

Using Movies in EFL Classrooms: Ways to Enhance Language Skills

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Abstract

Language teachers have been utilising movies in their classes for a considerable length of time. English movie-watching activities seem to be rising in popularity in Bangladesh as a valuable tool for learning a language. The present study was designed to investigate the perceptions of Bangladeshi students and teachers towards the integration of English movies to enhance students' English language skills in their English language classes. To this end, two research questions were posed, and a qualitative approach was adopted. The study involved fifteen students and three English language teachers from three private universities in Bangladesh. The analysis of the data showed that movie-watching activities were perceived as inspirational and motivational activities for both students and teachers, which reportedly helped the students enhance their micro and macro skills in the English language. The findings also indicated that movies were seen as useful resources for designing effective multi-dimensional pedagogical tasks in EFL classrooms. However, the study recommended that more logistic facilities and training may help English language teachers design effective movie-watching activities.

Keywords: EFL, language teaching, movie-watching activities, micro skills, macro skills

Introduction

English is a foreign language in Bangladesh which is considered to be a valuable tool for international communication. The impact of the language hence is widespread in the country. Teaching English seems to have turned out to be challenging for various reasons in recent times (Mariam, 2013). Teachers need to employ interesting and up-to-date teaching materials and techniques to ensure the quality of education towards enabling students' proficiencies in the four English language skills (Ismaili, 2013).

The use of movies as materials is increasingly becoming popular in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms around the world. A good number of studies have been conducted on using movies in English language classrooms (Baratta & Jones, 2008; Brown, 2010; Kabooha, 2016; Keene, 2006; Khan, 2015; Metruk, 2019; Parmawati & Inayah, 2019; Seferoğlu, 2008; Simamora & Oktaviani, 2020; Tuncay, 2014), which show the powerful impact of movies in EFL teaching and learning processes. Seferoğlu (2008) advocates movies for the authenticity of language that they provide which facilitates the framework for interesting classroom discussions. Movies draw students' attention towards the target language (Kabooha, 2016) and support communicative skills with ample teaching materials (Keene, 2006; Parmawati & Inayah, 2019). Besides, watching movies increases students' motivation, which nurtures a conducive language learning environment (Brown, 2010). In addition, it cultivates cultural awareness of students of the target language (Tuncay, 2014). The study of Baratta and Jones (2008) predicted improvements in the writing skill of non-native English-speaking students because of watching English movies with classroom activities. Khan (2015) argued that watching movies can increase the learners' ability to comprehend language in an ideal context, making it a useful teaching tool.

Using movies in the English language classroom is a relatively new idea in the education system of Bangladesh, although it is a common practice in other countries. Studies on how English movies help develop English language skills are not commonly available in the Bangladeshi context. However, there are several studies on teaching and practising English language skills (Abedin, Majlish & Akter, 2010; Farooqui, 2007; Mariam, 2013; Mirza, 2010), where the researchers explained the use of various strategies, activities and materials in the English language classes at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Few studies have examined the view of EFL teachers and students towards implementing films in their classrooms as a medium to enhance students' English language learning. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the thoughts of EFL teachers and students on integrating English movies to improve English language skills in the private universities of Bangladesh.

This study examined students' attitudes towards movie-watching activities as the course requirement and showed the teachers' approach to implementing English films in the language class.

Literature Review

Private universities, the non-government higher educational institutions, are a relatively newer educational system in Bangladesh where most courses are job-oriented (Alam, Haque & Siddique, 2007). This education sector is continuously trying to develop the standard of local education to match the quality of international education (Alam et al., 2007). Also, this sector is trying to overcome various shortcomings, such as inadequacy of fundamental infrastructure, shortage of materials for teaching, library and number of full-time teachers (Khan, Rana, & Haque, 2014).

Although private universities face various challenges, student improvement has always been the focal point (Farooqui, 2007). In the study of Mariam (2013), it can be found that the English language is taught with immense importance where teachers design various activities (role play, pair work, group work, debate etc.) with the help of multimedia and numerous numbers of course books in private universities.

Movies in EFL Classroom

Movies have been used for teaching the English language for a considerable duration for various reasons. The first and foremost reason is movies are considered one of the resources that provide enjoyment to the student, ultimately empowering the teachers with rich materials for teaching language (Ismaili, 2013). Additionally, movies are powerful resources for teaching that include native English taken from real-life contexts (local dialects, accents, and stress) rather than an artificial one (Albiladi, Abdeen & Lincoln, 2018; King, 2002). Moreover, movies generally present various linguistic structures, varieties in the speed of conveyance, real conversation, and different highlights of natural spoken language, such as ellipsis and elision to students (Parmawati & Inayah, 2019; King, 2002). By providing contextual knowledge to develop interactional skills, movies provide immense opportunities to language instructors that can be rarely matched (Keene, 2006). It provides opportunities to communicate for practical purposes, learn new ways of thinking and acquire knowledge of literacy skills (Keene, 2006). It makes perfect sense to use films to teach language in the classroom as movies have become an integral part of the students' lives, creating a pleasant learning atmosphere (Brown, 2010; Seferoğlu, 2008; Parisi & Nick, 2016). Additionally, watching movies allows learners to get a chance to learn non-verbal aspects of communication, such as body language, facial expression, and proxemics (Brown, 2010; Parisi & Nick, 2016). Likewise, students can learn real-life conversations by studying the responses of the movie characters to understand the conversations and dialogues (Keene, 2006). Hedge (2000 cited in Parisi & Nick, 2016) points out that using audio recording for language classroom often has an artificial effect, for example, rehashed structures, moderate pace, syntactically correct sentences, and absence of ellipses, which does not match the real-life conversations. Herron and Hanley (1992 cited in Kabooha, 2016) hence state that movies effectively stimulate prior knowledge of the students as they present appropriate and rich use of language. However, teachers need to be conscious of designing teaching and learning activities to engage the students actively in a classroom (Hadijah, 2016), and it is also important that “a teacher must have all the knowledge that students may want from a movie” (Brown, 2010, p.53). Elsewhere, the study of Simamora and Oktaviani (2020) and Seferoğlu (2008) display that students' confidence grows using a number of vocabularies in the English language class after watching movies. Another study by Flowerdew and Miller (2005 in Tuncay, 2014) claimed that movies are also effective for teaching the listening skill as the phrase - “listening for general pleasure or interest, usually to longer stretches of discourse” (p.56). Metruk (2019) also reported that watching English movies easily enhances EFL students' listening skills. Other studies demonstrated that practising a whole book is tedious and exhausting, while a single movie experience can be both engaging and connecting for the students (Ismaili, 2013; King, 2002). In the same way, according to Hanley et al. (1995), films may improve writing skills by providing fascinating and motivating input which helps with cognisance and fluency of target language input as well as output.

Pedagogical Aspects of Using Movies in Classroom

The usage of movies to teach the English language is a relatively new concept, but several programs across the world have integrated movies into their English language classes (Ismaili, 2013; Kabooha, 2016; Metruk, 2019; Parisi & Nick, 2016; Tuncay, 2014). Several studies examine the incorporation of movies in EFL classrooms from various pedagogical perspectives (Brown, 2010; King, 2002; Parisi & Nick, 2016; Seferoğlu, 2008). Parisi and Nick (2016) show the benefits of using subtitled English movies for practising reading skills, whereas King (2002) suggested that using subtitles impedes the learning of FL (Foreign Language). In the same study, King compared the “Whole Film Approach” and “Short Sequence Approach” concepts. According to King (2002), the “Short Sequence Approach” means that the fragments of movies are helpful in testing the language learning activities, whereas the “Whole Film Approach” indicates watching an entire film motivates the students to acquire more language skills for regular conversations, which promote real learning (pp. 3-4). Therefore, a brief description of movies and characters is needed to maintain the students' interests (Keene, 2006).

It is essential to have specific plans and strategies to teach from movies because with an absence of effective pre-viewing exercises, students may end up being passive learners (King, 2002, 2006). Not just pre-viewing activities, Parisi and Nick (2016) also put significant importance on while-viewing, and post-viewing activities for teaching the English language using a movie as class material. Along with strategies, researchers advised doing various activities based on movies, such as multiple-choice questions, fill in the blanks, summary writing, dialogue practising, paraphrasing, discussion, picture-telling activity, guessing quotations, self-directed comprehension tasks and movie-related writing tasks (King, 2002; Tuncay, 2014). Brown's study (2010) shows that an adequate amount of time and repetition of activities motivate learners to focus on vocabulary through dialogues that are used in the practical world. On the other hand, Sari and Sugandi (2015) claimed that the number of class activities decreases because of using movies in the EFL classroom. In another study, Champoux and Robert (2007) reported that students get more attentive to their favourite actors and actresses in the movies rather than focusing on classroom activities.

The use of English movies as teaching material can be quite sensitive at times, so the study of Tuncay (2014, p. 60) detected some points which should be considered when choosing English movies for English language teaching:

- movies with easy and logical language
- suitability of movie for students
- cross-cultural aspects
- paralinguistic aspects (e.g. accent, slang, intonation, pronunciation)
- the volume of dialogues (short, long and conversational dialogues)
- be aware of adult movies
- suitable and teachable aspects for the EFL context
- content for critical thinking
- interesting content for all age groups (avoiding a subjective context)
- appealing topic about any field of knowledge

In a research with 25 EFL students, Goctu (2011) demonstrated the inspired and motivated state of the students after utilising English movies in their classes regarding enhancement of the four English language skills. Moreover, the study of Ismaili (2013) concluded that English movies exert a pull-on concentration and offer plain language in a more regular manner than what is found in the traditional textbooks for the learners. It can be said that the visual aspect of the films turns them into an invaluable tool for language teaching, which enhances English language skills (Ismaili, 2013). Recently, the study of Kabooha showed a positive outcome of English movie integration in Saudi Arabia (2016).

Research Questions

The study aimed to find answers to the following research questions:

- What are the perceptions of teachers and students towards using movie-watching classroom activities to enhance students' English language skills?
- How does the application of movie-watching classroom activities help students enhance their English language skills?

Methodology

In order to answer the above-mentioned research questions, the present study adopted a qualitative approach. Two sets of semi-structured interview schedules were developed based on the comprehensive

analysis of two research questions of this study. The participants were selected based on their educational background and experience. Fifteen students (5 from each university) from three different private universities in Bangladesh were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix A), and three English language teachers, one each from the same universities, were interviewed using another semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix B). Convenience sampling technique was used for choosing universities and selecting participants. The selected students, aged 18-20 years, were enrolled in the first semester of BA (Hons.) in English. Of them, nine were female and six were male. The freshers, who had ‘English movie watching’ as part of their course curriculum, were selected from each of the three selected private universities located in the capital of Bangladesh. The selected English language teachers all had experiences of using English movies in EFL classrooms. The interview questions examined teachers’ and students’ observations towards the mixture of English films in the English language classes. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the data were transcribed on MS word. Finally, each interview was coded, segmented and analysed according to emerging themes based on the central research questions. The findings of the study were then further examined in relation to the reviewed literature.

Findings of the Study

We present the major findings of the study below:

Perceptions of the Teachers

All three interviewed teachers (T1, T2, and T3) were fond of using English movies in their English language classrooms. T1 preferred documentary and romantic movies such as *My Fair lady* (1964), *Life is Beautiful* (1997), *Emma* (1996) and *Pride and Prejudice* (2005). On the other hand, T2 and T3 preferred animated movies for their English language classroom. T2 and T3 chose animated films like: *Coco* (2017), *Inside Out* (2015), *Moana* (2016), *Peter Rabbit* (2018), *Bedtime Stories* (2008), *the Pacifier* (2005), *Shrek* (2001), *Ice Age* (2002, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2016). These movies were also used as a method to break down the monotony and stress in the English language classroom.

Usage of Movies in Classroom. The reported activities on movies in the English language classroom were varied. One of the teacher participants, T1, applied movies as a tool to teach English language skills. In the view of T1, the subtitles of movies were useful for performing reading activities which was supported by the study of Parisi and Nick (2016), where they showed that watching subtitles rather than reading textbooks seems to improve students’ reading skills. T2 used movies to teach English language skills, except reading skill. However, T3 never prefers to implement English movies in the language class to teach English reading and writing skills. To sum up, the activities given below (Table 1) are based on the data from the three interviewed teachers to teach and improve English language skills in the class:

Table 1: Various Activities Based on English Movies

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Multiple choice questions, fill in the blanks, one-word answers, matching	Roleplay, pair presentation, group discussion, debate, individual presentation on character, theme	Reading subtitles, reading the text (before, after or during watching novel-based movies)	Summary writing, review writing, paraphrasing, individual assignment on characters or events, writing an empathy

Generally, teachers preferred to give students home tasks to improve writing activities, and students performed the listening and speaking activities in their classrooms. In this study, although each teacher had strategies to enhance students' English language skills, they claimed that movie watching could be even more helpful with predetermined activities and lesson plans, which seems to reflect the claim of King (2002) and Tuncay (2014). So, the teachers provided handouts with some activities designed on the film shown in those classes before or after viewing the movies.

Moreover, three interviewed teachers claimed that students' pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, conversational skills, sentence structure, fluency, the listening ability have improved after watching English movies. In T2's opinion, students easily acquired slang and abusive language from movies which she also believed is essential for language learning. T2 said: "Sometimes, students grab abusive words from the movies, but it also helps them develop their language skills, especially improving their accents and pronunciation, I think".

According to all three interviewed teachers, speaking skill is improved effortlessly through watching movies as they present a plethora of expressions, accents, pronunciation, and conversational language. Additionally, teachers felt that using movies was helpful in teaching writing skills. Except for T2, the other two interviewed teachers preferred to use movie clips as it is easier to design activities. This statement supports the view of King's (2002) "Short Sequence Film", which states that chunks of movies are easier to understand and perform an activity. On the other hand, T2 preferred the theory "Whole Film Approach" of King (2002) as she felt the students' need to watch full movies; it is important to think about their imagination and critical thinking ability along with language competence.

Two interviewed teachers, T1 and T2, did not think that it was a good idea to give a brief description of the movie to the students before watching it in the classroom. They felt that if students were instructed beforehand, they would not focus on the movies as they would be too worried about their performance in the upcoming assigned activity. On the other hand, T2 did not allow a passive watcher in her class. So, she gave a short brief on the activities the students were required to perform after watching the movie. According to Tuncay (2014), a passive watcher is not motivated to learn the language; a teacher needs to design some activities on movies and instruct the students before watching them.

Common Challenges. One teacher participant, T2, expressed her thoughts about various challenges, such as the necessity of language labs and a limited number of students to teach language using movies in the classroom. According to T2, it was difficult for her to teach the English language from movies with an attendance of 40 students per class. T2 expected more technological support from the university authority to improve the teaching environment. On the contrary, T1 and T3 were satisfied with the facilities available in their institutions. However, T3 mentioned that repeating movie-related activities was hazardous when students failed to understand movies.

Selection of Movies. When choosing an English movie for the English language class, the first thought of each teacher is cultural difference. Three interviewed teachers showed concern about the visible cultural difference between Eastern and Western countries. According to them, Western movies are full of explicit scenes which might negatively affect their students. For this reason, the teachers watched English movies first before showing them in the classroom. One interviewed teacher, T2, even said that she preferred animated movies, which are usually free of explicit content.

Another two teachers, T2 and T3, preferred English animated movies for their abundance of conversational language. T3 selected the movies which are effective for designing various communicative activities. However, both T2 and T3 expressed their worries about time limitations. They showed some selected movie clips from each movie that can be shown in the class duration and be used not only to motivate the students but also to design effective tasks for the English language class. T3 said that a

movie of 1 hour and 40 minutes in length is preferable for his English language class. Also, T1 considered movies based on the cultural standard of students, not on the duration of the movie.

Students' Responses

Mainly, students like to watch science fiction (12 students) and romantic movies (08 students) by preference. Although they were *required* to watch animated and documentary movies in the English language classes, they found them interesting and motivating. Most of the students felt that it was difficult to watch movies in every single class. However, they never got bored of watching movies anywhere. They clearly stated that watching movies was better than reading a dull and difficult text.

Comprehensiveness. The comprehensiveness of movies makes discussion and conversation simpler. Also, more than half of the interviewed students believed that watching English movies in the classroom makes learning the English language easier. In some cases, watching movies helps build a broad scope of English jargon. However, there were a few students who did not have much awareness about this issue.

Improvement and Motivation. Students agreed that watching movies was an extraordinary technique to improve, especially listening and speaking skills, pronunciation and vocabulary. Indeed, the phenomenon of speaking in English like locals motivates the students. Most of the students claim that in the future, they are ready to watch more movies in classes and other proposed courses. A few learned items are as follows:

- Hearing native speakers in movies is useful to understand the correct way of saying things; Dialogs in films additionally give genuine examples of how sounds in words change in associated discourse.
- Many regional accents are being used, which help one comprehend English better; reading material seldom provides information about English accents.
- Vocabulary, phrases, expressions, native English accent, and speaking style are improved.

According to the students, it was found that the impact of movies on writing skills was not immediate. Most students liked to watch subtitles, building a better knowledge of grammatical structures. Students felt that when they learned new words from a dictionary or a book, they sometimes forgot them as they did not use them in conversations or were not given a chance to use them regularly enough. For example, students stated that if they watched a particular type of movie, they would begin to understand the vocabulary associated with it entirely and how to use a specific set of words that they might typically not be exposed.

So, it is acknowledged that anxiety and tension decrease by watching English movies in language learning, as the students pointed out. Since learning the English language is a conscious process, anxiety and tension pave the way. Students believed that a comedy scene, science fiction or fractions of movies reduced the stress of the classroom environment.

Discussion

Teachers and students in the study viewed the use of English movies positively for teaching or practising English language skills in private universities in Bangladesh. Both teachers and students thought English movies were entertaining and motivating for practising English. The dominant response of the students was that using movies is an effective technique in the English language classroom.

The results showed that both micro and macro skills of the English language were developed through the application of movies in the classroom. Teachers felt that conversational and interactional skills were developed through movie-watching activities which were the micro-skills of speaking (Mozayan, 2015). In one of his studies, Knee (2001 cited in Kabooha, 2016) contended that the incorporation of movies into English exercises fosters linguistic competence as well as the communicative competence of students. The interviews of teachers also showed that students felt confident and engaged in the discussions while movies were used as learning materials.

They additionally enjoyed the introduction to casual and conversational utilisation of English. They felt it expanded their vocabulary stockpiling. Students firmly agreed that understanding English was more accessible by watching English movies. Moreover, students believed that watching movies made vocabulary acquisition much easier. Vocabularies and accents learning are part of the micro-skills of speaking (Mozayan, 2015). The teachers and the students claimed that the micro-skills of listening were improved with the help of movies. As students can detect the meaning and understand the sounds of English phonemes (Aydoğan & Akbarov, 2014), listening as a macro skill unquestionably improved.

However, students and teachers felt that movies were not as effective in developing reading skills as the other English language skills (listening, speaking and writing). Two teacher participants, T2 and T3, were not fond of using English movies to enhance or teach students' reading ability. The views of teachers and students contradicted writing skills. Two interviewed teachers (T1 and T2) preferred various writing activities based on movies. In contrast, more than half of the students felt that the activities designed based on English movies were not effective in practising English writing skills.

Another difference was visible concerning the perception of teachers and students; a majority of the students felt that the classroom was not the best place to learn the English language by watching movies. On the contrary, two teachers stated that the classroom was the best place to learn English by watching movies. Students wanted to choose science fiction and romantic movies. However, as animation and romantic movies contain more conversational dialogue, teachers used those movies for language improvement.

This study presents the positive and profound outcomes of watching English movies as a part of English language learning. The more significant portion of the students was eager to watch more movies; thus, a proper choice of movies is mandatory. From the literature review and interviews of teachers, a few criteria have been suggested for selecting movies in the English language classes of Bangladesh:

1. Films should not violate the cultural value of Bangladesh
2. Movies should be matched with the levels of the students
3. The duration of movies should be considered according to the class duration

The above considerations for selecting movies as material for English language classes were also pointed out in the study of Tuncay (2014), where fourteen points were recommended for choosing a movie in an EFL classroom. Moreover, each teacher has strategies and techniques to integrate movies into their classroom. Notably, the study uncovers King's (2002) idea that movies are an upgrade, which provokes learners to communicate "colloquial English in real-life contexts rather than artificial situations" (p.2). It must be understood that only meaningful and authentic text in a stress-free setting enhances the students' capabilities and encourages them to use English as a tool for communication. To sum up, the study presented those practising various activities, which are mentioned in Table 1, enhanced the students' language skills.

The study showed that private universities lacked technological facilities, as T2 expressed the need for more facilities to conduct classes on movies. The study also brought up the issue of large class size of Bangladeshi universities, where 40 to 50 students sit in one class to receive education.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Here we present some possible implications and recommendations based on the results of this research. The findings of the study suggest that using movies in EFL classrooms helped the students enhance their English language skills. We argue therefore that the curriculum developers may consider movie-watching classroom activities while designing the language courses. As mentioned earlier, using movies in the language classroom is a new concept in Bangladesh; therefore, teachers need to be trained in arranging workshops and seminars so that they can carefully select movies and overcome the challenges during classroom activities. The research also revealed that lack of logistic support (e.g. multimedia classroom, language lab and microphone) created challenges to using movies in EFL classrooms. The education stakeholders need to ensure all facilities for movie-watching activities in classrooms.

Limitations and Further Studies

In this study, several limitations need to be considered. With fifteen students and three English language teachers, the study worked on a relatively small sample size which restricted it from generalising. Another impedance of the study was a shortage of research and surveys on the selected topic in a local context. For these reasons, the authors' books and journal articles from other countries were used to conduct the study. Limitations of this study will make the scope for further research to explore the use of movies in EFL classrooms at different levels of education. Since the implementation of English movies in the classrooms of Bangladesh is scarcely explored, researchers can conduct a study on individual language skills to assess the improvement of learners after watching English movies at the tertiary level.

Conclusion

The investigation shows that the appropriate use of movies can be useful for instructing the English language learners and improving their motivation for learning, storage of vocabulary, diversity of phrases, and everyday articulations. We also acknowledge a few limitations of the study. The study could not cover a large number of universities in Bangladesh. So, the results of this research cannot be generalised. Further study on this topic may help English language teachers and education policymakers understand the effectiveness of movie-watching activities in EFL classrooms.

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Ethics Statement

We, hereby, state that we have conducted the research and prepared the manuscript following the protocol of research and publications ethics. We are solely responsible if any deviation or mistake (in content and language) is identified in the manuscript.

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Appendix-A (Questions for Students)

1. What kinds of English movies do you like?
2. What kinds of English movies have you seen in the English language classroom?
3. Do you think that watching movies in English has a positive effect on improving your English language skills? Can you explain it?
4. How classroom participation and discussions become interesting if the teacher uses English movies for teaching the English language?
5. Do you think that watching English movies motivate you to learn English? How?
6. Do anxiety and tension decrease by watching English movies in language learning?
7. Do your English language teacher use more English movie watching activities in the classroom to help you improve your language skills?
8. Have your vocabulary, phrases, expressions, and native English accent been improved by watching English movies? If yes, then how?

9. What impact has taught material of English movies had on your writing skill and grammatical knowledge?
10. By presenting a familiar context, have English movies helped you to improve the reading skill of English?
11. Do you think that the classroom is the perfect place to watch English movies while learning the English language?

Appendix-B (Questions for Teachers)

1. Do you like using English movies in your English language class? Why or why not?
2. How do you use English movies to teach the English language?
3. What type of movies do you select for your English language class?
4. Can you share some examples of improvement of students English language skill after watching English movies?
5. What are the challenges do you face while using English movies to teach the English language in your classroom?
6. What principles do you follow to select English movies for your English language class?
7. Which English language skills are mainly improved after showing English movies?
8. Will you tell the name of some shown movies in your English language class?



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