THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VISUAL MEDIA
IN LITERATURE-BASED CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

A typical Literature-based classroom consists of the students, the teacher and the Literature texts. This has resulted in the loss of students' interest towards learning Literature. Apart from literary texts such as novels, poems and short stories, most other materials, in essence, lack the power of capturing students' interest towards understanding the literary meanings of Literature texts. Another setback to this is the teacher's dependency on the textbook which results in a monotonous lesson as the teacher is not using creative methods to engage students in a Literature lesson. This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of implementing visual media in the teaching of Literature towards students' interest and understanding of Literature texts. Based on the findings, the research has revealed that there is a significant correlation between the independent variable; visual media in Literature-based classroom, and the dependent variables; students' interest and understanding of Literature texts. The majority of the respondents agreed that visual media in Literature-based classroom enabled them to understand their Literature texts better. Moreover, the use of visual media in Literature-based classroom can be one of the creative ways to attract their interest.

Keywords: literature-based classroom; visual media; literary texts; teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

The Problem
Since 1980s, many studies have been conducted to understand the processes and effects that occur when students learn Literature and develop literary understandings (Langer, 1998). In the studies, it has been found that students who develop literary understandings are more enriched in their thoughts, interpretations of diverse socio-cultural meanings, and also in their interactions with teachers and other students.

Nevertheless, teaching and learning in our modern times is different from that in previous generations due to the occurrence of electronic media. Contemporary teachers are approaching the visual-verbal relationship in student-generated illustrations (Hickey & Reiss, 2003). As mentioned by Duffy (1998) visual media command thousands of hours more than school does in a young adult's life. Like it or not, media are an educator of this generation. It is found that the teaching of Literature through media is able to stimulate the students' interests to learn Literature in a more critical and exciting way (Avery, Avery & Pace, 1998). This is also related to the recent and growing notion of media literacy, which Krueger (1998: p. 17) described as "the ability to comprehend information that is contained and conveyed through a variety of non-print media."

Importance of the Problem
The development of critical viewing skills has become almost as important as critical reading skills in this age (Corbitt, 1998). Students need more than the traditional way of learning, particularly involving visual media as in films, television, and etc. There is evidence throughout history that there is a strong connection between visual and verbal information. According to the poet Simonides, as cited in Stokes (2001, p.10), "Words are the images of things" and similarly, Aristotle stated that, "without image, thinking is impossible". Visual media could be any non-print form that could attract attention and influence people. It is well-known that visual media are a means of communication that could reach people widely regardless of age groups and race. Many studies show the positive effects of using visual media in teaching and learning. Hence, there is an urge that students need to learn visually and teachers need to teach visually (Stokes, 2001).

In the Malaysian context, the use of visual media in complementing literary understandings is still not widely applied in Literature classes. Researchers of previous studies focused on children and there is paucity of knowledge on undergraduate students' perceptions on the effectiveness of visual media in Literature-based classroom. Hence, this study contends that use of visual media in Literature-based classroom is effective to enhance students' interest and understanding of literary texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual media are one of the visual literacy that suggest positive enhancement in students' learning. Research suggests that using visual treatments in lessons enhances learning with varying degrees of success (Stokes, 2001). With the rapid development of information technology nowadays, much has been said about integrating modern media with the teaching and learning of Literature to complement literary understanding. However, before the introduction of audio-visual media as supporting materials in the classroom, many studies had been conducted to investigate the effects of television-viewing on students' reading performance (Wright, Huston, Murphy, St.Peters, Pinion, Scantlin & Kotler, 2001). Some of these studies indicated positive effects of television-viewing on reading performance which they referred to as *facilitation hypothesis*, but most studies however indicated that television-viewing had negative effects on reading performance which was known as the *inhibition hypothesis*.

Furthermore, it has been found that students who develop literary understandings are more enriched in their thoughts, interpretations of diverse socio-cultural meanings, and also in their interactions with teachers and other students. All these findings seem to focus on the benefits and enthusiasm of most students in learning Literature. In reality however, not all students have the same passion and interests for learning, let alone reading literary works.

English language and Literature teaching is an integrated process (Considine, 1995; Langer, 1998). Therefore, tutors have come to the idea that audio-visual media can aid Literature teaching for successful language acquisition as they are authentic and have connection to the students, which adhere to the needs of language learning. As Curry-Tash (1998) mentioned, media literacy offers opportunities for us to connect with our students' lived culture. Avery et al. further added that "many of today's high school students need assistance winding their way through difficult Literature…audio and film adaptations can improve reading comprehension and open doors to the rhetorical devices locked within the text of a good book" (1998, p.62).

The use of audio-visual media to complement Literature teaching has also received formal acknowledgement from educational authorities. For instance, according to the 1996 NCTE *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts* (27),

> Students need to construct meaning through different media, analyze their transactions with media texts, and create their own media texts and performances. Teachers must help students to explore contemporary media as extensions of Literature and as entities in and of themselves.
>
> (Krueger, 1998, p.17)

Educators and teachers believe that the use of audio-visual media in the teaching and learning of Literature is able to foster interactive, collaborative, and communicative learning behavior (Owen, Silet, & Brown 1998; Hobbs, 2001). These researchers and educators observed that with the introduction of audio-visual media in Literature classes, the students are involved in active interaction and collaboration with each other and with the teacher for better interpretation

of messages, assumptions and discussions on contents, values, and cross-cultural comparisons contained in the audio-visual media.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In conducting the study, there were certain expectations and predictions of the end result based on the theories and findings of the related studies that were manipulated to develop a conceptual framework of the study.
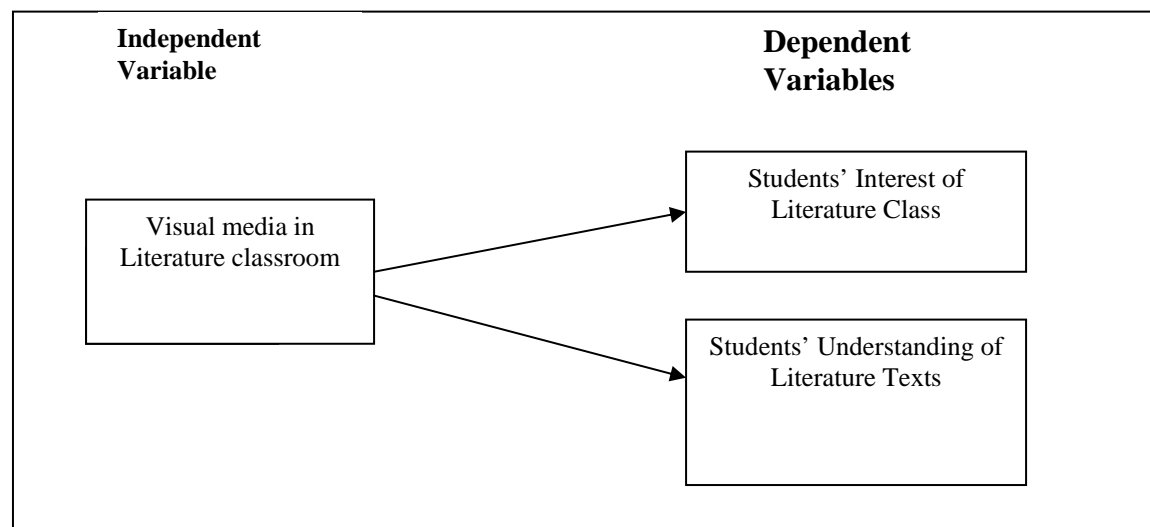

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted with students enrolled in the TESL program at the Faculty of Education, University of Technology MARA, Shah Alam. It focused only on forty (40) TESL students who were taking Literature as their elective subject.

Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to twenty (20) Part Five students and twenty (20) Part Eight students to be answered. Each questionnaire comprised four sections:

Section A: Demographic Data
Section B: Effectiveness of visual media in Literature-based classroom.
Section C: The correlation between visual media and students' interest of Literature class.
Section D: The correlation between visual media and students' understanding of Literature texts.

In addition, an interview was also administered by using the purposive sampling method. Questionnaires of ten (10) selected respondents were labeled A to E for Part Five students and F to J for Part Eight students. The respondents with the labeled questionnaires were informed that

they would be interviewed.

ANALYSIS

Table 3.1 Correlations Matrix between Visual Media and
   Students' Interest in Literature Classrooms

		MSI
MVM	r =	.453**
	Sig. (2-tailed) =	.003
	N =	40

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The data obtained signify that students' interest as would be expected, is significantly positive correlated with the independent variable. From the result, as shown in Table 3.1, there is a weak positive relationship between visual media (MVM) and students' interest (MSI). The significant value is 45.3% (r = .453). In other words, if the usage of visual media in Literature classroom increases, students' interest will increase by 45.3%. There is a significant relationship between visual media and students' interest (p= 0.01) significant at .003 level. This means that null hypothesis is rejected. However, the relationship is not strong enough because it is only 45.3% related.

Table 3.2 Correlations Matrix between Visual Media and
   Students' Understanding of Literature Texts

		MSU
MVM	r =	.895**
	Sig. (2-tailed) =	.000
	N =	40

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The results obtained, as shown in Table 3.2, indicate that students' understanding as would be expected, is significantly positive correlated with the independent variable. The data show that there is a strong positive relationship between visual media (MVM) and students' understanding (MSU). The significant value is 89.5% (r = .895). In other words, if the usage of visual media in Literature classroom increases, students' understanding will increase by 89.5%. There is a significant relationship between visual media and students' interest (p= 0.01) significant at .000 level. This means that null hypothesis is rejected, thus, the relationship is very strong because it is 89.5% related.

DISCUSSION

From the data analysis results, it can be seen that the respondents are highly positive that visual media in Literature classroom are beneficial to the students. The findings indicate that students believe visual media should be integrated in all Literature classrooms as they perceive that such media can enhance students' thinking skills and their ability to relate to the Literature texts. (Considine, 1995; Avery et al., 1998; Brooks, 1998; Owen et al. 1998). Besides, interview respondents also believe that visual media in Literature classroom helps them to understand and remember the storyline of the texts better. From the result, it shows that one of the effectiveness of visual media in Literature class is that students are more focused in their reading.

The findings for this study have supported Krueger's (1998) research, in which the use of media in the Literature class increases students' enthusiasm to learn. Based on the result, it is proven that there is a positive relationship between visual media in Literature classroom and the enhancement of students' interest towards the subject. Although the correlation matrix indicates that there is a weak positive relationship, it is proven that in some way visual media are able to attract students' interest to learn Literature. According to one of the respondents in the interview, students are more interested to go to a Literature class when there are visual media being integrated as they enjoy the class better. Besides, most interview respondents also feel that visual media in Literature classes are one of the creative ways to attract their interest.

The data obtained and analyzed show a significant relationship between visual media and students' understanding of Literature texts. There is a strong positive relationship between the variable, hence proving that the use of visual media in Literature classroom is able to improve students' understanding. The reason may be because students are able to relate and compare the visual version they watch and the texts that they read. From the visual version, students are able to get clear meanings of the underlying message in certain texts. As mentioned earlier, most of the students find it difficult to understand Literature texts because of the differences in the way they present the setting, culture and unspoken actions. Thus, via visual media, students can understand as they see the Literature texts and comprehend them clearly.

CONCLUSION

There is a positive correlation between visual media in the Literature classroom and the enhancement of students' interest and understanding of Literature texts. Based on the result of both questionnaires and interview conducted, majority of the respondents agree on the effectiveness of visual media in Literature-based classroom. Visual media is able to integrate the students in class discussion and also able to improve students' thinking skills. Through visual media, students are more interested to finish their reading. It is also proven that students agree that visual media enhance their understanding of Literature texts, which are commonly regarded as difficult to comprehend. For the Literature personnel, this study has contributed in giving another perspective to improve students' learning of Literature. Apart from that, the findings of

the research are parallel with most literature from the previous studies which support the hypothesis that visual media in the Literature classroom are beneficial not only among children but also among undergraduate students.

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