



A REVIEW OF DOCUMENTARY FILM AS AUTHENTIC INPUT IN ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS IN ASL SETTING

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this paper are three folds: firstly, to highlight the studies which have used documentary film as authentic input in teaching second language skills, secondly to review the studies which have used documentary film in enhancing the second language writing skill, and lastly to offer ways to deal with documentary film in improving Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) writing skill. For this purpose, the paper analyses related literature review and previous studies in the field. The literature review shows the concern of second language practitioners as well as scholars in the field in using documentary film in the learning process. However, studies related to ASL are very scarce. There are four steps to be adopted for the purpose of linking documentary film input with enhancing writing skills output. The paper also highlights the strengths of documentary film as authentic input in language teaching as well as putting forth some technical advice and suggestions to improve the selection of teaching materials.

Keywords: TASL, teaching material, Arabic for specific purposes, Arabic writing skill, authentic input.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In all settings, the role of language learning strategies is undeniable due to its contribution as the main factor that helps to determine the success of the teaching and learning process. Referring to Oxford (1999), the difference between second and foreign language is the setting of that language as vehicle of daily communication. If a language is the main vehicle for daily communication, it becomes second language whereas a language is considered as a foreign language if it is not the primary medium of instruction in everyday interaction. Another aspect is the input of that language, there is abundant input for second language while the input in that language is restricted in foreign language setting.

The use of authentic materials in second language classrooms dated back to the 1970s, when the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach started to spread. Since then, the definitions of “authentic material” tend to reflect the primacy of communicativeness. The authentic material is real language created by native speakers of the target language in pursuit of communicative outcomes, and also can be written to language learners, by native speakers, as long as there is an authentic communicative objective in mind. In second language acquisition setting, Krashen (1982) has described the importance of various types of comprehensible input hypothesis in teaching and learning process. Then, to what extent is the second language (SL) classroom beneficial from this input? By providing the comprehensible input that the learner is going to receive in real world, they have interacted in an environment in which the language spoken will likely proven to be better for the learners, especially considering the fact that a language classroom will not be able to reflect the broad range of language use that the real world provides (Wilson, 2002).

This comprehensive input defines the meaning of the authentic materials in language learning. According to Maroko (2010), authentic material is any materials which have not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching. The materials are real texts designed for real-life use for both interactional and transactional purposes, and the texts produced for communication purposes in native speakers’ situations. Authentic materials can be broadly classified as audio, visual, and printed materials. First, audio materials involve those that learners can listen to, including television programming, radio programming and taped conversations. Second, visual materials on the other hand are those that the learners can see, including photographs, paintings and drawings, children’s artwork, wordless road signs, pictures from magazines, and wordless picture books. Third, printed materials which involve restaurant menus, directories, minutes of a meeting, memoranda, diaries, tourist information brochures and travel guides, greeting cards, letters, billboards, posters, etc. (Jacobson et al., 2003).

2.0 AUTHENTIC INPUT IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING (ASL)

The importance of authentic input in second language acquisition is discussed by many researchers, including Bahrani (2013), who stated that the most essential factor in second language acquisition (SLA) process is language input where this necessity of exposure to comprehensible language input in SLA can make strong claims related to the role of language input. In this regard, there are previous studies related to this effectiveness of an audio-visual mass media program in second or foreign language, for example Bahrani and Sim (2012) found that news, cartoons, and films can enhance low level learner language proficiency, while Macwan (2015) claimed that visual aids like clips, episodes, documentaries, English films can help learners’ learning of language. Similar results were achieved by Shu-Qing (2009) who said that songs, stories, ads, self-readings, menus, and children’s letters can change the learners’ attitude towards language learning. Morley and Lawrence (1971) implemented this authentic source in advanced English classes and have demonstrated that the value of such films is not only for aural comprehension but also for much more, including writing skill. Soong (2012) reported that in teaching oral interpretation to low and intermediate level learners, documentary films becomes good teaching materials in many

ways. Furthermore, in the reading skill classroom, the use of documentary projects supplements and enforces classroom instruction (Bernardo, 2011).

Authentic materials can enhance language learner skills as proven by some researchers, such as for listening and speaking skills (Zhafarghandi et al., 2014; Woottipong, 2014; Khalili, 2012) and also positive results on reading and writing skills as claimed by Berardo (2006), Al Musallam (2009), Masood (2013) and Soliman (2013). Other research also proved that authentic input in language learning is very important and really motivates learners as well as the instructors (Macwan, 2015; Al Mamun, 2014; Zhang, 2013; Erbaggio et al., 2012; Bahrani & Sim, 2012; Bataineih, 2009; Al Musallam, 2009; Shu-Qing, 2009; Salah, 2008; Shu-Chin, 2008; Caroline, 2007). There is not much research done in ASL setting, but there are some papers that highlighted the role of audio-visual material as an interactive Arabic learning tool in other educational settings and environment (Mahmoud et al., 2013). In addition, there was a study on the importance of choosing the best authentic material from Arabic newspaper in order to help learner and lecturer in language education in China. There was also a study on reading skill for authentic Arabic texts among Arabic foreign language learners, particularly the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Salah, 2008). In another study, Ali (2004) recommended to use television program in learning Arabic to non-native speakers' because this program will enhance the learners' achievement and simply interact the new words with the meaning due to the collection of audio, picture and movement at the same time.

Due to the importance of authentic SL input in enhancing the four language skills, the researchers put the attention on the writing skill in ASL setting because this skill is the hardest skill to be acquired by learners. The writing skill is also related with the other three skills and learners should be exposed to many types of authentic material in order to help them master this skill, which can be beneficial to their academic writing. Several studies choose documentary film as authentic input in their writing skill classroom (Kasper, 2000; Snow, 2012; Hasan, 2011; Hasan & Syukriah, 2013; Esra & Tjut, 2013; Minanur, 2014; Enisa, 2014), this is because documentary film proved to be the authentic input which covered linguistic and informational purposes (Morley & Lawrence, 1971) and fulfilled the demand of communication (Soong, 2012). Peacock (1997) further recommended that authentic materials may increase their learners' levels of on-task behaviour, concentration, and involvement in their target activity. Hence, the researchers want to explore in this paper on the significance of documentary films as part and parcel of authentic learning input in enhancing writing skill in the field of Arabic as second language setting.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The primary principle in this paper is about the Input Hypothesis over five hypotheses in SLA: the Acquisition-learning Distant, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis, as mentioned by Krashen (1982). The basis for the understanding of input hypothesis in Arabic as second language acquisition are: (1) The input hypothesis relates to Arabic as second language acquisition, not second language learning (2) Arabic learners acquire by understanding language that contains structure that is beyond their current level of competence ($i + 1$) and this is done with the help of context or

extra-linguistic information (3) When communication is successful, the input is understood and sufficient to the learners, $i + 1$ will be provided automatically (4) Production ability among learners emerges as it is not taught directly.

The input hypothesis makes the following claim to answer the question of how do researchers move from stage i , where i represents current competence, to $i + 1$, the next level? The claim is necessary (but not sufficient) conditions to move from stage i to stage $i + 1$ where the learner understands the input that contains $i + 1$, of which "understand" means that the Arabic learner focuses on the meaning and not the form of the message. In other words, the Arabic language learners acquire when they understand language that contains structures that are "a little beyond" where they are now. How is this possible? How can they understand language that contains structures that they have not yet acquired? The answer to this apparent paradox is that the Arabic learners are acquiring more than our linguistic competence to help their understanding. They also use context, knowledge of the world, extra-linguistic information to help them understand language directed at them.

A third part of the input hypothesis says that input must contain $i + 1$ to be useful for second language acquisition, but it need not contain only $i + 1$. It says that if the Arabic learners acquire to understand the input, and there is enough of it, $i + 1$ will automatically be provided. In other words, if communication is successful, $i + 1$ is provided. This implies that the best input should not even attempt to deliberately aim at $i + 1$. There is a "structure of the day", and usually both Arabic lecturer and learner feel that the aim of the lesson is to teach or practice a specific grammatical item or structure. Once this structure is "mastered", the syllabus proceeds to the next one. This part of the input hypothesis implies that such a deliberate attempt to provide $i + 1$ is not necessary. The final part of the input hypothesis states that speaking fluency cannot be taught directly. Rather, it "emerges" over time, on its own. According to this view, the best way, and perhaps the only way to teach speaking is simply to provide comprehensible input. Early speech will come when the acquirer feels "ready"; this state of readiness, however, arrives at somewhat different times for different people. Early speech, moreover, is typically not grammatically accurate. Accuracy develops over time as the acquirer hears and understands more input. Although this part of the input hypothesis covers the speaking skill, researchers assume that this input hypothesis can also be practiced for writing skill since both are from productive skill in the four language skills where writing skill is an important part of communication similar to speaking skill.

The secondary principle in this paper is the model of Cognitive Process Theory. Writing skill is the last and the highest skill among the four skills of language learning. This last skill proficiency develops over time, beginning with a kind of free association of learners' ideas that a reader may find difficult to follow. From this idea, learner used processes for planning, evaluating, and revising in order to develop a more sophisticated growing knowledge. Development continues with compositions marked by awareness of an audience from readers to make writing a more unified and productive craft (Graham & Perin, 2007). Alnufaie and Grenfell (2012) stated that writing is viewed as a complex cognitive skill, a decision-making and a problem-solving activity from the cognitive perspective in the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing. The model of Cognitive Process Theory presents attempts to account for the major thinking processes and constraints during writing. The act of writing involves three

major elements that are reflected in the three units of the model: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory, and the writing processes. The task environment includes all of those things outside the writer's skin, starting with the rhetorical problem or assignment and eventually including the growing text itself. The second element is the writer's long-term memory in which the writer has stored knowledge, not only of the topic, but of the audience and of various writing plans. The third element in our model contains writing processes themselves, specifically the basic processes of planning, translating, and reviewing, which are under the control of a monitor (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In this paper, role of documentary film as authentic input in writing process placed the role of the task environment, one of three units of Cognitive Process Theory.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper aims to highlight the studies on using of documentary film authentic input in second language writing skills classroom. The specific research questions are:

- 1) To what extent is the contribution of documentary films in second language skills teaching and learning?
- 2) To what extent is the contribution of documentary films in enhancing second language writing skills?
- 3) What are the ways to deal with documentary film in ASL writing skills?

To answer the three questions above, this study chose intentional and convenience samples which are written content of 45 articles from the duration of the previous sixteen years and they were then analysed using content analysis to answer the research questions.

5.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the discussion is divided into three parts: documentary films as authentic materials in learning language, contribution of documentary film in enhancing SL writing skill and ways to deal with documentary as authentic materials in TASL for writing skill.

5.1 Documentary films as authentic materials in learning language

There are different purposes or benefits of using documentary film in language teaching and learning described by some studies. As discussed by Morley and Lawrence (1971), there are two purposes of using documentary films in language learning which are linguistic purpose and informational purpose. The linguistic purpose is to provide advanced learners with opportunities for live practice in the four skills of language. The other purpose, informational, is to provide learners with up-to-date, relevant information about contemporary affairs (Morley & Lawrence, 1972). Besides, Bernardo (2011) showed that the use of documentary films draws philosophical and theoretical support in teaching and learning, coming from two important aspects: constructivist view and inquiry-based learning. Constructivist view purports that learners construct knowledge by connecting new and old information largely by them, while inquiry-based learning principally involves the learners and leads them to understand content, issues, and questions surrounding a curricular area or concept.

In the same year, Terantino (2011) claimed that watching documentary film via You Tube can help learner in the aspect of linguistics, motivation and also culture information. From

previous literature review, it was found that the role of documentary is very important for learners and lecturers, as supplement materials besides textbooks in classroom (Shin & Cho, 2015; Soong, 2012; Bernardo, 2011; Torri, 2011; Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011). In addition, Capanegra (2014) administered the same test to participants in an experimental group that revealed moderately positive attitudes toward the use of authentic readings prior to writing assignments, while Cheon (2007) and Ellen (2008) proved that authentic material can help learners in understanding Korean and Spanish cultures. Soong (2012), in her study on using documentary film in English oral interpretation class, had drawn some important findings: first, a film is more interesting than a textbook and the researcher offers modern teachers another choice of class teaching material. Second, a long film will frustrate English as second language learners in class, where the length of a film is between 10-20 minutes in a two hour class. Third, documentary films meet the demand of authenticity and communication. In their study, Shin and Cho (2015) used an educational documentary film to experience convergence learning. They found that the learners' experience changed in cognition and emotions from fear to pleasure. The most intense emotional change was when learners realized that they not only understand the document's main content, but could also produce their own meanings due to the convergence of their learning experience.

There are three important reasons drawn by Morley and Lawrence (1971) to answer the question about 'what makes the documentary film different from any other film programs? Firstly, a documentary film here functions as the stimulus which sets in motion a communication process which eventually involves the writing skill modalities. Therefore, documentary film is not an end in itself but a beginning, the feature of dynamic documentary film dealing with controversial, international, personal social issues of the century can act as catalysts. With guidance, the second language learners can provoke highly motivated spoken and written exchanges of ideas and opinions. Secondly, the documentary film is not just a pleasant sound and light diversion, but it is an active experience for its viewers and should be underscored in regard to second learners that, in fact, each person who views it also has a unique individual experience because of his or her particular cultural-social background regardless whether the documentary film provides a more-or-less common experience. Follow-up language exercises from discussing and writing must capitalise on the individualism of the learner. Thirdly, the documentary film is not an extra-curricular activity but plays the role of an integral content part of the in-class English instructional program. This is somewhat different from the other profitable uses of films reported in the literature: language teaching (grammar, vocabulary, etc.); laboratory practice; cultural exchanges; orientation; entertainment.

Morley and Lawrence (1971) also listed six criteria in selecting documentary films that have relevance, sequence continuity, quality, intelligibility, organization and vocabulary. Salah (2008) discussed about the criteria in selecting authentic reading texts. Authentic reading texts can be motivating for learners, but also overwhelming. Some authentic texts will be frustrating rather than motivating when the material contains language that is beyond the learner's abilities. In order to avoid that, second language lecturers need to determine what kind of authentic text is appropriate for what level and "what authentic texts are for a particular interest to a class such as poetry or newspaper articles". There are some studies that discussed about the importance of the documentary film in enhancing Arabic language skills

learners majoring in Bachelor of Arabic language at universities in Malaysia, such as Azlan and Rosni (2015) which highlighted the role of Arabic films, cartoon, documentary and songs as good references in enhancing the Arabic writing skill and Rabiatal Aribah et al., (2014) found that the usage of spontaneous strategies in learning strategies “I pick up words from films and TV programmes I watch” is the lowest mean value ($M = 3.04$). This phenomenon shows that low level of awareness to the role of documentary film and other TV programme among Arabic language learners in Malaysia.

5.2 Contribution of documentary film in enhancing SL writing skill

Some studies have been done to prove a relationship between film and writing skills. The selected films *Halloween*, *Diamonds are Forever*, *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sixth*, helped university learners in writing in terms of introducing learners to concepts such as textual cohesion and coherence. Nunun (2010) concluded that the film “The Postman Pat and Surprise Present” improved learners in the aspect of social function and generic structure of narrative text while Anggraini et al. (2014) highlighted an improvement in narrative text writing in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics from the video multimedia. Retana (2010) proved that the “All about animals” VCD is very useful for teaching learners writing report text while Siti Maryam (2015) proved that English News video can be used to improve learners’ report writing.

There are some studies proving that employing documentary films in second language writing class has value, for example “Tsunami Japan” is an effective documentary film for use in a writing class (Hasan, 2011) and natural disaster and technology documentary films are helpful for writing news text (Hasan & Syukriah, 2013). In addition, ‘natural and environment’ documentary films (Minanur, 2014) and documentary films about animals, plants, the city and the last natural disaster (Esra & Tjut, 2013) help learners in writing report texts. Then, Enisa (2014) proved that by answering some questions involving the film, such as making an outline before writing report text, the learners’ writing ability were improved. In other studies, Snow (2012) used four types of documentaries, which are expository, observational, interactive and reflective to explore the similarities between all these types of documentary film and essay composition. Critical thinking in writing exposition was also mentioned by Kasper (2000), who found that film imagery enables learners to visually process comparative and casual relationships between and among issues and events and encourages learner to support a point of view on that issue.

5.3 Ways to deal with documentary as authentic materials in TASL for writing skill

The following four steps are amended from Morley and Lawrence (1971) and Peacock (1997). The following are the suggested steps to deal with authentic materials for ASL writing skill:

Step 1: Advanced preparation for aural comprehension

- a) Study guide for contents of the documentary films (used before first showing)
- b) Vocabulary for oral practice and discussion (used before first showing)

Step 2: Aural comprehension and class discussion

- a) General discussion question (used after first showing)
- b) Documentary film continuity guide and note sheet (used during second showing of the documentary film)

- c) Opinion speech-topic questions (used after third showing of the documentary film)
 - i. Distribution of on-task behavior observation sheet
 - ii. Distribution of overall motivation observation sheet

Step 3: Advanced preparation for writing

- a) Written vocabulary exercise (used after first showing of the documentary film)
- b) “Before you write” instructions (used after second showing of the documentary film)

Step 4: Composition exercise

- a) Specific writing assignments (used after second and/or third showing)

6.0 CONCLUSION

The present paper is a short review on the role and the importance of documentary film program as language input in the acquisition of L2 writing skills among second language learners. Accordingly, the role of input is considered from different theories of language learning. It is noted that some theories attach a great importance to the role of input in second language acquisition and at the same time the importance of cognitive strategies in writing process are also discussed. Researchers who have conducted studies related to this topic are; Soong (2012) who mentioned about the length of documentary films, Bernardo (2011) discussed on assigning documentary film projects as reading task among language learners, Morley and Lawrence (1971) highlighted on the steps in using documentaries in teaching writing skills, while Peacock (1997) showed the use of observation sheet in exploring learners’ motivation. The experimental design of the effectiveness of authentic material study was implemented by Zhafarghandi, Barekat, and Homaci (2014), Woottipong (2014), Soliman (2013), Masood (2013), Khalili, (2012), Bahrani and Sim (2012), and Shu-Qing (2009). At the same time, Shin and Cho (2015) promoted the use of educational documentary film to experience the convergence learning and they found that the learners’ experience changed in cognition and emotions from fear to pleasure.

From the review of literature, input of documentary film in language classes has been used years ago, whereas this paper highlights and promotes the use of this material in Arabic as second/foreign language classroom especially in enhancing writing skill, where this material can be found on the internet even though the surrounding is not conducive to practice Arabic all the time. This topic is still an on-going research and the review on this process is needed.

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