

**CREATIVE ACTIVITIES IN LANGUAGE
TEACHING BY USING AN ENGLISH FILM
CALLED AKEELAH AND THE SPELLING BEE**

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Abstarct

The aim of this study is to give an overview of some activities by using the films to teach English in a class of students who study English as a second language. Many English teachers accept that language learners seem to be more motivated when a film is involved, especially when it is an authentic one as it is a very supportive activity. Watching films cannot be enough by itself in language learning. This is probably because of watching it with subtitles in students' own language but not in English. An English film can be used in many class activities to open a way to focus for discussing the language and culture. With a good planning it creates a warm atmosphere among the students and they are helpful to reach an objective as a pastime activity too. It should be kept in mind that methods can especially work best only if it is done with pleasure. Using these activities give students courage, motivation, and increase their stimulation. Oral and other skill courses are composed by using common ideas, functions, or grammar emphasized in the film. If the right film is chosen motivation will increase. The purpose of the students' watching it should also be clear. The use of films will help improve the language and the learners' social developments.

With the help of these activities, students will develop their pronunciation, vocabulary, authentic language, cultural transmission, and speaking abilities. Below are listed 12 activities to be carried out during viewing and post viewing the film. The author selected this film because it can be used in any class easily as it has no inappropriate scenes and students will have empathy on the players in the film made in a school environment.

Key words: Activity, films, dubbing, spelling, pronunciation, matching, listening.

Introduction

Language learning is a complex process: In this process, language teachers can't be far away from the technology, which is the application of scientific knowledge to practical tasks by organizations that involve people and machines. It is a fact that technology cannot be separated from society. It is a well-known fact that audio-visual materials are a great help in stimulating and facilitating the learning of a foreign language. According to Wright (1976:1) many media and many styles of visual presentation are useful to the language learner. That is to say, all audio-visual materials have positive contributions to language learning as long as they are used at the right time, in the right place. In language learning and teaching process, learner use his eyes as well as his ears; but his eyes are basic in learning. River (1981: 399) claims that it clearly contributes to the understanding of another culture by providing vicarious contact with speakers of the language, through both audio and visual means (Çakır, 2006) The use of image and

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sound is very helpful in success of the pedagogical aims of reading, writing, listening and speaking. During the film it will be easier for students to follow the plot and learn the idioms. They also feel more motivated to learn the language.

Watching English films is a perfect way for learners to improve and enhance their English, especially listening and speaking skills. Films can help us develop not only our listening and speaking skills but also pronunciation and vocabulary. They enliven the classroom and draw students' attention, and help build connections between the discourse of the classroom and the contemporary cultural world. Many techniques can be created like the ones explained below.

Properly selected and presented, films can do a lot, what is perhaps most difficult in university language teaching: move students to speak (Steward, 2006).

There are many good reasons to make use of videotaped materials and mass media artifacts in the management classroom: such materials make accessible visual and emotional experiences to students, they enliven the classroom and engage students' attention, and they help build connections between the discourse of the classroom and the contemporary cultural world.(Hobbs, 1998:262)

Film, as an audio-visual art, shaped by thoughts and feelings which reflect national spirit, reflects the cultural and aesthetic image of the society in a realistic manner. Film is like a mirror reflecting real life, popular culture and art.(İşcan,2016:2)

When you watch a movie or TV program, superficial and even deep feelings and emotions are elicited, such as excitement, anger, laughter, relaxation, love, whimsy, or even boredom. These emotions are often triggered or heightened by the mood created by specific visual scenes, the actors, and/or the background music. A video can have a strong effect on your mind and senses (Berk, 2009:132) According to Berk the outcomes are underlined below as:

1. Grab students' attention;
2. Focus students' concentration;
3. Generate interest in class;
4. Create a sense of anticipation;
5. Energize or relax students for learning exercise;
6. Draw on students' imagination;
7. Improve attitudes toward content and learning;
8. Build a connection with other students and instructor;
9. Increase memory of content;
10. Increase understanding;
11. Foster creativity;
12. Stimulate the flow of ideas;
13. Foster deeper learning;
14. Provide an opportunity for freedom of expression;
15. Serve as a vehicle for collaboration;
16. Inspire and motivate students;
17. Make learning fun;
18. Set an appropriate mood or tone;
19. Decrease anxiety and tension on scary topics; and
20. Create memorable visual images.

Introduction to the activities: There are twelve activities presented in two groups as while-viewing and post viewing activities.

These activities include dubbing practice, reading subtitles, attention activity, moving and learning, guessing what will happen next, practicing conversation, finding the main idea, spelling words, watching and circling the correct answers, listening and repeating the sentences, matching the pictures, finding who did the activity. During these activities the students will not only be developing their listening and vocabulary skills but also doing brain storming activities. The purpose is to include all the students in the learning process with a friendly atmosphere and take them away from classical teaching environment.

This is a brief description of the film: Akeelah Anderson is an 11-year-old girl in Los Angeles, with a love for words. Spelling words is her unique hobby. She is a bright student, but she has been skipping class and is barely passing. Akeelah wins the spelling-bee and goes to the state contest. Dr. Larabee a college professor enters the picture. The principal has asked Dr. Larabee to coach Akeelah. At first, Akeelah is stubborn and hardheaded that she doesn't need any help to win the next spelling-bee. However, Dr. Larabee proves her that she doesn't know all the words to win. During the summer, Dr. Larabee is a tough taskmaster teaching her as much as he can. He then gives her 5,000 new words to learn and tells her to do it on her own. With the help of the whole neighborhood, Akeelah learns all the words, and makes it to the national spelling-bee in Washington

Sample Activities

While-viewing activities

Activity 1: Dubbing practice

The aim of the activity: To develop speaking activity, increase creativity and pronunciation by volunteer studies in a fun environment with the help of the film in its original language. To grasp the natural spoken English with the help of the native speakers.

Dubbing- which is a process used in filmmaking can be a good incentive in teaching the foreign language. To implement this activity, students will have the words of the dialogue in their hands beforehand on a printed paper. The students start watching the relevant part of the film. Then the volume is turned down by the teacher. While re-watching the scene the learners do the dubbing and record that part and form their own clips. When the process is done it will give them great confidence. They may also do this study from their mother tongue into English for fun in groups and also upload them on the internet. As it has been described in British dictionary the direct method is a method of a teaching a foreign language with minimal use of the pupil's native language and formal grammar. So from this point of view this activity presents a good example. This is sometimes called the natural method, and is often used in teaching foreign languages, refrains from using the learner's native language and uses only the target language. Choosing the films to be dubbed according to the wishes of the students will be more encouraging.

As a sample study in this film the speech between the minutes from 27:58 to 29:36 is used.

This is the dialogue to practice between the groups of students. This is a good speaking activity to practice of students of four. The dialogue is between the contestant and his mother, the jury, and the sister.

- "Carmagnole."
- Could I get a definition, please?
- A lively song and street dance.
- Um... C... A...00: M... A...G-N-O-L-E, carmagnole.
- That's correct and that means you are our 10th and last finalist for the district bee.
- They cheated! They cheated! That boy's mama helped him out.
- What... excuse me? Who are you?
- I'm Keelie's sister. I was standing back there and I saw that boy's mama give him the letter G. She was saying "geeeee."
- He knew the word! I mean... it's one we studied. - He knew it.
- Ma'am...did you help your child spell the word? Ma'am, this is serious business.
- Oh, you're damn right it's serious! You are going to give these kids ulcers! Do you know how long he has studied for this? He knew that word.
- No, I didn't.
- I'm sorry, number 62, you are disqualified from competition.

This activity will develop learners' pronunciation, increase their interest, create a fun environment, and support their grammar.

Activity 2: Reading subtitles while watching the film

The aim of the activity: Develop speaking ability, correct spelling, cooperative learning, and authentic learning.

Repeating the scenes in the films is always helpful when trying to develop student understanding of the whole subject. While watching the English film, English subtitles are added and the learners are asked to read the lines at the same time to improve the pronunciation of the words which is essential for being able to communicate in English. The speed of the speech is adjusted according to the need of the learner with the right keys of the keyboard. Watching an English film with its original subtitle will be very effective to learn the spelling in the most natural way. The three powerful items; watching, hearing and seeing will be a great help for the learner. Having the subtitle in another language will distract the attention so if there has to be a subtitle it is best to have it in English to teach the right way of spelling.

Activity 3: Attention activity "Catch the words and clap once"

The aim of the activity: Learning spelling of the new words develop listening skills, creating a fun learning atmosphere in language phase by developing the listening skills of students.

This activity offers advantage for enhancing listening skills.

How to use it: To carry it out, any part of the film is chosen and the selected key words uttered are written on the board. Optionally the pronunciation or/and the meanings are checked in class. Then as the selected clip is started the students will be full alert waiting for the given words to catch. As soon as they catch the words they should clap their hands once, they should not be late in doing this. For example, in this film the words are chosen between the minutes 00:46:41 to 47:47. These words are written on the board: year, attain, muscles, essay, spell. The students get ready to clap when they hear them. This also creates a good atmosphere in class. They will be learning the language by having fun.

Activity 4: Move and learn

The aim of the activity: Break passive learning by forming a warm atmosphere in language learning; help to learn by physical exercises by creating a fun environment as a warm up activity too.

In this film, the main character is spelling the word by jumping in the minute: 01:31:19 during the competition. Because she had studied the words while jumping rope in the previous parts. So the teacher asks students do the same activity with different words which will lead to a fun environment. The students start jumping and at the same time spell the words they choose or the ones given by the teacher. The power of movement cannot be denied during this learning stage. It will break the classical passive learning postures. According to John Ratey, author of *A User's Guide to the Brain*, calls exercise "Miracle-Gro for the brain" because of its role in stimulating nerve growth factors. Exercise may have both a physiological and developmental impact on children's brains. Physical mechanisms include: Increased oxygen to the brain that may enhance its ability to learn, Alterations to neurotransmitters and Structural changes in the central nervous system.

Activity 5: Guessing what will happen next

The aim of the activity: Develop thinking and speaking ability, strengthen the previous learned grammar structures.

Guessing is very important in language learning as it is a great way to intuition. When the students try to express their guesses they may use their dictionaries or grammar books for help. This is how this activity is used: The teacher pauses the film in one of the hit moments and asks students to guess what is going to happen next in the following scene. It will be an opportunity to produce lots of sentences in 'going to future'. For example in the minute of (00:36:01) when it is stopped by the teacher, all the learners will be impatient to see the next scenes it is a good opportunity to make them speak. Sample sentences can be like 'Her mother is going to punish her. She is going to be angry'....etc.

Activity 6: Practicing the conversation

The aim of the activity: Develop speaking, pronunciation, mimicry, creating a natural environment, learning cooperative studying with the others. With the help of this activity learning takes place as the activity is engaging and memorable. The atmosphere of the class will be broadened to include the word outside of the learners which will offer a lot of language practice opportunities.

Any selected part of the film as shown below is practiced in pairs. The emphasis is put on the way it is said and the mimics with the facial expressions. This is a helpful opportunity to give more importance to mimicry which often lacks in many language classes. The students will have the opportunity to observe how native speakers use interactional language combined with appropriate body language and the right behavior. As the dialogues are performed in the class the students are requested to make some substitution drills. The students try to make up more sentences similar to the same structure. Here is the time sequence when the sample dialogue takes place. The teacher will have the role of a facilitator .He will monitor the class and offer assistance if anyone needs some. In this role play activity the learners will put themselves in the others' shoes to form an imaginary situation. Students can be asked to think of some other scenarios to act similar to this role-play activity which will cause a brainstorming activity.

00:08:I'd like to welcome you all to Crenshaw's first school wide spelling bee. We have some very special students competing today, so let's give them all a round of applause.

00:08:50: Whooh!

00:08:53: Okay, we drew numbers to see who would go first,

00:08:56: and that's Chuckie Johnson from the eighth grade.

00:09:03:Mr. Welch, I have a question about the basketball nets.

00:09:05: Chucky! You need to pay attention.

00:09:08: Now, we're going to start things off with "grovel."

00:09:12: Gravel, like little rocks?

00:09: No, grovel like get down on your knees and grovel.

00:09:20: Get down on my knees? What?!

00:09:22: Just spell the word.

00:09:24:Uh, G-R..A-V-E-L.

00:09:30: No, Chuckie, you spelled gravel.

00:09:36: You weren't listening. I'm sorry, Chucky.

00:09:39: Who cares?

Post-viewing activities:

Activity 1: Finding the main idea of the film

The aim of the activity: Developing productive discussions to support the structure by brainstorming activities. This will cause students' focus and attention, encourage them dialogues when discussing the main idea of the film between their friends and this participation will provide the teacher some idea if the watched part has been understood or not.

This activity can be used as a revision after the film has been watched. The students are asked to guess the main idea of the film and tell it to the rest of the class individually or in groups. It may not only lead to a good and productive discussion but also give the teacher an idea about the level of the students. For instance the best guess can be on focus of being patient or ambitious studying and its fruit in the film called "Akeela".

Activity 2: Spelling the words

The aim of the activity: Learning the correct spellings of the vocabulary. Creating a fun environment, moving students to break the monotony in class. This activity will help to

form a cement between the letters and the sounds. The more words they learn to spell them more words they will recognize and will use them in their speech.

How to learn spelling the words helps to develop knowledge by forming the relationship between letters and sounds which also results in better reading.

Because of this reason by setting a competition atmosphere in class, the teacher asks students to spell the vocabulary taught before. Or students can ask each other to spell the words they choose and check each other with the help of dictionaries. Giving points to each other also adds an extra excitement to the activity.

In this film the word 'A-R-G-I-L-L-A-C-E-O-U-S,' is a good example to this in minute of 01:29:49

Activity 3: Watch the scene and circle the correct answers

The aim of the activity: The revise and evaluate what has been learned so far.To contribute the reinforcement of the studied part.

Any scene of the film is selected and multiple choice test is prepared beforehand by the teacher. And this test is applied in class after reviewing the film. Then students can evaluate their answers.

Here is a sample optional test.

Akeela is.....years old.

- a) 11 b) 10 c) 13 d) 15

Akeela's tough rival is

- a) Mike b) Dylan c)Javier d)Suzan

She studied the new words by.....

- a)swimming b)dancing c)jumping rope d)watching TV

Her mother is working

- a)in an office b)at school c)at a hospital d)at a disco

Activity 4: Listen and repeat the sentences for reinforcement

The aim of the activity: To develop speaking ability, reinforcing the vocabulary and structure.

Repeating scenes is especially helpful when trying to develop student understanding of complex topics (Wolensky, 1982).

Repetition is one of the most important learning strategies in language learning. By repeating more and more the confidence will increase and the speed of speech will improve. It will also strengthen the connections in the brain that help students learn. While watching the film the pattern sentences are repeated again and again by pressing the movement keys of the keyboard. For example: While practicing the selected scenes by pressing the left movement key on the keyboard over and over the learner will have the chance to repeat the sentences at the same time. These are sample sentences to practice

this activity. They can be repeated many times to learn the structure and to increase the speed of speech. This can be practiced by learners at home as a self-study too.

Sample sentences are:

(19:15) You know what?

(26:58) We need you to spell the word.

(01:10:58) I want to tell you something.

Activity 5: Matching the pictures with the right sentences

The aim of the activity: To revise the structure, sample sentences by revising the whole story. To form a warm atmosphere by remembering the whole story by forming discussion groups among students.

Different pictures from the film are taken and the sentences uttered in these scenes are written below the pictures randomly. Then the teacher asks the learners to find which picture belongs to which sentence. This is a sample activity with pictures and sentences to match.

a) Now it's your turn. b) Agreed. c) What do you think rap is? d) I talked to the pilot.



Activity 6: Find who did this activity

The aim of the activity: Have a revision of pronunciation, vocabulary and pattern sentences. To brainstorm and develop focus on the film.

The teacher chooses as many sentences as he wishes uttered in the film and write them on the board. Then he asks the learners to remember and write the people who said them in the blanks. This practice may optionally be done on any specific scene of the film to draw the learners' attention and focus.

Focusing techniques can show a physical reality as seen by the human eye or show it in a different way (Bazin, 1967). Deep focus refers to having all parts of a scene in focus from the nearest object to the farthest.

Example:

1.....They laugh because you intimidate them. (Said by Dr. Larabee)

2.....I did not know what to do. (Akeela)

3.....He's never won anything in his life. (Dylan)

4.....We are going to win. (Dylan's father)

Conclusion

This article has described twelve activities through *Akeela* film used as a source and stimulus to teach English. The purpose is to show that more and more brain storming activities can be produced to give a color in language teaching. Using films in language teaching is a good motivation and enjoyable way providing authentic rich context and varied language. They give visual contexts bringing variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of teaching techniques and resources, helping students to develop all four communicative skills. For example, teachers can use the whole film or sequence to practice listening and reading, and as a model for speaking and writing. Films also act as a springboard for follow-up tasks such as discussions, debates on social issues, role plays, reconstructing a dialogue or summarizing. It brings extra variety to the language learning classroom by screening different types of film: feature-length films, short sequences of films, short films, and adverts. With the help of the films the learners practice the integration of verbal and non-verbal language. They also raise the awareness of the role of the body language and facial expressions in communicating different attitudes and emotions. They bring a lot of speaking practice, new vocabulary and expressions, cultural life, and other effective tasks are brought to the class. Students can work in groups for cooperative language learning with especially dubbing and subtitle activities which are unlike the method they follow at schools. They will get away from their boredom by moving in class. They will not be sitting on their desks passively but making guesses, spelling the words, repeating the vocabulary in their natural way, revising the studied part of the film. More important than this is an English film should not be viewed for the sake of spending time .On the contrary many more activities should be produced by the teachers according to the needs of the class in this changing world. The learners should be guided to search more to find new techniques in language learning.

These activities will develop students’;

- concentrating on language learning,
- forming a connection with each other,
- stimulating the flow of ideas,
- increasing understanding,
- having fun during the learning stage,
- setting an appropriate mood,
- leaving a permanent effect in the language
- knowing the culture,
- drawing their attention,
- changing their attitudes.

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