

A COMPARATIVE MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF ALGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' INTERACTION WITH FICTION WORKS AND THEIR MOVIE ADAPTATIONS THROUGH READING AND WATCHING

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Abstract: This research delves into the engagement of Algerian university students with literary works and their corresponding film adaptations. Focusing on 1st-year English department students at Mostafa Benboulaïd University, Algeria, a comparative mixed-methods approach is employed to study preferences, cross-cultural understanding, and motivations. Five literary works Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*, Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* and their movie adaptations form the basis of this investigation. Data was collected from surveys distributed to 200 university students, along with additional inputs from interviews, creative writing samples, and tests across four student cohorts. Results highlight the enhancement in self-expression, identity exploration, and social communication, comparing students' comprehension, interpretation, evaluation, and enjoyment across both mediums. The findings underscore the potential benefits of leveraging movie adaptations as educational tools, with particular relevance during crises, such as the pandemic.

Keywords: Literary works and film adaptations, Algerian university students, mixed-methods analysis, reading and viewing, cross-cultural understanding.

UNE ÉTUDE COMPARATIVE DE MÉTHODES MIXTES SUR L'INTERACTION DES ÉTUDIANTS UNIVERSITAIRES ALGÉRIENS AVEC LES ŒUVRES DE FICTION ET LEURS ADAPTATIONS CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUES PAR LE BIAIS DE LA LECTURE ET DU VISIONNAGE

Résumé : Cette recherche s'intéresse à l'engagement des étudiants algériens vis-à-vis des œuvres littéraires et de leurs adaptations cinématographiques correspondantes. En se concentrant sur les étudiants de première année du département d'anglais de l'Université Mostafa Benboulaïd, en Algérie, une approche comparative de méthodes mixtes est employée pour étudier les préférences, la compréhension interculturelle et les motivations. Cinq œuvres littéraires - *The Kite Runner* de Khaled Hosseini, *The Hunger Games* de Suzanne Collins, *The Alchemist* de Paulo Coelho, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* de Stieg Larsson et *Le Petit Prince* d'Antoine de Saint-Exupéry - ainsi que leurs adaptations cinématographiques constituent la base de cette enquête. Les données ont été recueillies à partir d'enquêtes distribuées à 200 étudiants universitaires, ainsi que d'entretiens, d'échantillons d'écriture créative et de tests effectués sur quatre cohortes d'étudiants. Les résultats mettent en évidence l'amélioration de l'expression personnelle, de l'exploration de l'identité et de la communication sociale, en comparant la compréhension, l'interprétation, l'évaluation et le plaisir des étudiants sur les deux supports. Les résultats soulignent les avantages potentiels des adaptations cinématographiques en tant qu'outils éducatifs, particulièrement pertinents en période de crise, telle que la pandémie.

Mots-clés : Œuvres littéraires et adaptations cinématographiques, étudiants universitaires algériens, analyse de méthodes mixtes, lecture et visionnage, compréhension interculturelle.

Introduction

"Literature and cinema wield unparalleled influence on human emotion and thought," as illustrated by J.K. Rowling, author of the world-renowned Harry Potter series. Literature nurtures the imagination, enriching critical thinking and fostering creativity. In contrast, films provide a sensory-driven perspective, enhancing the emotional depth and comprehension of literary tales. Within the Algerian university landscape, especially for students grappling with the intricacies of literature in a foreign language like English, there exists an intricate challenge. This paper delves into the possibility that the symbiosis between film adaptations and their original literary counterparts could be a beacon for rejuvenating a fervent interest in literature. The global traction and reverence garnered by the cinematic versions of the Harry Potter series, particularly *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, 2007), epitomizes the innate potential of film adaptations in elevating literary works to unparalleled pedestals of acknowledgment and influence. This global influence holds profound implications for Algerian university contexts, highlighting the potential benefits of such integrations. Centering on five eclectic literary masterpieces, each paired with its cinematic rendition, this study traverses a myriad of genres, cultures, and motifs. From Khaled Hosseini's poignant tale of loyalty in *The Kite Runner* to the mystical allegories in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, these selections offer a spectrum of human experiences. These narratives challenge students to introspectively evaluate their convictions, principles, and decisions against the backdrop of the character arcs. With an aim to bridge a palpable academic chasm, this research delves into the dynamics between Algerian university students, specifically first-year undergraduates from the English Language Department at Mostafa Benboulaïd University, and these dual-format narratives. The overarching objective lies in discerning the nuances of student engagement through both reading and viewing. This study's pursuits are manifold: it assesses the facets of engagement encompassing self-expression, identity formation, and social interaction; juxtaposes the experiential outcomes of reading against viewing; evaluates the pragmatic applicability of these adaptations as pedagogical tools, especially in the turbulent milieu of the pandemic; and finally, proffers insights and strategies to enhance the pedagogical resonance of these narratives for Algerian university students.

Central to this investigation are three guiding questions. Firstly, the study seeks to understand how interactions with literature and its film adaptations influence students in terms of self-expression, delving into their identity, and shaping their social interactions. Secondly, it aims to identify the similarities and differences in the experiences of reading versus viewing, particularly in aspects like comprehension, interpretation, and overall appreciation. Lastly, the research considers the potential of incorporating these film adaptations into academic curricula as a means to enhance teaching efficacy, with a particular emphasis on the challenges presented by the current pandemic environment. Additionally, the study formulates a research hypothesis positing that the integration of film adaptations into the learning process positively influences students' engagement, comprehension, and cross-cultural understanding. The research objectives include exploring the preferences of students towards literary works and their film adaptations,

analyzing the impact of these dual-format narratives on students' self-expression and identity formation, and proposing practical strategies for integrating film adaptations into educational settings.

The structure of this paper is sequential: commencing with this introduction that establishes the context, followed by a comprehensive literature review that excavates pertinent academic discourses related to literature, film, and student engagement. Subsequently, the methodology elucidates the research design, tools, and analytical techniques. The results and discussion sections then interlace qualitative and quantitative findings, contextualizing them within the research framework. The paper concludes with a synthesis of discoveries, coupled with recommendations to augment the efficacy of literary and filmic adaptations within Algerian university settings.

1. Literature Review

At its core, literature serves as a reflection of society and provides insight into the human psyche (Eagleton, 2008). Similarly, films, with their multisensory appeal, have a unique potential to translate and amplify the emotional, cultural, and thematic essence of literary narratives (Stam, 2005). The act of adapting literature into film is not just a mere translation but involves selecting, interpreting, and amplifying certain aspects of the source material while potentially sidelining or omitting others. This transformative process has been extensively studied by theorists like Hutcheon (2006), who argued that adaptations are not secondary or derivative, but are artworks in their own right. Both literature and cinema require active engagement from their audience. Rosenblatt's (1978) 'transactional theory' posits that reading is an active, interpretative process wherein the text and the reader's experiences transact to produce meaning. Cinema, on the other hand, according to Bordwell (1985), employs a more direct form of narrative comprehension, often making use of visual and auditory cues to guide interpretation. Studies have shown a growing interest in the interplay between literature and its film adaptations, especially in the realm of education (McFarlane, 1996). Diverse teaching methodologies have integrated films as a way to supplement, contrast, or compare with literary texts, revealing varied impacts on student comprehension, critical thinking, and interpretative skills (Smith, 2017). Specifically, for non-native English speakers, films can serve as a bridge to better understand cultural nuances, idioms, and contexts often embedded in English literature (Vandermeeren, 2010). The Covid-19 pandemic significantly reshaped the educational landscape, compelling educators to rethink traditional teaching methods. The integration of multimedia, including films, became crucial in ensuring the engagement and comprehension of students in a predominantly online mode of education (Hodges et al., 2020).

2. Methodology

This section delineates the methodological approach deployed in the study, specifically emphasizing the use of surveys, to assess Algerian university students' engagement with select literary works and their corresponding film adaptations. The sample incorporated first-year students from the English Language Department at Mostafa Benboulaïd University, Algeria. A sum of 150 students, gender-balanced, voluntarily participated in this study. Their age bracket spanned 18-21 years. Despite careful planning, a few challenges were encountered during the data collection process. The intricacies of coordinating schedules and ensuring active participation posed logistical

hurdles. Additionally, the diverse thematic nature of the selected literary works and film adaptations presented the need for nuanced survey instruments to capture the varied responses accurately. Despite these challenges, the study persevered, aiming to maintain the integrity and comprehensiveness of the data collection process. A focus was placed on five distinguished literary works along with their respective film adaptations, representing a broad literary and cinematic array. This range ensures diverse themes and genres that facilitate a multifaceted examination. The primary tool for data collection was structured surveys. Students were presented with these surveys after engaging with both literary and cinematic versions. The aim was to gauge their preferences, comprehension, emotional engagement, and overall enjoyment. The questionnaires were meticulously designed to extract both qualitative feedback and quantifiable data on their experience with the content. To ensure comprehensive coverage, the study intentionally omitted other potential data collection methods such as creative writing samples and interviews. This focused approach streamlined the research process and tailored the results more closely to the research objectives. The quantitative data extracted from the surveys were statistically analyzed via the SPSS software, utilizing descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA to discern variances and patterns in student engagement, comprehension, and appreciation for the literary and film content.

4. Findings

In an era where technology and multimedia continue to evolve and shape content consumption patterns, understanding preferences towards literary works and their movie adaptations gains significant importance. This section delves into the data gathered from Algerian university students at Mostafa Benboulaïd University, aiming to shed light on their inclinations, interpretations, and engagement levels when interacting with these two distinct mediums. The responses have been dissected across various parameters, from general preferences to the nuances of engagement with individual works. The subsequent analysis offers a panoramic view of students' perceptions, their reasons for favoring one medium over the other, and the resultant impact on their cross-cultural understanding.

4.1. Overall Preferences

The surveyed Algerian university students displayed a marked preference for movies over books, with 65% favoring movies as opposed to the 35% who preferred books. This pronounced inclination toward visual media underscores its popularity among this demographic.

4.2. Preferences by Literary Work

An analysis of preferences by individual literary works revealed nuanced insights. For "The Kite Runner," the book was preferred by 55% of the participants, whereas the movie adaptation attracted 60%. "The Hunger Games" received a book preference of 70%, slightly surpassing its movie counterpart at 65%. In contrast, "The Alchemist" was heavily favored as a book (80%) when compared to its movie version (70%). "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" was chosen by 60% for the book and 75% for the movie. "The Little Prince" maintained a balance with 75% book preference and 70% for the movie. The variations in preferences highlight intriguing dynamics between literary works and their cinematic adaptations, providing valuable insights into participant inclinations.

Chart 02: Detailed Preferences by Literary Work

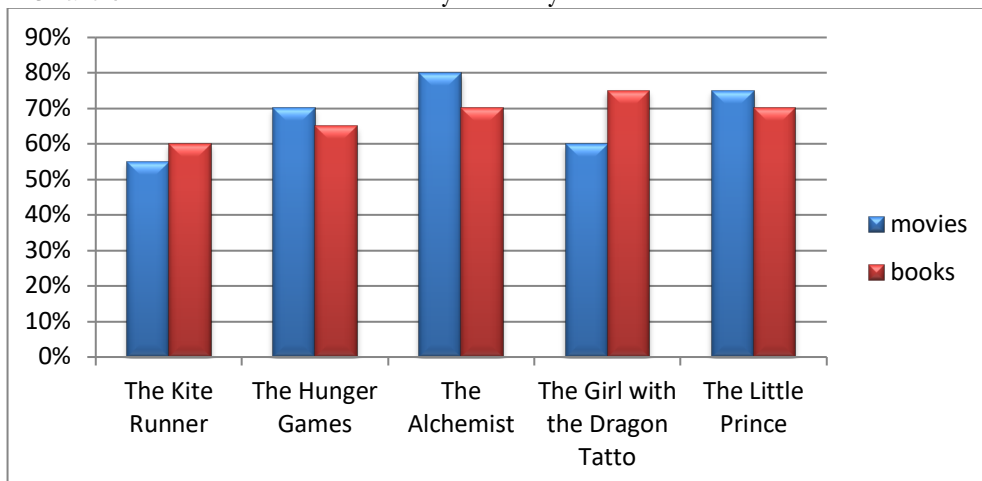


Figure 2: Percentage breakdown of Algerian university students' preferences for each literary work and its movie adaptation

4.3. Cross-Cultural Understanding by Work

On examining the efficacy of each literary work in fostering cross-cultural understanding, "The Alchemist" emerged as the most impactful, with a high score of 76%. This was followed by "The Hunger Games" at 55% and "The Kite Runner" at 50%. Both "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" and "The Little Prince" resonated the least in this context, each scoring 45%.

Chart 03: Cross-Cultural Understanding by Literary Work.

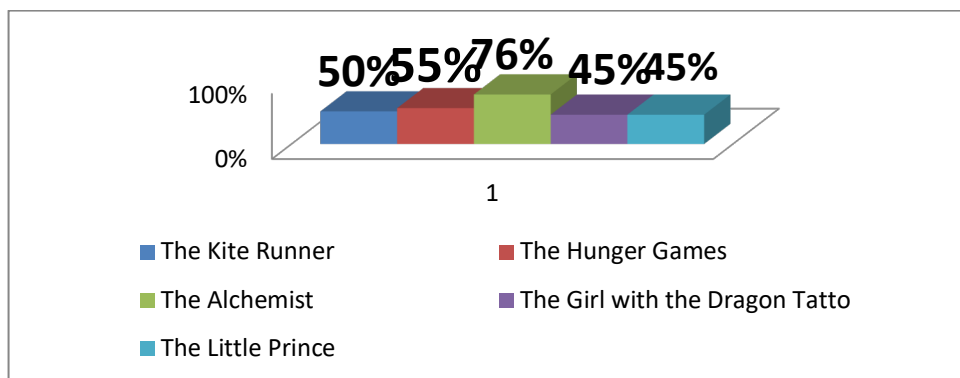


Figure 3: Percentage representation of Algerian university students' cross-cultural understanding derived from each literary work and its movie adaptation

4.4. Enjoyment and Entertainment

Movies emerged as the dominant medium for entertainment with 87% of students endorsing them, although only 67% found them enjoyable. Books, on the other hand, garnered substantial enjoyment from 87% of the respondents. However, when it came to entertainment, they lagged behind movies with a score of 55%.

Chart 04: Comparative Enjoyment & Entertainment: Books vs. Movies

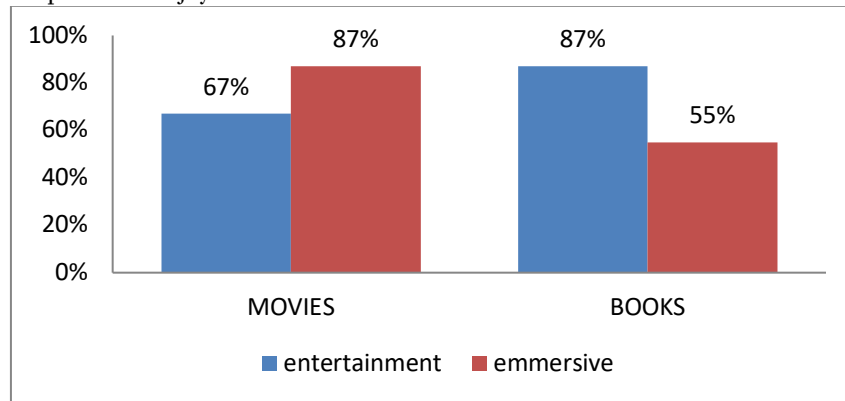


Figure 4: A bar chart highlighting the differences in enjoyment and entertainment scores between books and movies among Algerian university students

4.5. Reasons for Preferences

When probed about the reasons behind their preferences, students' responses offered intriguing insights. A significant 98% of the participants cited "Emotions through music or action" as a dominant reason for their preference. This was closely followed by "Convenience" (77%) and "Pacing" (76%). Other notable reasons included "Detailed descriptions" (88%) and "Connection with Characters" (66%).

Chart05: Reasons for Preferring Books or Movies.

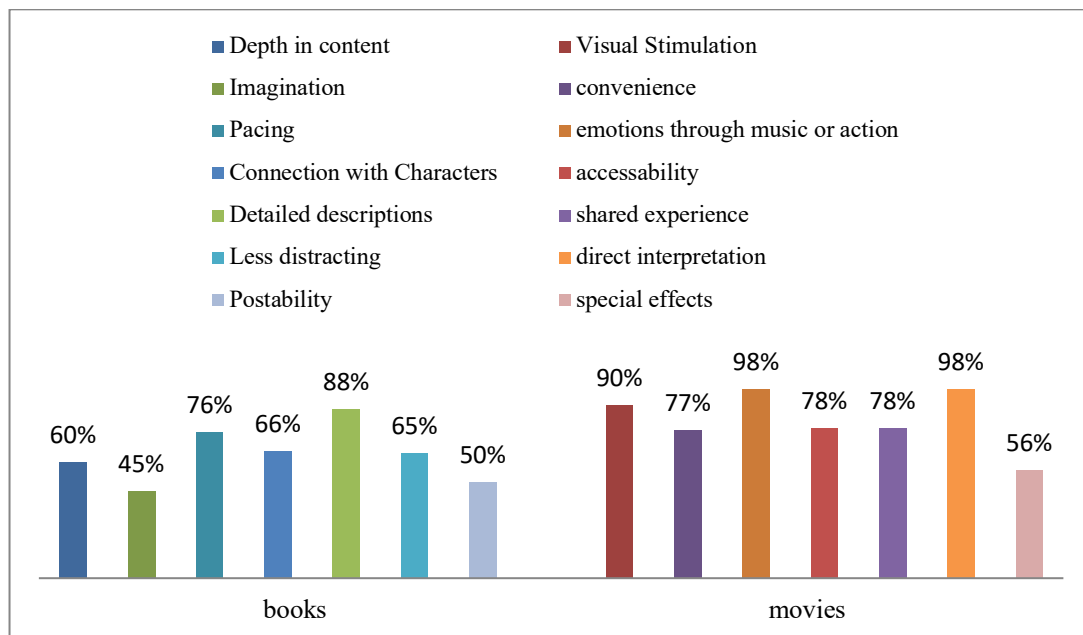


Figure 5: Distribution of reasons cited by Algerian university students for their preference towards books or movies

4.6. Cross-Cultural Understanding Across Mediums

When comparing the two mediums in terms of fostering cross-cultural understanding, books garnered a 56% approval rating. In contrast, movies were more favorably viewed at 78%. However, a combination of both mediums seemed to resonate the most, securing an 82% score.

Chart 06: Cross-cultural Understanding across Mediums.

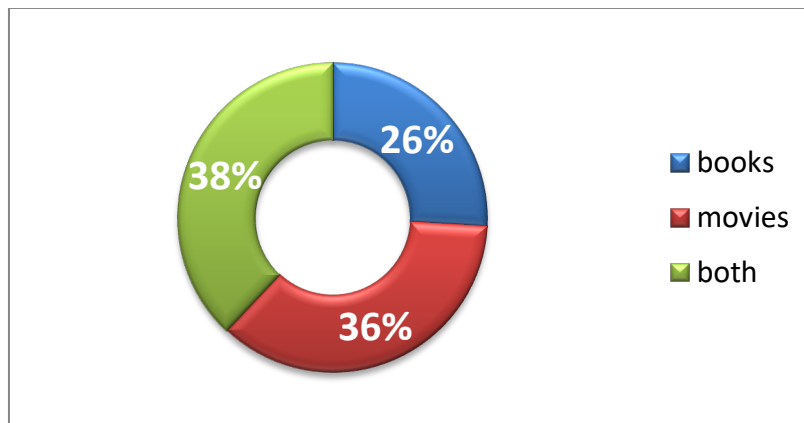


Figure 6: Distribution of Algerian university students' cross-cultural understanding based on their interaction with books, movies, or both."

4.7. Engagement Levels

On the spectrum of engagement, both books and movies maintained a consistent pattern. Only 10% of the students felt unengaged with books, and this dropped further to 5% for movies. At the highest level of engagement, books captivated 40% of the participants, while movies slightly surpassed them at 45%.

Chart 07: Engagement Levels Across Mediums

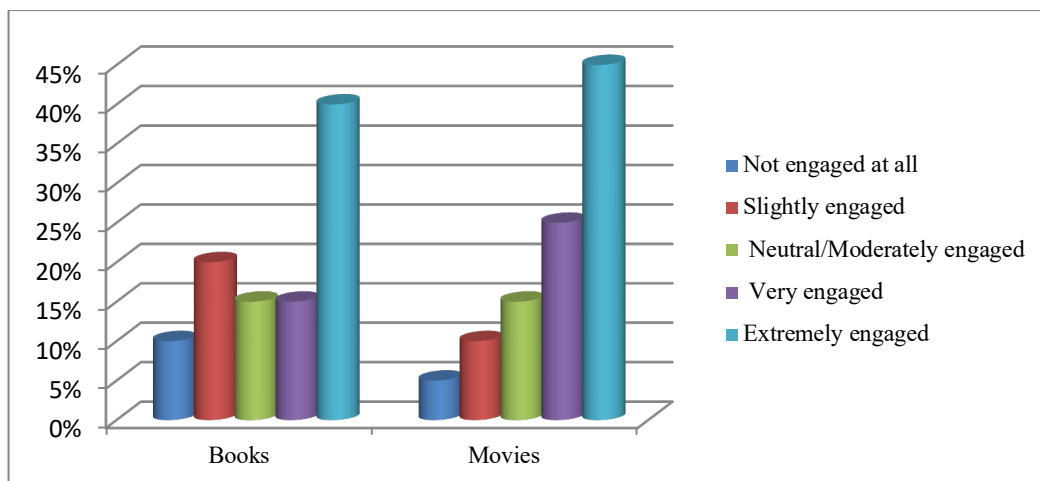


Figure 07: A comparison of Algerian university students' engagement levels when interacting with books versus movies, represented as percentages.

The findings underscore a robust preference for movies among the student populace. Although both mediums are instrumental in promoting enjoyment and cultural understanding, movies seem to have an edge, particularly due to their convenience, pacing, and immersive auditory and visual experience. Nevertheless, books hold their ground in offering depth and nuanced descriptions, retaining their unique appeal to a significant portion of the audience.

5. Discussion

In examining the outcomes of our research alongside existing literature, we gain valuable insights into how Algerian university students engage with literature and its film adaptations. The preference for books (35%) among students resonates with the idea that literature acts as a mirror to society, offering a window into the human psyche. Literature, at its core, provides depth, nuance, and a platform for introspective exploration. On the flip side, the allure of films (65%) is evident, suggesting a distinct appeal tied to the multisensory nature of cinematic experiences. This preference aligns with the belief that films can enhance emotional and cultural dimensions in storytelling. Our findings shed light on the nuanced dynamics between specific literary works and their film adaptations. Despite literature often taking precedence, film adaptations, as unique artworks, manage to capture considerable interest. For instance, "The Alchemist" stands out, with 80% favoring the book, yet 70% showing interest in its cinematic counterpart. This coexistence suggests that adaptations can offer distinct and valuable interpretative experiences. The results highlighting cross-cultural understanding and engagement levels link back to our participants' interpretative engagement with the content. Reading demands an active and personal interpretative endeavor, explaining the powerful cross-cultural understanding fostered by certain books. In contrast, cinema, with its direct narrative comprehension, garners higher engagement levels, supported by the sensory cues it provides. In the realm of education, our study gains relevance, especially for non-native English speakers in Algeria. The dual engagement with literature and film becomes pivotal, demystifying cultural nuances found in English literature. This becomes even more pronounced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the shift to online education accentuates the allure of movies with their convenience and multisensory engagement. Our research fills a notable gap, offering insights into Algerian university students' engagement with literature and film during a period defined by global challenges. Films, while emerging as a more preferred medium, do not overshadow the inherent value of literature. Instead, they provide complementary pathways for understanding, engagement, and cross-cultural exploration. This dynamic interplay between mediums, particularly during challenging times, calls for further exploration, emphasizing their crucial roles in shaping holistic educational experiences.

Conclusion

In an age of rapid technological and multimedia evolution, understanding the nuanced preferences and engagements of Algerian university students towards literary works and their corresponding film adaptations becomes paramount. The study embarked on this exploration, firmly grounded in theoretical frameworks that juxtaposed literature

and cinema as expressive mediums and delved deep into the art of adaptation, engagement, and interpretation. The research unequivocally illuminated that both literature and cinema occupy distinct but interconnected realms in the hearts and minds of Algerian university students. While the multisensory allure of cinema was evident in the pronounced preference for movies, literature, reflecting society's intricacies and the depths of the human psyche as Eagleton (2008) suggests, continues to hold its ground, offering unparalleled depth and introspective experiences. Adaptations, far from being mere translations of literary works, manifest as unique artworks, resonating with Hutcheon's (2006) adaptation theory. The fluctuating preferences concerning specific literary works and their adaptations underscored this, suggesting a harmonious coexistence where each medium provides its interpretative dimensions. Engagement and cross-cultural understanding emerged as pivotal themes, intertwined with Rosenblatt's (1978) and Bordwell's (1985) theories. While literature demands a more introspective interpretative endeavor, cinema's direct narrative comprehension, facilitated by visual and auditory cues, seems to captivate students more efficaciously. Educationally, the interplay between literature and film takes on added significance, especially given the pandemic-induced shift towards online modes of learning. Movies, with their convenience and multisensory engagement, seemed to gain ground in these challenging times, aligning with Hodges et al.'s (2020) observations. Yet, the pedagogical value of integrating both literature and film, particularly for non-native English speakers, remains undeniable, as highlighted by Vandermeeren (2010) and McFarlane (1996). This study, while addressing a specific research gap concerning Algerian university students' preferences, serves as a beacon for educators, policymakers, and content creators. In the intricate dance between the written word and its cinematic rendition, there's a harmonious symphony that, when understood and employed judiciously, can amplify educational outcomes, engagement levels, and cross-cultural understandings. In conclusion, as technology continues its relentless march and as educational paradigms keep evolving, the intricate relationship between literature and cinema will undeniably remain a focal point of interest. For Algerian university students, and perhaps for global audiences, the dichotomy between reading a book and watching its movie adaptation is not about replacement but about enriching experiences that both mediums collectively offer. Future research in this domain, potentially exploring the dynamics in different cultural or educational contexts, holds immense promise.

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