



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND THE IMPACT OF NOVEL READING AND MOVIE WATCHING IN ENGLISH AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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### **Abstract:**

English language learning is considered as a language that must be learned as it is needed in everyday life in local and global context. In response to students need to learn English, it is obvious that modern technology, i.e. modern environment is 'the' environment suitable for students' prosperity nowadays. However, the longer and more complex things are to learn, the more the need to emphasise the importance of evolution in teaching English. This is because our society may be characterised by its diversity, complexity and interconnectedness. The educational systems must embrace this fact and adjust the 21<sup>st</sup> century societal needs by using all teaching tools. Young Adults (YA) nowadays are keen on speaking and understanding English, which is spontaneously connected with reading and writing, such as texting, using social media, but when it comes to book/novel reading, there is a believe that they do not prefer real, hard copy books. Of course, they substitute books with technology as modern, cheaper, and faster tool for reading and getting the information. This study aims to compare and contrast reading novels' strategy and /or watching movies. It aims to find out the YA's language learning based on books' reading, and based on movie watching. The study reveals English language achievement in both cases, however with a kind of difference in English usage between groups.

**Keywords:** movies, novels, technology, reading, young adults

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## 1. Introduction

Traditional teaching that uses traditional methods is fairly widespread in many contexts, as mentioned by Harmer (1991), Richards & Rodgers (1995) and Larsen-Freeman (2007), but questions may be raised about the efficiency and about efficacy of consequent learning: these are the main issues when dealing with the 21<sup>st</sup> century English Language Learning (ELL). Scrivener (2011: 15) succinctly describes traditional teaching as: *“jug and mug - the knowledge being poured from one receptacle into an empty one”* where the teacher is the ‘knower’ who transmits the knowledge. He also warns about the risk if only these approaches are being used. Thus, ‘deep’ and ‘wide’ approaches to learning are a ‘must’ in modern education. Watkins (2001) states that these deep approaches to learning are associated with learning environments, features of which include the role of the teacher, his/her involvement and support, and student collaboration, all of which should be taken into consideration in a modern teaching context, i.e. at both levels, local and global. It is teachers’ responsibility to plan and organize the teaching in such a way that includes challenging skills. When discussing about skills, both: book reading and technology application, belong to ELT approaches: Book reading for the purpose of learning a foreign language is much older than technology usage, however, the latter one is considered to be more wanted nowadays and it has a large expansion in society. On the other hand, the world is dominated by technology and commerce which also results in books’ offers. Taking into consideration all these offers, the aim of all foreign language teachers and educational institutions is to develop further foreign language teaching and learning based on students’ interests and learning styles. As Hutchinson and Waters (1992) point out, learners are seen to have different needs and interests, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on the effectiveness of their learning, while the area of TV watching i.e. movie watching has been developed especially rapidly. Taking into consideration that there is a believe that FL learning through reading is more difficult than watching a movie, it is advisable to mention in this paper that a person needs to understand around 300 words in order to understand the full text, nonetheless there are graded books that are appropriate for each persons’ reading level.

As FL teachers – practitioners nowadays are more interested to find the best approach that would improve students’ FL skills, this paper would like to investigate reading in a FL and/movie watching. Many FL teachers and theorists have started producing FLT courses and syllabuses which would give priority to the video language learning, i.e. technology in a FL class, which would be more relevant to learners’ needs. Thus FLT in general, and its methods to language learning/ teaching offer a choice, and

the books 'content and techniques, as well as the choice of a movie that the students would watch, are based on the learner's reasons to learn English.

The aim of this paper is to analyze youngsters' concern about learning a FL through books' reading and/or movie watching in a FL; To reveal the significance of novel reading for the purpose of foreign language learning, i.e. English learning and the significance of TV watching as efficient methods/instruments in contributing the students' FLL. The aim of the paper is to engage students' higher-order thinking, which involves analysis, synthesis and evaluation of their own FL acquisition based on their preferences, either reading preferences or watching movies. It also aims to outline the main distinctions of two language learning techniques; to reveal the most important motivating factors of both approaches; to present the selection of students' books, movies, and the most wanted topics that are content and learning strategies.

The purpose of this paper is designed for the level of high school students in Prishtina. It has been carried out by following Widdowson (1975) about "*the verbal and nonverbal realization of the communicative system*". This paper is to present three assumptions for English learning and practice:

- The learners' preferred way of learning a FL;
- The learners' awareness of the foreign language improvement;
- The learners' confidence of their foreign language usage in everyday situations.

The upper mentioned assumptions just help FL teachers/practitioners to understand students' opportunities and wishes to choose either books/novels or movies that determine students' awareness about discussions in English language and their needs to learn English. Further teacher-teacher, students-student, student-teacher or vice versa, cooperative analysis of the students' lacks, needs and wants help to formulate foreign language teachers' and linguists' main objectives of FLT course nowadays, which try:

- To identify the language, the students, the need to learn;
- To develop different language skills;
- To teach students learning strategies;
- To integrate different teaching methods and novel or movie content;
- To integrate language and learning strategies, and
- To specify the goals for both components.

The content selection of the books and movies is the most important problem for this level of students. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) claim that content is the primary focus of instruction, rather than language, while Allen and Widdowson (1974) consider grammar as an activity how language is used in order to give expression to certain reasoning processes, how it is used to define, classify, generalize, to make hypotheses,

draw conclusions and so on. In this sense, content selection is closely connected with a). reading and b). watching a movie for extracting particular information. These will become the main activities to develop reading, speaking, listening and writing skills. As far as these activities are concerned, students are free to develop strategies for reading, listening and speaking.

## **2. Methodology**

The paper was conducted in Prishtina and it included sixty-seven high school students who volunteered to participate. They were asked to write a paper and express their own opinions about reading novels in a FL/English, and watching English speaking movies; their own preferences whether reading or watching a movie; reasons of these preference; their preferred books/ movies; the benefits of reading/watching in English, as well as the disadvantages, if applicable.

The students were offered different books (that are movies, too): *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Harry Potter*, *The Last Song*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, *P.S. I love you*, *Dear John*, *Message in a Bottle*, *A Walk to Remember*, *Divergent* and *Something Borrowed*. They were asked to read them or to watch the movies, based on their own preferences.

## **3. Results and discussions**

Surprisingly, this paper has received a considerable amount of attention on the part of students. It is performed in terms of opinions, students' attitudes towards reading for the purpose of learning a foreign language, attitudes towards movie watching for the purpose of learning a foreign language, generalizations, etc.

The results of the paper show somehow scattered responses about novel reading and TV – movie watching. The participants' responses show that they were interested to know how they can learn to write and speak a FL well. They are also interested to find a way where they can enjoy themselves, improve their FL skills and enrich their vocabulary at the same time. Most of the participants have shown that they are aware that reading in a FL helped them improve their ability to express ideas and concepts in a foreign language; yet, there are participants' responses which promote movie watching in their original versions, and it helps them improve their FL skills in a shorter time.

The selection of books or movies is clearly defined by Kennedy and Bolitho (1990) who point out that the selection is based on the students' needs and its functional

analysis, and the development of related communicative abilities such as reading, listening, speaking: “what and how” speaking-in an appropriate balance and in a suitable context.

According to students’ responses, the integration of English literature contributes to students’ motivation. More specifically, the students show that they enjoy reading novels. They feel free to choose the novels and organize reading time. More than half of the students have responded that they have the opportunity to become protagonists in stories and it helps them develop their imagination, all through reading.

Some of the responses are shown below. They are distinguished as student’s response A, B, C,... such as:

- A. *“I prefer watching a movie because it takes less time than reading a book”.*
- B. *“I like reading novels because you become more open minded, you get curious and challenged. Reading novels makes you think deeper”.*
- C. *“I’ve just finished “A walk to remember”, it was a great book. It made you continue reading. When I watched the movie ... it was a disaster”.*
- D. *“Reading books make your imagination get to work, become more creative”.*
- E. *“TV watching??? It’s relaxing and you don’t have to use your brain a lot”.*
- F. *“It takes only two hours to watch a movie”.*

Half of the students have responded that they like reading, confirming that imagination is different and more developed, adding that English language became better. They also add that books would remain on the bookshelf and re-reading would be always attractive. The books are better because the narrator narrated/explained feelings and it offers opportunities to experience different points of view, accordingly to experience English language growth. The author’s emotions and ideas are transmitted directly to the reader, and the reader/ the student can find himself/herself even in other characters, and that can also improve spelling, reading writing skills in English. The books allow to better experience the feelings and thoughts of the characters, while the movies only show the actions of the actors.

*“The books have only one writer, movies can have more directors who can change or modify the story”*- was one of the students’ responses why more than half of them consider reading as a better solution for FLL.

Then again, students have responded that they also prefer movie watching, for the reason that reading a book is more expensive, or it is harder to download for free and reading environment is more limited (except reading corners which are not very popular around us), while movie watching is considered to be much more entertaining; movies can be watched with friends.

#### 4. Conclusions

This paper has dealt with the main features distinguishing novel reading or movie watching in English of high school students. It has tried to emphasize how can novel reading in English and watching movies balance all factors that stimulate English learning/teaching process.

I strongly believe that of course, the books' or movie content are important motivating and stimulating factors for students. As learning is based on students' "wants" it can affect the development of all foreign language skills, determine language acquisition, furthermore it can fulfill the need for students to "learn at their own pace". It can also be considered inherently more interesting as book selection is related to a variety of personal interests. The whole process of reading in a foreign language, or watching a movie in a foreign language adjust foreign language development and cooperation of student-teacher or student-student activities.

Since it can be more successful, it can make ELT methodology more interactive and appropriate, it is concluded that language practice through novel reading and movie watching in a foreign language is viewed more as a set of functions.

One important point of this paper is that if the educational systems are going to embrace change in education, in this case change in English language teaching, it is necessary to look at the values and beliefs that constitute the English learning philosophy, i.e. a teacher's potential to generate progressive learning and satisfy students' needs within these changes.

Additionally, teaching/learning English language philosophy and the enhancement of English learning through tools that YA prefer, in both local and global learning context should take into consideration teachers' opinions about substitutions and/or slight modifications in English classes, in a balanced way, with/or (sometimes) without 'modern teaching ingredients', such as the use of technology based on the learning styles and on the topics, the involvement of students' in class in the 'teaching' process, i.e. presentations about what has been read or watched, debates, etc. all in all, to make more general and more challenging English learning. Finally, this paper has presented some ideas about the significance of ELT classes, and as a conclusion, I may add that each syllabus should contain educative life messages; Every ELT syllabus should include activities with a). novel reading i.e. ask students to read books in a FL and b). watch a movie in a balanced way, always trying not to lower the importance of one and raise the importance of the other teaching /learning tool, but to help the students get used to 'real' reading, i.e. 'real books' and help the students to conduct

such activities in a critical way, by analyzing every single detail which will help them gain more self-confidence in English usage.

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