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# Learning Literature through Media: A Comparative Study of Learning Process through Written and Filmed Literature

## Abstract

*Literature documents and represents the experiences of human beings in the form of novels, poetry and dramas. These experiences can also be made visual in movies and other enactments. EFL practitioners employ literature to teach English. This study investigated the differences in the learning processes of EFL learners using texts and movies in the Pakistani context. Macbeth and A Passage to India were selected arbitrarily for this study. The data were collected through classroom observations and interviews from Lahore and NUML University Peshawar. The participants were divided into two groups of twenty. The control group used written texts of the literary works, whereas the experimental group was taught through movies of the novel and the play. The study's findings revealed both positive and negative effects on the learners. The use of text resulted in better writing skills, correct spellings, and sentences but tended to show weak speaking skills with the local pronunciation of English words. On the other hand, watching movies improved the learners' fluency and pronunciation, but they had spelling and sentence construction problems. Therefore, it is recommended that both written and visual forms of literary works be used concomitantly.*

**Keywords:** Media, Literature, Written Texts, Filmed Literature, Learning Process.

## Introduction

Media has revolutionised teaching-learning processes worldwide (Hussain & Safdar, 2008). Different stories, dramas, and novels as a representation of the past generations have been adapted for the awareness of the masses that the world is the outcome of the past experiences of humanity (Hand, 2018). Human beings transform themselves based on their past experiences through construction,

deconstruction and reconstruction of different realities (Osterhammel, 2014). People have transformed from book reading towards social media and electronic media (Qualman, 2012); (Twining, A. T., 2020). Consequently, learners prefer watching movies rather than reading books (Guntupalli et al., 2020).

Moreover, the postmodern generation has even shifted from print to electronic media (Livingstone, 2004). The information of the

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common person is based upon the media realities rather than his perception (Shapiro & Chock, 2004). It will be not wrong to say that media has revolutionised the whole world, and it has also played a vital role in the world of academia (Aronson, 2012); (Abubakar Ismaila, A., et al., 2019). It is also a fact that the importance of book reading cannot be ignored (Johnsson, Smaragdi, & Jönsson, 2006).

Written fictional and dramatic scripts have been sold worldwide to represent human beings' history, moral values, and problems (Staiger, 1983). These fictional and dramatic accounts directly affect readers' minds (Mar, Oatley, Djikic & Mullin, 2011). It is a fact that human beings learn from their forefathers' experiences (Mahmood et al., 2020; Tomasello, 2014). But it is also a fact that the postmodern world literature represents multicultural societies and multi-dimensional problems (Kumar, 2020; Yang, 2013). It is a fact that screened literature has a different impact on the audience's minds than the written script. Movies and videos build the interest of the audience and students (Kumar, 2021; Hobbs, 2011). *Macbeth (1992)* by Shakespeare represents human beings' over ambitiousness and desire. For instance, they tend to use every means to acquire power (CA, E., & A.A., D., 2019). Different characters in the play try their best to fulfil their desires (Dean, 1958). Supernatural witches also play their part to stimulate Macbeth to murder king Duncan (Ko, 2017).

Lady Macbeth plays the same role as the witches (Williams, 1973). This play has been performed hundreds of times in the life of Shakespeare. Every time new interpretations of the play emerged. Many researchers believe that a complete emotion can be portrayed through digital media (Moschovakis, 2008). Readers of the play always tend to imagine that they are a part of it. Emotion and pity can be portrayed and observed in movies compared to written text (Tan, 2013).

*A Passage to India (2018)* is a complete representation of the picture of colonial India. Some scholars believe that the fiction depicts the Western narrative about the East, while others comment that it is moderate (Caiaphas Makadi, et al., 2019). It will not be wrong to say that the Indian picture painted by the novelist is very horrible (Hawkins, 1983). He has presented a stupid picture of Aziz Khan, an Indian doctor. Aziz Khan is not well mannered and well dressed (Parry, 1998). He seems in a hurry all the time. All the incidents in the story are a true representation master-slave relationship.

This research project deals with the comparative study of literature taught through written and screened scripts in Pakistan. A novel, *A Passage to India (2018)*, and a drama

*Macbeth (1992)* are discussed. The researcher tried to determine how screened scripts affected audiences' minds more than their written counterparts. Screened scripts employ verbal (communication) and non-verbal (through gestures and facial expression). Some scholars believe that screened scripts provide a complete package to the literature students. The combination of dressing, body language and communication has an entirely different impact on the students compared to the reader of a written script (Mbaya, L., et al., 2019).

The bloodshed of King Duncan and the satirical representation of Aziz Khan displayed on screen have quite different impacts on the audience's minds compared to reading the novel's script. It is a fact that direct emotion affects directly. Movies and dramas have long-lasting effects on the audience's minds because they think they are a part of the situation created through historical and fictional accounts (Bartsch, Appel & Storch, 2010). The audience feels an emotional attachment with the characters, situation and representation (Hall, 2003).

## Literature Review

Brumfit and Carter (1986) asserted that "literature is a language's ally", which asserts that literature and language cannot be separated in any text. Another critic McKay (1982), stated that "literature presents language in a discursive context". Literary language aids in learning a language. Literary texts teach English as a second language, sometimes for specific purposes such as introducing new vocabulary to students (Çakmak et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021; Maley, 2001).

Many studies have been conducted on learning literature through the use of media, including Ghahderijani et al. (2021), Alotaibi & Kumar (2019), Traore and Kyei-Blankson (2011) and others. Traore and Kyei-Blankson (2011) investigated the use of literature and multiple technologies in an ESL classroom. Most of the instructors incorporate literary texts into their lessons and language structure books in classrooms. This research described how media was used in teaching the novel *Things Fall Apart*. The reactions of the respondents were investigated in depth. This project provides a platform for teachers who wish to incorporate literature and technology into their English language instruction.

Mirvan (2013) studied how movies aided in improving ESL students' reading skills. Students exposed to various media and technology resources were less motivated to learn traditionally. Even though most course books included CDs and DVDs, students found them

less authentic and engaging than expected. Many EFL teachers used films in their classrooms to provide a variety of input and let the input be of interest to their students. This study aimed to investigate the effects of showing films in the EFL classroom. It was discovered that watching movies positively impacted students' reading and communication abilities.

Calo-oy (2014) studied how movies were utilised in teaching English literature. Movies are an excellent educational medium for disseminating information. Student interest in historical recreation and integrating the outside world into the classroom is increased by this technique, which is effective in both situations. Because the knowledge being imparted does pass through the sense of hearing and sight; hence learning is long-lasting. This study employed a descriptive research design, with a questionnaire and follow-up interviews as part of the process. This study determined the gender, family status, exposure to films, and students' academic performance by analysing their profiles. It also surveyed the types of films that students most frequently watched, the aspects that capture their attention, and the best methods for incorporating films into the classroom. According to the findings, teachers still need to introduce films into the classroom. Students should be exposed to various instructional techniques to engage in lessons. According to the study's findings, using films in the classroom to teach English literature would improve student learning of the English language.

Hasanah (2014) studied using movies for teaching literature. The researcher wanted to find out whether there was a difference between the learners who were taught using movies and those who were taught English by reading novels. It was an experimental study. This study revealed that ESL learners responded positively to using this media to teach literature, which is encouraging.

Tahir (2015), in his project, studied the kind of effects films had on English language learning. The results revealed that watching movies assisted EFL learners in learning the English language more quickly than other methods. It has the potential to assist learners in improving their language abilities (C. Job, G., & Opeyemi, A., 2019).

Kabooha (2016) researched utilising films in classrooms to enhance students' English language skills. Fifty female EFL students studying at a university in Saudi Arabia were asked about their attitudes toward integrating English films in classrooms for improving students' English proficiency. Students were asked to complete questionnaires to learn about their opinions toward integrating

English-language films in their classrooms. This study showed that students had positive opinions toward using movies in their classes.

Albiladi et al. (2018) studied how English was learned through media. The use of media included viewing and listening to films music as learning resources. This qualitative research study explored the perceptions of English learners toward the utilisation of films as an English learning resource. According to the study, the participants opined that watching English-language movies improved their language proficiency and posed some challenges. The study's findings revealed that films were incremental in language learning.

Khan and Alasmari (2018) researched the advantages of using literary texts in ESL classrooms. This study explained how English was learned through the use of literary texts. This project was unique because it explained how different literary texts could improve one's communication ability in another language. This project aimed to determine the benefits of using literary texts in EFL classes. It described the various approaches to teaching literature that could be used in the classroom. It also demonstrated how literature contributed to enriching the vocabulary of EFL learners.

Few studies have been conducted in Pakistan on how literary texts are utilised in Pakistani ESL classrooms. Wasti (2016), in her research, examined the role of literary texts in EFL classrooms in Pakistan. The project looked at various aspects of literary texts that appeared to impact Pakistani learners of English who took part in the study. Preliminary findings the research revealed that undergraduate students' perceptions of literary texts in their English language learning were shaped primarily by their experiences in the classroom. After reading literary texts, these young learners appeared to be more motivated to continue learning English because they showed interest in learning more about the English language and its speakers.

Nijabat et al. (2019) researched how writing skills were improved by utilising literary texts. The qualitative method was used in this investigation. The findings of this study were encouraging in terms of the part that literary texts played in developing students' writing skills. And Alam, I. & Shah, A.H. (2020) also pointed out the social media impact on writing skills.

The literature review suggests that a comparative study has not been done to explore the learning process of Pakistani ESL learners from two different perspectives: one learning through reading text and the other learning through watching movies. Therefore, it is essential to determine whether learning literature through digital movies and dramas has a

different impact on university students from learning literature through books.

### Research Methodology

This research was qualitative. The data were collected through classroom observation and interviews. Forty graduate students were selected from two different universities for this project. Fifty percent (N#20) of the students watched the screened fiction and drama while the learners (N#2) learnt through texts. Once the learning process was complete, students of both groups were asked to write their understanding of both texts to analyse their written capabilities after the given task. And their verbal/oral responses were also recorded through interviews.

### Results and Discussion

Language and literature are two inseparable parts of the same phenomenon. The process of learning literature depends upon language proficiency to a great extent. But apart from language learning techniques, learning literature involves the aesthetic abilities of learners. Literature written in any language provides readers/learners with the opportunity to appreciate the culture of another society. It develops the reading habits, vocabulary and language of learners. It also enhances learners' language proficiency and gives them an enjoyable experience. In ESL classrooms, literary writings like poetry, drama, and novel have been important channels to learn English. In the contemporary world, apart from written literature, screened literature is also a powerful mode of learning literature produced in a second language. In the present project, the researcher attempted to explore how the learning process differed if the same literary work was studied through movies, based on the written dramas or novels, compared to learning through written text. For this purpose, two universities in Pakistan were selected to collect the data. The University of Lahore and NUML University (Peshawar campus). Observations were made to document the participants' verbal and written responses and their perceptions of the learning experience.

Two groups were made, each consisting of twenty learners. Group-1 (control group) was used written texts. They were taught two texts: *Macbeth* (1992), written by William Shakespeare and *Passage to India* by E.M Forster. Group-2 (experimental group) was offered to watch two movies based on the same texts given to Group-1. As mentioned earlier, the present project aimed to find the strengths and limitations of the two learning methods; therefore, the analysis

reflects the comparison and contrasts based on the two approaches.

*Group-1 Observations:* As mentioned earlier, the observations were made to document the participants written and spoken performances in group-1. and their comprehension of the text. The first group was offered two texts, *Macbeth* and *Passage to India*. *Macbeth* (1992) is a classic tragedy written by Shakespeare. Shakespeare stands supreme among authors known for his strong narrative quality, expression and brilliant use of language. Another essential quality of his tragedies is his deep understanding of the human psyche of every age and gender. It is quite different from the modern English language if we talk about language. Reading his works becomes a fruitful experience. When he selects a specific word or phrase, it attains an effective stylistic effect that has the quality to persuade the reader/audience. He frequently depends on rhetoric which works as a tool of experimentation with language. Such an experiment actively adds to the communication process among learners/readers. His sentence structure is sometimes loose, aiming to avoid monotony (Damascelli, 2007).

When the participants started reading the text, they focused more on identifying difficult words. They kept making themselves familiar with the words they had never learned or heard before. This practice had both positive and negative effects on the learners. The positive aspect was that they started improving their vocabulary. Many literary words became a part of their daily usage. When the learners started reading the text, they were more inclined towards memorising dialogues and the sequences of scenes and situations. It also gave them confidence and an opportunity to improve the structure of their sentences. Very few grammatical and structural mistakes were found in their written assignments. They composed a well-structured script, as they were more conscious of the written text's evaluation from the language point of view.

If we look at the negative side of literature learning through reading text, their accent was not up to the mark as they read the text in the local accent, which resulted in poor dialogue delivery. Moreover, it was a bit difficult for them to understand different devices used by the author to catch the reader's attention. Due to these obstacles, their understanding level was affected during the first reading, but it started improving gradually in the second reading.

*A Passage to India*, written by E.M Forster, is a novel written in the postcolonial context. It was published in 1924. Forster wrote this novel after he visited India in 1912 and 1921. The novel narrated the political condition of India when it was occupied by the British. It is all about

the relationships between colonisers and the colonised, as it falls into modern novels. Hence, the language used was not much difficult to understand for the learners. As far as the novel's theme is concerned, the learners were quite familiar with it. Human relationships, power politics, the experiences of colonisers and the colonised are quite known experienced in the sub-continent. Forster says that his book *A Passage to India* narrates human beings' desire to have a "more lasting home". When ESL learners first read the text, they found minor issues regarding the language of the novel as it was written in modern English with which learners were quite familiar. As the novel depicts the sub-continent culture, learners find themselves at ease to understand the cultural environment of the novel. Compared to the reading and understanding of *Macbeth*, readers were more at ease in uttering words used in *A Passage to India*. Names of characters from the sub-continent origin were also familiar to them. Despite all the favourable circumstances, it was seen that reading alone was not sufficient for them to understand the novel better.

*Group-2 Observations:* According to mind scientists, visual effects leave a long-lasting impression on the audience's minds. When anything is seen in pictures and videos, it becomes easier for learners to memorise as the mind creates a better association with visual effects, including colour, sound effects and overall environment (Gardner, 2006). In this project, the researchers intend to explore and analyse this situation in ESL learning. Based on the two texts, the learners who were offered to watch the movies registered different results from Group-1, who were confined to reading texts. Group 2 observations were also made to check their spoken and written capabilities and their level of understanding. The learners were asked to watch the same two movies fortnightly during the whole academic session. It was observed that the repeated act of watching movies helped the learners improve their English accent. They had gained more confidence in the articulation of dialogue delivery. Although the nature of the English language was different in *Macbeth*, the learners of group-2 had developed a sound familiarity with those words. It improved their accent and dialogue delivery.

Reading literature is usually meant for enjoyment. And it becomes even more enjoyable when adopted for the screen. During the classroom observations, it was seen that watching the movie of the same text that group 1 had read, the participants of group 2 enjoyed the story more. They also better understood the cultures presented in *Macbeth* (1992) and *A Passage to India*. The costumes of characters, sound effects, and social environment provided

them with a better understanding of the times depicted in the two texts.

Apart from the positive effects of learning literature, the researchers also found a few drawbacks. For example, it was seen that in their written assignments, they made more spelling mistakes grammatical mistakes and also had issues in their sentence structure. As they had not read the text, grammatical errors and loose sentence structure were their major problems. The findings of this research are thus very much in line with previous studies. The use of movies helped develop students' motivation and had a positive impact on the communications skills of the learners (Mirvan,2013; Hasanah,2014; Kabooha, 2016) and the use of text, on the other hand, improved students writing skills (Nijabat et al., 2019; Alam & Shah, 2020; Ajmal et al., 2020). Hence, it can be derived that teachers need to use both text and videos for writing skills' improvement, as Khan and Alasmari (2018) found.

## Conclusion

A careful observation of the participants of the two groups chosen from the two universities of Pakistan proved insightful as it yielded a new dimension of teaching in ESL classrooms. Learning a second language through written literature has been a much-practised phenomenon in teaching English. But learning the English language and, specifically, English literature through the screened version of written texts added to the researchers' observation in the context of this research as both positive and negative aspects of the two ways of learning were noticed. The researchers conclude that both ways could be adopted according to the situation students are in and the demand of the learning process to get better results. These methods could be applied together in the same classroom, and one could be preferred over another only when required.

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