

SECTION #4. VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE SYSTEM OF PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING

4.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF USING MOVIES FOR ONLINE LEARNING IN WARTIME

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***Abstract.** The purpose of the paper is to summarize and present benefits and challenges of using films in both real and virtual classrooms. This research reveals the importance of using movies for online learning in wartime. This paper reviews the literature regarding how effective the use of video is for distance learning classes. It stresses current issues related to the use of movies for online learning. The article highlights psychological benefits, multicultural and real-life English learning tools, and the effectiveness of multimedia learning tools in education. The study highlights the main ways of using cinema therapy in the learning process in wartime. In particular, how movies can provide emotional and mental health benefits, help students to develop four communicative skills. It also describes ways to use video in the lessons to broaden students' understanding of other nations' cultures for self-development and learning speciality horizons.*

1. Introduction

Using films has always been one of the most popular and effective ways of teaching and learning English. Films can be used in both real and virtual classrooms, which is very important nowadays, in the period of the COVID-19 and wartime in Ukraine. Though methods and tasks can be different, films are becoming more and more attractive to many teachers and students, because they help to make the process of teaching and learning the language more interesting, motivating, educative, informative and closer to real everyday and professional life. So, films can help to improve both general English and professional English knowledge and skills, and to know more about life and your future profession. The question of reality and realism in films is very controversial, that is why teachers need strong subject matter knowledge about the topics portrayed, so they can frame the movie and its relationship to fact and fiction. Teachers also need to have sound learning goals and awareness of the diverse cultural viewpoints that students bring to the classroom. And they need the time and resources for meaningful discussion or assignments after viewing [1].

The National Aviation University is equipped with the modern multimedia rooms. The Multimedia Room is defined as a place where students can work on reports and presentations for classes and run internet searches. It is a student-oriented space for audio and video capture. Multimedia equipment enables both students and teachers to input, process, edit, produce, disseminate and save pieces of multimedia contents for educational purposes. It is often used for watching movies.

In 2020 COVID-19 pandemic restrictions forced the Ukrainian universities to abandon their traditional face-to-face classroom education and replace it with online classes and digital educational materials which led to the digital revolution in the higher education. According to the Rector's directives, students of the Faculty of International Relations of the National Aviation University switched to the online classes in March 2020 with only two months of offline classes over the first semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The online form was continued after the full-scale Russian aggression on February 24, 2022, and still remains relevant due to safety precautions.

Online learning continues in Ukraine, but with new wartime challenges. Ukrainian students are using Google Meet to study languages. Internet connectivity in Ukraine has remained relatively resilient during the war, thanks in large part to technicians and telecom engineers.

2. Emotional and Mental Health Benefits

Watching movies is an effective way to relax and reduce stress, and can even be used as part of therapy treatment. Movies are proven to have psychological benefits. Also, movies are a great conversation starter and not just an entertainer, but also beneficial for students' overall health.

Science proves that excessive screentime is detrimental to human brain structure and impacts people's cognitive abilities such as memory and focus. However, as it turns out, the same is not the case with movies. Some studies show that watching movies can make you more productive and help with your mental wellbeing.

A study conducted by researchers at University College London and Vue Cinema found that people who watched movies experienced improved mental focus and fixation towards the movie [2]. According to the study, such focused watching helps to improve cognition and memory.

Therapists have used film therapy as a relaxing and mentally soothing activity. A recent study found that it can reduce stress levels by up to 68 percent. It may have the added benefit of improving emotional and mental health. Cinema and video therapy are sometimes used as a part of psychotherapy [3]. Therapists might use this type of therapy to expose you to a character who might be having a similar emotional experience, according to a 2021 study [4]. It could also encourage you to look at your situation from a different perspective, providing new ways of coping.

Cinema therapy or movie therapy is a form of expressive therapy – like art, music and dance therapy – for medical and mental health issues. It is also used as a form of self-help. Cinema therapy was created and popularized by Dr. Gary Solomon, the first to write on using movies as therapy. The movement started to catch up again in 2019 with the featured documentary "Calypsonians" by director Anghelo Taylor, unlike the creation of Dr. Gary Solomon, Anghelo Taylor wrote the Cinema Therapy Manifesto, that starts with one simple principle: "In order for cinema therapy to truly exist the filmmaker must have an internal search, question or problem to solve inside himself but that relates with the rest of humanity or with specific community.

Once the filmmaker and his crew engage in the process of filmmaking, they start healing by the revelation and situations that happen along the process of making a film. In the end, the result of that process will be a medicine for all the viewers as

human beings. But everything starts with the deep intention that the filmmaker has when making the film" [5].

Cinema therapy is defined by Segen's Medical Dictionary as: A form of therapy or self-help that uses movies, particularly videos, as therapeutic tools. Cinema therapy can be a catalyst for healing and growth for those who are open to learning how movies affect people and to watching certain films with conscious awareness. Cinema therapy allows one to use the effect of imagery, plot, music, etc. in films on the psyche for insight, inspiration, emotional release or relief and natural change. Used as part of psychotherapy, cinema therapy is an innovative method based on traditional therapeutic principles [6].

There are several types of cinema therapy, with varying degrees of entertainment and therapeutic value. Popcorn cinema therapy is primarily cinema entertainment, that may result in an emotional release. Evocative cinema therapy, helps individuals connect with story lines and the movie characters. In the process they "learn about themselves in more profound ways." Cathartic cinema therapy helps a person access their emotions, for instance if they are in a depression, and may be used at an early stage in psychotherapy [7].

Many people in the world suffer from a mental illness at some point in their lives. Some of the major causes of mental health problems are childhood abuse, trauma, social isolation, discrimination, stigma, loneliness and stress.

Recently, the war in Ukraine that began on the morning of February 24 is one of the reasons why people are going through mental health crises, including international students who were studying at Ukrainian universities and Ukrainian students who continued their university studies in Ukraine and those students who became refugees abroad.

The war has not only disrupted their education but also left long-lasting scars on them. Most of them are now experiencing depression and even PTSD in more serious cases. The Royal College of Psychiatrists concluded that – 'Being caught up in a traumatic event that is overwhelming, frightening and life-threatening can lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.' The war in Ukraine has had a huge impact on Ukrainian students abroad too. They are also experiencing stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues due to the situation in their homeland. One of the students said that the news about the war in Ukraine 'hit me like an earthquake'.

Pleasurable distractions and entertainment could provide rest and relaxation and replenishing qualities, according to a 2017 study [8]. A good comedy could help lower your stress levels. A 2016 study [9] found that laughter could reduce the levels of hormones in the body responsible for stress, such as cortisol and epinephrine. If you're not in the mood to laugh, consider a drama or tearjerker. Crying could also lower cortisol levels in the blood, according to a 2020 study [10].

Film watching has a cathartic effect, allowing viewers to experience strong emotions through an activity. This can be very beneficial for those who have trouble expressing emotions, as films may easily prompt them to laugh, cry, or experience an emotion. Watching a movie allows one to disconnect from their surroundings for a duration of time. Our minds are actively engaged with the television, allowing external thoughts and worries to fade away. Musicals or romantic comedies are great examples of relaxing films [11].

Motivation is one of the most important factors in determining successful second-language acquisition. Movies are an integral part of students' lives so it makes perfect sense to bring them into online classes. Film, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable. Watching movies could be motivational in many ways. Giving your mind a break from work for something enjoyable could motivate you to be more productive when you return and to ward off feelings of burnout [12]. If the movie highlights someone successfully chasing their ambitions, it could motivate you to do the same.

It might also inspire you to take up a new hobby or pursue a new goal, according to a 2020 study [13]. Fictional characters can act as motivating agents. Seeing an iconic character may influence the viewer to become more like that character or become less like a repulsive character. Certain action lines may inspire viewers to take on similar activities in their own lives. For example, a very passionate character may influence a viewer to pursue their own personal interests [11].

If you've been feeling some level of disconnect between someone close to you – whether it's your romantic partner, best friend, or child – watching movies together could be just what's needed to rekindle your relationship. It could be especially helpful if you have the same taste in movies and choose something new that you're both enthused about watching. Not only will you bond in the moment of watching, but you might feel a renewed sense of connection when you discuss what you watched afterward [14].

Throughout the industry, films and shows show very different familial and friend relationships. Watching and analyzing these relationships may allow one to reflect and grow on their own connections. Watching movies makes you more empathetic and strengthen relationships. Studies suggest that watching movies can increase our emotional intelligence and also help in improving social connectivity. A study conducted by psychologists at Oklahoma University [15] studied the relation between fictional drama and emotions. For the purpose of the study, the subjects were divided into two groups. One group was shown fictional dramas or documentaries. While the other group was asked to either watch documentaries or nothing at all. These groups then underwent reading the eyes in the mind test [16]. According to the results of the test, researchers found a consistency in the feelings of the participants who watched the fictional drama [17].

Finding relaxation by watching a movie might be easier than it sounds. It might be a good idea to eliminate unnecessary distractions during the movie. You might find that you're able to engage your mind with the plot you're following without distractions, which could make for a more soothing experience. A musical or romantic comedy, aka rom-com, could be just the distraction you need to relax after a long day [11]. Watching movies can boost mood and reduce symptoms of depression. A 2016 review [18] found that enjoying leisure activities such as watching movies could boost mood and reduce symptoms of depression.

Both positive and sad films can lift our mood and improve mental health.

Sad films can make us happy: It is similar to the effect that sad songs have on our mood, they uplift us and make us feel lighter. Sad music resonates with our feelings helping us find an outlet for them. Similarly, sad movies help us find an outlet for our feelings, hence making us feel less sad.

However, there hasn't been any study on this topic, but studies on the effect of sad music in uplifting moods in people help understand the phenomenon better.

Whether it is thriller, drama, horror or romance – whichever genre you prefer, now there is proof that movies don't only entertain you but also help your mental wellbeing [17]. Watching stressful movies, such as horror, may actually make us feel better in the long run. Temporary stress releases cortisol, which is automatically met with dopamine, once that stress is erased. This emotional rollercoaster may be very beneficial to viewers.

3. Multicultural Teaching Tool

Students can learn about the culture behind the language when they watch movies in English. Language and culture are closely connected. Short clips from foreign language films can be incorporated into the teaching of language and culture in the university classroom and then to pinpoint and evaluate the wide range of learning outcomes that such a multi-disciplinary endeavor would elicit from students. Activities and tasks are created increasing language fluency (interpretive and presentational) and increasing cultural knowledge and sensitivity.

In a globalized world with different languages and cultures, learning foreign languages is a necessity for ensuring international communication and understanding. Adding to that language and culture are inseparable, learning a language also involves learning the associated culture. The close interdependency between culture and language can be used to contribute to social cohesion and stability in areas where cultural bias, political and religious hostility is prevalent.

Therefore, language teaching practices can be used to eradicate stereotypes and to promote intercultural understanding, universally shared values, which will serve the peaceful coexistence of different people in the world. Movies chosen appropriately for this purpose, with a rich source of cultural events and varying patterns of human behaviors, seem to be an appropriate tool to enhance the understanding of cultural diversity.

UNESCO defines cultural diversity as the multiplicity of ways in which societies manifest themselves [19]. Cultural diversity is also the ancestral heritage that distinguishes us from other people, gives us identity, spiritual, symbolic, aesthetic and technological values. It also includes the goods that our ancestors have contributed to the history of humanity.

There are many films that in some way touch our cultural diversity and make us see the richness we have, just because we are different. It is a list of films that are based on intercultural communication. They illustrate interactions between people of different cultures:

1. And The Earth Did Not Swallow Him (Summary: Mexican-American migrant workers during the Korean War and their family lives)
2. The Beauty Academy of Kabul (Summary: American women open a beauty school in post-Taliban Kabul as community service project)
3. Born Into Brothels (Summary: This film is a portrait of a group of unforgettable children in Calcutta's red light district)
4. The Debut (Summary: A third generation Filipino teenager deals with cultural identity issues in the U.S.)
5. The Gods Must Be Crazy (Summary: A comic allegory about a travelling Bushman who encounters modern civilization and its stranger aspects, including a clumsy scientist and a band of revolutionaries)

6. Hotel Rwanda (Summary: Paul Rusesalagina was a hotel manager who housed over a thousand Tutsi refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia in Rwanda)
7. Invisible Children (Summary: A documentary about child soldiers in Uganda)
8. Quinceanera (Summary: A girl reaching her coming of age celebration also teaches about cross-generational issues)
9. Something New (Summary: This film explores aspects of middle/upper class African-American culture and interracial/interclass dating)
10. Under The Same Moon (Summary: This film teaches about Latino immigration to the U.S. and family separation) [29].

We study intercultural communication to develop our cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills to facilitate communication with people from different cultural origins. This type of knowledge assists us in achieving high levels of personal and cultural self-awareness and a deep understanding of and respect for the influence of culture on behavior, values, and beliefs. In a mobile and globalized world, the knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication are of great significance and value, since it supports the development of lifelong learning and soft skills, which are required to help people navigate through their careers and future relationships towards both personal and professional fulfilment.

According to the United Nations, the Russian invasion has led to more than 4.7 million Ukrainian refugees fleeing across Europe. Many of these are students. Many international students find it difficult to adjust to the culture of their host country. One of the most common challenges international students face is dealing with «culture shock». It is a feeling of disorientation many people feel when experiencing an entirely new way of life.

Cambridge Dictionary defines culture shock as "a feeling of confusion felt by someone visiting a country or place that they do not know" [20]. Culture shock refers to feelings of uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety that people may experience when moving to a new country or experiencing new culture or surroundings. This cultural adjustment is normal and is the result of being in an unfamiliar environment [21]. Culture shock can occur when people move to another city or country. For example, when international students study abroad.

Although the timing of each person's adjustment process can be different, there are specific phases that most people go through before they adjust to their new environment. Culture shock can be quite stressful and lead to anxiety. However, students can overcome this situation and some great movies will help students understand and outline some of the key takeaways about culture shock:

- Culture shock refers to feelings of uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety that people may experience when moving to a new country or surroundings.
- Culture shock can occur when people move to a new city or country, go on vacation, travel abroad, or study abroad for school.
- A cultural adjustment is normal and is the result of being in an unfamiliar environment.
- Culture shock is typically divided into four stages: the honeymoon, frustration, adaptation, and acceptance stage.
- Over time, people can become familiar with their new surroundings as they make new friends and learn the customs, leading to an appreciation of the culture [22].

We would recommend such movies as

1. Culture Shock (About four American college grads who take their first trip overseas and get caught in an international crime ring).
2. Studying Abroad: Culture Shock (Five students from five different continents tell us how they adapted to a new culture when they first came to study abroad).
3. The Theft (An anthropology student travels to the pacific island of Samoa).
4. The Durrells (Based on the real-life events of the Durrell family as they resettle from England to Greece).
5. Anna and the King (About an English school teacher in Siam) [30].

Culture shock occurs when an individual leaves the comfort of their home and familiar surroundings and moves to an unfamiliar environment. The adjustment period can be fairly intense, particularly if the two locations are completely different, such as going from a small rural area to a large metropolis or moving to another country. People can also experience culture shock when moving from one place to another within the same country. Typically, no single event causes culture shock, nor does it occur suddenly or without reason. Instead, it gradually builds from a series of incidents, and culture shock can be difficult to identify while struggling with it [23]. The adjustment process due to culture shock can get better over time, leading to growth and an appreciation of the new environment.

Watching films that take on tough topics could be a thought-provoking experience for you. Whether you want to better understand a current social issue or spark a conversation about an opposing point of view, watching films could help educate and enlighten [14]. Films bring awareness to social topics, many that may be thought-provoking and influential to viewers. Witnessing another culture, viewpoint, or background can have great effects on viewers. Social commentaries, particularly documentaries, allow for an educational experience [11].

4. Real life English Learning Tool

Motivation is one of the most important factors in determining successful second-language acquisition. Films and TV shows are an integral part of students' lives so it makes perfect sense to bring them into the language classroom. Film, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable [24]. If students learn Legal English, it will be much more interesting for them to watch legal movies and series such as *Suits*, *The Law and Order* etc.

Another benefit of using films is that it provides a source of authentic and varied language and real-life environment. Film provides students with examples of English used in 'real' situations outside the classroom, particularly interactive language – the language of real-life conversation. Film exposes students to natural expressions and the natural flow of speech. If they are not living in an English-speaking environment, perhaps only film and television can provide learners with this real-life language input [24].

With a vast array of legal films and series on the market, it is crucial to choose an appropriate film and episodes from television series which are fitting for this setting. Elkins (2006) provides valuable insights into the choice of appropriate "lawyer films" as well as various approaches to film and text analysis [25]. After previewing several of them, *The Rainmaker* can be chosen because it corresponds to the needs of the learners. The film is replete with ethical issues both in and outside the court, which stimulate

awareness, responsiveness and debates. Students can easily relate to and identify with the main character who is uncertain about his career choice. *The Rainmaker* is about an inexperienced lawyer, Rudy Baylor (played by Matt Damon), faced with the corruption and challenge associated with legal services in the heart of the USA.

A story of David and Goliath, with many twists and turns, the film reaches its climax when Rudy manages to bring a major insurance company to its knees. The plot, which explicitly details the stages of a court trial and the apparent corruption in the legal profession, allows for in-depth analysis. In this film, students are presented with a clear model of courtroom drama. The film is given more weight than the television series since it deals with the complete evolution of a lawsuit: a. the initial stages of a contract between lawyer and client; b. jury selection and courtroom drama; c. opening arguments, exchanges between lawyers and judges; d. closing arguments, and e. the outcome of the case. It also includes the analyses of all the people directly involved in a lawsuit of this type [26].

The visibility of films makes it an invaluable language teaching tool, enabling learners to understand more by interpreting the language in a full visual context. Film assists the learners' comprehension by enabling them to listen to language exchanges and see such visual supports as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously. These visual clues support the verbal message and provide a focus of attention [24]. Such visibility of films also makes them closer to real life and promotes better student's attention, comprehension and perception. For example, *Twelve angry men* is a powerful indictment, denouncement and exposé of the trial by jury system, the film that keeps you on the edge of your seat from the beginning until the end and you become fully concentrated on the legal language and involved in all the details of the jury deliberation process.

Film can bring variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of teaching techniques and resources, helping students to develop all four communicative skills. For example, a whole film or sequence can be used to practise listening and reading, and as a model for speaking and writing. Film can also act as a springboard for follow-up tasks such as discussions, debates on social issues, role play, reconstructing a dialogue or summarizing [24]. Role play such as round tables and mock trials is a very effective tool for Legal English learners which make students more motivated and give them the opportunity to work in the environment that is close to the real life. Real situations can be created and students can benefit from the practice [27]. It is also possible to bring further variety to the language learning classroom by screening different types of film: feature-length films, short sequences of films, short films, and adverts [24].

5. Conclusions

Given the benefits of using films in the language learning classroom, it is not surprising that many teachers are keen to use films with their students, and an increasing number of them are successfully integrating films into the language-learning syllabus. Until quite recently it was difficult to find pedagogically sound film material to help students improve their language through watching film, and teachers had to spend many hours creating their own materials.

However, with the advent of the internet there is now a wealth of online resources for both language teachers and their students. With so many resources, it's

sometimes difficult for teachers to see the wood for the trees [24]. As teachers, we have an ongoing responsibility to formatively assess and update our teaching approaches and strategies to reflect the changing times and use of technology. We are very fortunate to have such a wide variety of ESP/ELP resources available to us today. Film and television series provide the perfect setting for students to venture into the real – life, professional world and learn the appropriate language in a virtual and natural setting [26]. Since learner engagement is a priority [for a successful teaching and learning environment] (Richards & Rodgers 2001), where teaching is a pleasure, students are taught the pleasure of learning [28].

Watching movies is a useful way to improve English. Textbooks are great for learning vocabulary or grammar, but nothing is better than listening to authentic spoken English. By watching films, students can hear native English-speaking actors using their language in a natural way, helping students to learn and speak modern English in terms of sound, vocabulary and style. Across English speaking countries there are different accents; from Australia to the United States of America, and even within the British Isles there are distinct dialects.

Students hear and learn from these regional accents and understand them better, especially as textbooks seldom provide information on this subject. When students learn words, it can be difficult to remember their meaning or how to use them, but dialogues and subtitles in movies can provide good examples of how words sound and change in connected speech. When used as part of a screenplay, the context helps the student to learn, recall and use words more effectively in the art of reading, writing and conversation.

Students can sharpen many of their English language skills by watching movies in English. Film being an excellent teaching and learning tool, which in turn, can extend the range of teaching techniques and resources, helping students to develop all four communicative skills.

Engaging in activities students enjoy, such as watching movies, can be beneficial. It can boost mental health, relieve stress, and foster relationships. However, movies are not a panacea for all mental health issues, and if one's symptoms interfere with daily life, a mental health professional would be more appropriate.

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