Abstract

The main aim of the present study is to enhance the speaking skills of engineering students by using films. The study is based on the theoretical assumption that films can be utilized as an effective pedagogic tool in language teaching. Films with subtitles help the learners in learning vocabulary. With the increase of vocabulary knowledge, the students tend to enhance their speaking skills. Learning a second language involves four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among all these skills, speaking is an essential component for communication. It is an act of creativity and an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information.

The use of films facilitates in exchanging opinions and ideas, helps to explore nonverbal elements and improves oral and aural skills (Altman, 1989) by providing meaningful contexts for vocabulary. Visual images stimulate student’s perceptions directly, while written words can do this indirectly. Films have a sensory experience, besides they have colour, movement and an audio component to draw student’s attention and capture their interest. Using films/other videos are often seen as a source of entertainment. Movies and video programmes, in particular, represent an inexpensive as well as a versatile pedagogic tool. King (2002) states that, “films provide more pedagogical options and are a rich resource of intrinsically motivating materials for learners”. When learners are open to the elements to movies, they can learn some words and phrases used in the movies and improve their target language.” Films like fiction, science-fiction, horror, romance, and historical movies catch individuals’ interest and learner’s motivation. “Films are considered to be more influential communicators because a person remembers five times more of what he hears and sees as opposed to what he only hears.” The dual-coding theory proposed by Paivio (1971) suggests
that “when pictures are added to the meaning, the number of signals connected to the message increases.”

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Brown:1994; Burns & Joyce:1997). Penny Ur (1996: 120) defines “speaking as the most important skill for people who know a language are referred to as “the speaker” of a language. Also, speaking is the ability which includes all other kinds of knowing. The productive skill in the oral mode”.

English is essential for engineering students. It plays a prominent role in their academics as well as career development. All the subjects in engineering are taught with the help of English. English language competence is necessary to engineering students as they have to cooperate with engineering students of different nationalities in certain projects and more particularly in their final year. The importance of English becomes more prominent when students continue their higher education like pursuing PhD where they have to work under the guidance of a professor who must be of a different nationality. When globalisation and industrialisation on the vogue, many changes took place in the country and this lead to a new work order which demands not only the specialisation in the particular field but also a combination of skills among the employees. Coming to the engineering education, when students get out of the college after completing their graduation, English appears more crucial for them than it is used in their studies. Since engineers have to work in groups, their task can be solved by an individual. The nature of work demands that they have to meet and communicate with different people from various parts of the world and non-native English speakers. Most of the engineers use English as the first language or the working language. To comprehend and coordinate with their colleagues and furnish their projects fluently, they should have excellent speaking skills. If the engineers do not have a good proficiency in the English language, they face many problems in their field because they have to work with
different kinds of people who do not share the same mother tongue. They are also involved in Research & Development where they have to coordinate with the scientists and engineers from all over the world. Since they belong to different nationalities, English language is an important tool of communication. Therefore, the principal aim of mastering the English language is to overcome the language barrier of different nationalities. Hence the communicative competence in English is essential for engineering.

In engineering, students come from different educational, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. They face many problems in understanding English and most particularly to communicate. Regional medium students lack competence in English. Despite twelve years of studying English, even English medium learners lack proficiency in English. Their fear of making mistakes, lack of adequate vocabulary and self-confidence hinders their communication skills.

The present study aims at exploring the outcome of using films in language teaching. Many researchers and practitioners have shown how movies and other video materials can be utilised in the language classroom. Stoller (1998) advocated the use of films as linguistic models for skills development. Stempleski and Tomalin (1990a, 1990b) focused on the educational value of authentic broadcast and video material and how they can be used to create creative and skills development. Films (audio-visual material) draw learners’ interest and affect their motivation to learn (Stempleski, 1992; Allan, 1985; Lonergan, 1984). Hence films can be used as effective tools in enhancing the speaking skills of engineering students.

Research questions of the study are

- What is the impact of movies with subtitles on L2 vocabulary learning?
- How does this impact affect the speaking skills of the learners?
The study adopted a quantitative method to obtain the data, and it was carried out in eight stages.

1. Conducting speaking activity

As a part of preliminary work in the present study, the researcher conducted a speaking activity to know the students’ basic proficiency in speaking.

2. Questionnaire to the students

The questionnaires were given to the 45 students to know their problems in speaking English, their use of English outside the classroom, opinions in watching English movies with or without subtitles and their views on the importance of English in the globalised world.

3. Administering the Pre-test

In the third stage, the pre-test of vocabulary items was administered to the students before watching movies to measure the entry level vocabulary knowledge of the students. The pre-test was administered to the sample of 45 students. There were eight sections. Each section consisted of 8 to 10 questions. Total numbers of questions were 68. The test included multiple-choice, match the following and contextual clues. The test consists of adjectives, phrasal verbs, idioms, and collocations. The test was for 68 marks.

4. Movies with subtitles

In the fourth stage “The Life of Pi” and “The Slum Dog Millionaire” movies were screened with English subtitles. While watching movies, the researcher conducted one activity. Whenever collocations, idioms or phrasal verbs were encountered in the movies, the
movie was paused and asked the learners to tell the meaning of the words according to the context. The list of collocations, idioms and phrasal verbs are attached in the appendices.

5. Administering the Post-test

In the fifth stage, the post-test was conducted to measure student’s vocabulary knowledge after watching movies with subtitles.

6. Conducting speaking activity

At this stage, speaking activity was carried out to know the difference between the vocal performance of the students before and after watching movies with subtitles.

7. Comparison of the results of pre-test and post-test

The results of the pre-test and post-test were compared using tables, graphs, and calculation to find the difference.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that the use of subtitled movies had a positive impact on L2 vocabulary learning. There was an improvement in vocabulary knowledge of the students after watching movies with subtitles. The results also indicated that with the increase of vocabulary knowledge, the students were able to perform better in their speaking tests and their oral proficiency was enhanced.

**Design of the thesis**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I foregrounds the context of the study, emphasizing the importance of English and the background of the study. It gives the brief description of the use of films in language teaching, a different genre of films, audiovisual aids in language teaching and the role of audio-visual aids in motivating the learners. The study also discusses theories of visual aids in language learning. It also presents
the main objectives of the study, research questions, and hypothesis. It also focuses on the limitations and the design of the thesis.

Chapter II presents the review of the literature. It also describes the significance, definitions, elements, and sub-skills of speaking. It also mentions about the Bygate’s and Harmer’s perspectives on speaking. It also gives the theoretical and pedagogical views of films in enhancing speaking skills. It mentions the definitions of vocabulary, the role of vocabulary in language learning, kinds of vocabulary, techniques, and strategies of teaching vocabulary.

Chapter III discusses the research the research instruments adopted for the study and how data collected through questionnaire, speaking activity, and tests. It presents the need for triangulation of data and administering the questionnaire, the detailed analysis of data with graphs and tables.

Chapter IV analyses the data collected from the research instruments. It also depicts the procedure employed for analysing the data from speaking activities, questionnaire, and tests and how they are interpreted and presented. Thus this chapter prepares the ground for the findings and implications of the study.

Chapter V presents the major findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further research for the teachers and students.