

IMAGE INTO IMAGINATION INTO WORDS: USE OF INDIAN ENGLISH FILMS AS INTERACTIVE ESP/EFL CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

Authentic and practically accessible audio-visual materials ensure a high motivational value for learners/practitioners as they are intrinsically more interesting or stimulating than non-authentic, traditional, stereotyped or impractical materials. Film as an authentic material in ESP context helps practitioners to improve comprehension, listening and speaking competencies. In normal/traditional ESL/EFL classroom, the language teacher is limited within four walls of the classroom and can bring outside world only in a limited way by means of make believe and mime. Film can help in widening the language experience of the learners. This article discusses the implementation of film as a method of English language teaching in ESP/EFL classrooms for gaining language competency and develops personal sociolect of students of professional and technical education. The study will focus on how using films, especially Indian English films in ESP instruction can motivate the students who fear to participate in communication activities and overcome the English-phobia.

Keywords: Classroom Activity, Communication, ESP, Film, Teaching Method.

Introduction

The ultimate aim of learning and acquisition of a language is the comfortability of communication. But the use of English assumes more importance in professional education as it has to perform particular job-related functions. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which important difference lies in the learners and their purposes for learning English. ESP students are usually grownups who already have some acquaintance with English and learning the English is required. The appropriate use of audio-video materials can be an invaluable support in language learning. Authentic audio-visual materials are intrinsically more motivating and stimulating than any non-authentic materials. Films as authentic audio-visual resources can be a powerful source in the English

classrooms both as an object of study in its own right and as an addition to the more usual language skills. As films are strongly related to the learners' lives and surroundings they can freely participate in discussing all aspects of the film.

Aims and Objectives

The introduction of Communicative English in professional courses is a recent development. Although English was taught in some technical institutions in the past, the objective was not very clear then. The English courses taught then were mostly literature-oriented and not communicative-based. The situation is different today. India has witnessed an explosion in technical education during last two decades and has become 'IT super power'. Now Indians technocrats are in great demand all over the world. Since English plays a key role in the domain of career advancement, there is an urgency to mould Communicative English Course with an aim to develop communicative competency of professional students. The concept of ESP is said to be particularly appropriate for teaching English to the students of professional education.

Statement of Problem

The potential for employment of students graduating from professional colleges is enormous, but one major handicap which many of them face is poor communicative ability in English. In most of institutions teachers are still using old fashioned and less effective method of teaching, that is, 'Chalk and Talk Method'. The teachers come to the classes and go on teaching the whole class and the students are the silent listeners and passive viewers of the blackboard. For a successful teaching and learning students should play an active role. This paper deals with use of films as teaching aids/methodology for enhancing communicative competency of professional students.

Use of Films as Learning Strategy for ESP Learners: Critics' Overview

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) define motivation as "interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in the class: persistence with the learning task, as indicated by levels of attention or action for an extended duration and levels of concentration and enjoyment" (470). Stoller (1998) advocates the use of film "linguistic model for skills development" (1). Film can be used as an enhancer of learners' sociolects and cultural acquaintanceship. "It was only while exploring the extent of cinema that we found students discussing the range of interests, historical, philosophical, linguistic, psychological, sociological, geographical, architectural aspects that could be found in one film." (Groves (1996) quoted Dickinson Thorold 12) So, in this way, film is also an instrument for socio-linguistic research.

Arcario (1993) argues that "extended context, interesting content, rich visual imagery and often exaggerated actions and gestures in a film provide students with multi-sensory input that is close to what they would find in real life communication" (122).

Benefits of Using Films in an ESP Classroom

- Films not only teach language structure, but also feature of pronunciation, intonation and stress. If the learner watches a film with subtitles he can relate the indigenous dialogues with the subtitles and thus a scope to learn vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and accent neutralization.
- Films can create a great deal of linguistic and para-linguistic environment.
- As to develop writing practice film can be taken as a case study.

- In addition to analyzing and evaluating films, students can use their creativity to textualize new themes.
- From a socio-individual standpoint, film can be used as any activity/practice by which students imbue reality with meaning. Discourse in the film is found in a wide range of forms: any social practice from the facial expression, the body language, utterance of speech, or voice maintenances (pause, rhythm and breathing resonance) to the dance, music, or landscape(s) presentation (geographical, socio-cultural and mythic). So, verbal and visual discourses can be analyzed within classroom ambiance.

Why Indian English Films?

Students from regional mediums school background (where L1 is the mother tongue language) seem to be reluctant to speak in English for their fear of looking and feeling ashamed when they make a mistake that would make the others ridicule them or even look down on them. Using English films (Hollywood movies) as tool in L2 classroom may create confusion among the learners in comprehending the theme and the accent of the film. It develops a kind of self inferiority complex (a kind of negative psychic syndrome). This problem may not happen in using Indian English films. This article focuses on the importance of using Indian English films in the language classrooms which can help the teacher/instructor to alleviate the first fears in the students in grasping the thematic and discourse/dialogism purely of a foreign set-up. Indian English films present everyday English (Indian English) in real life situation within a known/recognizable landscape and expose learners to the dialects, accents and dialogues they are familiar with. They are quite motivating as they provide the students with a wealth of contextualized linguistic and paralinguistic terms and expressions (mostly culturally codified), culturally determined behavioral imprints and of nativity touch.

The story(ies) that is being presented provide the students opportunity to make inferences based on the perspective of their experiences, (a kind of subjective recycling of experiences) and through the story-line the students can participate in a lively discussion. Students can apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate and appreciate the story and character expressed through the film. They can use tone, rhythm and pitch of speech along with the actions of the characters. Students' learning is supported by the tracing the nuances of body language, which is a powerful vehicle for effective communication. There is a scope for enhancing students' social and human sense by learning the rhyme of emotions, feelings and sentiments, which stimulate reflective thinking necessary for creative writing.

Indian Film as a reflecting mirror provides hints of social inter-(actions) enacted through inter-(subjective) viewpoints. A minute study and a subjective introspection of various representations can bolster the 'understanding competencies' (systems of significances, and socially shared types) among students. The interest in discourse/dialogism as a means of understanding social reality is based on the notion of the subjective orientation of social action. Given that social actions (both contextual and contentful that the film displays) are guided by the meaning that individuals attach to their actions. Students must account for this meaning when attempting to understand and explain the actions and placing reactions. Yet meaning is not solely a product of individual beliefs. Instead, the meanings that guide individual actions are, to a large degree, socio-culturally produced and shared patterns. Alfred Schutz highlights the need to account for the individual's viewpoint (inter-subjectivity, psychic resemblance and subconscious communication) in order to explain social action and discourse/dialogism:

"Successful communication is possible only between persons, social groups, nations, etc., who share a substantially similar system of relevances. The greater the differences between their systems of relevances the fewer the chances for the success of the communication. Complete disparity of the systems of relevances makes the establishment of a universe of discourse entirely impossible" (Schutz, 1962, p.323).

METHODS OF TEACHING AND SETTING EXERCISES FOR USING FILMS IN ESP CLASSROOM: A MODEL

1- Things to be looked after by the teacher

Just as in many English teaching situations, the teacher plays a key role in using the film as an aid for language teaching for s/he has the prime responsibility for creating a successful language learning environment. It is certain that the teacher is as effective as the film in teaching, because he is the only person who enables the learners to comprehend what they watch and hear by using some of the communicative techniques. The teacher can be a controller, an assessor, an organizer, a prompter and a participant as well.

- Set the class in motion by telling the things to be expected from the students.
- Try to be friendly with students and act like a friend-philosopher-guide way.
- Ask the students/audience to become active listeners.
- Encourage students to note down the points interesting to them.
- Stop, start, pause, and rewind to repeat the film for several times to drive home the desired points.
- Use any particular part for intensive study.
- To promote 'guessing game' a part can be played without sound.
- Encourage the weak students to open their mouth without pointing out their mistakes immediately.

2- Teaching Activities and Exercises

• Describing Characters, Objects and Appearances

Method:

With the help of stills of the film or by freeze- framing parts of the scenes, the students will describe the following characteristics of the scene and the characters.

- (a) Personality, attitude, character and so on.
- (b) Comparing them to those of other characters.
- (c) Other distinguishing features, such as facial expressions, suitability of dress code.
- (d) Progression of character.
- (e) Situation and psychological states of characters.
- (f) Discourse/Dialogism interpretation.



Character Sketch

Name of the characters:

Physical appearance:

What does the characters look like? Are these physical features important in understanding the character? If so, why?

Actions:

What do the characters do in the story? How do these actions affect the viewer's understanding of the character?

Interaction with other Characters:

How does this character (one specific character) interact with other characters in the story? What do these reactions reveal about the character?

Motivation: What does the character think the situation around him or her? How do the character's thoughts affect what we know about the character?

3- Group Activities

Look at the poster and work in group to discuss:

- Does the poster reflect the summary? State your reasons.
- Does the title reflect the summary? State your reasons.
- Can you make any suggestion that will improve the poster?

4- Comprehension Test (Orally/Writing)

- What do you like best about the film? Why? Give reasoned answer.
- What, if anything, do you learn from the film?
- Was there anything you don't understand about the film? What is it?
- What is the film trying to convey us? Do you think the filmmakers are successful? Why or Why not?
- Which character in the film do you like best? Why?
- Which events in the film are the most realistic and heart touching?
- Do you find any unrealistic/fantastic presentation in the film?
- Did the ending of the film seem appropriate? Why or Why not?

5- Thinking and Writing Test

- This is the end of the story. If - - - - (such type of thing happened) then - - - Write a story of your own in about 150 -200 words.
- What do you notice about the camera work that helps to establish a link between theme and landscape presentation? Write a paragraph describing the changing trends of camera technique in Indian films.

Results

Students will acquire English as they work with materials which they find interesting and relevant and which they can use in their professional work or further studies. The more learners pay attention to the meaning of the language they hear or read, the more they are successful; the more they have to focus on the linguistic input or isolated language structures, the less they are motivated to attend their classes. From this study we can see that students can learn both English and knowledge from ESP course. Students can pick much knowledge through communicative teaching method with the visual aids. An interactive quiz comparing with a normal test gives more motivation to learners. Students acquire language when they have opportunities to use the language in interaction with other speakers. That's why reading a hot topic from the film and making a round-table discussion will give learners more self-confidence in order to communicate, and teacher has the responsibility to help build the learners' confidence.

Conclusion

Language and communication skills are recognized as important elements in professional education. Film can aide in developing communicative competency of professional students. Use of film is not new to language teaching, but proper use of film is always important. Language practice through the use of films can facilitate the development of interactional competence. However, it is important to recognize that films are not a substitute for traditional classroom teaching. Films are aids – they are simply one type of supplement to the regular curriculum in teaching English for specific purposes. In conclusion, the effective use of film can fully improve students' ideation and practical language skills, which is helpful and useful to ensure and fulfill an effective result in teaching and learning. The modern tool can be used in addition to the inputs given by the teachers in the classrooms. The magic is real in that it helps the students to enhance their language learning in a fruitful way.

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