

Study of Teaching English in Primary School with Original English Animated Films

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Abstract. With the development of society and time, English teaching in primary school becomes more and more inevitable. In order to meet the need of English teaching in primary school and reform and improve the efficiency of English teaching, the author makes a detailed presentation to the usages of teaching English with original English animated films in primary school from the aspects of functions, choices, operations and so on with the hope of giving reference to other English teachers.

Keywords: Original English Animated Films; Functions; Choices; Operations.

1. Introduction

Teaching English to primary school students is a worthy and changeable try. Findings imply that the students ,who participate in the research, have mad e significant progress, while students with different language proficiency levels have made different change in terms of learning effect. That is to say, the middle group has made great achievement, while the upper and lower groups make no significant progress.

2. Functions of English Animated Films

(1) The Characteristics of English Animated Films

When it comes to teaching English with original animated films, students of primary school demonstrate great interest and enthusiasm, which agrees with children psychological features. The characteristics of English animated films which are vivid, active, interesting, adventurous, educating, meet the need of children’s language learning. Consequently, students can learn English with high motivation, following their interest.

(2) Role-play Performance and Dubbing

Students are keen on giving role-play performance and dubbing. It is without doubt that films actually get students to talk and they can be a stimulus to genuine communication in the classroom by giving performance. It is the film class that provides them with a platform to perform in English and therefore gain a sense of achievement. During the class, students have chances to notice their speaking shortage. As a result, they pay more attention on solving the problems they have, which contribute to great progress.

(3) Teaching Procedures of English Animated Films

Teaching procedures, including every step and activity in pre-viewing ,while-viewing and post-viewing, have great impact on teaching and learning effect. For instance, when it comes to the background information about the film, students will lose patience if it is too hard to understand. What’s more, if not given proper instructions, students will find it tough to finish some tasks, such as answering “why” questions, writing review, making film poster. To make sure the high-quality teaching effect, teaching procedures should be wisely designed. In other words, class activities should not be too easy or too tough for students.

(4) Stimulating Interest and Confidence

In class, according to the author’s observation, the slow students fail to perform well when they are divided into the same group, for the other group can easily surpass them. What’s more, the failure to perform well when they are divided into the same group, for the other group can easily surpass them. What’s more, the failure to perform well in class competition frustrates them a lot, which lead

to inefficiency in learning. Therefore, in class activities, according to students' language proficiency, teachers should carefully control grouping.

(5) Authentic Materials for Improving Students' Speaking Skills

By observing students' performance after class, it indicates that films are valuable authentic materials for improving students' speaking skills. For example, when talking about dreams, some students immediately reply "I am going to be a police officer." When they feel like being tricked, they always say, "You Liar." When they encourage their classmates, they can say "Anyone can be anything." Other lines from films that they always use in daily life are "OK. You are the boss." and so on. The fact is, after so many times' practice, students remember and intake the context, they therefore use the saying in films spontaneously. It can be clearly seen that films are beneficial for enhancing their interactional skills, which agrees with Katchen's claim (2003) that textbooks usually do not teach for instance small talk and conversational interaction; thus, films can be an effective way to motivate learners to develop their interactional skills, since films usually present the most current and real language with different interactional situations.

3. Choice of the Film

Based on the results of the test and the interviews, it can be safely drawn in a conclusion that English animated films have positive impact on English language teaching. In the other hand, we can find that the majority of students are highly motivated in learning English through films. Tao Linyan (2011) declares that English films teaching shares exceptional advantages with its authentic context, succinct language expressions and close-to-life dialogues, standard pronunciation, abundant vocabularies, original culture background, fascinating plot, penetrating characters as well as attractive scenes. However, for different proficiency level of students, the proper choice of the films proves to be difficult for teacher. Here are some recommendations about choosing appropriate films.

(1) Language Level

It has to be confirmed that the language level of the film is a little about the student's language proficiency level. One important of effective teaching is comprehensible input. If not students may lose heart in learning. Therefore, the words, speed and accent of the line should be taken into consideration. Even in the same film, different scenes of the film show different scenes of the film show different language difficulty. For primary school students, the choosing clips of the film should contain simple sentences in most instead of complex sentences, for the purpose of learning is to understand the content and learn to use them. For example, one scene of the film *Zootopia* contains several sentence pattern of "to be" and "can", which are suitable for students to learn.

(2) Theme

The theme of the film has to be positive and healthy, which makes the film educational. A good film will be a good educator that can live up students' life and light up their world. It sparks their imagination and let them see the world from different prospects. For example, the theme of *Zootopia* is about fighting for world peace, living harmoniously with all kinds of animals and being harmoniously with all kinds of animals and being brave and kind; the theme of *Skrek* is about keeping the homeland safe; and *How to Train Dragons* is about being friends with other creatures.

(3) Culture

The chosen film should be variable and contain culture meaning, because with a foreign language always comes also a foreign culture. It is important to try to spread knowledge of the culture of the target country in order for the learners to be able to understand it. Teaching culture in EFL class is extremely important, since textbooks usually give a rather narrow pictures of the English-speaking culture. For example, *Zootopia* spreads the ideas about American Dream, melting pot, racial discrimination, Utopia and so on. After this study, here are some popular activities in film class that can be recommended.

4. Teacher's Operation to the Film

(1) Guessing Game

For pre-viewing, a guessing game helps a lot to stimulate students' interest and attention. For example, when teaching *Zootopia*, students were asked to guess what the characters wanted to be in the film. The film should not only be native and authentic, but also short and easy to understand. All these features of the animated films meet the standards of children's proficiency and their psychological need. Without doubt, the relaxing and humorous atmosphere of the animated films will always attract children and make them motivated.

(2) Repeatedly Listening of the Film

The unique features of the English animated films make great deal in maintaining students' focus and attention in class. The visual feature of animated films make it an invaluable language teaching tool, enabling learners to understand more by interpreting the language in a foil visual context. Films assist the learners' comprehension by enabling them to listen to languages and see such visual supports as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously. These visual clues support the verbal message and provide a focus of attention.

(3) Engaging Learners Attention

The results support the view that English animated films, which act as useful authentic materials for language acquisition, can enhance students' English comprehensive ability, especially listening and speaking ability. Students were more engaged and involved in lessons using films than using textbooks or other learning materials. Engaging learners' attention is the key to effective learning and teaching, and teachers can then work out what aspects students could learn from different films. In particular, films were useful for enhancing their listening and speaking skills, which is in line with the opinion that films can be considered as a bridge between the real world and classroom environment in which effective ESL instruction takes place. In this study, the participants especially enjoyed using what they learned in the films which is not commonly found in textbooks. This means that learners do feel more confident and perhaps superior about authentic materials.

(4) Broadening Students Horizon

English animated films also provide students a large number of chances to get a better understanding of English culture, broadening students' horizon and strengthening their confidence. For example, there are a lot of topics of culture that can be further taught in the film such as the different symbols of dragon home and abroad, which can be seen from the film *How to Train Your Dragon*, the relationship of *Zootopia* and *Utopia* and so on. Only when students have access to the real English language culture, can they truly understand the language and have an international horizon.

(5) Other Operations

Create a class in the APP and ask students to join in, then set the dubbing task to students. By using the App, students can listen and imitate the line of film repeatedly sentence by sentence. The recording function will record the speakers' sound in order to let the speakers to compare and improve. During this period of study, the author showed everyone's works in class and gave students some awards, which made them feel a sense of achievement. Even the students of low-proficiency group were likely to finish the dubbing because they could practice again and again at home and they could see their achievement.

Besides the APP a Wechat group also can be used to set assignments for post-viewing. Students were asked to read the vocabulary and phrases on the handouts everyday before they finished the dubbing. By using Wechat group, teachers can check if students get what they learn in class or not. It also provides chances to teachers to correct their wrong pronunciation.

In conclusion, when having film class for primary school students, the learning competence of students should be carefully considered. Making full use of English animated films can help a lot in primary school students' English learning, especially for their listening and speaking, which are important and prior for young learners. What's more, choosing the appropriate learning material of English animated films is considered to be vital and difficult, which will take a lot of time for teachers. The learning material should not be too easy nor difficult. Furthermore, the design of film class

activities Teachers should take variable kinds activities and make full use of the supplemental learning tools.

5. Summary

First, English animated films can act as a useful resource of English language teaching and learning, for it helps to arouse students' interest and stimulate their English learning motivation. Having a look at the most favorable Disney animated films in recent years, it is easy to find out that the plots of the films are full of adventure and fun.

Meanwhile, the leading characters of the films who demonstrate a sense of justice are brave, humorous, which make them unique, original and educational. Also, the language had a vocabulary brainstorming about vocation. Also, teaching the theme song can be an exciting way to open a class. The theme song form Zootopia is a perfect choice for teaching. What's more, the pre-learning of vocabulary and the phrases of the selected video is needed, for the students of low-proficiency group may feel tough to follow. The pre-learning helps a lot.

Second, for while-viewing, freezing frame can give students more time to think about the film. Pause the playing button to get a still picture. Then ask students to talk about what they can see, what is happening and predict what is going to happen next. Next, continue playing for students to find out if they are right. This can be more motivating than simply asking the questions about the film.

Third, for post-viewing, imitation and role-play provide students with more chances to speak English. It is worth to be mentioned that the situation of the role-play clip should be interesting and challenging. The roles should be suitable for students to get involved in the interaction easily. Also, students should be given time to prepare and do the rehearsal, during which a team leader should guide the team and keep the discipline. What's more, in this study, the students of low-proficiency group sometimes dared not to speak and interact with others. The other way of helping the low-proficiency group is to ask the students from high-proficiency group for help. Given appropriate chance, the students form high-proficiency group can be good helpers. Thus, teachers should pay more attention on them and encourage them to join in the performance. Besides, class props are needed in the role-plays. The other activity for post-viewing is dubbing, which is one of the most popular activities. In class, we can turn the sound off and replay the scenes. Then the students substitute for the actors. At the same time, the teacher records the performance to compare with the original one.

The last but not least according to students' different proficiency level, authentic material needs to be carefully chosen to ensure the level of difficulty is suitable and the content is of interest to students. Generally speaking, films contain difficult vocabularies or ungrammatical or incomplete structures that are hard for students to understand. Thus, students might not be able to discriminate the reduced or incomplete forms of language while they were watching the films. What's more, Lynch(1998) further explained that when the speaking rate is too fast, listeners will not have enough time to process the complete messages. This means that they will focus on their attention more on lexical or grammatical processing that the meaning of the text. Therefore, they would not catch all the message conveyed.

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