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Integration of Films in Education: Practices in Teaching Literature

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Abstract

The film is currently regarded as one of the most effective means of conveying intellectual messages, imparting implicit goals, and addressing life in all its aspects. Cinematic film has become a vital instrument for many to present and display their national identity, which plays a major role in the ideological, social, and historical framework. This paper deals with integrating cinematic film into the classroom and educational setting. It attempts to discover how cinema can be employed in education due to its profound impact on students and the community at large. This study aims to investigate the possibility of teaching literature by using film as a pedagogical tool to help students develop their critical and reflective thinking. The study uses the descriptive-analytical method. The film *Still Alice*, which was adapted from the same-titled novel, serves as a model for this study. Thus, the study reveals that the film is capable of presenting a parallel language that is not focused on in schools and universities, which is the visual language that forms the basis of the modern era. Visual language, if used creatively, away from its stereotypical forms that are prevalent in television and other mass media, can help students expand their skills for self-expression and communication beyond the boundaries of language. As a result, it can help students become more adept at deciphering visuals and comprehending how they function in various contexts.

Keywords: Classroom, Education, Film, Literature, Teaching

Introduction

Literature as a specialized discourse is actually difficult to be taught in the classroom. This is due to its complicated nature. For students to be able to interpret and analyze any piece of literature, they need to be intellectually, emotionally, and linguistically engaged as well as to have a good prior knowledge. American psychologist Jerome S. Bruner is most recognized for his significant contribution to developmental and cognitive psychology. In *The Process of Education*, Bruner maintains that any lesson can be taught efficiently in a particular intellectually authentic method. By this, Bruner suggests that rather than concentrating on teaching content, educators and instructors should optimize the mode of

presentation in order to optimize the learning experience. Therefore, the premise of Bruner's Theory is that learning occurs most effectively when moving from the concrete to the abstract.

In order to foster Bruner's notion of teaching in literature, I believe that teachers should include other forms of art such as music, painting as well as cinema. In this paper, I will focus on the usefulness of integrating film in teaching works of literature.

1. The Popularity of Film and its Impact on Public Opinion

In the 2000s, a group of students at a school of the deaf in Gwangju, South Korea, were repeatedly sexually assaulted by the teaching staff at the school. After the sexual assault scandal at the school was revealed, a large-scale investigation was opened into the matter. Investigations led to the trial and punishment of several assailants and those involved in administrative corruption at the school, including teachers and officials who committed crimes against these students. Legal action was taken against them and they were brought to justice.

In fact, after the trial, it was found that the punishments imposed on the criminals were relatively light. Most of the teachers and officials who participated and were accused of the crimes were freed immediately and returned to work at the school after a very short period (Bae, 2011). The truth about these children was forgotten until 2011, when a film entitled *Silenced* was released. The movie is a screen adaptation of Kong Jee-young's novel entitled *The Crucible* (2009).

Reactions after watching the film varied greatly. The film sparked anger and resentment among the audience because of the horrific crimes shown in it. This outrage may have a positive impact on the public debate about children's rights and the need to punish abusers more strictly. The film may also encourage stakeholders to take additional measures to protect children and promote justice. There were legal and social developments after the film's release that caused some cases to be reopened and penalties for those involved to be tightened.

From this standpoint, it is clear that films have a significant impact on public opinion, as they reflect social, political, and cultural issues, and can shape the public's opinions and direct their attention towards specific issues. In addition, films may help raise awareness about important issues, such as human rights, justice, tolerance, and education. Films may also inspire audiences to think more deeply about certain topics and motivate them to take action and change. Freedberg believes that the effectiveness of images can reach the extent that people are not only emotionally impacted but in ways that have long-term behavioral consequences. (1991, p.5)

Accordingly, cinema is considered an important source for learning about different cultures, understanding oneself, stimulating thinking, contemplation and asking questions, and strengthening imagination and artistic perception. Thus, it is important to use the film to build future generations to instill constructive critical thinking. It is then necessary to integrate films into the educational system as an effective tool to raise the scientific and exploratory level of students, particularly in teaching literature.

Literature has long been labelled as a passive subject. Students are usually requested to produce critical papers on literary texts based on certain analytical stances, rather than a spontaneous and active response to these works. Therefore, the teacher's objective according to Lewis and Sisk, is to direct learners' attention and aid them to comprehend literary texts and their milieu in perspective without anybody's interference (1963). Therefore, film can be an effective platform for the application of the literary and artistic criticism.

Compared to traditional print texts, students are naturally more interested in multimedia including the Internet, music, TV shows, cell phones, and movies. Notwithstanding the efforts of educators, students will undoubtedly be fascinated by movies more frequently than literature. Therefore, Shaw highlights that multimedia, particularly films, can be excellent teaching tools that educators should use to help students learn critical analytical skills (2003). Muller also maintains that students will be drawn to multimedia texts regardless of how enthusiastically teachers presented printed texts. He argues that it is up to the teacher to use various media to help students develop textual analysis abilities so that they can read these new and evolving texts critically.

Some teachers believe that the classroom serves as a battleground against advancing technologies (Muller, 2006). Thus, refusing to believe on the popular culture as a noteworthy source of knowledge, teachers and educators frequently devalue

their students and make it impossible to develop a teaching method that connects classroom knowledge to the various subject relationships that contribute to students' social lives (Giroux and Simon, p.3). Muller challenges this notion, saying that movies are a special kind of moving medium that can convey ideas in a way that written language cannot. Students will gain the ability to examine a new generation of texts and read outside of the classroom regularly, with their own language and norms by critically thinking about films as films (2006).

2. Causes for Integrating Film in Teaching Literature

According to Cruse, one of the video's biggest advantages is its capacity to engage viewers on both an emotional and cognitive level (2013). Correspondingly, Mark introduced three uses for movies in the classroom: as a text; as a means of focusing on language; and as a mirror of a particular culture's attitudes, behaviors, and values. Films can be used to question students' preconceptions and encourage them to think about alternative perspectives. Hence, he mentioned that while watching a movie, students could grasp the significance of certain words or the grammatical structure of a text (2011). Thus, it is mentioned below the main reasons for why teachers must integrate film into teaching literature:

- The film is an effective medium through which students can see literature in a new light and access a new completely different experience.
 - Teaching with film can make the majority of students more interested
 - Admiring a film often encourages students to seek to read the original story.
 - Students tended to be more descriptive and expressive.
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- Improve critical skills and boost realization, and here I mean, not only about literary texts but also to think critically about different social and cultural issues.
 - Help students to be media literate in today's world. Teaching them literature through films helps students read visual and video-based media and be able to interpret messages and images they meet every day in films, TV shows, and social media. This notion is addressed by Muller as he maintains that, unlike literature, films may tell stories using camera angles, lighting, and music which makes students learn to view the film as a cultural artifact by examining these components and observing how it uses cultural norms to communicate ideas (2006, p.33)
 - Films have great power in influencing students for several reasons, as the film can present many elements that a novel cannot present in the same way.
 - The film can powerfully convey feelings and ideas through visual elements such as colors, lighting, framing, and photography. This has an emotional impact on the student. Thus, the film can strongly arouse feelings and emotions by representing characters and presenting stories in a persuasive and influential way.
 - Sound, music, and sound effects in a film can also create an epic sensory experience that enhances immersion and emotional impact.
 - Students can actively participate in class discussions and learn about various viewpoints through the use of films.
 - The film allows teachers to communicate with a diverse audience through visual language that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers.
 - The film can also leave a deep impression on the students' memory and leave traces that last long after it has finished showing.

Thanks to these factors, the film can be an effective means of conveying messages, provoking thought, and generating a strong and effective impact on the students.

3. Ways of integration

Films can be integrated into the educational system through several ways that require some planning and organization based on the learning objectives that the teacher wants to achieve by watching the film, whether that is expanding students' understanding of a particular concept, stimulating critical thinking about a particular issue, or enhancing skills. Below it is mentioned some of the basics that the teacher takes into consideration when integrating films into the lesson:

- The teacher must first choose a movie that matches the topic of the lesson or the unit of study he wishes to cover. This film must be of high educational value and contain topics appropriate to the level of the students and their field of study. Vetrie believes that educators ought to teach film in classroom as “a garment of human spirit”. He states that they must begin by engaging students in an atmosphere to meditate and a desire to exchange ideas. for Vetrie, The film is just a type of literature that help to fasten analytical and critical skills (p. 41).

Therefore, Films must be carefully selected respecting the university policy, rules, and norms. Nevertheless, the film is preferable to be an adaptation of a literary text.

- Film can be used as a tool to stimulate discussion and guide students toward critical thinking. The teacher can design powerful questions that encourage students to analyze what they saw and guide them to think deeply about the topics presented in the film. Thus, while students are viewing the movie, teachers can assign easy interactive tasks like the double-entry reading journal. Typically, double-entry diaries consist of two columns: on the left, students write a quote from the text that they feel is pertinent, and on the right, they write their own thoughts about it. Students are provided with multiple choices to help shape and diversify their responses. For example to speculate about the events that will occur later in the book or to have any inquiries concerning characters or events.
- To gauge students' comprehension or interpretation of the movie, teachers can pose challenging questions. Teachers can also ask students to respond to the informational strategies employed in movies by contrasting and comparing those strategies with similar strategies employed in print literature (Vetrie, p.40)
- Teachers can develop educational activities and projects based on films, such as writing articles, acting out scenes from the film, conducting a group discussion after viewing, or even conducting research on the issues represented by the films. Herein, Vetrie argues that the primary objective of using a feature film in teaching is not to teach fifth language art, rather it comes to help at-risk students develop their reading and writing language skills and critical-thinking abilities—which, unexpectedly, includes their use of film far outperforms literature (Vetrie, p42)
- Films can also be used as teaching materials in distance learning by providing online access to these films and designing associated learning activities. Discussions and activities must be appropriately guided to ensure that students absorb the concepts and values presented in the films effectively and responsibly.
- The teacher must present the lesson in a structured manner, guiding students to understand the historical, social, and political context and background related to the film, focusing on the main points he wishes to highlight.
- Students should be encouraged to think deeply, analyze issues independently, and develop their own insights. The teacher can guide students to explore multiple perspectives and understand the context behind events before making a judgment or providing an evaluation. The primary goal is to enhance students' intellectual and analytical skills and enable them to make informed decisions based on their comprehensive understanding of the subject.

4. Visualizing Literature: Film Adaptation of *Still Alice*

Still Alice is a novel written by Lisa Genova in 2007. It portrays Alice Howland, a professor of cognitive psychology at the university who suffers from early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease is a progressive condition that begins with mild impairment of memory and may eventually lead to a decline of the ability to react and engage on a discussion. Thus, Alzheimer's disease damages the parts of the cognitive system responsible for thinking, remembering, and language. It may significantly damage the individual's capacity to do everyday responsibilities (cdc.gov, 2020). The protagonist's memory starts to decline as she disremembers a term during a lecture. Then, she gets lost during a jog on campus, and then she daydreams of her mother and sister, who passed away in an accident when she was a teenager.



Still Alice - Movie Poster

Teaching this story to students in the classroom can be achieved through two different ways; as a piece of writing or as a film. It depends on the objective of the lesson: Literature and film create stories through the use of narrative structures, character development, and topic inquiry. Both have the power to arouse feelings in the viewer or reader and produce engaging experiences. In fact, filmmakers and writers frequently influence one another by turning literary works into movies and vice versa. Thus, literature and film are capable of delving deeply into intricate philosophical, political, and social concepts while offering insights into the human condition.

However, the medium in which literature and film tell stories and transmit information are the main distinctions between them. Literature is essentially a textual art form in which the narrative is expressed through words on a page. This enables more subtle storytelling as well as more in-depth descriptions and character motivations and ideas analysis. Literature frequently moves at a slower speed so that the reader may focus entirely on the story.

Film, on the other hand, is a visual and aural medium. It mostly uses sound, speech, and moving images to transmit information. Cinema can instantly create people, situations, and images in a way that writing frequently takes more language to do. Students often fail to comprehend the figurative language that is often used by writers; however, it becomes easier to understand it while they visualize the text. Metz argues that images in films “impress themselves on the spectators, obstructing everything that is not themselves” (p. 69). This according to Metz, makes films hard to be explained because they are generally easy to be understood.

4.1. A Stylistic Analysis of Still Alice

a. Cinematography

The story of the film is essentially told from Alice's perspective, but her perspective is not reinforced in any predictable way by the cinematography. A limited camera angle does appear to depict her confusion and loss. The entire story is told from Alice's point of view, and as her illness progresses, her story becomes less credible. Nevertheless, it is hard for us to understand the concrete feelings of loss if the camera does not show this emotional misperception in the movie. We see Alice lose, but readers are unable to see what is inside. Nevertheless, the acting and the narrative it tries to convey are the film's strongest points.

b. Music

Based on psychoanalysis, there is an unconscious interaction between the audience and the film music. Gorbman stresses the resemblance between the auditory appeal of music and cinematography and the hypnotist's voice that unwittingly attracts the viewer to unconsciously dissolve into the ideological demands and requirements of the film text. Thus, as a glaring emphasis of the cinematic meaning, music attempts to meld the viewer's subconscious with the movie's reality. In fact, because it appeals directly to the viewer's emotions, music is particularly equipped to perform this task (1987, p.186). The original soundtracks and songs from *Still Alice* include *Brand New Start* by Haroula Rose, *Were in the Water* by Venner, *Dead Sound* by The Raveonettes, and *If I Had a Boat* by Lyle Lovett.

According to the words of the song *If I Had a Boat* by Lyle Lovett, Alice's memory is transient, swift, and unstoppable, like lightning. She believes she does not need sneakers to come and go anywhere she wants, indicating a strong desire for complete freedom from all responsibilities and commitments, devoid of fear and humiliation. Students can gain insight into Alice's cognitive and psychological state as they are listening to these words and sharing deep feeling with Alice and her spouse.

The soundtrack of the film may then have a significant impact on students' understanding of the emotional significance of the events and characters portrayed. The music from films can also help students remember the lessons the film teaches. Students' expectations about what will happen would be more realistic and thought-provoking if there was an emotional connection made between them and the characters.

c. Light and colors

One of the most effective tools in cinematic storytelling is light and color. They enhance the visual storytelling of the picture and elicit a particular emotional or psychological reaction from the viewer. Warm colors and simple filming techniques are primarily used in *Still Alice* to convey the emotions subtly rather than dramatically. The photographic technique, color scheme, and lighting all emphasized Alice's strong sense of psychological stability and closeness to her family despite her illness. The whole family of Alice struggles to handle the genetic role of the dice that faces them as Alice's decline into disease continues. Nonetheless, the image of love and ties to family is still evident in the film.

d. Motif

Alzheimer's disease

The film gives a humanistic lesson that students could perhaps implement to their own lives. Alice's response to her malady is a reflection of her determination and strong character. Alice fought bravely as she made an effort to memorize as many words as she could. Even though reading wasn't as enjoyable as it once was, Alice still read *Moby-Dick*. Alice also set up "an early-stage dementia support group," for those who had the same issue which turned out to be quite helpful.

e. Symbolism

Alice's BlackBerry

Alice's BlackBerry represents a life that never stops; lists of things to do, and continuous motion. Alice was upset when her BlackBerry failed to work after she forgot it in the freezer. For Alice, this may symbolize the end of Alice's career.

Clocks

Clocks frequently appear as a metaphor for Alice's loss of time. The film opens with the divergent readings on Alice and John's clocks, reflecting the relative nature of time as well as their disparate personalities and perspectives. For example, Alice becomes angry and humiliated in Dr. Davis's office due to her incapacity to draw a clock. The absence of a clock also represents her deterioration and John's growing estrangement from her. By the book's end, Alice has declined to the point where she can no longer tell time.

Butterflies

Butterflies represent the momentary yet superb existence. Butterflies had always captivated Alice. However, she used to cry over their unfortunate fate when she was a little child, maybe six or seven years old. Nevertheless, her mother would reassure her that having a short life didn't mean they were not happy. Alice found it enjoyable to recall that her life was similar to that of a butterfly. Despite being only 50 years old, Alice lived a life that could be deemed beautiful full of energy and happiness.

f. Themes

Loss and estrangement

The sense of alienation and loss is the movie's most important theme. Alice is frequently blind to the world around her. An uncomfortable example of this is when Alice gets lost in her own house and finds herself in an awkward and distressing situation. She also completely expects her mother and sister to show up for dinner, even though they passed away decades ago. Alice becomes alienated and withdrawn from a life that she used to be in control of as a result of these circumstances.

Relationships and Family

The complexity of coping with a loved one's Alzheimer's and how this malady can both drive people apart and bring them together are well portrayed in *Still Alice*. The film offers an interesting glance into the undesired consequences of a family member's illness on the beloved by depicting Alice's mental battle with Alzheimer's. Both positive ones that foster understanding and unify people, as well as destructive ones that push people away. Alice is conscious that Alzheimer's will eventually take away her memories, but she strongly believes that her love for her kids will endure.

Conclusion

To conclude, the integration of other artistic forms like films and theatre in teaching literature is often necessary to captivate the attention of students and communicate important ideas and stories. In fact, integrating films in teaching literature does not replace reading the original text. This means that students are primarily supposed to read the printed texts. Teachers should know when to make students read the books and when to let them watch the cinematic adaptation of the books. Thus, the study emphasized on the effectiveness of integrating films into education in which students become more interested and able to visualize what was ambiguous and vague for them.

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