Full Length Research Paper

Using films to teach Turkish as a foreign language: A study of classroom practice

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In recent years, developing communication skills is the main goal of foreign language learning, so the most effective way of developing this skill is to expose the learners to real life situations. Movies provide exposures to real language, used in authentic settings and in the cultural context. Movies are the most effective audiovisual materials both in teaching basic language skills and reflecting the language and culture used in real life. Movies are frequently used in the teaching of foreign languages (English, German, French, etc.) that are widely taught. However, studies on the use of films in teaching Turkish as a foreign language are limited. In this study, authentic B1 level activities are developed by using Happiness Mutluülük movie to teach four basic language skills, and to develop intercultural competencies. Fifteen activities are developed according to the achievements regarding to the intercultural competency and communication skills developed by the Maarif Foundation. These activities can develop Turkish language learners’ four language skills, vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, critical understanding and encouraging them to use language in a creative way. Also, these activities can increase language learners’ intercultural understanding, as well as helping them to become aware of the similarities and differences between cultures.

Key words: Cultural transmission, movies, teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language teaching is not only to find and express the meaning of the concepts in the mother tongue, but also to know in which environments and when to use those words. This is only possible due to the films. In recent years, the use of films in foreign language teaching is very common. Films are the most effective materials, both in acquiring basic language skills and reflecting the language and culture used in real life. Movies are frequently used in teaching foreign languages that are widely taught. However, studies on the use of films in teaching Turkish as a foreign language are limited. Increasing international student mobility, political and economic developments in recent years have increased the interest in learning Turkish. The developments regarding the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language have made this study mandatory in this field.

Learning a language means communicating in that language by gaining the communicative abilities of that language. In other words, acquiring communicative...
competence, understanding the communicative skills of that language, namely productive skills such as speaking and writing, and receptive skills such as listening and reading, as well as the culture, lifestyles of the target language culture (Aktaş, 2005). Today, goals and achievements have been determined in line with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) developed by Council of Europe and Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language Program developed by Maarif Foundation. Both programs focus on the communicative aspect of Language teaching, to develop the communicative competencies of language learners. These programs are based on language use and communicative competence theories to describe what a language user needs to know and do in order to communicate effectively and what language learners are expected to do at different proficiency levels. In this study, authentic listening/watching activities on B1 level are developed to improve the communication skills of Turkish as a foreign language learner.

Most language students are very happy watching films in class, but most of the teachers and students ignore the teaching goals. Students tend to enjoy films in class without any activities to do. Some Turkish languages teachers just play them leave the students to watch them by themselves. Students think it is a good chance to relax themselves; thus, they miss the academic goal of learning. Before watching the film, teachers should prepare different tasks and activities and provide necessary guidance to achieve the best results of Turkish language learning. Before showing the film in class, the teachers should give some tasks and homework related to the movie before class to help the students understand the movie better. Teachers should bring all the materials about the film such as poster and pictures. All the activities should be ready before watching such as guessing, introduction of the topic, cultural background, key words of the film, and discussion. In this way, teachers may activate students’ background knowledge on the topic, introduce the main characters, and teach necessary new vocabulary.

While watching films, learners are exposed to real language considered as a valuable source of input. The comprehensible input hypothesis, developed by Krashen (1985), states that language is acquired by receiving comprehensible input; films in this respect are necessary materials in language acquisition because they provide learners meaningful comprehensible input. Thus, the activities developed in this study are valuable comprehensible input materials for good language learning. When the literature is examined, it is possible to come across many studies on the use of films in teaching foreign and Turkish language (Arslan and Adem, 2010; Aytan and Tuncel, 2015; Işcan, 2016, 2017; Ismaili, 2013; Ying and Hai-Feng, 2012). Based on these studies, the benefits of using films in teaching Turkish as a foreign language is listed as follows:

(i) Films are very effective means of language teaching and have a positive role in developing foreign languages;
(ii) It increases students' interest in the lesson and improves the teaching process;
(iii) It keeps the element of curiosity alive during the learning process and encourages listening / watching by guessing;
(iv) It makes learning permanent because it addresses more than one sense organ;
(v) It opens the door to autonomous learning and takes the learning process out of class;
(vi) It provides students the opportunity to activate their passive vocabulary;
(vii) It helps students to realize non-verbal linguistic elements appropriate to the context;
(viii) It can be used effectively in the development of four basic language skills;
(ix) It is good for conducting classroom activity, practicing students’ speaking, and listening abilities;
(x) It helps to develop learners’ intercultural competencies;
(xi) It is a tool for valued education;
(xii) It contains concrete examples of theoretical information about language use;
(xiii) It provides examples of using the target language in social life;
(xiv) It allows students to develop their communicative skills in the target language.

As seen, it is thought that the use of films in teaching Turkish as a foreign language contributes in many points from motivation to skill development, from body language to culture transfer. Although there are many studies on using films in English and Turkish classes, but very few studies are done on developing authentic activities developed according to the goals of Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language Program prepared by the Maarif Foundation. Therefore, this is an original study due to exemplary activities on developing Turkish language, using Mutluluk film.

Language and culture

Culture is important in terms of learning a new language with the aim of increasing learners’ communicative competence. Language competence and culture are closely related. If the major purpose of teaching communicative language is to provide students with meaningful interactions in real-life situations with native speakers of the target language, it is necessary to provide learners with new information about the new culture as well, so that students can know how to deal with their communicative challenges (Canale and Swain, 1980).

The first thing that comes to mind when talking about foreign language teaching is undoubtedly the concept of
culture. Therefore, the relationship of language with culture must be considered in determining the materials, methods and techniques to be used in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Learning a foreign language does not necessarily mean to find and use the equivalent of the concepts and expressions in our mother tongue, that is, only learning the rules and translating the words into that language. Foreign language learning is an effort to understand the perspectives, thinking and value systems of other societies in the world. In order to perceive the various activities that the individuals who make up a society create in daily life; it is necessary to know the basic points of the culture of that society. These competencies are more effective if they are developed through movies. For this reason, films are of great importance in terms of cultural transmission and language development. Demircan (1990), no one can learn foreign languages by abstracting from social and cultural values, referring to how important the relationship between language and culture has in this process. Many scholars have revealed that movies used in foreign language classroom can become an important part of the curriculum. This is because movies provide exposures to “real language,” used in authentic settings and in the cultural context which the foreign language is spoken. They also found that movies catch the learners’ interest and it can positively affect their motivation to learn (Kusumarasdyati, 2004; Luo, 2004).

Movies as an audiovisual tool in foreign language teaching

Due to the increasing importance of visual and media images, films have a great potential in the language classroom, as they bring together a large variety of modes. Films are rich multimodal texts containing linguistic meaning, but they also contain other modes that are sometimes more difficult to illustrate or provide in the standard language lesson, such as the gestural component. Films are perfect vehicles for introducing students to different types of popular culture and engaging them with critical questions about the relationship between information and power, through the critical analysis of sociopolitical issues and intercultural relationships (Chan and Herrero, 2010: 11). The use of movies with the support of structured materials can help students develop all four communicative skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening). Audiovisual material enables them to develop a critical understanding, encouraging them to use language in a creative way. Learning languages through movie can increase language learners’ intercultural understanding, as well as helping them to become aware of the similarities and differences between cultures, such as everyday life, education, traditions, social customs, religious beliefs, and events of national importance (Chan and Herrero, 2010: 13).

Films are important materials for cultural transmission especially in environments where the target language is not used. It is stated that the films are at least as effective as communicating with the people who speak that language, in terms of learning the cultural elements of the target language. Films that give sections from the life where the target language is used increase students’ motivation to learn and communicate with each other and prepare the base for using the language more effectively. At the same time, students also grasp different expressions and intonations that express hesitation and exclamation in verbal, non-verbal, formal and informal expressions used in the target language through films. Scenes that reflect real life in films and videos allow the student to develop critical and creative thinking skills, which makes the student more active in language learning (Boggs, 1996; Stemleski and Tomalin, 1990).

Regarding the use of video in foreign language teaching, students’ interests and levels should be taken into consideration. At the same time, whether videos are too easy or difficult will not motivate students. Videos contain richer content than audio tools because videos will be easier to understand through gestures and gestures of speakers. With videos, it is possible to use listening materials effectively (Harmer, 1998). Along with language, they can learn many things from the personality of film characters, their way of life, and their cultural background. The duration of the movie should also be appropriate. If the movie is watched without the necessary guidance, it turns into a disadvantage. A brief explanation should be given about the film, especially about its historical and cultural background. Students should be enthusiastic to watch the movie by giving explanations about the leading actors. Some words should be given to the students before the movie. What can be the subject before the movie can be discussed? One of the benefits of such preliminary preparations is to determine the language levels of students (Ying and Hafeng, 2012: 1010-1014). Movies reflect the language and culture of the target society in a realistic way. In addition, the teachers should arrange some tasks and activities related to the movie before class to help the students better understand the movie.

In a video, a student can easily see people in a dialogue; their gender, clothes, relationships, social status, what they do and how they feel. Furthermore, students can observe those people’s gestures, hand movements, intonations, all their behavior, and understand the context much better. That is why videos have recently become one of the most used tools in teaching foreign languages and the video teaching has become one of the most important techniques (Demirel, 1999).

The aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine the use of films
in teaching Turkish to foreigners to develop the communicative abilities of students, basic language skills and to increase the learners’ intercultural understanding. This film is chosen to prepare activities because it is rich in formulaic expressions, idioms, proverbs and Turkish cultural elements. The study is important as a concrete example of the use of films at the B1 level in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Apart from the intercultural competency, by using films in Turkish classes, learners can improve their listening and speaking skills, they can enlarge their vocabulary knowledge and they can even make their pronunciation and intonation better.

**METHODOLOGY**

In this study, document analysis method, one of the qualitative research methods, is used. Document analysis involves the analysis of materials that contain information about the phenomenon or facts intended to be investigated. The data obtained by document analysis is analyzed by content analysis. The process followed in the content analysis is to gather data like others within the framework of certain themes and to transfer them by interpreting them to the reader (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). By watching the film in detail, phrases, formulaic expressions, behaviors, gestures, mimics, body language, facial expression and cultural elements related to cultural transfer are listed in writing and authentic activities are developed by the author using these elements.

In this study, the use of films in teaching Turkish as a foreign language was discussed and 15 B1 level authentic pre-listening/watching, while-listening/watching and after-listening/watching activities are developed to improve the communicative abilities of students, communicative language skills and to increase the learners’ intercultural understanding, as well as to help them to become aware of the similarities and differences between cultures. The activities are developed according to the achievements regarding the intercultural competency and communication skills developed by the Maarif Foundation. The learner is expected to develop intercultural skills, followed by teaching Turkish as a foreign language program developed by Maarif Foundation:

1. Linking their own culture with the target culture,
2. To recognize and use different strategies to gain cultural sensitivity and to relate to those from other cultures,
3. Coping with intercultural conflicts and conflict situations by establishing a relationship between their own culture and the target culture,
4. The ability to break and exceed cultural prejudices in multicultural settings.

The program aims to develop intercultural interaction competence based on cultural sensitivity in line with the communicative functions specified in the syllables expressed in basic language skill (Maarif, 2020).

**Summary of the film “Mutluluk”**

The film was released in 2007 and the director of the film is Abdullah Oğuz. The film begins with the presence of Meryem in a shabby and unconscious state by a lake at the age of 17. The family, who lives in a village in the east of Turkey, decided to kill due to custom, considering that their daughters are dishonest. The killing task is given to his close relative, Cemal. İrfan Kurudal, a well-known professor of sociology, leaves his life in Istanbul and sails with his sailing boat due to his deep identity crisis. The paths of Meryem and Cemal cross unexpectedly with Professor İrfan Kurudal on their journey of death. Will these three people, who are on their way to freedom, defeat their destiny in this journey?

**MUTLULUK FILM ACTIVITIES**

**Pre-listening/watching activities**

Before students watch the movie, Language teachers should make some preparations for the activities. Teachers should bring all the materials about the film such as poster, pictures of the actors and actresses. All the activities should be ready before watching.

**Activity 1: Guessing**

Teacher brings a movie poster and hangs on the classroom board and tells student to answer the following questions. Students try to guess the movie using their imagination.

1. What comes to your mind with the Movie title “Mutluluk”?

2. Where do you think the events take place?

3. What kind of movie is it?

4. What is the meaning of “Namus” discuss it in pairs.

5. Do you like cross cultural movies?

6. What is your favorite movie genre, why?

**Activity 2: Vocabulary**

Look at the phrases below, write the meaning of the words and look up in a dictionary if you do not know it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turkish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mir mir konuşmak</td>
<td>Kalbi kırmak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kafaya koymak</td>
<td>Talibi çıkmak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gıcır gıcır ayakkabı</td>
<td>İntihar etmek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While-listening/watching activities

While watching film the teachers should prepare the activities and should know where to stop and ask questions.

Activity 3: Pause and play, guessing

Teacher stops the movie in the following scenes and ask students questions, this is a stop and play activity.

1. What do you think Cemal will do after taking his niece Meryem to İstanbul?

Students were placed into four groups to discuss all opinions. Then the teacher will play the movie and analyze their guesses.

2. Meryem’s uncle with a group of villagers was looking for Meryem in İstanbul, will he catch her? Discuss it with your partner.

3. Cemal and Meryem met prof. İrfan and he invites them to live on a boat together. Will Cemal and Meryem accept this invitation and what will be next?

4. Cemal takes Meryem to the bridge to kill her. Do you think will he kill her?

5. Meryem begs her mother to forgive her, by telling she is innocent. What do you think, will her mother forgive her? Discuss it in pairs.

Activity 4: Correct the following sentences

The words in the speeches in a selected part of the movie are changed and distributed to the students. The movie is watched again, and they are asked to find the mistakes and correct them.

1. Sabah Cemal abin ile Ankara’ya gideceksin.

2. Akşam olunca işi bitirirsin.

Activity 5: Complete the missing words

Students are expected to remember key words, idiomatic and formulaic expressions.

1. Lütfen dikkat Gebzeye gidecek olan banliyö………….bıraydan hareket edecek.

2. Meryem…………..kirlettin.

3. Baba sen neden geldin buraya …………….vereceğim sana.

4. Hadi ………………………. hazırlayalım, abi bu kadın diğer bize yakışır mı.

5. Bilyorum…………………….kırdım ve sizi çok üzdfım.

Activity 6: Repeat the following phrases while watching

It involves activities to teach nonverbal language such as body language, movements, gestures and facial expressions. It is very important in terms of communication to use body language, hand, face, and arm movements that reflect Turkish culture in the appropriate place and in a proper way. Scenes in which gestures and facial expressions reflect the Turkish language and culture of the students were selected from different parts of the film.

The students will practice the following sentences in the classroom by using the movements, tones, gestures and mimic expression by the actors in the movie. At the same time, the speeches in the film are made of drama by making pairs or groups in the classroom. Students memorize the speeches, gestures and facial expressions in the movie and stage in the classroom.

Activity 7: Find the idiomatic/formulaic expressions

Students are asked to note the sentences they find most
effective in the movie scene they watched. The sentences that each student finds are written on the board. These formulaic and idiomatic expressions are memorized by the students. The expressions and context they are used in is shown by watching the film again.

1. Tahsin bu işi temizlememiz lazım.
2. Kararını verdiler artık Allah affetsin.
4. Kurban olayım söyle kızım hadi inat etme.
5. Allah belanı versin, hangi devirde yaşıyoruz.

Activity 8: False/True
Listen to the following sentences and put D for true and Y for false.

1. Teknede telefonun bozulmayacak bir de moralin bozulmayacak ...
2. Siz hocaymışsınız üniversitede ...
3. Ben hiç kötü yapmadım, ben masumum ...
4. Sen hiç kuzu eti yemedin mi, özelmiş tavuk gibi biraz ...
5. Ağlam çok dikkatli ol vallahi çok tehlikeli...

Activity 9: Who said the following sentences (Cemal/Meryem'in Annesi/Meryem/İrfan)

1. .......... Sen kirlendin Meryem günahın büyük sen de biliyorsun.
2. .......... Ben hiç günah yapmadım, onu utandıracak hiçbir şey yapmadım.
4. .......... Benimle kalmanız istiyorum tekneye geri dönmenizi istiyorum.

Activity 10: Let's Role Play
Students are asked to act out following dialogues in front of the classroom.

Dialogue 1
Meryem'in Babaannesı: Kurban olayım söyle kızım, haydi inat etme, bak sen söylersen, jandarmaya giderim mani olurum.

Activity 11: Complete the sentences

1. Aha su temiz ............... al.
2. Cemal seninle biraz............... konuşmamız lazım.
4. Abi atamadım ................. Allah belanı versin, hangi devirde yaşyoruz.
5. Ben hiç günah yapmadım, onu............... hiçbir şey yapmadım.

Activity 12: Choose the correct one

1. Buraşı İstanbul baba burada (töre mère/mutuluk/namus) işlemez.
2. Türkiye ayakta duruyorsa (ailem/Mehmetçik/akrabalar) var diye duruyor.
3. Bir de su lütfen, zahmet oldu. (inşallah/estağfurullah/maşallah)
4. Hadi (çatal bıçak/yemek/sofrayı) hazırlayalım, birazdan yemek yiyeceğiz.
5. Cemal askerden gelene kadar sikacağız (dişimizi/burnumuuzu/kulağımızı).

Activity 13: Rewrite the sentences

Some of the speeches selected from the movie are given
to the students and asked to make these sentences negative.
1. Biliyorum kalbinizi kırdım ve sizi çok üz dü.

2. Cemal abim geldi, beni İstanbul'a götürecekmiş.


4. Bu iş evin tek erkeği Cemale düşer.

5. İçim yanıyor Cemal.

Activity 14: Writing

1. Write a short summary on any issue you like in the film.

2. Write about any character you like in the film.

3. Do you have any “bad luck” in your culture.

4. Write a short summary of the film.

5. How would you like to end the film?

Activity 15: Group discussion

Discuss the following scenes.

1. In the scene Prof. İrfan takes Cemal and Meryem to his boat to live together, suppose that you are İrfan, would you invite them to your house? Discuss it in pairs.

2. If you were asked to kill someone, would you do it for someone? Discuss it within pairs.

3. In the film Cemal says “preparing the table for lunch is the duty of females” what do you think? In your culture who prepares the table for meal? Discuss it.

4. Meryem misses his village in the scene. Do you miss your country? What do you miss more?

5. Do you have customs about the male female relations? Discuss it with your friends.

Conclusion

Learning from films is motivating and enjoyable; motivation plays a key role in the success of foreign language learning. Film, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable. Using movies as an authentic material helps teachers to provide students with enjoyable and fun lessons and encourage their students to practice their language skills with different types of expressions from movies.

Providing authentic language is another benefit of using films. Using films in the Turkish language classrooms is a great method to improve learners’ language skills, especially listening and speaking skills. Since films are a versatile tool for language teaching, the activities in this study can develop learners’ writing skill, some examples of writing tasks based on this film are, writing a short summary on any issue or character in the film, writing an alternative ending to the film. Using movies or authentic videos is a great way to help language students learn more about target language together with its culture with examples of Turkish in real situations out of the classroom. As the film is being watched, the learners will realize some sayings or daily talks expressed as they have never heard before. So, using a film like that will give the learners opportunity to grasp the right usage of such expressions.

While developing the activities about the film in the classroom, the objective of the course should always be kept in mind. And, teachers should not ignore the importance of planning useful and meaningful tasks for students before, while and after watching the film.
Films give a visual context to the learners, so the visuality makes it an invaluable language teaching material, allowing learners to understand more by interpreting the language in a visual context. Selecting appropriate films for learners is also one of the remarkable factors in terms of accomplishing the expected objectives.

This study brings authentic sample activities for teachers on how to use films to teach Turkish language. The pre-listening/watching activity “guessing” is important in determining the level of students and preparing them for film and lesson before watching. It also provides the opportunity to make comparison, since the questions will be answered after the film. The activity covers making predictions as well. These activities can be used as a warm-up activity before watching the film. Guessing activities are engaging and enables learners think; which is an ideal way to practice key vocabulary.
Guessing activities will arouse the learners’ interest and teachers will learn the readiness level of learners. The second “vocabulary” activity will prepare the students to comprehend the film and activate prior learning. Any pre-watching activity will be associated with developing learners’ comprehension strategies. All the activities are related to the film and they are organized from easy to the difficult. Before students watch the movie, teachers should plan for the activities. Teachers should bring all the materials about the film and all the activities should be ready before watching.

While listening/watching activities should be ready beforehand, teachers should know where to stop and ask questions. In the third activity “Pause and Play, guessing”, the teacher stops the movie and asks them to predict the continuation. In these activity learners watch video to confirm predictions made in pre-watching activities. Learners take note of content to answer comprehension questions (Activities 4-9). Students will develop note taking strategy with these activities. Learners are expected to remember key words, idiomatic and formulaic expressions while watching (Activity 5). The students will practice the sentences (Activity 6) with gestures and facial expressions reflecting the Turkish culture in the classroom by using the movements, tones, gestures and mimics expressed by the actors in the film. It is very important in terms of communication to use body language, hand, face and arm movements that reflect Turkish culture in the appropriate place and in a proper way. Thus, these activities will help learners grasp body language, movements, gestures and facial expressions. These nonverbal signals will improve daily communication. After listening/watching activities are developed to have a detailed understanding of the film. Watching a film is not the main goal, but to develop the students’ linguistic skills and intercultural competencies. Group discussions, role playing and writing activities are good practice examples (Activities 10, 13, 14, 15). These activities can help students develop a positive perspective towards the target culture and find the opportunity to grasp the similarities and differences between their own culture and the target culture. By using this film, formulaic and idiomatic expressions, gestures and cultural elements of the Turkish language will be learned by the learners. Film activities could help improve learners’ vocabulary acquisition as they provide them with a wealth of information about a variety of vocabulary, phrases, and colloquial expressions (Activity 12).

As a suggestion, the films to be used in the lesson are at the levels determined in foreign language teaching should be appropriate. The speeches in the video chosen for basic students should be slow and understandable and contain fewer cultural elements. At an advanced level, students’ ability to understand and use the sentences they learned in real life is maximized by watching films or documentaries with native subtitles. The selection of suitable films is very important to achieve targeted language development. The teacher should be very careful and meticulous in choosing the movie. First, the content and language of the film should be carefully examined, and the language used in daily life should be preferred. It should be noted that the topics of the selected films include subjects and cultural elements that students can use the language outside of the classroom and may encounter in real life at any time.

**CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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