

A Study on the Application of Task-based English Movie Clips to Listening and Speaking Class in Higher-Vocational College

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Abstract: English movies can be effective supplementary teaching materials to make up for the lack of communicative use in daily life for English learners. However, the application of the movies is not so sufficient and it is not suitable to use a whole movie in class for college students because of their limited English level. The paper analyzes the current situation of English class based on movies, and put forward some points for attention. These include the movie chosen should do some help to set up correct outlook on life and the world of the students; teachers are required to apply suitable movie clips instead of the entire movie to English class and use task-driven approach and cooperative learning. At last, the paper introduces teaching methods for listening and speaking class based on movies in higher-vocational college in detail by an example.

Keywords: English movie clips; listening and speaking class; higher-vocational college; the theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD); task-driven approach; cooperative learning; micro-linguistic skills

INTRODUCTION

With the popularity of computer multimedia technology, English movies are shown in class more frequently at college which have been proved to successfully motivate students' learning interest so as to improve teaching quality in accordance with some English teaching experts' research [1, 2]. However, according to our survey, many students don't agree that English movies have done help to their English study greatly. How can this happen? So, what are the points for attention for English class, especially for listening and speaking class based on movies? How to design teaching tasks to fulfill teaching objectives? All these questions need to be further discussed.

THE CURRENT TEACHING SITUATION OF ENGLISH CLASS BASED ON MOVIES AT COLLEGE

1) The Present English Learning Conditions in College

The average grade of English entrance examination for college for students in our college is about 90, which is just a passing mark. Our survey shows that, students lack of interest in English study. About 25% of the students find it boring to learn English and 24% of the students are poor at English. In that case, if teachers only focus on the training of micro-linguistic skills on the textbook in despite of students' requirements for interest and creative activities in the course, the students naturally will have less interest in English study. What's more, compared with high school students, college students lack of pressure

from entering a higher school, which adds to lower teaching effect.

2) The Present Situation of English Teaching Based on Movies at College

Due to the limited class periods and the students' English level, English movie appreciation class is not offered as a required course or elective course at many colleges. The students are arranged to watch one or two English movies each term, which are regarded by some teachers as a purely entertainment, instead of a supplement to the textbook. Sometimes, there are no course designs, clear learning tasks, specific teaching objectives and teaching methods for the movie appreciation class exactly. And some teachers tend to believe that after watching the movies, the teaching objectives are fulfilled and no teaching activities and additional practice along with corresponding assessments are taken to test the students' understanding. Besides, some of the teachers choose the movie casually, and horror movie and science fiction are shown according to the students' preference.

THE PRINCIPLES FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LISTENING AND SPEAKING CLASS BASED ON MOVIES AT COLLEGE

English listening and speaking class based on movies focus on comprehensive training in students use of language especially on listening and speaking ability [3-5]. From the relevant teaching theory [6, 7] and our long-term teaching practice, we put forward these teaching principles.

1) Movies Chosen Should Help to Set Up the Correct Outlook on Life and the World [8]

Young students form their outlook on life and the world during their life at college. However, during this period of time, they face a lot of major life development issues which will affect their life a lot later. If teachers can give them enough guidance, they will naturally have fewer difficulties. So our English teachers can choose English movies based on this principle.

2) Apply Suitable Movie Clips to English Class

Classic English movies usually show a certain incident or a series of incidents which has a rich vocabulary filled with slangs, proverbs and idioms, and it is quite difficult for a college student to fully understand an entire English movie. Under such circumstance, it is an important step to choose proper movie clips [9].

Teachers should assign harder tasks to students and also provide enough assistance to encourage and advance their individual abilities, according to the theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), a concept introduced by Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. So English teachers should carefully choose movie clips [10] in line with the level of students and suitable for classroom teaching in order to optimize the classroom teaching effect [11-13].

3) Use Task-driven Approach and Cooperative Learning

Task-driven approach can be considered a branch of communicative language teaching^[14, 15]. In the past teachers' task used to impart knowledge to students. According to task-driven approach, students become subject who are guided by their teachers to complete language tasks and develop skills [16]. It is a new teaching mode which is famous for developing language fluency and building students' confidence. The core of this approach is task and students are assessed by the performance of the completion of real world tasks.

Cooperative learning asks students to work together in small, fixed groups on a certain task [17]. Less skillful students work with more competent peers and can get help from them which is viewed as an effective way to develop language skills.

We assign teaching tasks to each group and ask them to discuss after class [18, 19]. In class, one of the group members present the results. In this way, the time-consuming and tedious preparations are finished before class and the efficiency of classroom teaching can be improved [20, 21].

THE APPLICATION OF ENGLISH MOVIE CLIPS TO LISTENING AND SPEAKING CLASS---ILLUSTRATED BY AN EXAMPLE

The Notebook is an American romantic movie directed by Nick Cassavetes. The movie is starred by Ryan Gosling and Rachel McAdams as a young couple who fall in love when they are young and don't abandon each other when they are old and sick.

Pre-watching task

The aim is to help the students have a general understanding about the content of the movie and clear language barriers [22, 23].

Students are asked to fulfill the following tasks: preparing a vocabulary [24, 25] (includes new words, idioms, slang, etc), summarizing the plot [26], classic dialogues and searching for the background of the movie in group [27, 28]. And they are required to watch it before class.

Classroom task

1. Retell the story [29]

We choose two movie clips for the students to retell. One is from 5' to 19', the other is from 43' to 66'.

2. Vocabulary

We choose the following words to explain in order to enlarge students' vocabulary: indifferent (CET-4), trial (CET-4), bitter (CET-4), convince (CET-4), stream (CET-4), agony (CET-4), consequence (CET-6), blaze (CET-6), portrayal, contemplate, devastate, defiance, etc [30].

3. Dubbing

Two boy students and two girl students are needed to dub the clip from 90' to 105'.

4. Translation practice: translate the following dialogues into Chinese

1) *Southern summers are indifferent to the trials of young love. Armed with warnings and doubts, Allie and Noah gave a remarkably convincing portrayal of a boy and a girl travelling down a very long road with no regard for the consequences.*

Pay attention to "convincing".

2) He was a country boy, and she was from the city. She had the world at her feet, while he didn't have two dimes to rub together.

Pay attention to "have the world at one's feet".

3) My Dearest Allie. I couldn't ... I'll smile at you with joy and remember how we spent the summer beneath the trees, learning from each other and growing in love. The best love is the kind that awakens the soul and makes us reach for more, that plants a fire in our hearts and brings peace to our minds...

Pay attention to "awakens, soul"

After-class task

Further discussion [31]: If you were Allie, who would you choose? And tell your reasons.

CONCLUSION

It is a daring attempt to introduce English movies into English class, especially for college students. The compression and density make English movies good and quite difficult teaching materials to apply to classroom teaching, but they richly reward the efforts if we teachers can make good use of these new teaching materials. Also, we should put forward appropriate assessment methods to test teaching results according to the training program and the criterion for English curriculum.

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