

ENHANCING STUDENTS' INTERACTION SKILLS AND CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING THROUGH MOVIES

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Abstract: In the context of higher education in Malaysia, the aims are to produce competent and confident language users in the students who learn English as their second language. By incorporating movies in English language teaching, it will enable the students to learn English more actively, meaningfully and interactively. This study seeks to explore the potential use of movies as a teaching and learning tool in encouraging active participation and critical thinking in the English language classroom. The existence of technology in movies has made ways for the educators to do segmentations of the important parts in the movies for the limited classroom time. Critical thinking plays a vital role in education simply because of the personal and language enrichment. It also allows the students into self-directed thinking in making decisions more carefully, clearly and logically. It is important to incorporate the Universal Intellectual Standards of Critical Thinking Theory into the crucial foundation in encouraging active participation of students. It is believed that critical thinking will enable the students to engage themselves in their own pace of learning and provide greater freedom for expressing and arguments. This is because critical thinking is aimed at making wise decisions on what to believe and do and also presenting claims, actions and practices into the real-life contexts.

Keywords: *movies, active participation, critical thinking, universal intellectual standard*

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is in the mid-point of its journey towards Vision 2020 and is in the process of transformation to become a developed nation by year 2020.

Everything in this world has changed tremendously especially in the education system. In Malaysia, English Language is used as the second language and has been introduced as the medium of instructions in higher institutions.

English Language has a functional role by virtue of its use as an international

language of communication in the economy of the nation, particularly for Malaysia to remain globally competitive. Sadly to say, there were less exposure and the usage of English Language among our students because the language is only limited in the language classroom. Due to this, educators should varies their teaching strategies in teaching the language because English Language is essential and very important in the employment opportunities and is a necessity for Malaysians of various

ethnics to rise up the socioeconomic ladder.

The standard of the English Language is still at the declining stage where there the language competence and performance of our Malaysian students are deteriorated due to the lack of exposure to the language at home and also across the curriculum. This resulted in students of being underachievers and not proficient in the language when it comes to the employment matters. Being an expert in the field of study is just not enough because students must also possess good communications skills which could be used globally. Besides that, graduates' employability is also based on how they can use the language and able to think creative and critically. This is because by having the ability to think critically, they may possess the potentiality in finding solutions with the problems with which he or she is confronted. Apart from that, the tool that is used in teaching the English Language plays an important role in instilling motivation for the students to enhance and develop their interaction skills in English Language.

UiTM is known as the largest university in Malaysia with the largest amount of students in the country. Due to that, the graduates of UiTM are expected to perform successfully in interacting with others locally and globally in English Language. The university's aspiration of being recognized as the 'world class' standard university lies solely on the performance of the graduates locally and internationally. But there are still problems arise due to the students' proficiency and attitude towards English Language. Students are still lack of sufficient motivation and determination and also the skills in interacting in English.

Thus, there is a need for a tool or medium which can be utilized by the lecturers in enhancing the students' speaking skills in English. The tool or medium used in teaching the language should be a yardstick to promote positive and motivational factors towards the students in learning the language. It should be not a chalk and board talk which used to be the teaching method in those days. As such, lecturers too play an important role in choosing the right medium to teach the language the huge emphasis must be placed on the creativity and innovation.

This study investigated the potential of movies in enhancing the students' interaction skills in English Language and how movies may encourage the students in creative and critical thinking in using the English Language. Using movies in the English Language Classroom is one of the methods that can be used to teach our students the skills in learning the language. By this way, learners are being emphasized based on their sensory learning styles where it helps the learners to acquire, retains and retrieves in formations based from their learning preferences. According to Hazita & Noorizah, they stated that 'A prepared educator can use movies to stimulate discussions, facilitate learning on particular topics, or reemphasizing material being presented through textbooks or classroom lecturers'. They also posit that learning English by movies promotes learners' skills.

Besides, Raymond Wolkowski (1987, as cited by Hazita & Noorizah) stated that teachers are responsible in for motivating the students, whether intrinsically or extrinsically by using the various tools in teaching. According to him, 'Movies have both audio and visual components that may lead to motivation'.

He also added that watching movies is surely stimulating and followed by discussions which will connect the students' feelings with the learning environment. Showing movies therefore is a successful approach to students because movies offer an entertainment factor from which many ideas can spring. It is also believed that movies can add color to a lesson, highlighting themes and projects and illustrating concepts and ideas for knowledge and creativity (Lever, 2010).

King (2002) believes that the use of authentic materials like movies will intrinsically motivates language learners to stay focus as it brings the learners to a new experience, different from the ordinary classroom setting. Lieberman (2002) reiterates that when film is used to illustrate a topic, it has the power to initiate an interactive classroom activity which may then bring to a motivating and interesting learning experience. The immersion power and familiarity aspects in films, adds, Lieberman will activate learners' participation and permits active learning.

According to Wappel (2010, p. 76), 'Video streaming is another high-tech tool used in the ESL classroom. To introduce or reinforce materials visually, teachers download clips or entire videos to make their classroom alive and spark active participation in the classroom. In a nutshell, the usage of movies in the English Language classroom promotes more active participation from the learners in order to prepare them for functional roles in the society as well as employability.

Creativity is very important in the English Language classrooms because creativity means 'transforming one thing into another'. Arthur Koestler (as cited by Feher, 2007), describes creative thinking as 'double-minded'

thinking that 'operates on more than one plane'. He also added that it can be best described as a 'transitory state'. It is believed that creative thinking should be integrated in the lesson because it can create a relaxed and exciting classroom environment which is essential in the learners' learning process. Feher (2007) further posits that creative thinking improves the learners' self-esteem as they can look at their own solutions to problems and their own products and see what they are able to achieve. Apart from that, creative thinking also can lead to a genuine communication and co-operation. It prepares the learners to use the language instrumentally outside the classroom. In a nutshell, creative thinking is considered as part and parcel of our life because it plays an important role in the personal growth and also in the development of the culture and society.

Critical thinking skills are increasingly important in facing the world today. Film usage in encouraging critical thinking skills is a widely acceptable notion (Bluestone, 2000; Lieberman, 2002; Waalkes, 2003; Weerts, 2005). Students today make judgments on certain issues more experientially than conceptually. Critical thinking encourages the students to act as a practitioner rather than as an observer. Dressel and Mayhew (as cited in Young, 1980) proposed that critical thinking can serve as 'a principle for integrating the curriculum as a point of view towards problems and their solutions and a way of thinking about basic problems faced by the mankind'. As such, they further summarized the five skills that is essential in critical thinking:

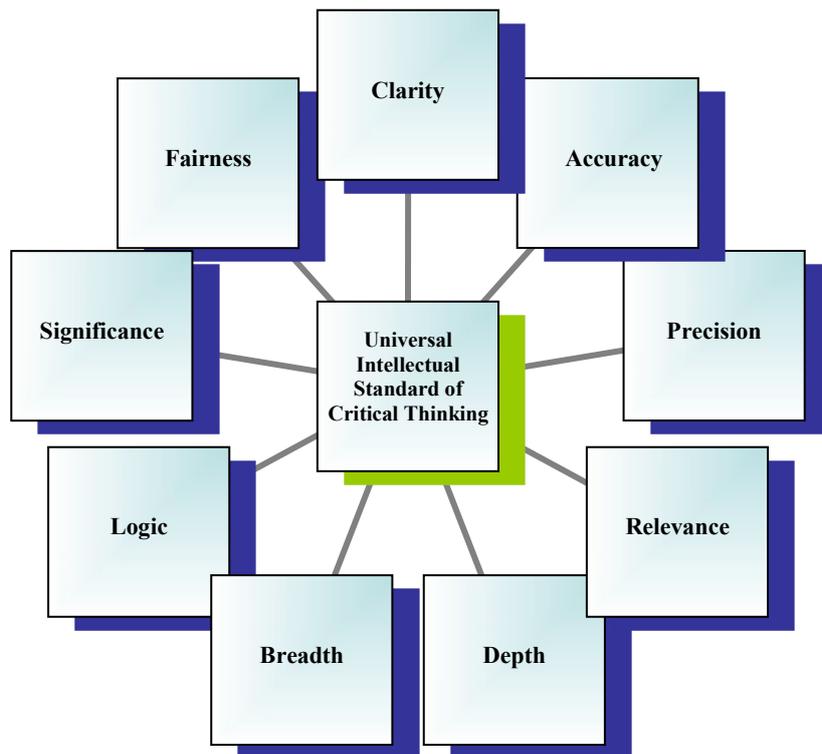
- a) *The ability to define a problem.*
- b) *The ability to select pertinent information for the solution of the problem.*

- c) *The ability to recognize stated and unstated assumptions*
 - d) *The ability to formulate and select relevant and promising hypotheses.*
 - e) *The ability to draw conclusions validly and to judge the validity of the inferences.*
- (As cited in Young, 1980)

To add more, Moore & Parker (2001, p. 23) stated that '.....thinking critically is not about attacking other people but is more about helping others about their ideas and also ourselves'. It is

understood that it is not a situation where winning takes place but more too in understanding the knowledge that is being shared.

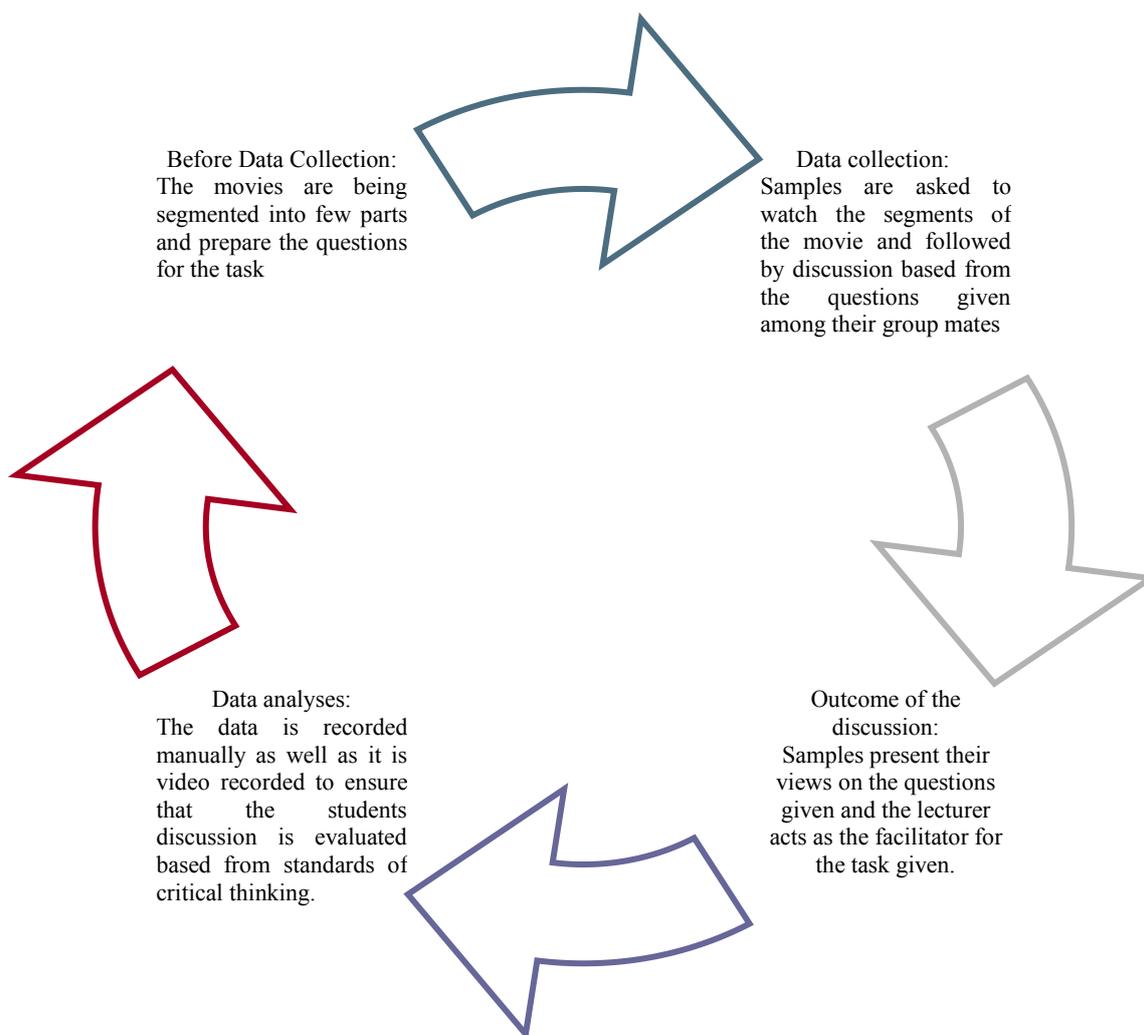
This study adopts the Universal Intellectual Standards for critical thinking and the theory of communicative language teaching as its crucial foundation. Paul and Elder (2007, p. 57) defined the concept of critical thinking as illustrated in the diagram below:



Besides, this research also adopts Communicative Language Teaching Approach because this theory is important in making the communicative competence as the goal of language teaching and acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication. Freeman (2000) posits that Communicative Language Teaching Approach promotes the linguistic competence of the students as well as the knowledge of forms and function of the language and their meanings.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative and quantitative study based from the students who are undergoing their studies in UiTM Penang. Those involved students are from BEL 130 (English for Communication Skills) class where they are thought on the basic skills of communication skills in the English Language. The research design is as follows:



The step by step method:

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Before Data Collection Preparing film segment Preparing Questions for task	Film segment is extracted from the full version. The critical questions are formed.
Data collection Watching the film segment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attention was gained through greetings and a slight conversation on how the students feel and what they have gone through that day. 2. The lesson outcome was shared where the goal for the day's lesson was to contribute and develop ideas for group discussion using language functions which have been learnt in the previous week. 3. The lecturer started by asking the students if they have any family members or relatives who are disabled. Few students responded.
Group discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The students were divided into an informal group of four as suggested by Johnson, Johnson and Smith. Every group was given a set of six questions and asked to read them all. 5. The students were given a little introduction to the background of the movie and then they were instructed to watch segment of

	<p>movies prepared to answer the given questions.</p> <p>6. They were then given 30 minutes to discuss in the small groups. The lecturer observed the group discussion form time to time and assists them solve arising matters.</p>
Presentation	<p>7. They then merge into one big group for an open discussion. Here, answers were elicited from every group and the lecturer often probes to invite more discussion, justification and arguments to create active participation and promote deep learning. The open discussion was recorded by another student who is familiar to the class. This is to lessen the nervousness and fear. This class is used to few classroom recordings as some activities in the previous weeks were recorded by their lecturer and discussed for further improvement.</p> <p>8. Finally, the students were asked to tick a simple questionnaire which aims at accessing their perceptions on the learning experiences during the lesson.</p>
Data analyses	<p>The recorded data including the short notes the samples have scribbled on during their discussion will be analyzed based on the given standards and instances of critical thinking will be scored accordingly.</p>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is found that the video streaming of the movie have spark the active participation among the students because this teaching material has made the classroom environment comes alive. It encourages the students to speak confidently in front of their peers as there was a space for them to say their views freely. The movie shown has proven to stimulate the students' interest towards the lesson and it is a great beneficial tool for communication interaction among the students. Based from the students' responses, it has been found that the students' ability in understanding a particular topic has increased via their discussions with the classmates and also the lecturer, who was the facilitator throughout the learning process. Therefore, it is also found that the students' pronunciation and acquisition of vocabulary has been improved. Apart from being involved in the interaction process, students were also being able to proceed with their development of other skills when they self-expressed through their writing.

Example from the students' discussion:

- Lecturer: Do you think that being disabled in some point, Sam was able to raise Lucy?*
Student: He is able to raise his daughter. Basically what makes a father competent from our point of view is that he can provide shelter, love and education for his daughter.....

Analysis: This question is post to the students to make sure students use the critical thinking standard which is 'breath' and 'logic'. This is because the student's answer shows the liberal viewpoint which gets deeply into the issue and provides accurate and precise details

- Lecturer: How does the society view Sam as a disabled father?*
Student 1: The society wanted to separate them so that Lucy will have a better life and education.....but society is being colder by on thinking what is best for Lucy.
Student 2: We should not separate Lucy and Sam because it gives negative impact in Lucy's personal development. So society needs to provide support Sam;

financially, guidance and also develop his skill in learning.

Analysis: The question post to the students is emphasizing more into finding the accuracy and precision answers from the students. This is because firstly, the students are asked to list the details that they have watched from the movie. Apart from that, they also tested on the depth of their understanding to make sure that they understand the complexity of the issue given.

CONCLUSIONS

Although sometimes it is difficult for the students to understand the Western movies, it is better to have English subtitles which may help the students to understand the movie better. It is believed that watching movies is very important in increasing one's visual and critical awareness. The lesson should be done interestingly by setting questions after the premiering of the movie, encourage healthy discussions in small groups and later open discussions with the lecturer and the students that may invite argumentation, criticism and also comments and feedbacks on various pertaining matters. This type of lessons should be student-centered and the lecturers should act as the facilitator in the discussions made.

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