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Optimising Literary Comprehension through a Multimodal Pedagogical Project: LAP for EFL Literature Class

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Abstract

This paper explores the integration of multimodal pedagogical tools, specifically films, in enhancing the comprehension and appreciation of literature in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Highlighting the significance of films in language education, it discusses their ability to engage cognitive, linguistic, personal, and emotional facets of learners. The study introduces the "Sandwich approach" for effective film presentation in classrooms, offering a practical methodology tailored to time constraints and educational objectives. Additionally, the paper presents the Literary Analysis Portal (LAP), an online platform designed to support teachers and learners in literary analysis through film adaptations. By analyzing the three representative literary texts from Renaissance, Romantic then Victorian Periods and their film adaptations, the research demonstrates how films can disambiguate narrative complexity, elucidate literary theories, and foster intercultural competence. Ultimately proposing a model for integrating cinematic tools to enhance literary understanding in EFL contexts.

Keywords: EFL Literature Class. Film Adaptations. Narrative Complexity. Cultural Competence. Literary Analysis Portal (LAP). Pre-While-Post (PWP) Model.

1 Introduction

Movies are a highly valued tool in foreign language education, aiming to be up-to-date significant, and applicable to modern learners. The incorporation of motion pictures in language instruction further exemplifies the significance of films in our media-saturated society. Therefore, including feature films into educational settings allows learners to relate their experiences outside the classroom and simultaneously develop a critical media literacy. An audio-visual text engages the cognitive, linguistic, personal, and emotional aspects of an individual. Sherman (2010) states that the film can be used both as an informative text for discussing and writing about it, and as an instrumental text for language learning purposes. Specifically, it is well-suited for comprehending and utilising verbal communication, with the assistance of paralinguistic aids such as visual interpretation. This is a crucial advantage because informal, interactive language usage still has a limited place in language schools. With the increasing ease of overcoming logistical obstacles such as access to English language TV channels, the Internet, DVD rental outlets, and the availability of cheaper DVD offers, it is undeniable that films have become a valuable resource for learning. As stated by Sherman (2010: 1), "Video... can be used with great pleasure and profit".

When examining the relevant references (such as Lütge 2018; Sherman 2010; Stempleski & Tomalin 2001; Thaler 2007), one frequently comes across the following justifications for utilising audio-visual tools in the foreign language classroom (see table below).

Arguments for films in EFL contexts	
Rationale	References
Popularity and motivation	"Video is today's medium" (Sherman 2010:2).
Authenticity	"People want access to the world of English-language media" (Sherman 2010:2).
Receptive competences (listening, viewing)	"To learn to speak to people they must see and hear people speaking to each other" (Sherman 2010:14).
Productive competences (speaking, writing, mediating)	"Media-transmitted content, in particular, evokes the need to think, feel, judge, and act on one's own" (Sherman 2010:130).
Intertextual-literary competences	film on book or book on film – Surkamp (2004).
Intercultural learning	Film as "moving picture book" (Sherman 2010:3)
Media / film literacy	" the formal, functional and aesthetic categories of media formats" (Thaler 2007).

Table 1: The Significance of Videos in (EFL) Classroom.

2 Film Presentation in Classroom

Once the appropriate material has been chosen, the next consideration is how to effectively display it. Specifically, when dealing with medium and long formats, there are five overall modes available for selection (Thaler 2007). Considering the unique strengths and disadvantages of each film, the decision should be made by evaluating the film itself, the planned objectives, the available time, and the students' level. (see the table below).

Mode of presentation	Description
Straight through approach	Presenting the whole film in one sitting, without Interruption
Segment approach	Presenting the whole film in separate segments, successive viewing in several lessons
Sandwich approach	Showing selected scenes, summarizing deleted scenes (telling)
Clip approach	Presenting one scene / sequence only, e.g. beginning of feature film
Mixed approach	Combining some of the four major approaches in various constellations

Table 2: Approaches to Film Implementation in Class.

After evaluating the three options, the researcher chose the Sandwich approach since it seems to be the only one that could be adapted to fit the time limitations in the Algerian university. The next part provides a comprehensive explanation of the Sandwich approach, including theoretical concepts and a methodology for teachers to implement and customise it for their classrooms.

2.1 The Sandwich Approach

The sandwich approach refers to the practice of selectively displaying segments of a film rather than presenting the film in its entirety. Similar to a sandwich, scenes that are observed in a movie or play are interspersed with ones that are not shown. This approach offers several benefits:

- Viewing and working: Similar to the segment technique, this method enables a lesson to be divided into sections for observation and stages when the chosen sequence is analysed and debated.
- PWP (Pre-while-post): The film extracts can be utilised by implementing activities prior to, during, and following the viewing.
- Time efficiency: Less classroom time is required compared to the segment approach.
- Establishing priorities: Scenes that are irrelevant might be omitted, while key ones are highlighted.

2.1.1 Drawbacks

Despite the beneficial aspects, there are still a few lingering issues. Similar to the segment strategy, the degree of cinema appreciation diminishes when it is fragmented into parts. The omission of the entire film may lead to a confused perception and a lack of comprehension, since viewers are deprived of the overall picture. In addition, the clip approach requires less classroom time compared to other methods. However, the researcher acknowledges some advantages of using this approach, as it allows for a more in-depth exploration of the literary devices emphasised in each of the literary texts covered in the course. The primary motivation for employing the sandwich strategy is typically the desire to economise time by omitting the necessity to present the entire video.

2.1.2 Methodology

A sandwich is composed of multiple layers. A minimum of two film slices is required, but more extensive educational sequences will consist of three, four, or even more audiovisual components. The gaps between them are filled with carefully selected assignments and exercises. Various stimulating topics of conversation and challenging academic tasks are expected to enhance the flavour of this dish. The film can be utilised in its original form, or it can be enhanced with the addition of subtitles or by utilising the fast forward feature to improve its overall quality and impact (Thaler 2007). The question of whether parts should be omitted may result in these exclusions:

- Insignificant scenes: Superfluous sequences are those that do not progress the plot, unveil no further traits of the protagonists, or add little to the significance of the film.
- Tedious sequences: In almost every film, it is inevitable to encounter segments that lack excitement compared to others.
- Impractical scenes: From a TEFL perspective, sections that do not provide language input or contain linguistically contentious discourse may be deficient in their ability to facilitate learning.
- Taboo scenes: Educators must determine the level of violence, sexuality, or profanity that they may reasonably expose their adolescent students to.

While some scenes are excluded, it does not imply that they are entirely disregarded. In order to ensure comprehension, the omitted sections might be replaced using verbal and/or written means - conveying information through speaking or writing rather than demonstrating. To compensate for the exclusions, a wide range of activities can be created using:

- Questions ➤ guessing and speculation
- True / false statements
- Oral and written synopses
- Summaries with gaps
- Scene index (displaying a transparent list of scenes and indicating any omissions)
- Film experts (students who take turns watching the omitted parts at home and then orally summarise the content in class during the following lesson)

Since the main reason for implementing the sandwich approach is to be time-efficient, it is important that these activities do not consume time as well. Another possible way of addressing skipped scenes is to directly inform the learners that the scenes are not pertinent or suitable.

3. Sources

Currently, there is an abundance of audio-visual content available in the market. The sources that are most pertinent for language teachers include:

- DVDs available for purchase or renting.
- Television programmes: Channels broadcasting in the English language.
- Brochures produced by film distribution corporations: e.g. Lingua Video.
- Websites: like BBC or YouTube.
- Coursebook publishers offer options for integrating film parts within the textbook or providing supplementary film content.

4. Activities

When it comes to integrating audio-visual resources in the classroom, there are numerous activities to choose from (Lütge 2018). One type of exercise involves assessing listening comprehension using closed activities such as answering questions, determining the accuracy of assertions, completing dialogues with missing words, or matching quotes with the corresponding characters. On the other hand, projects that involve composing a film script, writing a film response journal, organising a press conference, or producing a film provide students with greater opportunities for imagination and creativity (Thaler 2007).

In addition to the level of openness, activities can also be categorised based on the phase at which they are used: previewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities.

5. Film and Lesson Planning

There are numerous methods for incorporating films into the instruction of English Literature. A film can be used as an introduction, an illustrative example, a conclusion, or as the main focus of a course or project. The use of a film is based upon various factors, including the teacher's objectives, the distinctive qualities of the film, and the amount of time available.



Regarding the conventional traditional approach for planning TEFL lessons, there are multiple models accessible (Thaler 2017: 9) that can be adjusted to meet our needs. In several European trainee institutions, a traditional model is employed for 45-minute courses. This model incorporates the evaluation and verification of homework, both written and oral. It consists of the following stages:

- A. Warming-up activity (2 minutes)
- B. Engaging in a conversation about oral assignments, with a duration of 6 minutes.
- C. Evaluating written assignments (7 minutes)
- D. The new content (28 minutes) consists of a lead-in, a presentation, securing comprehension, practice, and use.
- E. Assigning homework (2 minutes)

6. Pre-While-Post Model PWP

It is a more widespread pattern used to structure and analyse processes or procedures. PWP (pre-while-post) model is especially well-suited for developing receptive skills such as reading, writing, and viewing.

6.1. The Pre-viewing Phase

The topic is introduced, prior knowledge is engaged, and motivation follows. The purpose of the while-viewing phase is to enhance comprehension and assess understanding. In addition to short-term tasks, such as checking comprehension during the viewing process, it is important not to overlook long-term activities, such as analysing character development (Lütge 2012: 60). Analysis and subsequent tasks might be carried out during the post-viewing phase.

Pre-viewing Activities		
Upside down comprehension	Students answer questions on the film before watching it, and check their answers after watching	
Associations	Students collect associations on the title or the topic of the film (brainstorming, heart-storming, mind mapping)	
Predicting the opening scene	Students speculate about the opening scene on the basis of DVD cover, poster or advertisements.	
Listening to the soundtrack	Students listen to the theme music and speculate about the content of the film	

Table 3: Types of pre-viewing activities.

6.2. While-viewing Stage

During this stage, it is important to first comprehend its content. Teachers must determine the specific level of comprehension that is anticipated from learners. An ambiguous task such as "listen and watch" is likely to elicit the impractical desire to comprehend each and every word. In order stay away from such overwhelming requests, which might lead to discomfort, it is necessary to clearly state one's goal. The subsequent classifications can be identified:

- Global comprehension refers to the understanding of a communicative situation and its issue.
- Selective comprehension of specific information
- Thorough understanding of details

Typically, films are analysed using many types of understanding. Therefore, it is crucial to inform the class beforehand about the specific form of comprehension that is required from them during each viewing.

6.2.1 Analysis

The while-reading stage is also an appropriate moment for conducting film analysis, as suggested by Sherman (2010) and Lütge (2018). During this phase, one can examine the precise techniques and tools used in film-making, as well as the integration of images and sounds with varying levels of depth. When teachers want to examine segments of a film, they should direct learners focus towards the distinct components of this medium and their impacts in the three fundamental dimensions: the cinematic dimension, the dramatic dimension, and the literary dimension.

Film Analysis	
Dimensions	Aspects
Cinematic Dimension	• camera movement
	• camera angles
	• camera speed
	• field sizes
	• editing, montage
	• sound, music
	• colour, lighting
Dramatic Dimension	• casting
	• acting
	• dialogues
	• locations
	• props
	• make-up
	• costumes
Literary Dimension	• story
	• topics
	• characters
	• setting
	• narrative point of vie

Table 4: Aspects of Film Analysis .

6.2.2 Analysis Activities

It is important to establish the fundamentals of film analysis in earlier semesters and then improve them in later years. Support for this can be provided through the use of worksheets including illustrations of different cinematic devices (Lütge 2018), as well as various forms of observation sheets, viewing grids, and note-taking sheets (Teasley & Wilder 2006, Lütge 2018: 34). In addition to comprehension and analysis questions, assessments may incorporate true/false assertions, gapped texts, matching activities, or texts that require identifying lies. Nevertheless, it is crucial to avoid imposing an obligation for learners to meticulously record every camera angle and editing approach in every scene, leading them to feel that film literacy is equivalent to possessing an extensive film glossary readily available at all times.

In order to examine the functions of cinematic techniques, it is necessary to connect observations with their intended consequences, just like when working with literary texts. If possible, learners should have the opportunity to encounter the diverse impacts, for example when a scene, without text, is accompanied by various soundtracks, the alterations in atmosphere are compared. Moreover, people might also be motivated to contemplate similarities between formal techniques and their own individual experiences.

6.2.3 Post-viewing Stage

It is the third phase of the process, following the viewing of the content. The post-viewing stage emphasises cognitive processes that surpass mere understanding, such as making inferences, expanding upon ideas, extracting key information, drawing broad conclusions, evaluating, providing commentary, developing new knowledge, and fostering creativity. Below is a concise list of recommended tasks that correspond to the topic at hand.

Post-viewing Tasks	
Press Conference	Students do a role play: a press conference with actors and journalists.
Debate	A controversial topic from the film is discussed in a formal debate.
Review	Students write a film review (and publish it on the Internet).
Film Projects	Students work on different film-related projects, e. g. film guide, movie magazine, trailer, script, etc.
Open ending	Students imagine the continuation of the plot for a film with an open ending.
Famous last words	The very last frame of the film is frozen and students imagine the last words spoken.
Wishing you were here	Students summarize the plot from the point of view of one character in the film.
The story within the story	Students tell the life story of a minor character in the film.
Moving the goal posts	Students imagine how the plot might have developed with different characters,



	at a different time, in a different place.
Making comparisons	Students compare film and novel, two reviews / trailers of the same film.

Table 5: Post-viewing activities.

The post-viewing stage is an ideal moment for developing creative abilities. Learners have the option to share their personal viewpoints on a video either individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Creativity is not limited to writing, but can also encompass spoken, manual, scenic, acoustic, visual, and audio-visual expressions.

7. Cinema at the Disposal of Literature in the EFL Context

The present research attempts to unveil the problem of narrative complexity that some readers face and that hinders the comprehension of these literary texts by proposing a model of disambiguation through film adaptations. As samples of analysis from literary texts and their corresponding film adaptations, we have chosen Jane Austen's Emma, William Shakespeare's Hamlet, and Charles Dickens's Christmas Carol and their film adaptations i Douglas McGrath's Emma, Kenneth Branagh's Hamlet, and Ronald Neame's Scrooge, respectively.

7.1 Narrative Complexity and the Blessing of Disambiguation

The narrative ambiguity resulting from the intricate use of free indirect linguistic mode of speech and thought in Jane Austen's novel Emma was clarified when Douglas McGrath adapted the story into a film titled "Emma". This cinematic adaptation simplified the narrative complexity, making it easier for viewers to understand. The readers among the viewers found a more straightforward plot, and the narrative techniques that represented the protagonist's thoughts became less perplexing and confusing. The implementation of cinematic techniques such as close-ups (CUs), voice-overs (VOs), Leitmotif music (LM), Sculptural effect of lighting (ScE) and the specular highlight of lighting too (ScE) in both the auditory and visual channels of the film helped the audience in gaining an improved comprehension of the narrative. The results of the initial phase of our study are presented in the figure below:

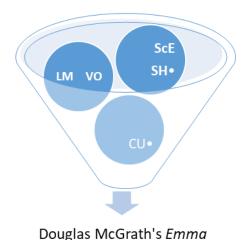
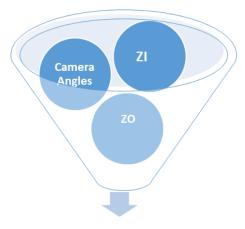


Figure 1: Disambiguation in Emma.

7.2 Disambiguation and Literary Theory

Non-native learners may find it challenging to comprehend some literary theories and aspects unless they are presented visually. This was the case with Kenneth Branagh's film adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet. The setting is crucial in portraying the Gothic mode of writing which aims to create a sombre, gloomy, and dark atmosphere. This effect is intensified and made more distinct through the use of cinematic techniques such as zooming in (ZI) and zooming out (ZO), as well as specific camera movements that enhance the overall mood of the text. The intricate portrayal of the protagonist's character in Hamlet was further simplified by the strategic implementation of camera movements (ZI, ZO) and camera angles, which effectively intensified the sense of claustrophobia inside the narrative and revealed the psychological depth of the story. The play's lines made it challenging to grasp some aspects of the plot. This is another instance where films prove helpful in providing a clearer understanding of literary theory and conveying the intended meaning of the story more vividly, explicitly, and immediately.



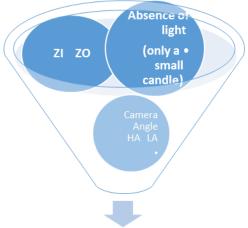
Kenneth Branagh's Hamlet

Figure 2: Disambiguation in *Hamlet*.

7.3 Disambiguation and Intercultural Competence

The lack of intercultural competence among non-native English learners can impede their comprehension of stories. Understanding beliefs, social codes, etiquette, gastronomy, traditions, and mores is crucial for any reader of fiction. Without a cultural background, readers may experience misinterpretations and encounter complexities in the text. Film, in its simplest definition, is a cultural creation and product that effectively communicates a country's cultural legacy through its visually and auditory rich content. Charles Dickens's *Christmas Carol* was adapted into a film entitled *Scrooge* by Ronald Neame. This film effectively used visual and auditory cinematic techniques to emphasise the significant cultural and religious aspects of Christmas in Victorian culture.

Based on the researcher's teaching experience, regarding the understanding of "A Christmas Carol" in literature classes, it was observed that students often struggle to reconcile their own cultural and religious backgrounds with the cultural aspects presented in the novel. During the Christmas season, certain cultural values are revived, however, EFL learners often misunderstand or misinterpret specific occurrences or reactions due to the constant need to compare the original with what is being presented. Readers sometimes find themselves in a state of perplexity and uncertainty when reading Charles Dickens's novel. However, the film adaptation is able to overcome this challenge by utilising its visually and auditory immersive elements to effectively communicate ideas, philosophies, and views. The potency of visual imagery surpasses that of language alone, but what if they are coupled with the inclusion of music? Neame effectively portrayed the economic, cultural, and religious aspects of the Victorian age by utilising the techniques of zoom in (ZI) and zoom out (ZO), which created a visual representation resembling a "tableau vivant" with the use of light, camera angles, and motions.



Ronald Neame's Scrooge

Figure 3: Disambiguation in Scrooge.

8. Literary Analysis Portal LAP for the EFL Literature Class

The previous discussion about the process of disambiguation and its relationship to narrative complexity, literary theory and cultural competence has inspired the researcher to create an online platform called the Literary Analysis

Portal (LAP). This platform aims to assist both teachers and learners in their literary analysis tasks. The primary responsibility of the literature instructor in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context is to confront and overcome the various barriers that learners encounter in order to foster an appreciation for literature. The learners, on the other hand, face the challenge of dealing with a language that is both linguistically and culturally difficult. Appreciating and understanding literature adds another layer of complexity, as it requires a mastery of the language and a comprehensive knowledge of its culture, since any language in the world vehicles a culture of its own. The figure below depicts the opening interface or primary menu of LAP.

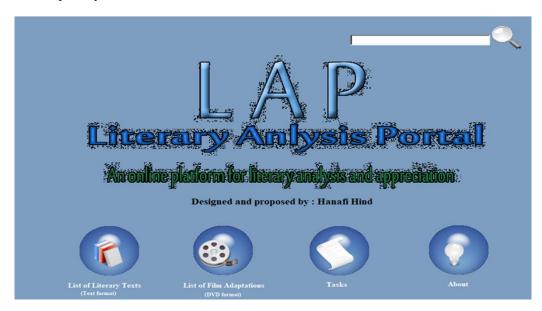


Figure 4: LAP Main Menu Page (screenshots from LAP).

The "About" section of LAP provides a concise overview of the platform, its objectives, and its target audience. This online platform provides support to both teachers and learners in the field of literature in (EFL) contexts.



Figure 5: Introducing LAP to the Users (screenshots from LAG).

LAP is an online platform that consists of three primary sections: a compilation of literary texts, a myriad of film adaptations, and a collection of assignments.

8.1 Catalogue of Literary Texts

This component of the platform provides a comprehensive literary examination of the three recommended masterpieces in English literature. These literary works are included in British literature courses at both the intermediate (graduate) and advanced (post-graduate) levels. (refer to the diagram below).



Figure 6: Catalogue of Literary Texts (screenshots from LAP).

These three texts are representative of three main literary periods in the history of English literature chosen on the basis of their high representativeness of the characteristics of each period and movement as illustrated in figure (91) below.

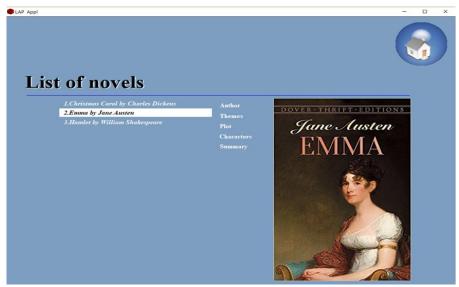


Figure 7: Literary Texts in LAP and their Literary Periods.

To the left of the three text titles in figure (91), there is a list of parameters for analysis, as outlined below:

- Writer
- Themes
- Plot
- Characters
- Synopsis

These elements of analysis have themselves layers of sub-titling constituting as such a standard for the overall literary analysis of each of the literary texts as illustrated in the following figure:



Figure 8: Literary Analysis in LAP.

8.2 LAP and the PWP Viewing Model

The literary Analysis Portal is designed to assist both teachers and learners in the literature class, and is itself supplied by work-sheets given to learners in the PWP viewing model. There are many sections in the LAP which constitute themselves ready materiel "film adaptations" for tasks in addition to a reading kit for each of the proposed literary texts. As the corpora are from different historical and literary contexts, and different genres too, the analysis tends to be varied and thought-provoking for learners. See the figure below.





Figure 9: List of film Adaptations.

8.3 Suggested Activities for the Literature Class

It is high time to teach literature in a more interactive vivid way and as educators of English literature, we should be more creative and innovative in dealing with the new generations of students in an age where technology overwhelmed all the areas of life. It is rather naïve to keep the old methods with the new generations. Literature analysis worksheets are a set of activities and questions for the learners prepared to accompany the LAP so that the teacher of literature can use them in accordance with his needs. He can divide the worksheet into three sections to suit the PWP model (pre-while-post viewing). As the first questions are targeting the context (literary and social) and can be answered by learners at the pre-viewing stage, while the second section of questions suits to be responded at the while-viewing stage.

9. Conclusion

Teaching literature in an EFL context poses some problems as per the nature of the subject itself, since literature is the natural recipient of many cultural values. Film adaptations help to bridge from the original culture to the English culture (FL culture) as films represent an authentic material that can disambiguate the understanding of many cultural and social concepts in the foreign language culture.

Watching films contributes to intercultural learning (Hescher 2009). When our students view a foreign movie, they experience other value systems and are encouraged to compare home and foreign identities, which fosters critical cultural awareness. Teaching foreign films can encourage the breaking down of barriers, ask the viewers to decentre from their own positions, make them reflect on auto- and hetero-stereotypes, all of which can lead to a better understanding between various cultures. As a *moving picture book* (Sherman 2010), video gives access to things, places, people, events and behaviour, and so films help to substitute for the experience of living in an English-speaking country.

The literary analysis Portal LAP was designed as a technological tool in pedagogical contexts, still, with the consent of the teacher, learners can get access to it like they can have text-books. Teachers decide of home or in-class activities according to their needs in each of the lessons considering as such the home activities as pre-viewing tasks to be done before coming to university. LAP is sought to be of help and assistance for both sides of the learning context.

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