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Effects of Cultural Teaching through Movies in English Classes on EFL College Students' Attitudes towards English Reading

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Abstract

In the age of technology and information, communicating with people from different cultures is significantly important. Regarding this perspective, communicative competence has been the focus in the EFL educational context. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using movies in a culture-integrated English reading course at the college level. In order to achieve this purpose, pre- and post-reading comprehension tests, pre- and post-surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted. The results of data analysis showed that using movies in the culture-integrated English reading class positively affected students' interest and confidence towards English reading as well as their reading achievement. In this respect, we suggest that cultural teaching through movies in English classes should be learner-centered so that learners can proactively analyze and understand different cultural backgrounds shown in the movies and build schemas which can be used in their learning process.

Keywords: Culture-integrated English Reading Class, Learning Attitude, Movie Appreciation, Reading Achievement

1. Introduction

Advances in communication technology such as telephone, the Internet, e-mail, social media websites like Facebook and Twitter, and other sound-based and video-based communication means allow people all over the world to be closely connected to each other than ever before, even if they are thousands of miles away. As we are living in this society, communicating with people from different cultures has become critically important. In this respect, communicative competence has been the focus in Korean higher education over recent years. However, communicative competence means not only the linguistic abilities such as forms and structures of the target language, but also communicative abilities based upon a broad understanding of the society and culture in which the language is used.

Language is an integral part of culture, and culture is an integral part of language (Moran, 2001) [1]. Byram (1989) [2] and Kramsch (1998) [3] also argued that language is inextricably linked with culture, so fluency cannot be achieved without learning about the target language culture. Based on this close relationship between language and culture, increasing attention has been placed on cultural teaching in foreign language education. The relevance of cultural teaching is also acknowledged in the 7th national English educational curriculum

revision. This Korean official curriculum for compulsory education highlights the importance of understanding different cultures in learning a foreign language (Ministry of Education, 2015) [4].

As stated in the previous studies and the 7th curriculum revision, the cultural contents can play a significant role in foreign language teaching and learning. Considering this perspective, universities in Korea have been attempting to provide sufficient opportunities for students to achieve a broader understanding of English-speaking Western cultures as well as communication skills in English classes. In addition, a number of studies on evaluating cultural elements in English textbooks, developing, operating and applying cultural teaching models in English education, and evaluating its effectiveness have been steadily conducted (Jin, 2018; Khang & Kim, 2002; Kim, 2018) [5-7]. Despite these efforts, there are still challenges and difficulties that need to be enhanced in cultural education (CE) at the college level.

Omaggio(1993) [8] pointed out the challenges that teachers face in teaching cultural aspects in English classes as follows: lack of preparation time and practical teaching skills, and uncertainty about what aspects of culture should be taught. South Korea is no exception in terms of these challenges that teachers may face during their teaching practice. According to the previous studies listed above, CE in most English classes has been conducted based on the textbooks including cultural subjects or web-based materials such as related videos and pictures. However, students may focus on fragmentary translations of the texts rather than critical analysis and discussion of the contents through critical thinking in this kind of textbook-oriented CE. This is likely to hinder students' interest and motivation in English reading as well as cultural learning.

Based on the limitations of CE in the traditional English reading classes, this study aims to investigate how this cultural teaching model through movies in English classes affect students' attitudes towards English reading and learning achievement. This study also aims to analyze how the students perceived the cultural teaching through movies in English reading classes.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Importance of Cultural Background in EFL Teaching

Edward T. Hall (1959) [9] who coined the term "intercultural communication" stated that "language is culture, and culture is language", which means language and culture are complexly interlinked so that they complement with each other. In terms of the relationship between language and culture, Brown (2000) [10] defined culture as a way of life of member of society and as "the glue that binds a group of people together" by sharing the same culture. Considering that language and culture are closely connected to each other, it is fair to say that CE in EFL teaching is essential in order to communicate effectively with people from different cultures. Jeong and Nam (2005) [11] also claimed that English classes should not be limited to teaching the use and function of language, but should be accompanied by an understanding of the lifestyle, cultural style and attitude of English-speaking countries.

2.2 Cultural Education Using Movies in English Reading Classes

In an EFL educational context like South Korea, there has been a limit for learners to directly experience English-speaking cultures, so various audiovisual materials related to cultural subjects have been used in the English classroom. Movie is one of the most commonly used materials in English reading classes (Kang, Lee & Hwang, 2018) [12]. English classes using movies can foster students' interest and learning motivation, and develop their critical thinking skills on cultural issues as movies allow them to be exposed to natural language which is used in authentic cultural contexts (Allan, 1991; Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Christine, 2005) [13-15]. Park (2011) [16] also stated that the use of movies in language education has the effect of allowing learners to naturally acquire the target language culture and reducing learners' cultural shock by providing them with opportunities to indirectly experience non-linguistic elements as the movies reflect the society's popular culture.

For instance, one famous movie "The Devil Wears Prada" is based on the vivid work life at an American fashion magazine company. Through this movie, learners can get a glimpse into the American fashion including modern office look and indirectly experience the authentic situations that office workers often experience.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were Korean EFL college students, between the ages of 20-25. The total sample of participants consisted of 62 students (40 males and 22 females), who were taking an English reading class as a liberal arts subject at a four-year college located in Chungbuk, South Korea. Their English proficiency level was from beginner to upper intermediate, and their educational backgrounds varied. This study took place over a 13 week period of time except the mid-term and final examination periods.

3.2 Data Collection

The goal of this study was to examine the effectiveness of CE using movies in English reading classes on students' learning attitude and English reading achievement. Titles of the movies used in this study were *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Never Let Me Go* where students can learn and indirectly experience American cultures. Three types of data collection used in this study were as follows: pre- and post-reading comprehension tests, pre- and post-surveys on students' interest, confidence and learning attitude towards English reading, and in-depth interviews.

3.3 Data Analysis

SPSS Version 22 was used for the data collected for this study, and the collected data were analyzed through the following analysis methods.

First, the average value of the pre- and post-English reading comprehension tests was analyzed through the paired *t*-test to see how this teaching method had an effect on the EFL college students' reading abilities. Second, pre- and post-surveys were conducted to determine how this class affected the students' interest and confidence in English reading as well as their English reading attitude. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement questions used in the questionnaire, and the average value of the pre- and post-surveys through *t*-test was used to determine whether there was any change in the students' affective domains towards English reading. Finally, the data collected from the in-depth interviews were analyzed based on the three elements of the qualitative analysis process introduced by Miles and Huberman (1994) [17]. The data analysis consisted of the following three steps: 1) data reduction, 2) data display, 3) conclusion drawing and verification.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Effects of movie-based cultural education on EFL college students' reading achievement

The questions of pre- and post-reading comprehension tests were consisted of two types as follows: 1) translating the given text from English into Korean, 2) filling in the blanks with appropriate words.

According to the result of *t*-test, cultural teaching through movies in English reading classes had positive effects on EFL college students' reading comprehension ability. As shown in Table 1, the average of the pre- and post-tests was increased from 54.03 to 75.42, and the *p*-value was .000 which is less than the significance level 0.05. It was found to be statistically significant. Therefore, it can be seen that CE using movies in English reading classes helped improve students' overall reading comprehension skills.

Table 1. *t*-Test results on pre- and post-test

variable		mean	Std.dev	<i>t</i>	p
Reading test	Pre	54.03	21.97	-5.558	0.000
	Post	75.42	20.86		

4.2 Effects of movie-based cultural education on EFL college students' affective domains

A *t*-test was conducted to find out the changes in students' interest, confidence and attitudes towards English reading through this class. As a result of the *t*-test analysis, it was found that there was a statistically significant improvement in learners' interest and confidence in reading through this class. As shown in Table 2, the average score of interest in the pre- and post-surveys increased from 3.60 to 3.95, and the average score of confidence increased from 2.52 to 3.08. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-survey results, although the average score of students' learning attitudes towards English reading slightly increased from 4.02 to 4.16.

Table 2. *t*-Test results on students' affective domains

variable		mean	Std.dev	<i>t</i>	p
Interest	Pre	3.60	0.73	-2.800	0.006
	Post	3.95	0.64		
Confidence	Pre	2.52	0.79	-4.047	0.000
	Post	3.08	0.77		
Attitude	Pre	4.02	0.58	-1.350	0.180
	Post	4.16	0.61		

In this study, a factor analysis for testing validity and reliability of measurement items was carried out to measure EFL college students' attitudes towards English reading, and the items used for measurement were classified into three factors: interest, confidence and attitude in English reading. In the factor analysis process, items with factor loadings less than 0.5 were not considered. Also, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency of a data set, and each item was considered to be internally consistent as Cronbach's alpha of each item was found to be higher than 0.6. Table 3 shows the results of analyzing the reliability and validity of the survey measurement items.

Table 3. Analysis of validity and reliability

variable		Factor loading	Eigen value	Cronbach's α
Interest	Interest 2	.897	2.257	0.835
	Interest 1	.871		
	Interest 3	.833		
Confidenc	Confidence 4	.926	3.265	0.924
	Confidence 3	.916		

e	Confidence 2	.893	2.479	0.795
	Confidence 5	.878		
	Attitude 4	.856		
	Attitude 5	.825		
	Attitude 3	.790		
	Attitude 6	.665		

5. Conclusion

The grammar translation-based teaching method in English reading classes can have limitations in proving students' reading skills as well as understanding of different cultures. Considering this perspective, this study employed movies as teaching and learning materials in the culture-integrated English reading class. In order to closely monitor students' learning progress and the changes of affective domains such as interest, confidence and attitude towards English reading, pre- and post-reading tests, pre- and post-surveys and in-depth interviews were investigated. The data analysis indicated that the use of movies in the culture-integrated English reading classes was helpful to enhance students' interest and confidence in the study of English reading as well as their reading skills. Based on the study findings, we suggest that cultural teaching through movies in English reading classes should be learner-centered so that learners can proactively analyze the cultural background indicated in the movies and develop well-structured and coherent schemas which can be activated in the process of learning.

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