shock	"How to avoid the culture shock" written and oral activities	Approximately 80 %
12	Extra linguistic issues in cross-cultural communication (attitudes, rituals, traditions)	By demonstrating and performing ways	Approximately 80 %
13	Verbal and nonverbal aspects of cross-cultural communication	By demonstrating and performing ways	Approximately 90 %
	Learning effectiveness of the film. Total balls of students	**Checking their knowledge**	**81%**

One of the important methods is that language learners are asked to watch a serial and to reflect on a series of questions, which will later inform the class discussion: Students are asked to complete background reading and to reflect on a series of questions, which will later inform the class discussion by answering the questions.

Empathetic Reaction Discussion Questions: Indian film named "English"

	Think deeply and answer the questions below	**Comments**
1	Is the problem to be solved in the film?	
2	What details in the setting of the film are similar to the setting in which you live or in various	

	places you have been? What are those similarities and what are the differences?	
3	Describe these problems and show how they are familiar to the problems you or someone you know must face.	
4	What are these qualities of heroes and where have you seen them in your own experience, either in your own behavior or in behavior of someone you know?	
5	Depth of feeling is what makes a film worth watching. Of the many feelings expressed in the film, with which are you most familiar?	
6	The resolution to the problem in the film can be satisfying or disheartening. Think about how some of your own problems have been resolved; write about a time when the solution was satisfying and write about a time when the solution was disheartening.	
7	How can you apply the lesson in the film to your own life? What types of cultural misunderstandings did you notice in the film?	
8	What was the strongest emotion that you felt when watching the film?	
9	What is the key moment in the story, the scene which brings illumination or an "ah-ha" moment?	
10	Would you suffer the same culture shock if you were in the hero's place? Why/why not?	
11	Which character did you [admire, hate, love, pity] the most? What was it about that character that caused you to have that reaction?	
12	What life lessons can be learned from the choices made by the characters in this story?	
13	Describe one thing that you learned about the culture of the country in which the film was set.	

Characterisation Questions

1) Which character do you most sympathise with and why?

2) Analyze a particular character X. [7, p3]

X is a typical hero because …	**X is not a typical hero because …**
Reason A	Reason A
Reason B	Reason B
Reason C	Reason C
Aspects of X's character	**Evidence from the film?**
Characteristic A	Scene where such and such happens
Characteristic B	His/Her attitude to …
Characteristic C	Suggested through …

Film is not only used for education but can also be used to present different culture. It provides a variety of content on the cultural topic ranging over various cultures of different people, state and even countries. Film can also increase students' cultural awareness because:

1. They get information from the movie,
2. They can compare their culture and others,
3. It can prevent them from culture shock if they study Cross Cultural Understanding.

We assigned some selected movies to third D group students as project assignment and asked them to do film analysis on the basis of relevant theories (cultural, social, psychological, political etc.). Students could get CD/DVD of the movie from YouTube channel, and submit the project report to the teachers. We asked our learners to watch some fragments of Turkish, Korean, British, Russian, French and Uzbek films in order to distinguish the differences and similarities among cultures by filling the blanks.

FILMS	Different ways of greeting	Taboos	Stereotypes	Attitudes, rituals, traditions	Manners/habits/ behaviours	Results (100%)
Uzbek						
Korean						
British						
Russian						
French						
Turkish						

CONCLUSION

Finally, films can be regarded as a form of edutainment because they combine pleasure and learning. Film, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more amusing, entertaining and enjoyable. Using movies as an authentic material helps teachers to provide students with enjoyable and fun lessons and encourage their students to practice their language skills with different types of expressions from movies. Using films in the English language classrooms is a great method to improve learners' language skills, especially listening and speaking skills. Students can predict their own personal ideas by giving some examples of writing tasks based on this film are, writing a short summary on any issue or character in the film, writing an alternative ending to the film. This activity helps our students to develop students' cultural competence and awareness. Using movies or authentic videos is a great way to help language students learn more about target language together with its culture. As the film is being watched, the learners will realize some sayings, collocations, idioms or daily talks expressed as they have never heard before. Language learners can easily use them in their conversation.

Therefore, using a film like that will give the learners opportunity to grasp the right usage of such expressions. While developing the activities about the film in the classroom, the objective

of the course should always be kept in mind. Teachers understand the importance of planning useful and meaningful tasks for students before, while and after watching the film.

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