"That's the biggest impact!" Pedagogical Values of Movies in ELT Classrooms[1]

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Abstract

Since many say watching movies can have a positive effect on language learning outcomes, this research was done to find out which skills movies can contribute most to, whether speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar or cultural aspects. A qualitative research method was used for this study. This study was done to find out the teachers' perceptions of using English movies in English Language Teaching (ELT) processes. Teachers from three different levels: primary, secondary, and senior high-school teachers were asked to answer a questionnaire set in accordance with the research topic. Five of them were senior high school teachers, two of them were junior high school teachers, and three of them were elementary school teachers. Creative interviews were also used as an additional data source. The results showed that most of the teachers agreed that movies play their biggest role and considerable advantages in developing cultural aspects and listening skills. Furthermore, some integration is possible between listening and speaking as well as with reading and writing because watching movies works better with integration of skills. Apparently, even though vocabulary can develop with this technique, grammar is not enhanced alone without being accompanied by writing.

Keywords: English movies, learning English language, ELT process, language skills.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English has posed a lot of challenges for English teachers; the most popular ones are problems with multilevel students and class size which lead to class' boredom (Sevy, 2016). The use of media has been considered as one way to improve pedagogical activities—as well as a way-out for this problem—in EFL classrooms (Rarick, 2007). Further, Barlex and Welch (2001) propose that media can ignite ideas that seem impossible to generate, help in brainstorming processes or even help weaker students to perform better. The fact that movies are easily accessed and screened nowadays provides more chances for English teachers to use audio-visual media in teaching various language skills to their EFL students (Vanderplank, 2009).

Movies have been used in many English language classrooms. First, they were used for teaching listening in a study by Ismail (2011). She found that the use of movie scenes in listening classes for four meetings significantly improved her students' average scores in listening, which rose from 62 to 74 (i.e. a 20% increase). To clarify this, she also mentioned that students' positive responses rose during the use of this technique which supports a strong belief that their motivation and behavioral traits played an important role in increasing their listening scores after only four meetings. Trent (2011) also supports this as he asserts that motivation is an essential factor in determining the rate of language acquisition because it enforces desire, attention, effort, goal settings, confidence, and application.

Second, movies have also been used to improve speaking as shown in a classroom action research (CAR) project by Kalean (2013). This study reported that the students increased their mean score from 60 to 71 (20% improvement). Again, as mentioned earlier, motivation also played a predominant role in this improvement. Third, another CAR study done by Agusta (2015) shows that students' ability in writing narrative text increased from 59 in the pre-test to 76 in the post-test (nearly 30% better). The study was conducted over two cycles with three meetings for each cycle; which means there were six meetings altogether. It also reported the use of movies can enhance students' grammatical knowledge, especially the one employed in narrative texts for past tense. Fourth, movies can be used in the teaching of reading because so many movies are adapted from literary works, this is especially so if captions in the target language are provided. This would be particularly relevant to the issues related to extensive reading such as novels or biography. As evidence, Alqadi (2015) states that movies have been profoundly influenced by literary works.

Fifth, concerning grammar, to the author's knowledge, no related studies have been found unless it is connected with the teaching of writing as mentioned by Agusta (2015). While for vocabulary, a research study by Gorjian (2014) reveals that students taught with movies subtitled with both L1 and L2 showed considerable development in vocabulary acquisition. The subjects of this study were 90 freshman students of English Translation at BA level in Abadan Azad University, Iran. They were divided into three experimental groups: one group was treated using bimodal subtitles (Group A), another was treated with standard subtitles (Group B), and the other group was treated with dual subtitles (Group C). Group A watched movies played with English sound and English subtitles, Group B watched movies in English with Persian subtitles, while Group C watched movies played with both Persian and English subtitles. After eight sessions of viewing, Group C with dual subtitles learned more vocabulary, the second largest

increase was shown by Group B with standard subtitles, and the least improvement was from Group A with bimodal subtitles.

Then too, movies can certainly be employed in building cultural awareness. This awareness includes geographic, sociolinguistic, socio-economic, socio-political, and educational issues Istanto (2009). Later, a study about the use of movies in ELT processes was done by Nur (2014) with a group of fourth semester college students in Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia to determine the effects of movies on those students. There were five conclusions: first, the students said that movies were interesting materials; second, movies made classroom teaching-learning more interesting and fun; third, the students understood the materials better; fourth, they could comprehend other cultures better; and fifth, movies increased the students' knowledge because they got information they did not have before.

Based on those explanations about movies and their use in English language teaching-learning (ELT) this study aims to find out which skills or sub skills can be substantially affected by movies based on the perceptions of English teachers. Accordingly, this research is looking for the answers to the following research question: What EFL skills or sub-skills can be most affected by movies based on the perception of teachers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Movies in Language Learning

Movies are the most well-known non-print media used in teaching foreign languages, including English. They are easily accessed and readily available in most countries around the world. Besides their popular means of entertainment, their use as teaching material is also significant amongst language teachers. Movies, especially with subtitles, can increase learners' motivation, solve confusion derived from cultural ambiguity and eliminate anxiety during learning (Sabouri & Zohrabi, 2015). Besides, movies also show learners a certain culture both from general and specific viewpoints, such as daily life and lifestyle practices. In addition, movies also provide chances to examine various sensitive issues such as race discrimination, drug abuse, violence in particular domestic violence and even aspects of religion e.g. tolerance and compassion. So, movies cannot only be used for teaching but also to educate students about social aspects.

From this stance, there emerges a contradiction. Vanderplank (2009) and Kramsch and Andersen (1999) argue that movies (which also refer to television and video) can make students confused as the information and meanings are both clear and hidden all at once. As most hidden meanings are bound to culture, the values could remain obscure for most learners who are non-native speakers of the language used in movies. Most teachers expect that their students can get a lot from watching movies. Some teachers have even become technophobes about movies, which means they believe that the students have already watched nearly all movies and nothing else needs to be watched anymore in the classroom. There is a solution for this. When watching movies outside of class, students do not have to prove their comprehension of the language or the values in those movies. So, teachers can get their students to discuss the language and the values in movies after watching them, even though they watch them out of

class. So, being a technophobe or not is not the absolute problem, the challenge is to understand the language and the values in the movies (Lam, 2000).

There are some advantages and disadvantages of watching movies as posed by Miller (2016). The advantages are learners can learn independently, shy students can have time practicing to be their best without having to interact with people, students do not have to pay for a class, and movies enhance the adoption of colloquial language, pronunciation and dialects. Furthermore, visualization in movies also helps students learn at their best (Silviyanti, 2014). Meanwhile, the main disadvantage is that learning language from movies is a slow process because most students focus on their entertainment goal, not on the learning language goal. Besides, there is no certain pattern that can be followed, and lastly, there is no interaction while watching movies.

2.2 Language Aspects

There are four major skills in learning a language, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, in this study, other aspects involved in the processes of learning a language are also presented, they are: grammar, vocabulary, and cultural aspects of the language.

The first skill for discussion is listening. Listening plays a significant role in language comprehension. There are two general ideas about the importance of listening as stated by Ahmadi (2016). Firstly, listening improves the ability to understand spoken words as it directly and naturally happens during a conversation. The messages are likely to be conveyed or, at least, the listener tries hard to draw meaning from the messages she is listening to. Secondly, listening promotes learners to learn some new language forms that are imitable and appear useful for language learners in term of learning from authentic materials. It is clear that during listening, two (or more) interlocutors not only listen for information being shared but they also imitate their word choices, the way of deliverance, even their facial expressions. For that reason, listening is no longer perceived as just a receptive skill but it is seen as a productive skill as well. Xu (2011) further says that in defining listening as an activity, we might have to use two different senses: a narrow and a broader sense. In the initial, narrow sense, listening is only seen as an activity of hearing sounds, while in the latter, broader sense, listening is an active activity to convey messages through sounds.

The second sense is speaking. Speaking is an interaction between two or more interlocutors with the objective to deliver messages. Once one speaks, it means that she wants to share certain information. Further, Brown (2001) says that speaking is an oral activity where two or more persons negotiate information in the form of meaning, ideas, and feelings. So that speakers should usually be aware of the ideas, unity and coherence present during the conversation. Speaking in a foreign language is basically an elaborate activity since one needs to be well-informed about the language aspects in the target language such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension.

Next, Murphy (1997) says that reading is also essential in the matter of language comprehension, especially for English. By reading, learners can develop their other language skills – particularly writing and speaking – besides improving their linguistic elements as well, for instance vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, reading comprehension is not merely understanding the written messages, but it is a process involving a complex integration (Kucan & Beck, 1996). The integration needed whilst

reading is the ability to decode information, knowledge of vocabulary both semantic and pragmatic meanings, background knowledge and other relevant strategies to make sense of texts.

Then, comes the most intricate skill which is writing. To master this skill, a learner needs to be good at setting goals and planning at length involving the issues of rhetoric and context and then must make it feasible by analyzing each part to finally narrate the ideas onto pages. Further, the ability to review, evaluate and revise is also needed because writing demands planning, drafting, revising and editing (Hyland, 2002). It is also important for a writer to understand and have knowledge of a large number of topics.

Next, comes the issues of grammar and vocabulary which are the basic building blocks essential for learning any language. As Zhang (2009) urges, these two linguistic items are the basis for knowledge of a language. Grammatical competence is an essential communicative competence which means that in communicating, grammar is vital for clarifying messages and ideas. Knowledge of vocabulary is also essential just like grammar. Besides of its importance, grammar in foreign language learning cannot be acquired automatically, it needs to be taught as grammar is not just random rules, but rules that give meaning. Like grammar, vocabulary shortcomings can lead to serious problems in using EFL. Many experts stress the paramount importance of vocabulary for learning ESL as learners need to rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge for both productive and receptive performance (Alqahtani, 2015).

Last is the cultural aspect. This aspect adheres to language permanently because learners adopt this aspect unconsciously as they learn a language. The cultural aspect is also considered important as it shapes learners' behavior towards the target language from which learners determine their success or failure toward the language learning process. This is so since behavior leads to motivation, which is an important catalyst in language learning. Moreover, movies can play a significant role in the motivation of EFL learners (Ismail & Wahyuni, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative-qualitative approach was used in doing this study which had two sources of data. The first one, which was considered the primary data source, was a questionnaire with 12 questions; the second data source was several creative interviews (Douglas, 1985). A creative interview is an unconventional way for collecting oral reports from respondents without following the general protocols of interviewing. It is responsive and adaptable to the situation in less formal conditions (Douglas, 1985). The questionnaire, which was answered with a Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=don't know, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree), is shown below:

Table 1. Questionnaire.

No.	Items
1.	Teaching listening through movies helps my students understand audio texts.
2.	My students respond positively each time I teach listening using movies.
3.	Teaching speaking through movies helps my students express their ideas orally.
4.	My students respond positively each time I teach speaking using movies.
5.	Teaching reading through movies helps my students understand various written texts

Table 1 continued…

6.	My students respond positively each time I teach reading using movies.
7.	Teaching writing through movies help my students express and generate ideas in written form.
8.	My students respond positively each time I teach writing using movies.
9.	Teaching grammar through movies helps my students reinforce their grammatical ability.
10.	My students respond positively each time I teach grammar using movies.
11.	Teaching English through movies helps my students expand their knowledge of vocabulary.
12	Teaching English through movies helps my students recognize cross-cultural understanding issues better.

The questionnaire was given to ten English teachers who teach in various public schools in Banda Aceh; five of them were senior high school teachers, two of them were junior high school teachers, and three of them were elementary school teachers. They were selected based on their availability and consent to participate in the study. The author held the creative interviews soon after the teachers had filled out the questionnaire to obtain their perceptions about using movies in EFL classrooms. As soon as the data was obtained, it was analyzed to find the percentages and the results from the interviews were used as complementary data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

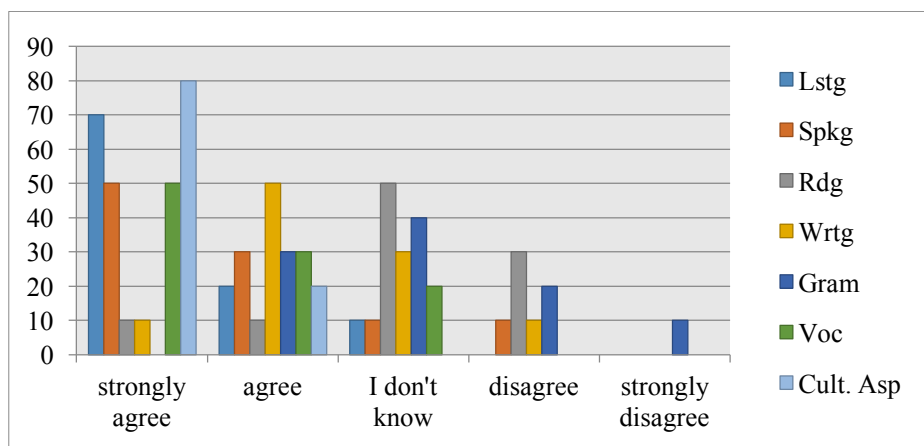The percentage answers for each question are shown in the chart below:

Figure 1. Questionnaire percentages (%).

It can be seen in Figure 1, most teachers agreed that the skills and sub skills which are mostly affected by movies are the cultural aspect, listening, speaking, and vocabulary, in that order; speaking and vocabulary have an equal percentage, 50%. The most dominant was cultural aspect, which was 80% followed by listening at 70%. This is somewhat similar to results from a study conducted by Ruusunen (2011) who found that most teachers strongly agreed (54%) that the cultural aspect is the most affected sub skill in the ELT process using movies. Next, is the listening skill that is influenced by the movies at 70%. There are only two sub skills with hardly any impact from watching movies: reading and grammar. For reading, only one teacher chose *strongly agree* and one chose *agree* while eight chose *don't know* or *disagree*, and for grammar

three teachers chose *agree* and six chose *don't know* or *disagree* and one chose *strongly disagree*.

Next, the author studied the teachers' perceptions about using movies in ELT classes based on the interviews. The oral information from the teachers was written down. Some excerpts from the keynote interviews are transcribed below. The interviews, originally in Indonesian, have been translated into English. The researcher/interviewer is indicated by initial *R*, and the Teacher/Interviewee by *T*.

Session 1:
R: *What skills do you usually teach through movies? Do you integrate some skills?*
T: *Listening, but sometimes, if it's applicable for speaking, I'll teach speaking. But once, I integrated listening and speaking. And for writing and reading, it is also likely. But (to teach reading) I asked the students to read the story earlier.*

In the interview above, the teacher confirmed that the skills with the possibility to be integrated are listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. This is in agreement with the proposition by Wu (2002) that one of the essential goals in teaching through movies is to improve abilities in speaking, listening, and interpretation. Rui (2014) further says that besides using movies for convenient access to foreign language learning, they can also extend students' listening skills. Regarding consolidation of reading-writing skills, movies and books are both sources of authentic materials that can be explored in and outside the classroom, and movies can stimulate the learners' reading habits and make the reading texts become more meaningful since movies visualize written texts with rich background and with additional background sound (Agulló, 2003; Raman & Vijaya, 2016).

Session 2:
R: *What about vocabulary and grammar?*
T: *Vocabulary certainly improves; even it is only one or two words. But if we teach grammar alone, I think it (i.e. film) is irrelevant. Unless it is used with writing, we ask (the students) to write (about the film), then in the editing process, we check on the grammar.*

Next, concerning the vocabulary development from the movie-watching technique, the teachers were absolutely convinced that there must be new word adoptions. This means the teachers agree that, after watching movies the vocabulary of their students increased. To clarify why the vocabulary increases after watching a movie, there is an explanation for this in Krashen's input theories (Ruusunen, 2011). While watching, learners are undoubtedly paying attention to encoding information during listening; hence, they are more likely to process the lexicons into their long-term intake processing. While regarding effects on grammatical ability, movies have no role in it unless it is actualized through writing (Ruusunen, 2011). However, Agulló (2003) argues that once the learners are familiar with the movie, they will automatically focus on developing their linguistic competences through vocabulary and grammar.

Session 3:
R: *What about cultural aspects? Do you teach cultural aspects in your class?*

T: *That's the biggest impact. Many of our youth learn new trends from western movies. But there is a negative impact, because not everything shown in the movies is good. If we want to show a movie in class, we have to carefully select it. We do not show inappropriate scenes or attire. But I never explain that to my students because it is not demanded in the curriculum. But I'm certainly sure it has the biggest impact.*

The teachers told us that cross-cultural awareness had never been specifically taught at their schools since there are no instructions to do so. Whilst, based on the findings shown in Figure 1, movies had more influence over learning cultural aspects than over any other skill and/or sub skill. The teachers all agreed about this in their interviews. As stated by Raman and Vijaya (2016), the post-activities after watching a movie can stimulate students' awareness towards cultural themes and ways of life. Besides, reflective discussions will also help the students broaden their knowledge. This is also one of the language learning strategies that can bring knowledge into practice. The knowledge will remain longer if it is experienced (Nur, 2014). When a student analyzes the issues found in movies, it leads to experiencing the process whereby he/she mentally feels and inquires into the issues shown, since knowledge will not be useful without experience (Weiler, 2011). In short, the easiest way to teach cultural aspects in an ELT classroom is by having the students discuss and reflect after watching a movie so that they can unveil the more intrinsic issues rather than just the extrinsic ones. So that is how the actual value of movies can be found – after a thoughtful careful selection of movies, of course.

5.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the teachers' perspectives, the language aspect which was most affected by watching movies was the cultural aspect. Furthermore, some integration is possible between listening and speaking as well as with reading and writing because watching movies works better with integration of skills. Apparently, even though vocabulary can develop with this technique, grammar is not enhanced alone without being accompanied by writing.

Nevertheless, this study is conducted not without limitations. The current study only employed ten teachers to fill in the questionnaires and further conduct interviews. Future related studies are recommended to have more teachers from more schools, public and private schools included, participating in the study to further gain detail on the impact and pedagogical values of movies in ELT classrooms.

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