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Teaching Arabic to Korean Students Using Films*

Abstract

This research aims to study the application of using films in teaching the Arabic language to Korean students. Recently, level based classes and developing communication skills are becoming important goals in foriegn language education. The most effective way to develop the student's communication skills is to expose them to real life situations and related resources. Films are replicas of real life situations and thus are effective especially in teaching spoken language. This research implies the following things to Arabic education. First, it is best to provide realistic data to students to improve their communication skills. Selecting films that contain conversations and expressions that are used every day, while avoiding violence or contents of too much slang, will allow students to continuously remain interested and focused. Second, a program that connects films to CD-ROM for textbooks needs to be created. Additionally, there is a need to increase the understanding of spoken language through various study programs for Korean teachers. Finally, using interesting films to motivate students will have positive effects and will allow them to approach Arabic through understanding of the language rather than pure memorization.

Keywords: *Arabic language, teaching method, films, communicative skills*

Introduction

With the rapid globalization of society in Korea, an easier flow of foreign cultures has led to an increase in the importance of foreign language education.

Furthermore, the Korean Ministry of Education has recently revised the 7th Education Curriculum in the effort to increase the communication skills of learners based on language education. However, the field of Arabic education has been slow to adapt to these changes, and to this day, the main methods of education have been based on grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods.

The primary purpose of language is to communicate. When a person communicates, they do not speak as if reading a book. Rather, they would speak in a tone varying according to the situation and the listener. However, this process does not come naturally for someone who is learning a foreign language, and it requires continuous practice and training. From this, we can see that learning spoken language is an important aspect of communication skills and that the contemporary education system, which is focused more on grammar, has limits in providing solutions to problems concerning communication. Learning written language is also an important part; however, the main problem arises when there is no balance between teaching written and spoken language. Therefore, creating a teacher-student model and continuously studying for even a short amount of time a day may partially solve the problem of communication skills. Porter and Roberts (1981) said that in order to increase communication skills, it is best to expose the learner to real life situations. However, it is not easy to expose students to such environments. Although films may not expose one to such environments in real life, they provide a replica of real life situations and can be an effective tool in teaching foreign languages. Furthermore, watching films can be a fun way to learn, which makes students interested and focused, and this will positively influence their learning of foreign languages.

This research aims to study the application of films in teaching foreign languages in Arabic education. Recently, level based classes and developing communication skills are becoming important goals of foreign language education. However, classes related to spoken language are not being offered. Therefore, Korean students are unable to speak even the basic sentences, despite the long term of foreign language education. The most effective way to develop the student's communication skills is to expose them to real life situations and related resources. Films are replicas of real life situations and thus are effective especially in teaching spoken language. Therefore, the goal of this research is to provide teaching methods focused on utilizing films in a multimedia education environment to teach the Arabic language to Korean students and develop their communication skills.

Theoretical background

Films are widely used as teaching material, because they include everyday conversations that occur between native speakers and these conversations give us a sense of the environment. Furthermore, with the advancement in computer technology, media, and DVDs, it has become easier to use films in the field. Therefore, through films, students can understand the society and culture of the country through first-hand experience and develop their communication skills with the understanding of the environment they can be in.

Geddes and White (1978) stated that if the realistic data contain everyday conversations or expressions, then the conversations can be categorized into 2 types. The first type is 'unmodified' conversation, which occurs in everyday life. The second type is 'simulated' conversation, which is used for education purposes and has a high chance of occurring in daily life. Porter and Roberts (1981) stated that in order to expose the learner to real-life conversations, it is crucial to use credible data to help students avoid the imbalance between spoken language and listening skills. It is also hard to expect students to exercise the types of conversation they have never been exposed to before. Both types of conversation which Geddes and White mentioned are included in films, therefore selecting the right films is important and it will be an excellent resource for the conversation education.

Kim Hyun Sook (2004) pointed out that for a more desirable method of language education films have the following characteristics.

- First, films not only allow students to be exposed to a variety of views and characteristics of different situations, but they make them adapt.
- Second, similar situations appear in different films, so watching films allows for the accumulation of language and information.
- Third, there is a consistent progression of development in culture, and watching films will help students to keep up with the change.
- Fourth, they help students build mobile communication skills, as mobile communication is being increasingly used in business settings as it transcends space and time.
- Fifth, speed control allows students to watch again the scenes that might have been missed.
- Sixth, composition in a chronological time frame helps students to understand the full situations.
- Seventh, accumulating new information is made easier.
- Eighth, images act as a strong emotional stimulant providing realism and liveliness.

With such characteristics, Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003) presented specific examples of teaching and learning. For instance, with the students learning English, we can start by showing the first scene of the movie, 'The River Runs through It'. The teacher can show a scene to the students and ask them to predict what will happen next. In the first scene, where the children ride a boat on the top of the waterfall, the teacher can turn the sound off and ask one group of students, who have already seen the scene, to guess what the characters were saying. Then, the teacher can ask another group of students, who have only previously heard the sound without any images, to guess what is going on. The students who have watched the scene will give better responses compared to the students who have only heard the sound. This can explain the positive effects of using images in language learning. Additionally, Bumpass (1963) said that if the linguistic level of students hinders them to absorb a large amount of language information, it would be more effective to choose a film with the story that can easily be understood just by looking at the images. Therefore, the selection of films must be made in accordance with students' level of advancement.

Advantages and disadvantages of using films as teaching material

Advantages
Using films for educational purposes has the following advantages:
- The characters that appear in films use realistic language.
- The stimulating effects provide students with motivation to stay focused.
- Images allow for maximizing the effects of learning.
- Other, non-verbal, forms of communication can be learned (gesture, culture, etc.)
- Understanding the film itself can help with understanding the culture.
- Sharing similar experiences will help students to learn the proper language used in those situations.

Disadvantages
Using films for educational purposes can have the following disadvantages:
- There is a high possibility that students will focus on the fun aspect of watching the movie, and not the learning one.
- The film director's subjective thinking may influence students.
- A long preparation time is required to provide effective teaching.

Methods to overcome disadvantages

To overcome the limits of films used as a teaching tool, the teacher must pick a film in advance and consider the student's language skills, culture, and connections between the learning processes. To prevent students from becoming distracted, teachers must insist on their active participation. After watching a film, in order to reinforce the contents of the film, students should summarize the story of the film or it can be watched again.

It is crucial to assess whether students have acquired linguistic, grammatical, or cultural information. Based on these, the teacher can coordinate the quantity and contents to assess the students' achievement.

For effective teaching, the teacher should edit and process the resources which will allow students to acquire language information in a less passive manner. An example could be selecting several scenes which will draw students' attention, in order for the students to understand and to actively participate. Furthermore, to overcome the problems that arise from listening skills and difficult contents, the script can be provided to prevent lack of understanding and distraction.

Films as reflection of reality

There is no doubt that a film will provide motivation and allow students to acquire information on language, society, and culture. Also, considering that films are created for the understanding of culture and its members, the cultural 'reality' cannot be questioned.

However, as all fiction carries a subjective view of reality, films may or may not support realism. Furthermore, films are not created for the purpose of education, thus preparation is required to use selective material for educational purposes. During the preparation stage, a discussion is needed in order to select the right film to use, and the main purpose would be to aid students with speaking and acting in a proper manner. Additionally, it needs to be considered whether students can relate the story with their surroundings.

In foreign language teaching, the realism of a film refers to whether it can be used for education or not. Here, the expressions and understanding through the film is more important than grammar and structure.

Using films in teaching Arabic

To be considered in advance

Regarding Arabic learning, a course titled 'Screen Arabic' may be created and films can be used as reference data. However, we must always remember the following two things in using the variety of methods:

- Films have independent characteristics (imagery and sound collaboration, characters, scenery, etc.)
- If films can be used for educational purposes, it is because people enjoy watching them. (Baddock, 1996)

Films draw attention through their linguistic information, storyline, subject, culture, and social aspects. In any case, our decisions regarding the use of films in class must be in coordination with our goals, and they must be appropriate to the students and set within our time frame.

Written Arabic & Spoken Arabic

The languages used in films also differ by their genre. In other words, the lines used in comedy and drama will not be the same. Different nuances will exist, and moreover, the relationship between spoken and written language must be considered. Spoken language differs depending on its formality. However, the conversations in films use spoken language and we can find a complex relationship of spoken and written language within them. In reference to Gregory and Carroll's (1979) language varieties and their social contexts, we can see the following:

(a) Text which imitates spoken language as if it has never been transcribed
(b) Text with both spoken language characteristics and written language characteristics
(c) Text not written for dictation purposes, such as diaries or letters
(d) Text written to be read in grammatical form (letter dictation)
(e) Text written to be read (Interview or discussion transcription)

(a) and (b) are the most common types of conversation that occur in films. Scripts such as (e) suffice the conditions of (a), and scripts such as (d) are close to (b) but without fully removing the grammatical nuances. (c) and (d) are not that hard to find in films, but on the other hand, (e) is a result of transcribed media.

In conclusion, whilst preparing a film to be used as teaching material, planning and studying of the various linguistic situations needs to be considered.

Using subtitles

Using subtitles is always a question arising in class. Without subtitles, it would be difficult to understand a film. It would also lead students to concentrate more on the images of the film and make conclusions through imagination. However, it will allow for noticing of the characteristics of languages, which would have been easily dismissed if subtitles were present.

Watching films with subtitles might interfere with the understanding of the spoken language, because students will focus on the grammatical structure. However, for scenes which are difficult to understand, subtitles could be useful and the teacher can ask the students what they have understood. If Korean subtitles were shown to students, they will naturally compare them with the spoken language and it will thus increase their interest in the language. However, this could be both an advantage and a disadvantage.

In exceptional cases, films with original language subtitles can be used. Using transcribed spoken language in class allows students to understand the expressions and linguistic styles more easily. However, the effort of understanding must precede this.

Example of using films in Arabic teaching

Arabic film title applied language study model

A model based on the previous theory has been created, which can be used in actual lectures. Figure 1 is based on Lee Choong Hyun's (2005) CALL lecture model, and it was modified for this purpose. Lee Choong Hyun (2005) stated that multimedia alone cannot be used as lecture data or as a replacement of teachers, and thus it emphasizes the importance of teaching methods.

First, before watching a film, students need to prepare by revising the previous material and getting used to certain expressions.

The students will watch a part of the film, acquire information, and practice pronunciation, which will improve their communication skills. Video study is more effective if it is done repetitively and if audio and video can be separately presented to students without subtitles. Individual study and partner/group study can be used appropriately, and for intensive and revision studying, expressions can be learned through related web-sites. At this point, students must be encouraged and all questions must be answered.

Finally, in order to organize what they have learned after watching the film, students can conduct role plays and simulations to apply it to real life situations.
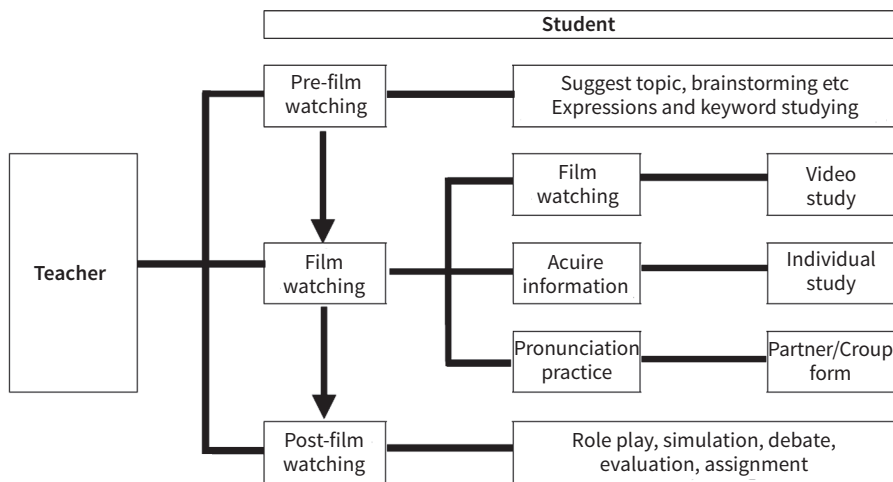
Figure 1. Arabic film title applied language study model.

Through this activity, the students can store the information they have added through the film to their existing knowledge. Teachers will need to prepare related web-sites beforehand and conduct the class smoothly.

Guide plan for Arabic lessons using the film 'Paradise Now'
Based on Figure 1, a guide plan example is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Guide plan for Arabic lessons using the film 'Paradise Now'.

Purpose of study	– Familiarize with communication skills through spoken language used in film. – Increase listening skills through authentic data – Based on listening, improve the 4 language skills through post activities.	
Preparation	Hardware: PC, Projection TV, internet installation Software: Power point, 'Paradise Now', linguistic learning machine	
Stage	Learning content	Time/tool
Pre–film watching	– Attendance check – Unit introduction and proposal of lesson aim – Propose lesson aim – Brainstorming: personal experiences related to topic – Learn expressions and idioms: related to topic – Introduce activities – Propose specific instructions and contents through PPT	15 minutes/ Power point, Projection TV

Film watching	Listening to conversation (group or individual study)	
Film watching	– Watching video without audio: guess overall story – Listen to audio without video: confirm whether guesses were correct – Watch video with audio: Understand general and specific conversation contents – Check for any misunderstanding	15 minutes/ Projection TV
Film watching	Acquiring information (individual study)	
Film watching	– Acquire information related to video: leave blanks for useful expressions and fill them out after watching – Propose subtitles: After acquiring information, propose English and Korean subtitles simultaneously	15 minutes/ PC
Film watching	Pronunciation practice (Whole study –> Group study)	
Film watching	– Explanation of pronunciation: Explaining pronunciation of words in focus – Listening to pronunciation: Repetitively hearing pronunciation from video – Pronunciation practice: Record and listen to their pronunciation and practice	15 minutes/ PC Recording wizard
Film watching	Intensive and supplementary study (Individual study)	
Film watching	– Using the internet: Using various listening web–sites and listening to appropriate texts according to each student's level	15 minutes/ PC
Post film watching	– Role play and simulation: Apply script from film or modify to one's situation, and conduct role play or simulation – Internet activity: Search for topic–related data on the internet and use for reading or writing – Evaluation: evaluate personal study	15 minutes/ PC, Projection TV

Recommended films for each level

a) Beginner – 'Kingdom of Heaven'

This movie triggers interest and is helpful for basic conversation. It is Ridley Scott's 2005 debut film, which was directed in the US as a standard Hollywood block-buster. But due to the appearance of Salah Al-Din, an Arab hero, basic Arabic is used. For beginner students, it is easy to learn basic phrases.

b) Intermediate – 'Paradise Now'

This is a cheerful approach to serious reality, based on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The story is about two Palestinian suicide bombers, depicting a very serious matter. It shows that suicide bombers are not different from ordinary young men.

c) Advanced – 'The Band's Visit'

It is a collaboration of English audio and Arabic subtitles. This film is about an Egyptian band inviting Israel to perform, and it shows what they encounter during their travel. Failing to reach their destination, they spend a night at a residence with people of different cultures and languages. The members use English in order to communicate. This is an interesting film for the students who understand both English and Arabic.

Conclusions

A film depicts the culture of a country, and as it is made with the use of its native language, it allows for effective learning of culture and language. Another strong advantage of using films in foreign language teaching is that you are able to learn spoken language without having to go to a given country. Therefore, it is necessary for us to prepare to use Arabic films efficiently to teach Arabic. Also, through such methods, while overcoming the disadvantages, more research needs to be conducted.

This research implies the following things to Arabic teaching. First, it is best to provide realistic data to students to improve their communication skills. Selecting the films that contain conversations and expressions that are used every day, while avoiding violence or contents of too much slang, will allow students to continuously remain interested and focused. Second, a program that connects films to CD-ROM for textbooks needs to be created. This will save time for teachers to prepare and edit films, and it will improve the communication skills of students. Additionally, there is a need to increase the understanding of spoken language through various study programs for Korean teachers. Finally, using interesting films to motivate students will have positive effects and will allow them to approach Arabic through understanding of the language rather than pure memo-

rization. Especially students can effectively enhance personal studying through multimedia and the internet to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, a systematic teaching method is important; detailed models can be applied to the field of teaching, and continuous research needs to be conducted in the future.

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