RESEARCH ARTICLE

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A STUDY OF VOCABULARY LEARNING USING FILM AS A MEDIA – A CASE STUDY OF THE UNDER GRADUATE ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT
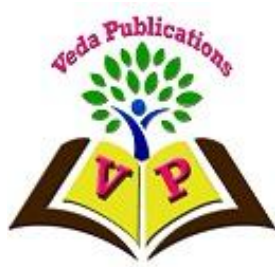
The objective of the study is to explore the use of vocabulary influenced by media with special reference to the movie "Slumdog Millionaire". Various tasks were used to make aware of the vocabulary learning by the first year under graduate engineering students of an institution at South India.

The English movie "Slumdog Millionaire (2008)" was shown to the students. A vocabulary test was conducted for the students before and after viewing the movie as pre-test and post-test. The scores of all the students have been analyzed. From the analysis, it was clearly known that there was a marginal improvement in vocabulary learning and the reason for the improvement was identified from the semi-structured interview. Use of films in language teaching can be both entertaining and motivate for learners with different skill levels.

Keywords*: Vocabulary, Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Vocabulary Test, Media.*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is considered as an important factor in language learning. Integration of media technology began in the '50s when all language classes began to use the phonograph, movies and the tape recorder as tools in the teaching of English language. In the '70s and '80s, audio and video courses were improved through the added use of video projectors and slide shows. By the late '80s and early '90s, language labs have become a part of many colleges and schools throughout the world. However, by the mid '90s many multimedia language programs became available for the English teachers through web based programmes. In the recent research in English language teaching, media technology such as videos, pictures, animations and interactive games, CDs or DVDs, the use of the internet, chat rooms and video conferencing have minimized distance and turned the whole world into a global community. Media provides opportunities to second language learners to converse not only in their mother tongue but in English as well. It has developed learning and teaching methodologies there by making the students enjoy and create productively. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of film on second language learning and to statistically analyze how far it helps the learners in acquiring vocabulary.

Movies and Videos are briefly known as one kind of visual aids. They are visible with both sound and pictures. In fact, the video is a useful means of communication as well as a powerful medium of sharing information and valuable aid in teaching and learning of languages.

"Movie" is defined as a film shown on a television. There are several kinds of movies such as silent movies, movies with subtitle, and movies without the subtitle. Videos and movies are more effective than traditional printed textbooks. Students can see from the textbooks are only dead words and sentences. Students would become more excited to experience this new way of teaching and learning. They would be more eager to understand the new language and remember them for a longtime. Learning with the help of videos will give a chance to get acquainted with the native voice, make the students feel at home with the world of the screen and absorb the new language without being aware of learning new words. When watching videos, students will not be aware of learning, so they will feel free from pressure and stressful situation in traditional language classes. They learn the language incidentally and as a result, they gain success.

There are a series of studies by Guildea, Miller and Wurtenberg (1990) which provide support for video use in a classroom to develop the vocabulary of students. According to them, the learners who saw video pictures were able to produce a higher percentage of acceptable sentences using the most difficult targeted words than the learners who read only the narratives or those who read both the narratives and definitions. In words of the researchers, "Pictures (video) improve sentence production for many words" (Gildea, 1990). Learners those who read illustrative sentences scored better on a multiple choice test than did those who read the narrative only or read the narrative and watched the video. This vocabulary learning is going to be measured by productive use, video is certainly facilitative. There are many studies conducted using the movie in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in classes; very few studies were done on the use of movies for enhancing reading comprehension, with the exception of one study of Weyers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Seay (1991) had conducted research on using video in listening comprehension for EFL students. They used an intermediate level of students and had divided them into two groups, experimental and controlled ones. The experimental group has substituted the regular classes with listening to the authentic radio tapes. The controlled group followed the regular class activities without an exposure to the radio tapes. The study has provided evidence that the experimental group performed significantly better on the final tests of listening comprehension with both the video and audio than the controlled group in which no strategy training occurred.

Herron and Hanley (1992) concluded that using movies in EFL classroom offered background information that activated prior knowledge, which is essential in stimulating the four skills of (LSRW) activities in the classroom. The main component of using movies in class is actually enabling the reader to pictures or to visualize the events, characters,

B.S.Gomathi ,T.S.Geetha and M. Richard Robert Raa

narration, story and words in the context. Draper (2010) has characterized visualization as a very important prerequisite for a good reader. They have studied and made conclusions regarding the reading process and visualization.

Yuksel and Belgin (2009) examined the effects of watching a closed-captioned movie clip on incidental vocabulary learning in a pre-test, post-test experimental design and demonstrated significant gains based on the Vocabulary Knowledge Scales and discussed the pedagogical implications of the study.

Merita Ismaili(2013) analyzed the effects of using movies in the EFL classroom in his paper and revealed its effects on developing students listening and communication skills. The study concluded that movies attract students' attention, present language in a more natural way that found in course-books.

Nalliveettil George Mathew and Ali Odeh Hammoud Alidma (2013) discussed in their paper on the usefulness of audio-visual aids in EFL classroom at an undergraduate level and gave insights on students' perception and opinions on the use of audio-visual aids and resources. He also revealed the effective use of audio-visual aids substitute monotonous learning environments, students develop and increase personal understanding of the areas of learning when they experience a successful and pleasant learning in the EFL classroom.

Atiya Khan (2015) in her paper suggested that greater exposure to audio-visual technologies, such as films, can lead to growth in second language acquisition to a significant extent in non-native English language learning environments. One of the most important pedagogical implications is that the use of films holds great potential in ESL learning context, but it should be conducted carefully by English teachers and in consultation with the experts.

Hossein Sabouri, Dr. Mohammad Zohrabi (2015) showed a video with subtitle to the control group. Results from the questionnaire suggest that learners paid most attention to captions, followed by video and audio, and acquired most words by associating them with visual images. Pedagogical implications of this study are that captioned video tends to aid recognition of written word forms and the learning of word meaning, while non-captioned video tends to improve listening comprehension as it

facilitates recognition of aural word forms. Finally they concluded that the use of movies with subtitles can improve students' engagement in learning and retrieval of new lexical items.

Iman Alizadeh (2016) in his review paper aims to provide a brief account of practices in vocabulary teaching and learning by focusing on the research on teaching words in context and out of context as well as incidental and intentional vocabulary learning.

Raniah Hassen Kabooha (2016) concluded in his paper that movies are powerful instructional tools that can help in developing students' language skills. The participants in the study have positive attitudes towards the integration of movies in their classrooms to improve their English. The study also indicates that using movies in the foreign language classroom could enhance the students' motivation to learn the language.

Wan LI (2016) concluded that electronically supported learning and teaching system through internet and multimedia improved the listening performance of the control group and helps the teacher in getting yield twice the results with half the effort. From the above literature it is found that through videos and movies with or without subtitles anyone of LSRW skills is being focused on improvement and vocabulary learning. So, in this work an attempt has been made to use movies for the improvement of LSRW skills along with vocabulary for the first year Engineering College students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Can Indian English film (Slumdog Millionaire) help motivate students to acquire and enrich vocabularies and participate freely in language communication activities?
2. Would these motivated students be able to perform better in oral skills?

RESEARCH DONE ON THE USE OF FILMS TO TEACH ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A review of the film theory and film studies literature suggested some unique features of film that make it an uncommonly powerful teaching tool. Early film theorist, Siegfried Kracauer captured this view of a film when he said that a unique property of the film is its ability to "…make one see and grasp

things which only the cinema is privileged to communicate" (Kracauer, 1973).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A survey of the literature on media studies shows that not much has been done in the area of the use of popular films as a motivational factor to teach language skills in Indian classroom contexts. The few studies which have been done in India focus on the use of English films to teach English language to Indian learners (Mudhulika, 2007).

RATIONALE FOR INCLUDING FILMS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The benefits of using films in an ESL classroom are numerous. Some important advantages are:

1. The film has an unparalleled power to transmit information and inferences.

2. A picture of people or objects in the real world is more complete and particular than a sentence and a film director can communicate in no smaller unites than single pictures.

3. Films motivate learners to learn the language (English). We should acknowledge the fact that the learners love to imitate the characters and their language.

4. A film has frequently been used to teach speech – not only a command of language structure but also features of pronunciation, intonation and stress.

5. Films are authentic material. The visuals and the aural medium reinforce each other. Films can present "natural" situations within which language occurs with no forced intonation patterns: no contrived action.

6. Films are able to do what the classroom teacher can never do and that is to present language, together with a great deal of its extra-linguistic environment.

PARTICIPANTS OF THIS STUDY

Participants in this study were undergraduate students of first year engineering, between the ages of 17-19. The study was carried out during the academic year 2015-2016 at Erode Sengunthar Engineering College, Erode, an affiliated institution to Anna University, Chennai, India. A total of 60 students, male and female, all in a classroom

setting were considered. Students were selected based on the following considerations.

(a) Locale (rural/ urban),
(b) Medium of study (Tamil / English),
(c) Scheme of their school education (State board / Central board),
(d) Family background (educated parents /uneducated).

This study took place over one month period of time. The study was conducted for all the participants exposed to the movie.

METHODOLOGY

The English movie "Slumdog Millionaire" supplemented with English subtitle was screened to all the students and data was collected from the students in two ways viz., pre and post-tests and Semi-structured Interview.

ABOUT MOVIE

The movie entitled *Slumdog Millionaire* was purposefully selected because it consisted of a language used by a learner of age 18, residing in a Slum area. The film starts by showing poverty in India. This is a breathless, exciting story, heartbreaking and exhilarating at the same time, about a Mumbai orphan who rises from rags to riches on the strength of his lively intelligence. It shows the use of various vocabulary items altogether and its intermediate difficult level of the lexical items expected to highly reinforce the vocabulary achievement by the learners. *Slumdog Millionaire* **is** a 2008 English drama film directed by Danny Boyle, written by Simon Beaufoy, and produced by Christian Colson. It is a loose version of the novel *Q & A* (2005) by an Indian author and diplomat Vikas Swarup, telling the story of Jamal Malik, age 18, from the Juhu slums of Mumbai.

WHY THIS ANALYSIS OF SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

Slumdog Millionaire has been chosen for analysis because it is more popular and won lot of awards and was viewed by millions of people around the world. The use of English vocabulary in Slumdog Millionaire subconsciously reminded that English has "acquired unparallel functional and societal path" as it has its own major roles in the multilingual society which exists in India. Simon Beaufoy's script was initially entirely in English, but film director Boyle's

B.S.Gomathi ,T.S.Geetha and M. Richard Robert Raa

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decision to have the children speak Hindi, instead, is the right call. The speech of the children in their native language made perfect sense, especially because Boyle and Beaufoy depicted the realism of the children who spoke in their mother tongue. Learners can learn from this film because it is socio-linguistically competent in a multi lingual society. While screening this film in the class room, will help the students to absorb English in various areas like accent, voice, body language, listening etc.

PRETEST

A questionnaire was constructed and distributed to the participants before showing the movie "Slumdog Millionaire" as a pre-test.

POST-TEST

The post-test was very similar to the pre-test. After showing the movie the same questionnaire was used for the post-test. Words were chosen based on the difficulty level. The content-relating to the difficulties was kept the similar questions for both the tests.

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

A semi-structured interview comprising open-ended questions was used to elicit information from the students and their response to the content-based approach in teaching vocabulary. Five randomly chosen students from the group were interviewed.

ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Based on the findings from the learners' profile, a questionnaire for pre and post-test was prepared which consisted of eight questions covering different strategies of vocabulary learning.

Students were given match the words, synonyms, antonyms, one word substitution questions and Homophones as brainstorming activities. After watching the movie, the participants received a questionnaire which was to elicit the students' feedback regarding usage of the movie in the classroom and to analyze the relationship between movie-viewing and students' performance.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE QUESTIONS

- Matching the words– Given in two columns
- Finding antonyms of the given words
- Homophones
- Choose the words

- One word substitution
- Completing the sentence
- Finding synonym of the given words
- Suffixes to form new words

The questionnaire was distributed to the students in class. The researcher was present in the classroom to respond to any queries regarding to the questionnaire. Upon completion, the researcher collected all answered questionnaires. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics where frequency counts were tabulated and converted to percentages.

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS / RESULTS

The findings in this study showed significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students on vocabulary acquisition. It may be concluded that motivational factors associated with movie-based teaching helped to increase the efficiency of the teaching and learning process.
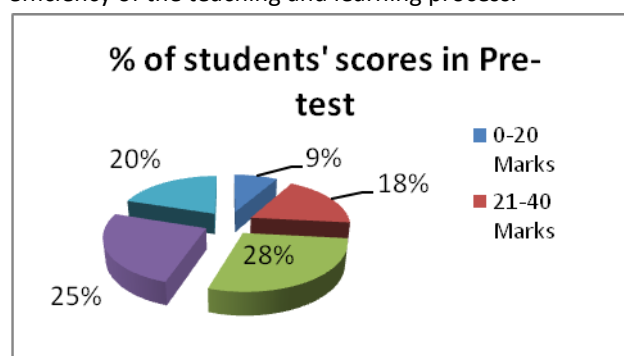

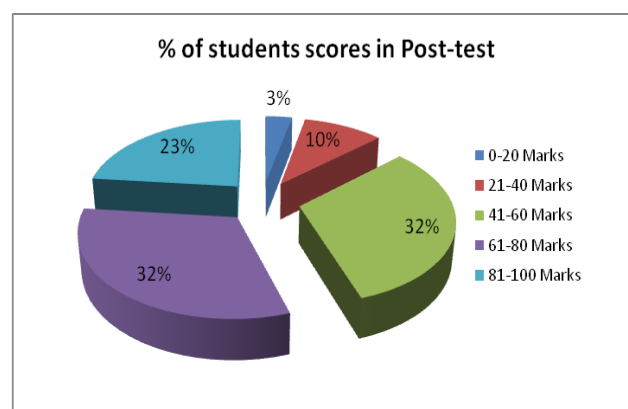Fig. (1) Marks scored by students Vs Number of students in % in pre-test

Fig. (2) Marks scored by students Vs Number of students in % in post-test

B.S.Gomathi ,T.S.Geetha and M. Richard Robert Raa

DATA ANALYSIS

From the above diagrams it is clearly known that the percentage score in the range 0-20 marks was reduced from 9% to 3% whereas the percentage score in the ranges 41-60 marks and 61-80 marks were marginally increased up to 7%. Similarly the highest marks score was also increased by 3%.

In order to validate the results and elicit specific information of students' attitudes about vocabulary learning, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 10 students. Open-ended questions were asked to them. The results of which are stated below. The question directed to seek "In what way the students' learn the meanings of different words after viewing the movie?" 6% of interviewees who scored less marks in pre-test and more marks in post-test stated that they listen to the movie and discuss with their friends to discover the meaning of a new word. They also claimed that using monolingual dictionary helps them to learn even more words because every item in the dictionary is explained.8% of total interviewees pointed out that another most preferred way to learn vocabulary was guessing from the context while seeing the movie. They added that this is due to the medium role of English. They stated that words need to be repeated in order to listen, and different texts provide a context that helps them figure out the meaning of words they do not know. As a result, this contextualized learning stimulates their understanding of words and they learn which words go together as well. The next way used reported by 7% respondents was "they memorize new words when it is repeated more than 2 times in the movie". They pointed the benefits of word lists as they are made by learners themselves based on their needs and their interests.

During the semi structured interview, most of them reported that they had fun in learning new words from the movie. They found it easy and interesting to learn the synonyms for the words and its usage. However, they were not sure whether the words learnt by them will be used in their spoken language or in the written communication. The score of all the questions of all the students were statistically analyzed using SPSS software and following results were obtained.

Table 1 Analysis of pre-test results

Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syn_match	60	3.5083	1.80040
Antonyms	60	3.0500	1.40731
Homophones	60	3.9333	1.49991
Gap filing	60	3.3667	1.11183
Substitution	60	3.6117	1.29329
Correct word	60	3.9500	1.19922
Synonyms	60	3.6117	1.40329
Suffixes	60	3.0833	1.52150
Total	60	28.1250	7.80156

Table 2 Analysis of post-test results

Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Syn_match	60	4.8470	0.57114
Antonyms	60	3.5750	1.54817
Homophones	60	4.9667	0.25820
Gap filing	60	4.2250	0.66654
Substitution	60	4.7917	0.44428
Correct word	60	4.8833	0.32373
Synonyms	60	4.6000	0.84773
Suffixes	60	3.9167	1.52706
Total	60	35.8000	2.75435

From the tabulated results it is clearly known that the mean score of individual learners have been increased in all the category of questions in the pre-test and post-test. Also, in all the categories the standard deviations was very much decreased. Hence the learning of vocabulary and LSRW skills were significantly improved through movies. Through the interview process it can be identified that the learners are able to understand and reproduce the vocabulary when the scenes in the film uses bilingual words as well very simple words along with the apt situation related to day to day activities.

CONCLUSION

It is an evident point to be taken into consideration is the fact that, apparently the audio-visual materials have induced a better motivation for

B.S.Gomathi ,T.S.Geetha and M. Richard Robert Raa

the learners to write about the topics provided, than any other one element of surprise to motivate the students in the teaching-learning process, showing movie is an effective tool however it cannot be overused. A wide range of vocabulary was derived from the video and then the showing a movies in the classroom environment. The pre-test scores were low and students were not actually able to introduce themselves properly. The students watched the English movie and the learners were given the post-test. A considerable improvement in their vocabulary was found. So, the point the researcher is trying to make is that, resumably it could be a great idea if the teachers use films, in language teaching it can be both entertaining and motivating for learners with different skill levels.

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B.S.Gomathi ,T.S.Geetha and M. Richard Robert Raa