



A CASE STUDY ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH MOVIES TO STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Original scientific paper

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ABSTRACT

Learning English is a must nowadays, especially for students pursuing higher education and aspiring for a presence on the international stage. There are many methods of teaching English as a foreign language. This case study focuses on the use of audiovisual material in particular movies and photographs as a method to master English language communication skills. In the current world, students must develop appreciable English language comprehension and communication skills to peruse international literature and find ways to express their opinions at the academic level. This study is conducted with the first year bachelor students of three different faculties at the University of Prizren using quantitative and qualitative methods. A carefully designed online questionnaire, as well as interviews, are the main research methods. Findings prove that using videos and photos as teaching materials during English communication classes sparked students' interest to engage in discussion and as the matter of fact they have improved their overall English skills, especially improved their confidence in expressing their ideas in English.

Keywords: *movies in TESL, communication skills, university students, student engagement, visual materials*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Using movies and videos in the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) has gained popularity in recent years due to its potential to engage and motivate learners. Alberta (2013) emphasized the potential of films as a medium for learning English, particularly in higher education settings. Rao (2019) points out that this way is more useful in learning a foreign language like English as the learners can get the real experience of listening to the voices of the native speakers of the language. Additionally, movies and videos can provide insight into the culture of English-

speaking countries (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011), which can help students better understand and appreciate the cultural context in which the language is used. Movies offer students a sense of reality by presenting a visual expression that interests them, in addition to providing visual explanations of the context and concepts of the content being taught (Rokni & Atae, 2014). Additionally, the sound and images in movies have the ability to raise consciousness, inspire critical thought, and pique learners' interest in one another's perspectives (Nelson & Guerra, 2009). Additionally, introducing images through movies into the educational process fosters student participation, critical thinking, and

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creativity (Schirta, 2011). With these benefits in mind, including movies into TEFL lessons holds enormous potential for improving student learning and fostering successful language acquisition. However, there are also challenges to using movies and videos in the TEFL classroom. One challenge is the time required to watch a movie or video in its entirety, which may not be practical in a classroom setting (Willis & Willis, 2007). This can be mitigated by selecting shorter movies or videos or using clips from longer ones, but this may also limit the cultural and language learning opportunities provided by the film (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Another challenge is the need for teacher preparation, as the teacher must be familiar with the content of the movie or video and be able to facilitate language practice and comprehension activities (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Additionally, some students may be distracted by the visual content of the movie or video and have difficulty focusing on the language (Willis & Willis, 2007). Finally, there may be logistical challenges associated with obtaining and showing movies and videos in the classroom, such as obtaining the necessary technology and obtaining copyright permission (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Overall the use of movies and videos in the teaching of English as a foreign language can be an effective way to engage and motivate learners and improve their language skills. However, it is important for teachers to carefully consider the class preparations, challenges and limitations of using movies and videos in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

Students were taught throughout the semester, which included 15 weeks of lectures using only photographs and videos as the teaching material. The only language of instruction was English. Questionnaires and group interviews were the two main research methods used in this case study. After 15 weeks, the students were handed out a questionnaire and asked to answer questions about their experience with improving their English speaking skills using the audiovisual teaching material. Additionally, a group interview was conducted and the outcomes were compared analytically and merged from both sources.

Research Design

Qualitative, quantitative, and analytical methods have been used to conduct this research paper. These cross-sectional design enabled complementation

and data assurance. It has been appropriate in the measurement of data and determination of relationship between variables. The number based research is used for measuring attitude, behavior, and performance of numbers. The data received from quantitative methods is converted into graphs and charts that are interpreted easily.

Population and sample

The questionnaire was eligible for English as a Foreign Language students who have followed English classes during the first semester at the University of Prizren. They were intentionally chosen because they were coming from high school and they were experiencing higher education for the first time. A total of 224 students have responded to the online questionnaire. This research sample is representative of the students' population taking English classes at the Faculty of Philology and Faculty of Education at the University of Prizren. Random sampling has been used to collect data from the targeted sample by emailing questionnaire to the students of respective faculties who were attending English classes during the first semester. This sampling technique represents targeted selection of all eligible students. The same students were interviewed in groups.

Data collection tools

The link to the questionnaire was sent to students to their official university emails. The questionnaire was designed using survey monkey which is quite user friendly and could generate satisfactory data analysis for the research. To the best of my knowledge this was the first study of this kind conducted on teaching EFL speaking skills in any of the higher education institutions in Kosovo. Questionnaire was user friendly and easy to answer. Students could submit their answers by using any digital device including their smartphone, computer, or tablet. Questionnaires were anonymous and were self-analyzed by the survey application. The feedbacks obtained from the participants of the survey through survey monkey was transformed into graphical data. The frequency represents the count of participant's responses for each question. Percentages are computed for providing meaningful results in graphs and charts that can be interpreted easily. Additionally, a group interview was conducted with the same groups after having fifteen weeks of classes implying audiovisual material in TEFL with a focus on improving communication skills. Interview questionnaire

consisted of sixteen questions and was used as a check and balance instrument for the online questionnaire. The interviews were recorded, content wise analyzed, and later on merged with the results from the online questionnaire.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interview was conducted with university students of the first and the second year of studies. All of them have been learning English at least for eight years. Based on the national curriculum of Kosovo English is set to be an obligatory subject from the first grade of elementary school in 2017, before that it was obligatory from the third grade. Majority of students declared to have Elementary level of English language skills or 30.4%, 25% pre-intermediate, 19.6 upper-intermediate and 21.4% advanced. Taking all English language skills in consideration, students unanimously considered that communication skills were the most challenging in language learning. When asked about the reason, most of them think that the lack of communication in English in previous education, using their mother tongue during the English classes instead of English and also large number of students in groups are considered to be the main reason of weak communication skills among students. This is surprising because of the fact that even after such a long period of having English at elementary and secondary education, majority of students have basic level of English. On the other hand, they clearly understand the importance of English communication skills 78.3% see communication skills as the most important for them.

Students clearly enjoyed having classes by using visual materials such as pictures, short videos and movies. 82.1% either agree or strongly agree that this methodology sparked their interest in engaging during the class, 16.1 declared themselves neutral whereas 0% or nobody disagreed. Majority of students believe that having shown photos and videos during English communication classes sparked their interest to engage in discussion. "I get quite clear idea about the information I should communicate when shown photos and videos, and that makes it way easier for me to find a way to express in English" points out one of the students within the group interview. Majority of students also believe that in last fifteen weeks of English communication classes they have improved their overall English skills, especially improving their confidence in expressing their ideas in English. "I can build my opinion by listening to others and

even If I have challenges to express myself, I still want to communicate my idea about certain topics during the class" shares one of the students. Students showed engagement and interest especially when they would recognize a photo or a video material. When shown a photo of The Queen Elizabeth II, majority of students asked for a word to comment. Students feel more confident in expressing their opinions when they are certain about the information they possess such as their personality, well known facts and people. Many students said that at the beginning of the semester when started having classes delivered entirely in English, it was challenging to follow. "It was like experiencing a cultural shock, coming from secondary school where most of English classes were taught in Albanian to having classes entirely delivered in English" stresses one of the students during the interview. As time passed students got familiar with the fact that only English should be used in any case during the class. "After some time I got used to and I believe my listening skills improved by time" concludes another student. A vast majority of students or 73.2% agree or strongly agree that they improved their communication skills by being taught this way during the semester, 23.2% declared neutral whereas nobody declared that he or she did not make any improvement regarding their communication skills in English. Students seem to be quite polarized when asked about the language of instruction during English language classes. Roughly half of the students or 50% of them either agree or strongly agree that during English classes only English should be used as the language of instruction. The other half or 23.2% disagree and 23.2% are neutral regarding this question. When asked if Albanian should be used as a language of instruction, majority only 19.6% disagree or strongly disagree, the vast majority either is neutral or agrees and strongly agrees. This is concerning and is related to the previous habits of having English classes in primary and secondary education. Students expressed reserves when asked about their opinion on quality of English classes in previous education, in primary and secondary. "There was lack of communication in English, we would usually learn about grammar categories, translate texts, dictation exercises and very few times we had chance to communicate in English" remembers one of the students. Majority of students believe that learning English is of very high importance. They associate learning English with their future career, internationalization, and travelling. During the interview, students recall English

classes in previous education, primary school and secondary school as a typical class. "It would be our English teacher who would be explaining things for the most of the time, usually grammar rules, tenses. I remember very little when somebody from us would be asked to say anything in English" one of the students describes a typical English during his secondary education. Students pointed out that passing the exam was important for them. So, most of them believed that studying English grammar, exercising and preparing for the examination was crucial. Time by time they would read dialogues in English, very rarely would be asked or talked to in English. Students who were able to communicate in English, above Pre-intermediate level students, are those who would learn English in another way or had additional English classes. These were students who liked English and had self-initiative to improve their English competence. Most of them followed additional classes in private Language Schools. This study's findings align with research on the importance of communication skills in second language acquisition (SLA). According to Willis and Willis (2007), communication skills are a key factor in successful SLA, as they allow learners to "participate in social interactions and to negotiate meaning with others" (p. 84). However, the finding that a significant minority of students disagreed with the use of only English as the language of instruction in English classes is supported by research on the role of the learner's first language (L1) in SLA. Some studies have found that the use of the L1 in the language classroom can facilitate learning and promote language development (e.g., Genesee, 1989; Krashen, 1982). Overall, these findings highlight the importance of communication skills in SLA and the potential benefits of using visual materials in the language classroom. They also highlight the need for further research to understand the factors that contribute to learners' English proficiency and to identify effective strategies for improving communication skills.

CONCLUSION

The study suggests that Kosovo university students face challenges in developing their English communication skills, despite having studied the language for a minimum of eight years. The majority of students reported having elementary or lower levels of English proficiency and identified communication skills as their most challenging aspect of learning the language. The students also expressed a strong recognition of

the importance of strong communication skills in English, with 78.3% stating that it was the most important aspect of the language for them. One effective strategy for engaging students and improving their English communication skills appears to be the use of visual materials, such as pictures, short videos, and movies. 82.1% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that this methodology helped spark their interest in participating in class and boosted their confidence in expressing their ideas in English. This finding is supported by research indicating a positive relationship between the use of visual materials and student engagement and language learning outcomes. However, the findings also revealed some disagreement among the students on the language of instruction for English classes, with 50% supporting the use of only English and 23.2% disagreeing. This is consistent with research on the role of the learner's first language (L1) in second language acquisition (SLA), which has found that the use of the L1 in the language classroom can facilitate learning and promote language development. These findings highlight the importance of communication skills in SLA and the potential benefits of using visual materials in the language classroom. They also underline the need for further research to understand the factors that contribute to learners' English proficiency and to identify effective strategies for improving communication skills.

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