About Us: http://www.the-criterion.com/about/

Archive: http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/

Contact Us: http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/

Editorial Board: http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/

Submission: http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/

FAQ: http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/

Cinema and Social Media: Reinventing Classroom Teaching and Learning

Dr. Divya Walia
S.S Jain Subodh P G College,
Jaipur.

Abstract:

With the advent of new century, learning and teaching practices have undergone huge transformation and are still in the process of getting updated with the changing learning needs and demands. Earlier where classrooms comprised a central figure responsible for knowledge transfer, these days it is more of a discourse with learners too in interactive and participative mode in knowledge sharing. Two of the factors that have influenced this change are popularity of cinema and social media.

Cinema has added new charm to the classrooms through its appealing content and now is being used as a part of pedagogy in number of courses and subjects. Today it is not limited to the mass communication classes but is being effectively exploited in the classrooms of literature, history, political science, psychology etc. Easy and wide accessibility of social networking too has led to evolution of new kind of teaching which goes beyond the physical boundaries of a classroom and also minimises the level of formality in a teaching learning process

This paper will look at both these resources and their effectiveness in teaching English Literature and Language. There will also be an attempt to highlight various features which are responsible for their increasing popularity among the teachers and learners community.

Keywords: Cinema, Pedagogy, Social Media, Teaching-Learning Practices

Introduction

In this new era of mutual knowledge sharing and transfer, role of learner has become equally important. In the past acquisition of learning depended only upon the person involved in the delivery of it but today equal emphasis is upon the learner for the effectiveness of the learning and teaching process. The role of a learner is no longer limited to being only a recipient he is rather valued as an active participant, contributing to the whole process of knowledge sharing and transfer. This change in the pedagogical process has transformed the classroom practices making them more dynamic, innovative and result oriented. In this dot com age, learning isn't limited only to the text books and the knowledge possessed by the facilitator; it has gone beyond these static resources to embrace content effective in matter and powerful in appeal.

Film as a Pedagogical Tool

Cinema is one such powerful resource which has brought elements of fun and entertainment to the classroom, rendering teaching –learning practices, more effective and interactive. Stating the importance of films in education, Kelvin Sealey writes, in *Film, Politics, and Education: Cinematic Pedagogy across Disciplines* that "As a classroom tool it can catalyze a valuable discussion or display in visual form a critical idea that might remain too abstract or

remote when encountered in discussion, literature or debate. And film, given its potential to connect to our emotional center, and as a device for pleasure-seeking, for fantasy, or for the experience of alternative ways of thinking or being, can help teachers connect with their students along the important but often ignored dimension of joy." (2-3)

Besides, films can also enhance comprehension of a topic by substantiating existing knowledge with visual content, thereby making it longer to retain and easier to understand. The "students in general appreciate popular and documentary films in the classroom as they believe that visual images give them more concrete ideas about subjects than an instructor and/or assigned readings can abstractly or tediously explain in words." (Takekawa, 4) For the students of mass communication, films are an essential part of the pedagogy but for other disciplines too they can prove to be pedagogical tools with immense potential. Films like *Rajneeti* and *Aarakshan* can offer a highly stimulating platform for discussion and analysis to the students of political science by giving them an insight into the darker side of the politics, its functioning and its consequences. Gregg (1998) argues that films dramatize concepts such as sovereignty and historical events, thereby making them more understandable to students, and additionally stimulating students to exchange their views and opinions in the classroom.

Similarly, movies like *Taare Zameen Par, My Name is Khan* offer a psychological peep into the minds of the children with special abilities. Such movies can be taken up as a case study among the students aspiring to make a career in the field of psychology. "They can expose students to aspects of the human experience that may be unfamiliar or provide examples of concepts that are difficult to explain or describe." Many students lack direct experience of working with people they would be studying later in life as psychologists. Using films or documentaries of infants or individuals with psychiatric disorders, abused and neglected children, prisoners, refugees, etc can lay a foundation for students, ensuring that at minimum, all students in the class have some exposure while also reinforcing what is covered in lecture and readings.

For literature students there are many adaptations available not only in Hollywood but also in bollywood. Such adaptations aid the understanding of the text and offer a wider discourse for the analysis and interpretation of the texts. "Films based on novels ultimately transform a story based in a linguistic medium into a story told in a visual medium that has its own distinctive characteristics. Also, explaining why the choices are made when transforming a literary work into a visual medium can help students understand the strengths and unique qualities of both novel and film." (Selvi)

More importantly, they also expose sufficiently to the oral skills of the language facilitating its practice and subsequent acquisition. "Vocabulary and listening-comprehension are not the only skills improved by watching films. Subtitles and closed captioning (dialogue and other sound information printed across the bottom of the frame) can help students increase reading speed. Films can also serve as the basis for writing assignments and oral presentations, especially when they are combined with the diverse film resources now readily accessible on the Internet." (Stewart 1) While reading a novel, the students are practicing only one skill but by bringing that text in a classroom with all its visual and auditory features , a teacher can make them practice both listening and speaking skills. Further various assignments based on film like a review, or a critical analysis of its specific aspects can be further incorporated to make students practice the fourth skill i.e. writing too. Films are entertaining and loved by the students of all groups; in fact, "if films did nothing more than extend the previous

technologies of language acquisition they would be well worth adding to our curricula insofar as they have the capacity to extend them quite considerably." (Stewart 2)

Social Media as a Pedagogical Tool

Over the last decade, internet and social media have fast emerged as technological tools, which have completely revolutionized the world of communication. It has not only brought people closer but has made communication so tremendously fast paced that people can remain connected 24X7 and can share knowledge and information almost in seconds. Through social media channels, people can be in touch round the clock even from the remotest of locations. "The growth of social media over the past five years has transformed the ways in which the internet is experienced by most end users. Now the internet is no longer a one-way broadcast delivery system where the individual user downloads data, information and other resources produced by a relatively small number of content providers. Instead, the internet is now driven by (and to some extent determined through) the activities of its ordinary users—what has been described as many-to-many rather than one-to-many connectivity."(Selwyn)

Being a popular communication channel, besides facilitating connectivity, social media can also function as one of the most effective pedagogical tool. It can work as a platform for students to share their thoughts and review others' over any topic or subject. As a pedagogical tool it has immense potential to aid learning and teaching at all levels. "Social capabilities give educators the opportunity to develop interactive, engaging projects and assignments for students and to build learning communities. Social sites let faculty and students share and comment on information, and interact with their peers, instructors, and the learning materials themselves. The social site environment's engaging, interactive nature creates an opportunity for faculty in higher-education faculty to keep the interest of their students and help them build up a network of peer support." (Tinti-Kane). By putting social media for educational purposes, the users can enjoy the flexibility of time and the convenience of location too.

For practicing language too, this is one of the potential resources. Social networking sites like *facebook* and *twitter* facilitate formation of a community with common interests and goals. Such communities can initiate a forum for exchange of knowledge and information with or without the supervision of instructor, thus building an online classroom, which will be easy as well as interesting to attend. In a study on using *Twitter* to enhance social presence in online instructional design and technology courses, several benefits were determined: (a) it provides quick help for students' issues, (b) it develops students' writing skills, (c) it helps them gain respect from their followers, (d) it yields participation to a community of practice, (e) it generates informal learning activities via self-directed and independent learning, and (f) it allows for on-going relationships even after the course ends (Dunlap and Lowenthal, 2009).

Besides offering platform for discussion and articulation of thoughts and opinions, Social websites like *Goodreads* and *Shelfari* act as an online library, also featuring recommendations and reviews on books from the readers all over the world, thus opening up a plethora of material for one to read and gain. Similarly *Youtube* offers a platform to view and upload videos online without involving any cost of burning a CD/DVD. The videos featuring speeches by the famous leaders and orators can serve as rich content for analysis by the students of political science or even language learners trying to perfect intonation.

Academia.edu is another useful site bringing together academicians/researchers on one platform. This site also affords wide resource of online journals for learners as well as teachers to read and refer to. In addition to these general websites there are many sites aimed at specific community and purposes, which can be well utilized for various learning and educational purposes. While exploring the potential of various resources in facilitating development of writing skills, one important fact that cannot be overlooked is the language being applied by the users. It is an obvious fact that with the advent of SMS and chatting options, students have started shying away from making serious attempt at writing well and in a structured manner. For this, blogs can be made a part of assignment for the students. In blogs, the information presented is structured and lengthy thus giving students an opportunity to practice them with accuracy as well as with adequate level of formality. "Blogging also offers unique learning opportunities to students. Through blogs students have the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with teachers and each other. Blogging not only provides students with a unique arena to discuss their interests express their opinions and share their ideas but also offers students a new perspective on the meaning of "voice". When students can "publish" their thoughts on a blog, this gives them a sense of choice and ownership while simultaneously encouraging articulation and topic focused interaction within a collaborative learning community".

Conclusion

Cinema and social media have and are still contributing to the field of education making it more learner centric and result oriented. Though the application of these resources for learning and teaching purposes depends primarily on the ability of the instructor to select and customize their various aspects as per the needs and interest of the learners, yet their popularity and convenience of usage can always encourage and engage students to participate actively in the learning defined by them. Their effectiveness in making knowledge sharing and transfer rapid and comprehensive cannot be questioned; however these resources need to be explored and developed further so as to tap their potential to the maximum. The future lies in the hands of the educators as well as learners to build upon them and evolve them as rich learning resources.

Works Cited:

Dunlap, J. C., & Lowenthal, P. R. "Tweeting the night away: Using Twitter to enhance social presence". *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 20(2), 129-135. 2009

Gregg, Robert W. *International Relations on Film*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 1998

Reddy, C.Nagendra and Hannah,G. "Blogs: A Learner – Centric Educational Tool". academia.edu. Retrieved on 7 May 2015. http://www.academia.edu/8277145/Blogs_A_Learner_Centric_Educational_Tool

Sealey, Kelvin Shawn, ed. *Film, Politics, and Education: Cinematic Pedagogy Across Disciplines*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2008.

Selvi, R.Tamil, "Film Adaptation as an Instructional Tool in Teaching of Literature" *Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature*. 2009-10 https://sites.google.com/site/splissueeltailiteraturejournal/articles/film-adaptation

Selwyn, Neil. "Social Media in Higher Education". *The Europa World of Learning*.2011. Retreived on 4 May 2015. http://www.worldoflearning.com.

Stewart, David M. "Film English: Using Films to Teach English" *Electronic Journal of English Education*. National Central University, Taiwan 24 (May 2006). Retrieved on 5 May 2015 http://ejee.ncu.edu.tw/articles.asp?period=24&flag=24

Takekawa, Shunichi. "Teaching International Politics in Multinational Classrooms: Popular Films as Pedagogical Aid" RCAPS Working Paper No. 11-1 June 2011 Beppu: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University http://www.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/

Tinti-Kane, Hester. "Overcoming Hurdles to Social Media in Education". *EDUCAUSE Review*

April 1, 2013. Retrieved on 6 May 2015

http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/overcoming-hurdles-social-media-education