

The Role of Films in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching: An Exploration of Pedagogical Contributions

Özlem PERVAN^{1*}

¹Civil Aviation Cabin Services, Vocational School, Maltepe University, Türkiye

^{*}(ozlempervan@gmail.com) Email of the corresponding author

(Received: 11 December 2024, Accepted: 17 December 2024)

(4th International Conference on Frontiers in Academic Research ICFAR 2024, December 13-14, 2024)

ATIF/REFERENCE: Pervan, Ö. (2024). The Role of Films in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching: An Exploration of Pedagogical Contributions. *International Journal of Advanced Natural Sciences and Engineering Researches*, 8(11), 425-430.

Abstract – Films are versatile teaching materials in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, offering authentic language input and cultural context. By combining visual and auditory elements, films effectively develop language skills while fostering cultural awareness and motivation. This study explores the contributions of films to EFL teaching and provides practical suggestions for language educators.

Research indicates that films are particularly effective in enhancing listening and speaking skills. Authentic dialogues help students become familiar with accents and improve their communicative competence. Subtitled content supports vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of idiomatic expressions. Written materials such as film scripts encourage creative writing practices, promoting deeper engagement with the language.

In addition to language skills, films significantly contribute to cultural awareness. They provide students with insights into body language, humour, and societal norms of the target culture. Films also serve as a motivational tool; their entertaining nature reduces learning anxiety and increases students' engagement with language classes.

In conclusion, films are a powerful resource for developing language proficiency and cultural sensitivity in EFL teaching. This study highlights their pedagogical potential and offers strategies for educators to maximise the benefits of film-based learning. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of film use in diverse EFL contexts.

Keywords – Foreign Language Teaching, EFL, Use Of Films In Language Teaching, Authentic Materials, Language Skill Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's EFL classrooms, the use of authentic materials is critical to improving students' language skills and providing a language learning experience that can be used in real life. Among these materials, films stand out as a versatile resource that combines visual, auditory, and cultural dimensions. Films provide students with access to authentic dialogue, cultural elements, and nonverbal ways of communicating. This

multidimensional approach to language learning enhances students' ability to understand and use language in context. The multidimensional nature of films also facilitates the development of both receptive and productive skills among language learners.

Many studies have emphasised that films are an effective tool in language teaching. Herron, Hanley, and Cole (1995) state that films play an important role in teaching cultural values and social norms. They highlight the significance of films in helping students become familiar with both the linguistic and cultural aspects of a language. Additionally, films create an immersive learning environment where students can observe real-life situations, diverse accents, and colloquial expressions. In this study, the contributions of films to EFL teaching are examined in terms of improving language skills, increasing cultural awareness, and ensuring student motivation.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study was carried out with a literature review-based approach. Various studies which examine the use of films in EFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) education were discussed in the study. Databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and ERIC were searched with keywords such as “films in language learning,” “EFL teaching,” and “authentic materials in EFL classrooms.” Selected studies were evaluated according to the following criteria:

i. Focus on the use of films in the EFL context: Studies need to focus specifically on the use of films in the context of EFL education. This includes research to understand how films can be an effective tool for improving language skills.

ii. Examining the effects of films on a language skill (listening, speaking, reading or writing) or cultural awareness: Studies must have examined the effects of films on language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) or cultural awareness of students.

iii. Papers published in peer-reviewed journals or presented at conferences in English: Selected studies must have been published only in English and appeared in peer-reviewed journals or papers presented at academic conferences.

The study aimed to investigate the potential use of films in EFL classrooms and their effects on language learning by examining resources that fit these criteria. It also aimed to gain more information about the linguistic and cultural advantages that films offer students.

III. RESULTS

i. Contributions In Terms Of The Development Of Language Skills

Contributions to the development of listening skills:

Films prepare foreign language learners' listening skills for real-life situations by exposing them to authentic accents, speech patterns, and intonation differences. Takeuchi, Edasawa, and Nishizaki (2024) discusses that films significantly contribute to the improvement of EFL students' listening comprehension abilities, especially when supplemented with supportive learning tools such as subtitles and visual cues. This study emphasised that while films might not always be as straightforward as traditional audio materials, their immersive and engaging nature helps students improve comprehension by associating auditory and visual input. The use of films as authentic materials motivates students and fosters a deeper connection to both language and culture.

Another study that investigates the use of subtitles as supporting tools is Hayati and Mohmedi's (2011) study. Hayati and Mohmedi's (2011) study compares the effect of different types of subtitles (English subtitles, native language subtitles, and no subtitles) on EFL students' listening skills. The study found that English subtitles had the most positive impact on listening comprehension. Subtitles support both comprehension and word recall processes by making it easier for students to relate auditory input to written forms. These findings suggest that subtitled films provide students with extra support when working with authentic materials. While Zanon (2006) also points out the effect of subtitled films on increasing

vocabulary, Canning-Wilson (2000) states that using videos as authentic material has positive effects on listening skills.

Similarly, King (2002) emphasises that films offer an authentic language input and that DVD films with subtitles are especially effective in improving students' vocabulary and pronunciation skills. Subtitle options and stage access features offered by DVD technology offer teachers the opportunity to customise in-class activities. These features strengthen students' listening and comprehension skills and make the learning process more enjoyable. With the easy access to films with English subtitles provided by today's communication technology, this benefit of films is even more exploitable for foreign language teachers and learners.

Additionally, Takeuchi, Edasawa, and Nishizaki (2024) discuss that films significantly contribute to the improvement of EFL students' listening comprehension abilities, especially when supplemented with supportive learning tools such as subtitles and visual cues. This study emphasises films might not always be as straightforward as traditional audio materials. However, their immersive and engaging nature helps students improve comprehension by associating auditory and visual input. The use of films as authentic materials motivates students and fosters a deeper connection to both language and culture.

Contributions to the development of speaking skills:

Films help students gain awareness of rhythm, stress, and pragmatic usage of language. King (2002) states that reenacting film dialogues through role-playing activities improves fluency and pronunciation. Additionally, a study by Fakhrurriana et al. (2024) argue that students believed watching English films helped them practice speaking skills, including improving pronunciation, understanding different accents, and using new vocabulary and idioms in context. Watching films allows students to become familiar with natural language usage, making the language learning process more authentic.

Similarly, Stephens et al. (2012) discuss that they observed in the *Film Circles* project that students enhanced their speaking skills by analysing films and participating in role-playing activities. These activities strengthened their vocabulary, pronunciation, and ability to use idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, films contribute to students' understanding of cultural differences and social contexts in language use.

Contributions to the development of reading and writing skills:

Using texts such as film scripts and subtitles allows students to analyse language structures and idiomatic expressions. Ismaili (2013) states that creative writing activities, such as writing alternative endings or describing characters, make a meaningful contribution to students' writing practice. This finding is echoed by other studies that highlight the role of films in enriching students' writing abilities. For example, Calogerakou and Vlachos (2011) discuss that incorporating films into writing activities helps students develop their ability to write more creatively by providing them with real-world language models and contexts. Similarly, Sariçoban and Yürük (2016) emphasise the importance of multimodal materials, like films, in boosting students' comprehension and writing skills by presenting language through both auditory and visual means.

Moreover, films not only improve the structure and flow of writing but also allow students to engage with complex cultural content. Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) argue that audiovisual materials, such as films, significantly enhance students' writing performance by providing them with richer content for writing prompts. Thereby films facilitate better organisation and expression in language learners' written work. By using film as a tool to discuss themes, characters, and plots, students can practice higher-level writing skills which include argumentation, summarisation, and critical thinking, in a way that is engaging and meaningful.

ii. Contributions In Terms Of Cultural Awareness Development

Films provide a window into the cultural contexts in which the target language is used. Weyers (1999) shows that authentic video materials, especially long-term content such as telenovelas, improve students' listening comprehension skills and provide significant increases in their communicative competence. Wedlock and Binnie (2023) present nine basic principles for the selection and use of authentic video materials and emphasise that such content should consciously support language learning. Their studies reveal that authentic videos not only improve language skills but also allow students to understand the target culture. Additionally, Jones and Baker (2017) emphasise that films not only improve students' language skills but also are extremely effective in raising cultural awareness. Their study points out that films increase intercultural understanding by providing students with authentic language input.

iii. Contributions In Terms Of Motivation

Films increase students' interest in language learning with their entertaining nature. Ismaili (2013) revealed that films attract students' attention, ensure active participation in classes, and improve their listening skills and communicative competence. The study states that students supported by film-based instruction show higher performance than students educated only with traditional textbook-based methods. Similarly, Pegrum (2008) emphasises that films offer a dynamic and creative learning environment for students. According to Pegrum (2008) this environment reduces students' learning anxiety and increases their motivation for classes. Therefore language learners' participation increases in this comfortable learning environment. Pegrum also states that films improve both students' language skills and cultural awareness by effectively reflecting the cultural context. Similarly, King (2002) states that films are an important tool in motivating students. King (2002) states that films offer a dynamic and motivating learning environment for students. The visual and auditory nature of films encourages active participation by reducing students' language anxiety. Additionally, the authentic contexts used in films increase both students' language skills and cultural awareness.

IV. DISCUSSION

Films are a unique medium that combines authenticity, interactivity and contextual learning. Unlike traditional textbooks, films contribute to the development of communicative competence by presenting how language is used in various social interactions. Herron and Hanley (1995) state that films play an important role in teaching cultural values and social norms. Thanks to the combination of visual and audio components, students can observe how the language is used naturally, closing the gap between the language presented in textbooks and the real language. Additionally, films also provide rich content in cultural context, helping students understand the subtleties of language in different social contexts; This is an advantage that textbooks cannot offer.

The multi-modality of films – appealing to auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learning styles – provides a more comprehensive learning experience. This multi-sensory interaction not only increases language retention but also accommodates different learning preferences. Zanon (2006) emphasizes that subtitles especially help students establish the connection between spoken and written language and stated that this is an important factor in the development of listening skills. Films improve listening skills by introducing students to a variety of accents, speech patterns, and stress differences. Hayati and Mohmedi (2011) also show that subtitled films have a positive effect on students' listening skills and that English subtitles are the most effective option in terms of listening comprehension. The combination of authentic language use and subtitles contributes to the development of both listening and reading skills by making it easier for students to associate auditory input with written forms.

To get the most out of films, it is important for teachers to take a structured approach. Preview activities, such as word previews, help students prepare for complex language input. Introducing keywords and

discussing cultural elements helps students better cope with the content they will hear and see. Canning-Wilson (2000) also emphasize that the use of videos in lessons, especially authentic video materials, improves students' listening skills and that exposure to real language use is important. Such preparation allows students to more easily understand the linguistic and cultural complexities presented in the film.

Activities, discussions, debates and creative projects after watching the film support critical thinking and language skills. After watching films, students can reinforce their language skills by participating in activities such as summarising content, analysing characters, and exploring cultural themes. Such tasks not only strengthen language structures and vocabulary, but also enable students to engage with the content critically. Stephens et al. (2012) state that film-based role-playing activities improve speaking skills and make a significant contribution, especially in terms of fluency, pronunciation and word usage. Additionally, Ismaili (2013) states that creative writing projects, such as writing alternative endings or defining characters, make students' use of language more creative and strengthen their writing skills.

In summary, pre- and post-watching activities that are designed with a structured approach enable teachers to create a more dynamic and effective learning environment in their classrooms. Films not only improve language skills, but also increase cultural awareness and increase students' critical thinking skills. This makes learning more interactive, meaningful and relevant to the real world.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of films in the language teaching process in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms and evaluated the effects of film use on the development of language skills. The findings of the study revealed that films not only contribute to grammar and vocabulary in language teaching, but also are an important tool in improving students' listening and speaking skills. Watching films introduces students to natural language use, helping them learn about accents, idioms and cultural references frequently encountered in daily conversations.

In particular, the visual and auditory context provided by films enables language learning to become meaningful and practical. This allows students to use their language skills not only in classroom lessons but also in real life. At the same time, films are an ideal tool for raising cultural awareness. By getting to know different cultures, students can better understand the functions of language in social and cultural contexts. This goes beyond language learning, enabling students to grow as individuals with an international perspective.

Films also play an important role in increasing students' motivation. Films, which provide a fun and interesting learning environment for students, reduce anxiety about language learning and make the learning process more enjoyable. In this context, film-based education is a powerful tool to sustain students' interest in language learning and achieve more effective learning results.

As a result, films go beyond being just a teaching material in language teaching and enable students to gain cultural knowledge and social skills as well as language skills. Future research should examine whether the use of film should be further integrated in EFL classrooms and how this process can be made more effective. Additionally, in order to deeply understand the role of films in the language learning process, experimental studies taking into account students' different language levels and cultural backgrounds may be useful.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Hayati and F. Mohmedi, "The effect of films with and without subtitles on listening comprehension of EFL learners," *British Journal of Educational Technology*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 181–192, 2011.
- [2] C. Calogerakou and P. Vlachos, "Film-based activities in language learning: A case study of English as a foreign language students," *Language Education in Asia*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 123–135, 2011.
- [3] M. Sariçoban and C. Yürük, "Using films in EFL classrooms: Developing students' comprehension skills and writing ability," *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 34–45, 2016.
- [4] Z. Ghaedsharafi and M. Bagheri, "The impact of audiovisual materials on EFL students' writing skills: A study on the effectiveness of films," *Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 23–39, 2012.
- [5] S. Canning-Wilson, "Practical aspects of using video in the foreign language classroom," *The Internet TESL Journal*, vol. 6, no. 11, 2000.
- [6] V. Jones and C. Baker, "Film as a tool for teaching language and culture," *International Journal of Language Education*, 2017.
- [7] J. King, "Using DVD feature films in the EFL classroom," *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 509–523, 2002.
- [8] M. Pegrum, "Film, Culture, and Identity: Critical Intercultural Literacies for the Language Classroom," *Language and Intercultural Communication*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 136–154, 2008.
- [9] R. Fakhurriana, A. M. Rahmadian, H. N. Aunillah, and G. G. H. Herdina, "Utilizing Films in EFL Classroom for Learning Speaking: A Study at English Major," *Indonesian Review of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 13–27, 2024.
- [10] C. Stephens, R. Ascencio, A. L. Burgos, T. Diaz, J. Montenegro, and C. Valenzuela, "Film Circles: Scaffolding Speaking for EFL Students," *English Teaching Forum*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 1–12, 2012.
- [11] N. T. Zanon, "Using subtitles to enhance language learning," *ELT Journal*, vol. 60, no. 4, pp. 44–56, 2006.
- [12] J. R. Weyers, "The effect of authentic video on communicative competence," *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 83, no. 3, pp. 339–349, 1999.
- [13] J. E. B. Hanley, C. A. Herron, and S. P. Cole, "Using Video as an Advance Organizer to a Written Passage in the FLES Classroom," *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 79, pp. 57–66, 1995.
- [14] O. Takeuchi, Y. Edasawa, and K. Nishizaki, "Do Films Improve EFL Students' Listening Comprehension Ability?" *Language Education and Technology*, vol. 81, pp. 1–6, 2024.
- [15] J. Wedlock and C. Binnie, "Selecting and using authentic videos for intentional second language learning: nine considerations," *Babel*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 24–34, 2023.