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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Integration of Technology in the EFL Classes to Teach Past Simple Tense: A Case Study of University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Oman**

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**ABSTRACT**

Teaching materials is an effective factor in determining EFL learners' competence levels (Richards, 2017). Taking this into consideration, this paper aims to examine the potential effect of technology, i.e. movies, on mastering past simple among Omani EFL learners. The current quantitative study uses written tests, before and after the treatment to test the grammatical competence of the participants. This study was contextualized in Oman, at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (SCT) with 13 Omani EFL learners. A considerable increase is shown in the participants' competence level (past simple) after analyzing the results of pre and post-tests. This indicates a beneficial influence of using English movies in English classrooms on learning past simple tense. Consequently, this research totally recommends the integration of English movies in EFL classes in order to solve the problem of learners' poor grammatical abilities.

**KEYWORDS**

Integrating Technology, EFL Classes, Movies, Grammatical Competence and Past Simple Tense.

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### **1. Introduction**

There is almost a common agreement that mastering English past tense is considered a very complicated process faced by EFL learners (Muftah, 2016). This is why around 50% of the grammatical errors made by EFL learners, at university level, are associated with verb tenses and forms (Sabtan and Elsayed, 2019). To deal with such issue, plenty of suggested techniques or procedures can be applied. This paper, however, focuses on teaching materials as they have major impact on the process of learning. The teaching materials used in this study are based on the integration of technology i.e., short clips in grammar classes, as it is believed to be an effective pedagogical tool in grammar teaching i.e., simple past.

This action research aims to find a solution for a serious problem in EFL field, namely mastering simple past tense. That is to say, this paper attempts to examine the impact of displaying short movies on the process of learning past simple. The findings of the previous concern were completely positive. Participants' competence levels increased significantly with the use of movies in the grammar classes. Therefore, this action research provides a direct solution for EFL teachers to overcome the problem of their students' poor grammatical competence regarding simple past tense.

This research has six main sections apart from its introduction. It includes a literature review where relevant work in the field is summarized, a methodology where a clear description is given of the methods used for data collection (i.e., pre & post-tests). Also, it contains a results section wherein the important findings are presented and where the data are discussed, analyzed and compared to others in the field. The last two sections are the conclusion, where a brief summary of the research is given and the limitation and recommendation section where limitations are mentioned and how they could be addressed by the future research.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Movies and the Teaching of Past Simple

Many studies have proven the effectiveness of the integration of movies in English language teaching in general (Dikilitas & Duvenci, 2009; Mohebbi, 2013; Washang, 2004; Yuksel, 2009). According to previous studies, the four language skills can improve significantly with the help of English movies (i.e. reading, writing, listening, speaking) (Burn & Leach, 2004; Baratta & Jones, 2008; Martin & Jaen, 2009; Ismaili, 2013; Saeideh & Sepehran, 2014; Yaseen & Shakir, 2015; Ergenekon, 2016; Kaboooha, 2016).

However, the influence of English movies on teaching grammar is still relatively new in the field. To put it another way, a very limited number of studies have examined the impact of using movies on EFL learners' grammatical competence (Mohammad, 2013; Haghverdi, 2015; Štaralová, 2016) and only a few researchers so far have studied the role that movies play in teaching English tenses (Hartanta, 2012; Jusoh, 2013, 2016). Nevertheless, even these few studies revealed a positive influence of movies on English grammar generally and tenses particularly, which is what the current paper aims to explore in an Omani context.

To start with, Mushtaq and Zehra (2016) investigated the impact that animated movies have on teaching gerunds. They displayed short clips from "Tangled" movie and then built questions and tasks on the use of gerunds. They concluded that participants were not only able to learn the gerunds easily but were also able to differentiate between them and present participle. Moreover, they added that the use of movies is not only a useful teaching tool for grammar but it also has positive impact on both learners' proficiency as well as learning rate of learners. In the same way, Mohammad (2013) attempted to understand the effectiveness of English subtitled movies in teaching past perfect. She tested her participants both before and after the experiment to measure the effectiveness of the subtitled movies. Mohammad found that her learners totally understood the use of past perfect. Therefore, she stated that English movies are of great benefit when it comes to grammar teaching. Same conclusion was drawn by Saeedi and Biri (n.d.) who taught conditional sentences using animated movies; they agreed with the previously mentioned researchers that movies play a very effective role as a pedagogical tool in grammar teaching and they also added that EFL learners usually appreciate this method.

With regard to tenses, the same findings were reached. For instance, Jusoh (2013, 2016) studied the effectiveness of authentic materials (e.g., tv, songs, etc.) on teaching past tense, which is the focus of this study. He argued that English clips helped the participants learn past tense very effectively. Similarly, another research was conducted on teaching past and present simple using English movies (Hartanta, 2012). 54 students participated in Hartanta's (2012) study and they were tested before and after the experiment. Finally, his findings were consistent with that of Jusoh (2013, 2016).

On the other hand, other researchers argued that the integration of movies in EFL classrooms is not the right choice as it could lead to some harmful social (Fahmy & Bilton, 1992; Sargent, 2005) as well as pedagogical (Horn, 1998; Ying & Zhang, 2012; Mirvan, 2013) consequences. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the previous studies done on the same topic strongly recommend the integration of movies as parts of the pedagogical tools in EFL classrooms due to its great benefits.

## 3. Methodology

As previous section shed light on the most popular conclusions drawn on the use of movies in EFL classes and its influence on mastering past tense, this section focuses on the following parts: participants, context, instruments used to collect data, and how data are analyzed.

### 3.1 Participants

Thirteen level one foundation students from the Salalah College of Technology, UTAS, in Oman took part in this action research. All the participants taking part in the research are Omani and they are the researcher's actual students; they aged between 18 and 20 years old. The participants agreed to participate and signed the consent form after the purpose of this research was explained to them in details by the researcher. Finally, participants were given different names to protect their privacy.

### 3.2 Context

In Oman, English is considered the one and only official foreign language (Al-Issa, 2014). With regard to public schools, English was firstly introduced in 1970, whereas in higher education institutes, it started in 1986 (AL-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014). However, English was never taught in Omani schools before grade 4 until the Basic Education Program emerged in 1998-1999 (Ministry of Education, 2006).

This action research, however, was contextualized in Salalah College of Technology, UTAS (University of Technology and Applied Sciences). The college started as a Vocational Training Center in 1979; then, in 1993, it turned into a Technical Industrial College. However, the College officially opened in 2001. Three major programs are taught in the college along with the foundation program, namely Business Studies, Engineering and Information Technology. The college has 3528 students, 163 academic staff and 36 administrative staff.

**3.3 Research Instrument**

**3.3.1 Pre and Post Tests**

The participants were given two gap-filling tests (pre & post).

**3.3.2 Gap-Filling Test**

The participants had to take pre and post gap-filling tests to measure the influence of movies on learning past simple. Each test has 30 questions, where participants had to fill the gaps with the correct form of past simple verbs. Twenty minutes were assigned for each test. One test was done before the treatment and the other was done after. The tests were marked according to the correct number of the past simple verbs written in the gaps; each test is marked out of 30 as it contains 30 questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS software (i.e. paired samples t-test).

**3.4 Teaching Materials**

As previously mentioned, participants were taught past simple tense using short clips from two English cartoon movies; the chosen clips contained many past simple verbs. The two cartoon movies used for the experiment are The Baby Boss and Paddington 2.

The clips were chosen carefully to suit the participants’ level. For instance, most of the verbs used in the clips were common English verbs (e.g. was, did, ate, had, sent, etc.). Additionally, cartoon movies were used, in the experiment, as they usually do not contain any offensive scenes, such as romantic scenes, to make sure that nothing hinders the learning process. Moreover, all the clips used in the treatment were comedy so that participants enjoyed and did not feel bored when watching.

**3.5 Lesson Design**

The lesson design is illustrated below:

- a. Students watch a clip without sounds
- b. Students discuss in pairs and then in groups what could be the main idea of the clip as a warm-up exercise to avoid having passive viewers (Keene, 2016; Fisher and Frey, 2011)
- c. Students watch the same clip again with sounds
- d. Students discuss the tense and verbs used in the clips
- e. Students do some exercises, such as gap fillings and writing short sentences using past simple tense
- f. Students check and compare their answers with each other and then with the teacher
- g. Feedback is given by the teacher (researcher)

**4. Results**

After discussing methods of data collection and data analysis, this section presents the results derived from those data collection tools. All the collected data are meant to provide answers and interpretations to the question “Can the integration of technology i.e., English movies solve the problem of learners’ low grammatical competence?”

**4.1 Movies and Grammar Teaching**

To answer the previously mentioned question, two tests were given to the participants (pre & post). These tests were marked and analyzed using Paired Samples Test to compare the results of the same group before and after the treatment. The results are given below:

		<b>Paired Samples Test</b>							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Participants Scores Before Treatment - Participants Scores After Treatment	-.92308	.86232	.23916	-1.44417	-.40198	-3.860	12	.002

As the table illustrates, there is a significant change between the participants' grammatical level of competence before and after the treatment ( $M = -.923$ ,  $T = -3.860$ ,  $DF = 12$ ,  $P = .002$ ). Clearly and precisely, the data show a positive relationship between the use of English movies and mastering English past simple verbs.

## 5. Discussion of Results

The earlier section presents the analyzed data, whereas this section discusses those data and makes comparisons with other previous studies in the field about the impact of English movies on teaching past simple tense.

### 5.1 Movies and Grammar Teaching

Despite the difficulty of English simple past tense, the results of the pre and post-tests suggest that there is a strong positive relationship between the integration of English movies and mastering past simple tense as shown in the results section. These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies that illustrated the effectiveness of the use of English videos in teaching the English language generally (Washang, 2004; Yuksel, 2009; Dikilitas & Duvenci, 2009; Mohebbi, 2013). More specifically, the findings are identical to the results of earlier research that revealed a clear positive impact on EFL learners' grammar competence (Mohammad, 2013 and Štaralová; 2016).

Particularly, the results of this paper totally agree with what is shown in previous researches in the field. To illustrate, Jusoh (2013, 2016) explored the impact of authentic materials (e.g. radio, tv, songs, etc.) on learning and mastering past tense, which is the focus of this research. The same conclusion was reached by Jusoh that authentic materials work as a very effective pedagogical tool when it comes to grammar teaching and learning, particularly simple past. Similarly, Hartanta (2012) tested the influence of authentic materials on teaching both past simple and present simple. He divided his 54 grade ten participants into two groups (control and experimental) and tested them before and after the treatment. After the analysis of the pre and posttests' data, he concluded that authentic materials are effective teaching tools in teaching both past simple and present simple. Furthermore, the results of Saeedi and Biri (n.d.) and Zehra and Mushtaq (2016) who displayed animated movies to teach conditional sentences and the use of gerunds respectively were identical to those of Hartanta (2012) and Jusoh (2013, 2016).

On the other hand, despite all the benefits of using movies in English lessons, there is a number of researchers who disagree with the current research findings and argue that the integration of movies in EFL classrooms can have dire social consequences (Fahmy & Bilton, 1992; Sargent, 2005) as well as negative educational results (Horn, 1998; Ying & Zhang, 2012; Mirvan, 2013). Nevertheless, these findings are still considered limited as the vast majority of the studies, tested the same hypothesis, agree with the findings of this research. That is to say, the integration of English movies in EFL classrooms is highly recommended by a huge number of studies due to its great pedagogical advantages on teaching English language generally (Burn & Leach, 2004; Baratta & Jones, 2008; Seferoglu, 2008; Florence, 2009; Martin and Jaen, 2009; Indrasari 2010; Ismaili, 2013; Rokni & Atae, 2014; Yaseen & Shakir, 2015; Ergenekon, 2016; Kobooha, 2016) and increasing the grammatical competence specifically as this action research and others show (Hartanta, 2012; Mohammad, 2013; Jusoh, 2013; Mushtaq, and Zehra 2016; Jusoh, 2016; Štaralová, 2016; Saeedi and Biri (n.d.).

## 6. Conclusion

The integration of technology, i.e., English movies in EFL classes can lead to a number of educational benefits. It plays a very effective role in teaching one of the most complicated, yet very essential, topics in English grammar, namely simple past tense. The results reveal a significant difference between the participants' level of competence before and after the experiment. The participants' results in the post test are much higher than in the pre-test.

Therefore, this action research, and based on the conclusions drawn from its findings, suggests a less dependence on the textbook for the sake of grammar teaching as a way to improve our learners' grammatical competence, which is a main issue in the Omani EFL context as discussed previously. Additionally, the integration of English movies into the English curriculum and classes in Oman is strongly recommended by this action research. Even though this integration will require extra work and creativity on the teachers' part, it really worths it.

## 7. Limitations and Recommendations

Like any other paper, this action research has some limitations that might hinder its findings. Firstly, this research relied on one instrument of data collection, i.e., pre- and post-tests, to measure the participants' performance due to the time limitation and the strict delivery plan that needed to be followed. Additionally, another limitation could be related to the setting. This research was done in one college only. Consequently, the findings of this action research may not be generalized until it is conducted in another Omani context, especially in other regions. Lastly, the number of participants taking part in this research is only 13, which is considered a small number. However, this is out of the researcher's control as it is not possible to have many students in one class according to the regulations of Supreme Committee with regard to Corona Virus. Finally, for the findings of this action research to be generalized, this research can be replicated in other Omani contexts with more participants and extra data collection methods.

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