

The Effects of Teaching the Iliad with Films on the Academic Success of Students ¹

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims to find out the effects of teaching the Iliad with films on the academic success of Turkish Grade 10 students. The case study pattern is used in accordance with a qualitative research method. Percentage, frequency and arithmetic mean methods are used in the analysis of data with SPSS v. 14.0. T-test is used for the analysis of significance. The experimental group watched the movie selected and shortened in relation to the Iliad during Turkish Literature course, while the control group followed traditional teaching methods (plain lecturing). It was found that the academic success rates of the experimental and control groups differ and this difference favours the group who watched the movie*

Keywords: *motion picture and education, motion picture and epics, motion picture and academic success*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is possible to design a learning environment that is more effective in the teaching of epics by making use of the multi-dimensional learning environment provided by cinematographic technology. When compared with traditional learning methods, a learning environment enriched with films will enable the learners to grasp the plot of the story and analyze the content much better. Films as audio-visual aids are also effective in relaying the social, cultural, and moral information and behavioral patterns as well as academic knowledge. Cinematography provides the learners with opportunities to create in mind clear images of universal values, equity, the extra ordinary events of the mythical eras distant and profound for the learners, democratic values, mentality and way of living. Besides, learners will have experience with the art of cinema. Also called “the seventh art”, cinema has a unique place in the teaching of literature with its universal, commonly found and easily accessible characteristics, offering a practical and lively educational context. There are, however, such limitations as teacher training, physical and technical insufficiency, and economic conditions in the use of films in classes in Turkey.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Literature – Cinema – Adaptation

Adaptations, or the restructuring of a work of art in a certain artistic genre according to the technical capabilities of another genre, are common for most of the distinguished works of art in literature, theater, cinema, painting, etc. By means of such adaptations, the interaction between artistic genres feeds the genres both content-wise. One of the reasons for the art of cinema to attract a dignified group of audience from the early years is the works adapted from literature to cinema. Literature also provides cinema with a draft screenplay and guaranteed audience. Cinema, in turn, provides literature with eagerness among people to read the original book and to get to know the author and the topic.

The advances in communications technologies led to the changes in the general outline of literature. Radio, cinema, and, later, television all affected the dimensions and ways of literary adaptations.

2.2. Instruction through Films

After the invention by the Lumière brothers in 1895, the cinematography was first used for educational purposes in 1907—in Turkey, in 1910. It was observed those years that visual methodologies proved to be more successful than those depending on the verbal expression of the teacher and containing innumerable auditory elements (Duffey, 1918: 5). Several studies were done on the effectiveness of learning by films to test the retention of information showed its effect in comparison with other learning contexts (Sumstine 1918, Malik 1933, Butler, et.al. 2006).

During the course of time between the two world wars, movies undertook such functions as entertainment, education, and relaying social and cultural heritage. Research done on cinema films in those years also yielded important results in relation to children’s sleep habits, moral standards, sex crimes, social crimes, etc. As of 1920’s, courses were given to teachers on the techniques of teaching by films, on cinema

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films, and on the use of projection machines; the effort was also put in a completion of the technical equipment in schools (Pasin, 1951). In most of the schools in the United States in 1930's, technical equipment was provided; school movie theaters, film libraries, and school movie centers were started; updated and detailed film catalogs, film guides and teacher manuals were prepared and used (İnce-Yakar, 2013).

In Turkey, however, teaching with films has not gone much further than a limited number of audio-visual materials prepared by a few innovative teachers and the Directorate of Educational Materials Production. Therefore, films are used in classrooms in Turkey according to the personal experience and wishes of individual teachers, not depending on the curriculum or sources. However, academic studies started to emerge in the use of films in the teaching of language, social science education, history education, arts education, educational science, medical education, science education and mathematics education (Öztaşkın, 2013; Öztaş, 2008; Capar, 2012; Kaşkaya, et.al., 2011; Mandıracıoğlu, et.al., 2011; Ayvaci, et.al., 2012; Balbağ, 2012).

2.3. Use of Films in Education

Use of cinema films in classrooms has two dimensions: 1) The use of films designed specifically for the teaching of a subject; 2) Extracting relevant parts from the films for educational purposes. In Turkey, various educational films were made by the Directorate of Educational Technologies of the Ministry of National Education. The films made for open education high-schools can be used for secondary education as well. However, the number of such films is very few. Therefore, the teacher can use the part of the film that he/she decides to select to supplement the text to be covered in class.

It is required that the teacher gets prepared before the showing of the film, check the projection machine, computers and other devices, and edit the film by means of special software programs to cut the sequence to be used off the film. The length of the sequence should not be so long as to cover the whole teaching session and direct the learner for visual reading only. Such activities as question-answer, discussion, reading and writing should be done in classes. Otherwise, an entire lesson period will be spared for watching the film. The film CD should also be checked for defects. There are also some criteria as to the characteristics of the films to be used in the classroom. Teachers should have some training in the selection of the films to be used for teaching a particular subject. Such films with scenes of obscenity, swear words, and rude behavior should not be selected, or the sequences which will be shown in classes should not contain such scenes.

The teacher should be prepared with the activity plan. The teacher should know beforehand what to ask about the film and the text and have a clear plan of how to cover the subject with allotted time. It is important to dim the classroom, eliminate the noise and distracting factors originating from the outside sources, and review the classroom seating. The teacher should ask the class some questions on the topic and the film, introduce the film, and raise interest in the film. There are three basic ways to use films in the classroom: 1) Watching the sequence before the subject is covered; 2) Watching the sequence after the subject is covered; 3) Pausing the sequence as the subject is being covered. Some sections or, if need be, the entire film can be shown again.

Students should also be guided to access to educational films outside the classroom. By means of the links to be placed on the school web-site, these films and videos can be made easily accessible (Fu-xia, 2006: 57). If the films are not made in the students' country, it is important that the film is dubbed into students' native language; some students can be all too reluctant to read subtitles (Champoux, 1999: 249). Besides, as the students try to read the subtitles, they are likely to miss some visual elements.

A technique mostly adopted to make use of films in the classroom is "read the book, see the movie". It is important that the technique is supported by the comparison and contrast between the film and the book. Besides, students are not required to put forward the superiority of reading to watching or vice versa (Teasley and Wilder, 1994).

In order to show a film in relation to a text that is not found in the course book, the teacher needs to adjust the text to be covered in class according to the course book contents; and, hence, summary of the text, appropriate length, specification of new vocabulary items, replacing the new vocabulary items with the known ones, and such. The match between the text and the film will enhance academic achievement, retention in mind, and pleasure from the course.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative research, the case study research design was adopted. The Iliad, found in the "Turkish Literature in Epic Era" unit of Grade 10 syllabus for Turkish Literature course, was selected to be the text. The questions for the epic and units of analysis were prepared in line with the gains and related literature, and then put through elimination process carried out by three experts in the field.

The research was conducted over a total of 30 focus students at *Karadeniz Ereğli Anatolian School* in Karadeniz Ereğli (Heraclia) district of the province of Zonguldak city in Turkey. 15 students from Grade 10 Science – A section and 15 students from Grade 10 Science – B section participated in the study. The reason why that particular school was selected for the study was the success and higher place of its graduates in

university enrolment rankings. The research was conducted with two groups, one control, and one experimental, the participants of which were assigned on a random basis. The groups are equal in terms of age, gender and academic achievement. To be covered with the control group, a passage was selected to fit the length of the passages in the course book of Grade 10 Turkish Literature course. A summary plot of the epic was introduced at the beginning of the passage.

To be covered with the experimental group, however, “Troy”, a 2004 film by Wolfgang Petersen on an Iliad adaptation by David Benioff, was selected due to such factors as the closeness of the adaptation to the original, the quality of photography and sound recording, and the acting success of the cast. The film was also found to reflect the original as closely as possible. Among other factors taken into consideration were the suitability of the film to the cognitive, physical and affective levels of the students, and achievement in telling the story of the epic. 14-minutes sequence related to the passage to be covered was cut off by means of video edit software to be shown to the students.

Depending on our observation during the pilot study, the course teacher in lieu of the researcher conducted the research for the purpose of preventing the researcher’s interference with the research results. The researcher only took place in the classroom as an observer. The course teacher was fully instructed on the research file, the text selected from the epic, the film, “Troy” (2004), selected for the research, and what should be done while conducting the research.

In the control group the text excerpted from the epic was read, the lesson was covered in traditional ways and questions were answered, while, in the experimental group, 14-minutes “Troy” (2004) sequence was shown and questions were answered. The first test was performed immediately after the course was processed, and the second test, which included the same questions as the first test, was applied after 1 month.

Further study was done for the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the research. The presence of the researcher in the research site for two months, including the pre-research period, during certain hours provided a detailed description of the data. The in-depth data were obtained by comparing, interpreting and conceptualizing the data from questionnaire results, document analysis, and researcher’s notes as well as multiple methods. In document analysis, three field specialists were asked of their opinions, and separate correlation analysis tables were prepared for each session of the experimental and control groups so that the unbiased scoring system between those reviewers could be demonstrated. Correlation scores are close to the level of 0,01 and meaningful.

IV. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The students were asked questions prepared according to the gains specified in the goals of the literature syllabus. The gains are as the following: Making explanations on how epics are created and evolve in time, gaining an understanding of the fact that the epics era is observed in different civilisations and tribal cultures, specification of the function of the characters in the epic, explaining how the epic theme expresses the universal traits in all humans, studying the plot of the epic and explaining its features, and explaining the mythological elements through the viewpoint of the mindset in that era.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

The findings related to the research question 1, “Is there a meaningful difference between the achievements in understanding the whole of the text for the first and the second applications of the *experimental* group, exposed to instruction with the film adapted from the epic?” are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The t-Test Scores of the Dependent Groups for the Academic Achievement First Test Scores of the Students in the Experimental Group

Test	N	\bar{X}	S	Sd	T	P
First test	15	24,67	2,69	14	2,20	0,046
Second test		23,07	2,79			

The results in Table 1 show a meaningful difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the academic achievement of the students in the experimental group, who covered the lesson by means of the film ($t(14) = 2,20; p < 0,046$). While the mean score of the first test scores of the students in the experimental group was $\bar{X} = 24,67$, the second test mean score was $\bar{X} = 23,07$. The difference between these scores was found to favor first tests. In the film-monitored group, the results of the first test made immediately after the course are higher. The second test, which was implemented a month later, was 1.60 points down.

Findings Related to Research Question 2

The findings related to the research question 2, “Is there a meaningful difference between the achievements in understanding the whole of the text for the first and the second applications of the *control* group, exposed to traditional instruction (plain lecturing)?” are given in Table 2.

Table 2. The t-Test Scores of the Dependent Groups for the Academic Achievement First Test Scores of the Students in the Control Group

Test	n	\bar{X}	S	Sd	T	P
First test	15	17,53	2,47	14	6,61	0,000
Second test		9,73	4,15			

The results in Table 2 show a meaningful difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the academic achievement of the students in the control group, who covered the lesson by means of traditional teaching techniques ($t(14) = 6,61; p < 0,05$). While the mean score of the first test scores of the students in the control group was $\bar{X} = 17,93$, the second test mean score was $\bar{X} = 9,73$. The difference between these scores was found to favor first tests. The results of the first test are higher than the results of the classical methods. The second test applied after one month was 7.8 points down.

Findings Related to Research Question 3

The findings related to the research question 3, “Is there a meaningful difference between the achievements in the retention of knowledge for the instruction delivered by means of the film adapted from the epic and the instruction delivered by means of traditional teaching techniques?” are given in Table 3.

Table 3: The t-Test Scores of the Independent Groups for the Academic Achievement First Test Scores of the Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	\bar{X}	S	Sd	t	P
Experimental	15	24,67	2,69	28	7,56	0,000
Control	15	17,53	2,47			

Table 3 shows that the mean score for the first application of the experimental group was $\bar{X} = 24,67$, while the mean score for the first application of the control group was $\bar{X} = 17,53$. These results yield a meaningful difference for the academic achievement pre-test scores of the students in the experimental group and control group ($t(28) = 7,56; p > 0,000$). This means that the academic achievements from the applications administered on the experimental and control groups immediately after the experimental study show difference and that this difference favors the group who watched the film sequence. The score of the group watching the movie is 7.14 points higher than the group performing the traditional methods.

Table 4: The t-Test Scores of the Independent Groups for the Academic Achievement Final Test Scores of the Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	\bar{X}	S	Sd	T	P
Experimental	15	23,07	2,79	28	10,33	0,000
Control	15	9,73	4,15			

Table 4 shows that the mean score for the final application of the experimental group was $\bar{X} = 23,07$, while the mean score for the final application of the control group was $\bar{X} = 9,73$. These results yield a meaningful difference for the academic achievement final test scores of the students in the experimental group and control group ($t(28) = 10,33; p > 0,000$). This means that the academic achievements from the applications administered on the experimental and control groups one month after the experimental study show a difference and that this difference favors the group who watched the film sequence. After one month, the score of the group watching the movie is 13.34 points higher than the group with traditional methods.

Findings Related to Research Question 4

The research question 4 was formulated as “As the reflection of the taste and enthusiasm that a work of art induces, is there a difference between the range of vocabulary used by the experimental group who participated in the instruction given by means of the film adapted from the epic and the range of vocabulary used by the students who participated in the instruction given by means of traditional teaching techniques?”

The students in the experimental group were shown a film adapted from the epic. The students' enthusiasm, excitement, and artistic interests also increased their attention. The answers given by the group who watched the film and group who received a plain lecture session were analyzed for the number of the different words they used. It was found out that in the first application, the experimental group and the control group answered the questions using 1140 and 618 different words, respectively. It was also found that in the second application carried out to test the retention of knowledge, the experimental group, and the control group answered the questions using 713 and 278 different words, respectively.

Findings Related to Research Question 5

The research question 5 was formulated as "Is there a difference between the frequency of words used by the experimental group who participated in the instruction given by means of the film adapted from the epic and the frequency of words used by the students who participated in the instruction given by means of traditional teaching techniques?"

The analysis was done to see if there is a difference between the semantic fields of the texts in the answers that the students in the experimental and control groups gave to the questions in the first and the final applications yield no difference. The list made for that purpose contained the proper nouns of *Troy, Paris, Achilles, Hector, Helen, Greek, God, Trojan, Agamemnon, Sparta, Akha*; the verbs of *die, kidnap, take (to), drag, kill, shoot, run away, throw*; and the nouns of *war, cousin, father, arrow, chariot, girl, horse, love, king, heel, wife, corpse*.

In the first application, the first five words in terms of frequency were *Troy, Paris, Achilles, Hector*, and *Helen* for the experimental group, while, for the control group, the first five words were found to be *Paris, Hector, king, Troy*, and *friend*. In the second application carried out one month later, the first five words in terms of frequency were *Troy, Paris, Achilles, Hector*, and *father* for the experimental group, while, for the control group, the first five words were found to be *Hector, kidnap, kill, drag*, and *Paris*.

V. CONCLUSION

Cinema has been an important medium for the epics to be performed. With a perspective of the new millennium and mentality adhered to it, the reality of the era of epics is more easily expressed to students by means of the use of films in the teaching of epics. Groups were established to evaluate the effect of the use of films in the teaching of epics. It was found out that the difference between the mean scores of the results of the first application of the experimental group favored the first tests. It was also found out that the difference between the mean scores of the results of the first application of the control group favored the first tests. The research yielded the result that the academic achievements in the application administered on the experimental and control groups immediately after the experimental study were different from each other and that the difference favored the group the film was shown. The research also yielded the result that the academic achievements in the application administered on the experimental and control groups one month after the experimental study were different from each other and that the difference favored the group the film was shown. The number and frequency of the words used by the experimental and control groups were compared. It was found out that making use of the films induced retention of knowledge and significantly contributed to the students' participation in the lesson with their own sentences and words.

In the research, a second application was administered one month after the activity in which the film was used for teaching. According to the results, it was found out that the academic achievements in the application administered on the experimental and control groups one month after the experimental study were different from each other and that the difference favored the group the film was shown.

The research showed that the students in the group who watched the film answered the questions they were asked using more words than the students in the control group. It was also observed that the students in the group exposed to traditional teaching techniques were mostly copying the text portions to answer the questions. The answers that the experimental and control groups gave were examined by means of frequency analyzer software and compared. The frequency analysis conducted on the answers that the students in the experimental group and those in the control group gave to the questions they were asked yielded no results to denote any difference between the conceptual framework created by the material used in the experimental group and that in the control group.

The studies done on the use of films in education demonstrate that the use of films has the capacity to induce effective learning and retention of information.

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