

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING FILM VERSUS BOOK ON THE COMPREHENSION OF LITRARY TEXTS AMONG KURDISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

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KURDISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation is my own except for quotation and summaries which have duly acknowledged.

Date / /2013

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DEDICATION

Special honour dedication to my parents, Hussein & Husna, who have spent their life for the sake of us. And also to my beloved brother, Zaradasht, and adorable sisters, Midia, Mahabad and Deeman. Without them, I would never accomplish this heavy duty in Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using film versus book on the comprehension of literary texts among Kurdish university students. The study also investigated the factors influence the level of comprehension of Kurdish university students. The participants of the current study consisted of 15 third-year Kurdish students enrolled in the English department of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zakho in Kurdistan, Iraq. The participants were divided into three equivalent groups and subjected to three treatments wherein each group was put to three different types of teaching approaches. The data collection procedure included two retelling tests that were carried out at different periods of time in which the participants retold a story through writing. The data procedure also included a questionnaire that was designed to determine the factors that influence the participants' reading comprehension. The results obtained from both tests showed significant differences in the levels of achievement between the three groups whereby the participants who were exposed to both the written and film version of a story performed better than those who were exposed to either the written version or the film version of the story. The participants' responses to the questionnaire determined the main factors that influenced their reading comprehension. Based on the results obtained, the researcher concluded that using film in teaching literature has a significant role on students' comprehension and their level of understanding of the course material.





ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dilaksanakan untuk mengkaji keberkesanan yang dimainkan oleh bahan bercetak berbanding dengan filem ke atas tahap kefahaman teks berunsur sastera ke atas pelajar-pelajar dari University Zakho di Kurdistan, Iraq. Pelajar-pelajar yang mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini merupakan 15 orang pelajar dari Jabatan Bahasa Inggeris, Fakulti Kemanusiaan. Peserta kajian telah diagihkan kepada tiga kumpulan dan didedahkan kepada tiga pendekatan pengajaran yang berbeza. Data yang diperolehi dari penceritaan semula secara bertulis menunjukkan bahawa tahap kefahaman yang ditunjukkan oleh pelajar-pelajar yang telah didedahkan dengan bahan pengajaran berbentuk buku dan juga filem lebih baik berbanding dengan mereka yang hanya didedahkan dengan penggunaan salah satu pendekatan iaitu bahan bercetak atau filem. Prosedur data juga termasuk soal selidik yang telah direka untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kefahaman bacaan peserta. Dapatan kajian juga mengenalpasti beberapa faktor yang mempengaruhi tahap kefahaman peserta kajian. Jawapan peserta kepada soal selidik yang ditentukan faktor utama yang mempengaruhi kefahaman bacaan. Berdasarkan data dan analisis keputusan kajian ini, maka bolehlah disimpulkan bahawa penggunaan filem dalam pengajaran teks berunsur sastera memainkan peranan yang signifikan ke atas tahap kefahaman bahan-bahan pembacaan tersebut.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Introduction

The past years have witnessed rapid technological developments in all areas of life, especially in the field of visual elements that made its uses something usual in almost all fields of life including the field of education. Film as an educational tool can be considered as one of the most important developments in the field of visual technology, because it provides endless usefulness in terms of teaching what have triggered educators to rethink about their traditional teaching methods and have concerted effort to use it for their teaching as learning purpose. This has led educators to include new strategies and innovative methods in order to try and address specific problems in education system and to provide effective assistance to teachers when carrying out their duties in a more scientific, effective and efficient way.





With the development of technology and increasing access to television and video, educators found ample opportunities to use educational films at all levels of foreign language teaching (Kothari et al, 2004; Canning-Wilson, 2000; Ryan, 1998). Furthermore, Richards and Gordon (2004) stated that using films assist students to use visual information to improve their comprehension skills. In other words, visual elements enable learners to observe signs, facial expressions and other means of body language that go with speech. They also show authentic language and cultural background about speakers of English.

Montgomery (as cited in Bo, 2008), states the philosophy of Peirce who explained the relationship between two things by using the term *Sign* and *Icon*; when one thing symbolizes another. According to him, the term (Sign) indicates the arbitrary relationship between two things, for instance, a word “flower” can represent a sign of a flower; also, a picture of a flower can be an icon of the flower but has less arbitrary relationship between the two.

In the light of this, film was said to be made of icons, while prose is made of signs. In other words, the scenes and views in film have immediate relationship to what it describes, while words hardly do. Besides that, sounds in the film version can effectively enhance the audiences to understand the story of the film. For that reason, we can see that film gives life to the text of any story and makes understanding achievable.





It is argued that the use of film is one of the best and effective strategies in teaching because it has positive influence on students' learning as it enhances them to better understand the subject (Lewis & Anping, 2002). Perhaps, previous researches which have investigated the role of film in the classroom have shown that film is an effective tool that benefits students in general. It makes it easy for students to comprehend the written materials by seeing the images in film which makes concrete the abstract concept.

Al-azzawii (2006) in her study stated that film visualizes literary texts and gives a dramatic aspect to its concept such as tradition and nonconformity. She adds, when such concepts operate within the framework of a film like, it becomes easier for students to comprehend these concepts and then to discuss them later. As a result, students who easily comprehend texts will enjoy the subject and tend to participate more extensively in the class. At the same time, AL-Shalabi states that using film as a supplementary material in literature classroom "facilitates learning, makes learning more enjoyable, helps teachers and students alike, enriches classes, develops students' skills, stimulates discussion, engages students, etc." AL-Shalabi (2011, p.42)

Bassili (2006) in his study clarified the different effective roles of using video for teaching. It was found that students who participated in his study were more interested in streamed-video lecture more than reading textbooks which motivated them to spark off the discussion confidently in the classroom. This is echoed by Horst (2005) who addressed the usefulness of using video and how it facilitates language teaching through communication, cross-cultural comparison and motivation. By using film as a complementary material, these aspects can be obviously enhanced by



students in learning literature. Moreover, further articles claimed the importance of using videos in foreign language study. For example, Herron et al (2000) offered evidences that the use of film show that films in the classroom expose language learners to authentic cultural information. What makes a film different from a book is the fact that it brings the real world into the classroom as well as it provides students the opportunity to see customs, people and culture of the community in which its language is targeted.

Cazden (2001) and Stipek (2002) claimed that film as a classroom tool can motivate students during discussions. Adding that the images, seen by students when watching a film, work as a reminder which assist them to recall the exact events when they are encountered in a debate or a discussion. Furthermore, Sealey refers to film as a justified and successful pedagogical tool because it is a "clear" visuality, the way it allows for the consumption of knowledge and ideas with the eye, its potential for touching our emotions, and, with the rise of technology in education, the growing ease of its use in the classroom" (Sealey, 2008, p. 3).

The studies done before confirmed that using film has a significant role in teaching in general and teaching literature in specific, since it assists teachers of literature in their objective to help students to comprehend literary texts , increase their motivation in the classroom, develop students' critical thinking skills, and provide them various ways of input (Al-azzawii, 2006; Ryan, 1998). Biedrzycki states that it is "critical that teachers gain a richer understanding of the effectiveness of movies as a learning tool in the classroom and what better way to do that than to explore student's input" (Biedrzycki , 2004, p. 28). Looking at the situation at hand,



literature suggests that using films as a supplementary tool in teaching literature increases effectiveness of learning and making students assimilate ideas more interestingly and meaningfully.

However, the education system in Iraq, where the level of education is very low compared to the other Arab countries in general and Gulf states in specific, is still depending on the use of traditional teaching methods that do not comply with modern technology and there is an urgent need for reforms and innovation (Abdullateef, 2011). Alwan (2004), in his report on the situation of education in Iraq, states that many teachers still use only text books and workbooks in teaching which “is often characterized by memorization without understanding” (Alwan, 2004, p. 29). This traditional strategy is definitely making the learning process boring and making students uninterested in the subject material.

Admittedly, using visual technology in the classroom plays a positive role in empowering the process of learning. This development in education is neglected in education system in Iraq which needs to incorporate use of technology in the classroom. Thus, this study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of using both film version and book version on the comprehension of literary texts among Kurdish university students.





1.2 Background to the Problem

Many researchers have widely examined the availability of technology in teaching literature at university - level and have provided creative ideas about how to carry out lessons using films as teaching materials (Sinjari, 2007). These researches proposed that using films or videos in the classroom could be highly effective method to enhance instructions as well as empowering students to understand course materials.

Reading textbooks alone could be very boring for many students (AL-Shalabi, 2011). The reasons mentioned above contribute in making students enjoy taking part in literary discussions or even attending literature classes. Ordinarily, most of students will spend their time looking for familiar synonyms for the strange words they read in the content of the literary text and they do not pay much attention to the events of the story (Ghazali et al, 2009). They usually forget the main ideas or the content of the story that they read.

The recent evolution of technology and the attempts of the United Nations to develop the educational sector in Iraq could be considered as the starting point of introducing the use of technology in the educational system by the Ministry of Higher Education (Alwan, 2004). It is worthy to mention that within the last two decades there were quite a lot of international programs in the Middle East, including Iraq, to increase the level of literacy and empower the educational system, such as many initiatives were under taken by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) which sought to assist Arab countries to introduce technology in their educational system (Abu-samak, 2006).





Compared to the developed countries, using technology in the classroom in Iraq in general is very new and it is not widely used, especially in higher education. In the beginning of the last decade, the use of technology was very limited and teachers generally used traditional methods in their teaching, especially so in the teaching of literature (Alwan, 2004). Teachers usually used only textbooks for teaching in the classroom which obviously was insufficient to get students to understand the materials. Majority of the students were unable to actively involved in classroom discussions and lacked, because they fail to understand the course material content (Sinjari, 2007).

The education system in Iraq remained like this until the end of the last decade. During this decade, especially after 2003, Iraq has seen a great evolution of technology on a large scale in various areas of life, including education. The trend of teaching literature has however changed with increasing students' access to video-CD, and DVD. Educators seized the opportunity to bring technology into classrooms and use it as a complementary material for teaching because it is useful for both teachers and students alike (Barton and Haydn, 2006; Gebhard, 2005; Triggs and John 2004).

The Ministry of Higher Education in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has announced the implementation of numerous changes in the system of education as it was suggested by a group of researchers from the University of Exeter after they conducted a needs assessment in 2005 which involved five universities in Kurdistan region of Iraq (Akrawi, 2011).





The Ministry of Higher Education in (KRG) then announced the incorporation of films in teaching is seen as a timely change for many literature teachers. Akrawi (2011) stated in his study that teachers in this region are not trained and equipped with the knowledge and skills of using technology in the classrooms. In this matter, many researchers have claimed the necessary need for comprehensive reform in educational system which would create an impact on the different dimensions of effective improvements in the quality and access to efficient educational system (Karsou, 2005).

1.3 Problem Statement



In general, English literature is still studied starting from grade 5 in primary schools to high school. In other words, the literature is taught in the university level as one of the main subjects, especially in Language and Communication Faculties.

With the attention to the process of teaching and learning nowadays in Iraq, teachers only rely on the traditional methods for teaching literature which negatively affect the academic level of the students (Sayakhan, 2007). Besides, almost all the projects and the assignments that students are subjected to depend on students' comprehension (Abbas, 2012; Sinjari, 2007). Thereupon, comprehending and understanding the course material is the main goal for students since they want to be well prepared for the exams as well as for the projects they are assigned to.





Aside from the traditional strategy that teachers still use, the foreign language used in the literary texts has a negative influence on Kurdish students, whose first language is Kurdish. Students face problems to fully comprehend the given literary texts that are written in either Arabic or English language as both are foreign language for the Kurdish students (Sayakhan, 2007). For this reason, many students fail to comprehend the language and content in the given literary texts. For this reason, students need more help for learning and that literature teachers should employ different methods and strategies in order to enhance students' understanding which will result in improving students' academic achievements.

Students, in Kurdistan Region, where English and Arabic are taught as a foreign language, find literature texts very difficult to be understood. Despite learning through textbooks provided, students still faced difficulties to understand the meaning of some vocabulary and words used throughout the text and comprehend its content (Sayakhan, 2007). Many reasons make students dislike literature. The lack of interest among students to study literature might be due to their low level of English language proficiency as well as the use of traditional methods in teaching.

Looking at the situation at hand, literature teachers occasionally use film for teaching in the classroom. They either teach a novel that is still not produced as a film or they have no proper facilities for students to view films (Sinjari, 2007). To illustrate, literature teachers are still using traditional strategies in teaching because there is no specific strategy defined by the Ministry of Higher Education about using films as supplementary material in teaching literature. Moreover, these teachers are not trained to use technology in the classroom and have limited knowledge of teaching





methodologies pertaining to the use of visual elements so they do not know the importance of using such method in teaching (Akrawi, 2011).

For the importance of this purpose, the institutions and the colleges of education that produce teachers and educators have to revise their curriculum to include courses that would address using of films in teaching literature. Also there must be more studies to verify the effectiveness of using films a complementary material for teaching literature.

Generally speaking, showing films in literature classroom can increase the students' interest to attend classes. For example, when literature teachers use films in the classroom, students would be able to hear and see the characters while they act the same roles as written in the content of the novel through the film so that they will keep the images of these scenes. These images will later assist them to remember the details and the events of the story when they are asked to retell the story later (Massi & Merin, 1996). Hence, students will be interested to watch film, even if comprehension is limited. The material used by literature teachers should motivate students' thinking and this will make them become more interested to follow up ideas and suggestions, and to ask questions. Assaf (2007) and Jonassen (2000) clarify that when teachers use films in the classroom, they create a climate for successful learning environment for students which increase their interest and motivation toward the course material.

This study intends to find out whether or not the use of a film as a complementary material a literary novel can improve literature comprehension skills among Kurdish university students. Both teachers and students can benefit from the





results of this research. Moreover, the findings of the current study will make teachers more aware of the effect of using films in improving comprehension of literature. This study will also be referred as a literature for further studies.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Since the use of technology, especially the use of film in the classroom has become one of the modern methods in teaching literature, many researchers have expounded the use of film as an effective tool in teaching literature. In relation to that, this study is designed to examine and determine the role of films in enhancing reading comprehension skills of literary texts among Kurdish university students.



This study mainly focuses on the current problems that both teachers and students face in the teaching and learning literature and to solve these problems through the use of films that to be used to empower the comprehension skill of students.





1.5 Research Questions

This research was conducted in order to find out answers for some questions which represent the central issues that are to be investigated. The research questions of this study focused on the level of comprehension assessed in the written story retellings of a group of Kurdish students from the Department of English at the University of Zakho in Kurdistan, Iraq.

By finding the actual level of comprehension of the students using three different ways in learning literature, the researcher was able to determine the impact of each strategy on their comprehension. The research questions are as follows:

- 1- What is the effectiveness of using film versus book on the level of comprehension of literary texts among Kurdish university students?
- 2- What is the effectiveness of using film versus book on the level of comprehension of literary texts among Kurdish university students after having read the text over a period of time?
- 3- What are the factors that affect reading comprehension of literary texts among Kurdish university students when using film versus book?

1.6 Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework

The current study implies the effective role of the films in enhancing literature comprehension. The research states that using film as a supplementary material with book has a positive impact on comprehension which leads to the increase the academic achievements of the learners. It also implies that films work as a conveyance for delivering the idea or the message to the learner through film, unlike the traditional methods which is direct teaching from teacher to learner (Figure 1.1).

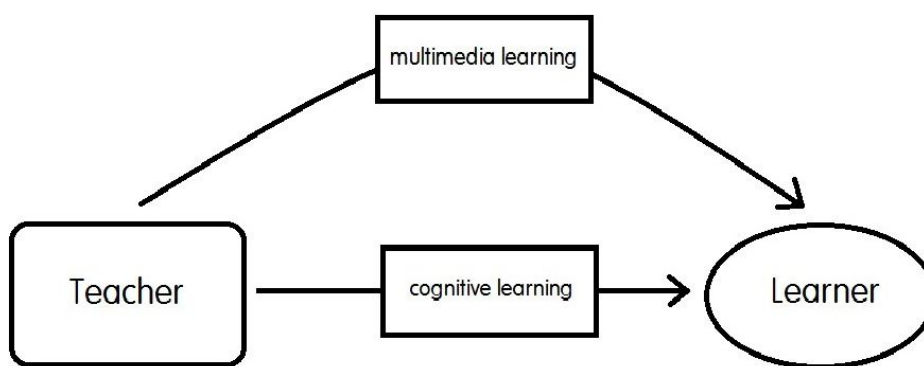


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

1.6.1 Cognitive theory of Multimedia Learning

Cognitive theory of multimedia learning is an evidence- based theory that describes learning from words and images. In other words, it is the combination of cognitive learning which can be defined as learning through the senses (visual, auditory, and touch) (Mayer, 1997, 2001).



In Cognitive theory of multimedia learning, the learner goes through three cognitive processes (selecting, organizing, and integrating). If the learner is fully engaged, he/she will select some materials and words to be further processed in the learner's working memory where he/she can mentally organize some of the selected images into pictorial model and some of the selected words into verbal model.

According to Mayer (1997, 2001), multimedia learning deals with everything you see and hear and that it is the learning through visual (animation, video, graphics, and pictures) and verbal or words (printed text and spoken text). It suggests that the integration of film as supplementary material in the classroom empowers the learning process. It is approved that instruction with using film is more effective in the learning process. By using film in the classroom, students will be able to learn through senses where they can hear, see, and manipulate the course material.

The multiple representation principle states that better transfer occurs when an explanation is presented with animation/ pictures and narration/words than from words alone (Moreno & Mayer, 2000). To illustrate, when words and pictures are both presented, learners have the chance to construct verbal and visual cognitive representations and integrate them. Moreno (2004) in his study states that simply presenting information does not promote students' understanding of a particular knowledge in a certain context.





When video is used as a supplementary material for teaching, the printed words in the text and the graphics are view throughout the scenes that enter the students' visual channel through the eye, while the spoken words enter their auditory channel through the ears. Finally, the integration occurs when the learner builds connection between the matched events in both the models and the prior knowledge. In brief, the learner will connect incoming materials with the existing knowledge (prior knowledge) from the long term memory. This meaningful learning occurs when the learner appropriately engages in all these processes.

1.6.2 Schema Theory



It is admittedly acknowledged that the effectiveness of the background knowledge on understanding and comprehending information from text is a complex process. Goldman and Rakestraw (as cited in Katherine & Michael, 2006) illustrates that this process includes building coherent representations of information. In other words, this process depends on the ability of the reader in understanding the meaning of individual words or phrases and constructing a meaning from a reading text as a whole. They further add that this process requires the connection between the background knowledge, interest and motivation that the learner brings to the task of reading to make a text more dynamic. Here, the background knowledge refers to prior knowledge or schema.





Schema theory deals with the readers that are expected to bring their previous experience to the text they read which results in comprehension (Kitao, 1990). Schema, according to Gunning (1996), is the attempt of relating the stored organized knowledge that the learner already has about people, places, things, and events to the existing information that are compartmentalized in mind to the new information gained from a text for more comprehension.

Kose (2006) maintains that human beings have the ability to interpret the world due to the prior knowledge or schema they possess. He also states that human beings have difficulty in interpreting or comprehending unfamiliar subjects or texts when they are unable to relate the new information they gain to their prior knowledge. As a result they will have problem with comprehending those information or will comprehend it incorrectly. Carell and Eisterhold (cited in Kose, 2006) maintained that “much of the meaning understood from a text is really not actually in the text, but in the reader, in the background or schematic knowledge of the reader.”

1.7 Significance of the Study

In general, there are few researches that study the effectiveness of film versus book on literature comprehension, especially among Kurdish students in Kurdistan, Iraq. Besides that, literature is still considered as a difficult lesson to be understood and the methodology used by the teachers is still the traditional one despite the efforts of the Government of Kurdistan for developing the educational system.





The use of teaching aids, especially film, is an effective strategy that promotes greater students' participation in learning process as well as it is suitable to enhance extension activities including retelling and rewriting stories, creating original oral and written stories or poems and many more. The importance of this study is to determine the most effective method for increasing the level of Kurdish students in comprehending literary works.

The findings and the results of this study could benefit students, teachers, Curriculum Development Dept. at the ministry of higher education, and education faculties and other institutions that are responsible for training for the teachers of literature around the region.



students of education department, in specific, because it will show them the impact of using film and book in the literature classroom on their comprehension so as to be aware of these methods when they become teachers. Besides that, this study will influence teachers of literature. It will provide them adequate information about recent teaching methods which need to be reflected on their teaching process.

Moreover, the Department of Developing Educational Curriculum (DDEC) at the Ministry of Higher Education would be influenced by the results of this study, as it will support them when providing recommendations of appropriate and suitable methods to be used as an alternative approach in the in institutions of higher education. In addition, education faculties and other institutions may develop the





content of their courses offered to teachers so that the use of visual elements can be incorporated into classrooms in the future for the teaching and learning of literature.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

This study mainly looks at the current difficulties and problems that both teachers and students face in teaching and learning literature with the use of film in Kurdistan region. There are some limitations considered while conducting this study. The participants of this study will be consisted of 15 third-year students (6 females and 9 males), aged between 21-25 years, and enrolled in the department of English of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Zakho in Kurdistan of Iraq. The selected students or the subject selected for this study do not represent the sample of the whole population of the country.

Also the researcher used the short version of George Orwell's fiction-novel *Animal Farm* which was written in 1945 and its filmed version as instruments for his study because this was the only available film. Group A will read the book provided by the researcher, Group B will watch the film, and Group C will do both together, watch the film and then read the printed version.

To start with, reading book might seem boring for most of the participants of the group A. They might jump over pages or chapters which may result missing up some details or events of the story. Also the level of the language or content might pose some problems for the participant of this study to fully understand the content.





On the other hand, the students in Group B who will watch the film version might not pay attention while watching the film, so they miss some important events in the film. Another problem is that the students may completely understand the film but are reluctant to retell the story using the English language due to their low proficiency or lack of vocabulary.

All the mentioned factors that might be limitations for the both groups (A & B) could be also applied to the participants of the group C who will do both activities together. The time chosen for implementing the study activities must be carefully considered and must be during a course break so that the participants might be free and ready to doing the activity.



1.9 Summary

Using film as a supplementary tool in the classroom can be considered as one of the most important developments in the field of teaching because it provides endless usefulness in term of teaching. To this end, the researcher targets the education system in Iraq, in general, and in Kurdistan Region, in specific, where the use of technology is not given enough attention or may be ignored in the class, especially literature classes. In doing so, the researcher attempts to highlight the important role of using film in teaching literature so the educators will have a general view of its effectiveness. Pursuing this further, this study is designed to examine and determine the role of film in teaching literature in an EFL classroom and its effectiveness in enhancing the comprehension of literature among Kurdish university students.

