

RESEARCH ARTICLE



ISSN

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

## THE STUDY OF COURSE DESIGN FOR ENGLISH MOVIE TEACHING

FUSHAN SUN

Lecturer & Research Scholar, School of Foreign Languages

Qingdao University of Science and Technology, Qingdao, China, 266061

[huihuifeifei@126.com](mailto:huihuifeifei@126.com)



FUSHAN SUN

### ABSTRACT

In China, English learners have little chance to experience the authentic environment of English language. Movies, as one of the most influential mass media, are not only able to help create such an authentic environment, but also of great help for English teachers to design, develop, and conduct English activities. In this thesis, the author develops movies teaching into an independent course. The author probes into movie selection in terms of students and movies and discusses the design of activities before, in and after class. At last, the author puts forth five types of tests which can be used in designing the tests of this course.

**KEYWORDS:** English movie teaching, course design, movie selection, class activities, test modes

Authentic language environment is always of great significance for English learners who rarely have the opportunity to live in the English-speaking countries. Movies can not only help create such an authentic environment, but also be helpful for English teachers to design, develop, and conduct classroom activities. Movies provide certain authentic language environment for non-native speakers. In this thesis the author explores some issues concerning course design for teaching English by movies.

In China, although movie teaching has been conducted, in most cases, movies are applied to assist other types of English courses such as listening, speaking, or movie appreciation. In this thesis, the author attempts to offer some guidelines for designing an English movie course which are suitable for college students. Three aspects required in designing this course will be discussed in detail—movie selection, design of activities and test modes.

### 1. Criteria for movie selection

So to what kind of movies can be used in movie teaching, teachers hold various ideas. Hence, some criteria may be helpful.

#### 1.1 Healthy

When it comes to selection of material, Smaldino et al. pointed out that whether the material is healthy in content and advantageous to foster students' good English should be considered. Since some movies with good material for improving listening and speaking may have the political tendency or sexy images, or objectionable bias. Healthy contents are the first priority. Movies with sexy images, filthy languages and political tendency should be avoided.

#### 1.2 Knowledgeable

Is it of help for students to enlarge their English knowledge and to understand English culture? Is it accurate and current in terms of the language? Does it contain clear and concise language? These questions were suggested by Smaldino et al.(2005) as to the selection of material. Movie teaching can provide comprehensive training, including

intonation, grammar, and vocabulary, listening and speaking. The type of movie a teacher chooses is important. Teachers should avoid movies with lots of dialects, slang of specialized language (Liu Yue, 2005).

### 1.3 Thought provoking

Some movies give us pieces of time that we can never forget. They fail to fade from memory even after the long passage of time and people chew it again and again after watching it. Movies will arouse the students' enthusiasm of thinking, give them insights into life, and even play a crucial role in one's growth. This kind of movies motivate students to express themselves, talk about themselves and will be of great help to train students in using English.

### 1.4 Motivating interest

When selecting movies, Smaldino et al. (2005) suggested that we consider the following question: Will they motivate and maintain interest? Only an interesting movie can arouse the students' efficiency and effectiveness of study and exploit their potential. The plot of the movie should be clear and easy to follow and the main storyline should be told in chronological order so that the students' interests could be aroused from the beginning to explore the answers of the plot.

## 2. Modes of activities in class

Different modes of activities in class are experimented based on different disciplines such as psycholinguistics, semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and cognitive science. In this thesis, the author will mainly focus on those modes of activities which can improve students' language proficiency (listening, speaking, reading and writing), communication ability and culture awareness. Harmer (1991:122) concludes seven modes of oral communicative activities, i.e., reaching a consensus, discussion, relaying instruction, communication games, problem solving, talking about yourself, simulation and role play. Five modes suitable for this course are mainly suggested.

### 2.1 Reaching a consensus

This is an activity in class which requires brainstorming, and is "very successful in promoting free and spontaneous language use" (Harmer 1991:122). One activity in this type may be designed as follows:

Movie	Beauty and the Beast
Requirements	Ask the students to list the personality traits of the characters after watching the successive fragments of the whole movie.
Stage 1	After watching the movie, all the students are told to make a list, and then they are put into pairs. Each pair should reach a consensus by negotiating and write a new list.
Stage 2	Put students into several groups and ask them to discuss the list of each pair and then re-negotiating to write a new list.
Stage 3	When each group has finished the new list, the teacher asks one student from each group to present their explanation of the list and justifies their choices.

In class activity such mode "is of great fun and produce a lot of English" (Harmer 1991:123). It can be adopted to improve students' communication ability.

### 2.2 Story-telling or picture describing

Story-telling or picture describing are two kinds of common instructional activities adopted in this study. Pictures, such as the characters' photos captured from movies provide students with chances to practice certain English expressions when the students tried to describe them. Also, students can be required to expect or make a guess at the following story according to a picture. Students try to retell the story and predict what might happen next. This story-retelling activity can help students to develop their creativity and speaking skills.

### 2.3 Discussion

The teacher may raise some open-ended questions for students to discuss in groups on topics retrieved from the movies. The topics of discussion range from humorous points in the movies to serious thought of life, like love and friendship, success and failure, survival and death, etc. Talking about organizing discussion, Harmer (1991:124) suggested that "(1) Put students in group first. (2)

Give students a chance to prepare. (3) Give students a task." The first suggestion means to lessen the students' embarrassment because some students may feel nervous when they are asked to express their opinions in front of the whole class. The second one is to give students some time to prepare. The third one is to ask students to respond to some controversial viewpoints about the topic related.

#### **2.4 Role Play**

Students can be assigned to different roles in a group according to the movie and required to perform in a similar or different linguistic context (Liu Xing, 2005). Activity of such type may arouse students' motivation to speak "because students do not have to take responsibility for their own actions and words — in other words, it's the character they are playing are speaking, not themselves. It has certainly been noticed that some shy students are more talkative when playing role (Harmer 1991:133). In order to make sure the success of such activities, students need to watch the fragment once more. Hence, it is necessary to preview the whole movie before the class, and the subtitle of the movie also should be given to the students before the class so that they can refer to them when they meet with some problems.

#### **2.5 Writing in Groups**

In this activity, students can be divided into groups of four students to five, since it may be difficult to handle the whole class or groups with more members. For example, after watching the movie fragments of *Beauty and The Beast*, each group is asked to prepare a piece of paper and reconstruct the story by their memory. Tell the students they can have a discussion among the group members and choose one student to write down what they are discussing. When all the groups are finished, the teacher may ask on student from each group to present the reconstructing story.

No matter which types of in-class activities are used, one point the teacher should keep in mind is to lessen students' anxiety because "if repeated occurrences cause students to associate anxiety with language performance, anxiety becomes a trait rather than a state. Once language anxiety has evolved into a last a trait, it can have pervasive

effects on language learning and language performance" (Arnold 2000:60).

There are other types of activities which also can be applied by the teacher. Those will not be further discussed in this thesis.

### **3. Test modes for the course**

In order to examine whether students improve their language proficiency by attending this English movie class and whether the teaching strategies are effective, six modes of test are suggested for this course, i.e., listening test, watching and testing, writing test, presentation, lesson, and quiz or examination.

#### **3.1 Listening test**

##### **3.1.1 Oral listening test**

Steps of organizing the test can be demonstrated as follows: To start with, the teacher extracts some audio materials from the movie fragments that the students have watched and then makes them into a test by recording it onto computer. Students are required to answer the questions, judge whether the statements are right or wrong or talk about the topics appearing in the audio materials. The teacher need play the recording set up beforehand and the students answer the questions by talking orally. Afterwards, the teachers score the students' answers and analyze the results to find out the difficulty degree of the test for reference of further organization of such tests.

Such tests may examine not only the students' listening ability but also their speaking ability. It may be possible that this type of listening tests will become quite easy for the students if they have really watch the movies and completed activities assigned by the teacher.

##### **3.1.2 Written listening test**

Written listening test used in this course is the same as the traditional listening comprehension test. The difference between them is that the materials of the listening tests in this course are taken from the movie fragments. The operating steps may be described as follows:

First, the teacher extracts some audio materials from the movie fragments that students have watched. The teacher needs to find the movie scripts and captions if needed. Second, the test

paper is set up according to the materials prepared. Third, the students take part in the test as they participate in the traditional listening test. Fourth, the teacher scores the test paper. Lastly, test results are analyzed to find the each student's weakness for further adjustment of materials and activities.

When carrying out any type of the listening tests, the following should be kept in mind:

The listening tests should be designed to test students' language proficiency, especially their listening ability, instead of testing their memory. The questions, statements or topics set up in the test should match students' English proficiency and chosen from the movie fragments they have watched.

### 3.2 Watching and testing

Watching and testing means that the students watch some movie fragments and then do the testing. This type of tests can be easier, reliable and relaxed for the students for they do the testing not by listening to the audio but by watching the videos on the screen. This type of tests is always applied to practice students listening and speaking. It may be divided into two minor types: class discussion and story reconstruction activities.

#### 3.2.1 Class discussion

Here the class discussion refers to a test form instead of a class activity. It is different from the class activity in that students engage in the discussion after watching and understanding the videos. Such type of tests may be used to examine the students' speaking, understanding of the movie fragments, communication and cooperation ability. After analyzing the results of the test, the teacher may find students' situation concerning activeness and participation in the discussion group. Therefore, the teacher may understand which students need more encouragement and inspiration in the later activity.

In designing this type of tests, the teacher should keep in mind that the topics must be completely related to the plot of the movie fragments and must be interesting and engaging so as to arouse students' interest and initiative to discuss.

#### 3.2.2 Story reconstruction

Here the story telling is also used as a test form instead of a class activity. This type of test requires

students to reconstruct the story individually, and what the students talk is to be recorded. In scoring this type of tests, the teacher may focus on students' accuracy and fluency of speaking together with their ability of logic thinking.

### 3.3 Presentation

Presentation can also be employed as a type of test in this course. The primary steps include:

- (1) Movie fragments are chosen by the teacher.
- (2) The students are given five minutes to prepare after watching the movie fragment, and then one student is asked to make the presentation before the whole class in 2 to 3 minutes.
- (3) All the presentations made by the students will be recorded.

Such types of test can be used to test students' listening ability and ability of impromptu speech on certain topics. When there are 70 students in class, as is the situation in Qingdao University of Science and Technology, it is troublesome for the teacher to manage. The author suggests that the teacher choose students at random and let them to make presentation in class.

### 3.4. Writing tests

Writing tests in this course generally refer to two types: comment writing and summary writing. Comment writing requires students to express their own view points after watching the movie fragments while summary writing demands students to write a summary only to summarize the story of the movie fragment.

#### 3.4.1 Comment writing

Comment writing means that the students make comments on something after watching some movie fragments. In this case, the main steps are:

The teacher selects some movie fragments which can arouse students' thinking and desire to make comments, and then based on the movie fragment the teacher gives a statement for students to express their ideas. After watching the movie fragments, students are required to write the comments. Then the teacher scores the comments and makes an analysis of the results of the test. This type of tests can be used to test students' power of observation, analytical ability and power of expression. By it the teacher can know the students' writing ability.

In carrying out this type of test, the teacher should not score the students' writing according to the grammar, but score the students' writing in terms of the whole structure of the writing, the logic inference, the cohesion of the writing as well as the expression of their viewpoints.

#### 3.4.2 Summary writing

The other type of writing tests is summary writing which is easier for students to complete. After watching the movie fragments, the students are required to write a summary about the story shown in the movie fragments. After that, the teacher scores the test and analyzes results of the test.

#### 3.5 Quiz or examination

By quiz or examination, we mean that the form is the test paper but the contents of the test paper should be based on the movies played in class. The quiz may be used during the class activities, and the examination may be used at the end of the school semester. This type of tests may be used to test vocabulary, listening comprehension, reading comprehension and writing skills.

#### 4. Conclusion

Movies provide interactive language, and the language of daily conversational exchange. Direct exposure to contexts of communication in movies will greatly enhance students' language comprehension ability while they receive the input of language materials. Movies also offer a stimulus for activities which exercise interactive language output, and hence movies will greatly improve students' oral English ability. Besides, movies allow language learners to look at situations, cultural backgrounds, social norms, and behaviors of people far beyond their classroom and help them foster linguistic sensitivity. A scientific course design may ensure the effectiveness of the course of movie teaching.

#### References

- [1]. Arnold, J. (2000) "Affect in Language Learning". Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. Print.
- [2]. Eken, A. N. (2003). You've Got a Mail: A Film Workshop [J]. *ELT Journal*, 42(1), 51-59. Print.
- [3]. Harmer, J. (1991). *The Practice of Language Teaching*. Longman. Print.
- [4]. Smaldino, S.E., J.D. Russell, R. Heinich and M. Molena (2005). "Instructional Technology and Media for Learning". Pearson Education Asia Limited and Higher Education Press. Print.
- [5]. Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (1995). Problems in Output and Cognitive Process They Generate: A Step towards Second Language Learning. [J]. *Applied Linguistics*, 16(3), 371-391. Print.
- [6]. Walker, M. (1990). Using Films in an ESL Literacy Class[J]. *TESL Talk*, 20(1), 224-233, Print.
- [7]. Yalden, J. (2000). *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. Print.
- [8]. 刘兴(2005). 英语电影教学模式初探[J]. *长沙铁道学院学报*, 6 (1), 179-181。
- [9]. 刘悦(2005). 英语电影欣赏课的学习策略和基本教学方法[J]. *安阳师范学院学报*, 1, 118-120。
- [10]. 潘琴(1997). 视听说课教材的选择[J]. *四川教育学院学报*, 7, 53-54, 72。
- [11]. 王守义(1981). 论外语电影教学[J]. *外语学刊*, 1, 61-65。