

Using Movie as A Linguistic Model Of Instructional Language

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A movie which is an audio-visual text can help learners acquire both linguistic and meta-linguistic awareness. Learners may learn about the language spoken by the characters consisting of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, intonation. They may also learn from gestures to acknowledge linguistic meanings during the absence of language. This paper examines how a movie can be used as a linguistic model. It focuses more on the language components used in the movie, specifically those related to instructional language. The movie "*Dead Poets Society*" was chosen for this study because it contains many lines of the instructional language. It, then, analyzes the use of the instructional language in that movie to find out its linguistic features.

Keywords: *instructional language, linguistic features, linguistic model, movie*

Background

English, as an international language, is used globally to serve many purposes in various level of using it. In countries where English is spoken as their lingua franca or national language, the speakers use English in their daily communication, in formal meeting, in various written texts (advertisements, journals, newspapers, etc.), including in classroom – as an instructional language. However, in some other countries that treat English as their foreign language, it is used more as an instructional language, especially in English classes. In other words, the use of English in those latter countries, like in Indonesia, as an instructional language is more limited. This happens for several factors; for example, the users of English lack a range of vocabulary, they also have a limited understanding on the correct grammatical structure, and they are even in a situation that does not allow them to use English in wider context. The situation can also be observed in

English classes in Indonesia; teachers often switch from English to Indonesia or vice versa to help their students understand the materials.

Instructional language or classroom language is a medium of instruction – a language used in a teaching and learning process. Thus, researches on this area have been conducted most as a part of educational research. Based on the findings of a research conducted by British Council, the use of language as a medium of instruction has been globally increasing (Dearden, 2014). This trend can also be found in higher educational institutions in East Asia and Southeast Asia (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Therefore, this study is considered as being significant as it is highly related to the students of education program, especially the students of English Education Program. The students are expected to be potential English teachers who use English as their medium of instruction.

In addition, in linguistic perspective, all utterances produced by people are considered as a text. Halliday and Matthiesen (2004) referred a text as the use of language in any mediums that is meaningful to whomever using the same language. Thus, when a language is used by a teacher as his/ her medium of instruction, and the language can be understood by his/ her pupils, the language can be referred as a text; a spoken text. The teachers serve as the text producer, and the learners are the users. They both build a mutual relation within a formal context – the teaching and learning process. As the teacher produces his/ her utterances, the learners who listen to the utterances can receive the text – there is no distance between the teacher and the learners as the text users. By using their cognitive skill, learners will process the information found in the text produced by their teacher. Being a text, an instructional language has distinct structure and characteristics marked by its linguistic features. The text is also produced within certain contexts – in this study, the context of teaching process; therefore, it is possible to analyze to what extent the language is used to serve the teaching purposes.

There are some ways teachers can employ to bring variety and creativity in their classroom to make students interested in the learning process; one of the ways is using movies. Movies are often regarded as an excellent teaching and learning tool. There are some reasons why teachers consider using movies in their classrooms. First, movies can be used a tool to motivate students to learn new languages (Donaghy, 2014; Kabooha, 2016). When EFL students watch movies in English, they are motivated to learn about English vocabulary, expressions, etc. so that they can understand the movie and enjoy it. Movies can also help learners improve their language skills (Kabooha 2016; Goctu, 2017), as indicated by Kabooha (2016), both the students and teachers show positive attitudes towards the use of movies in their classrooms; the students improve their vocabulary acquisition while teachers have more benefits by having appropriate learning activities.

This study focuses on how movie can be used as a linguistic model of instructional language. The movie chosen to be the object of study is *Dead Poets Society* (1989), a movie directed by Peter Weir, and written by Tom Schulman. The movie tells about a teacher, named John Keating, who inspired his students through his teaching of English poems. This movie is chosen as the object of the study since this portrays a teacher who taught in a senior high school. Most of the scenes are set in classroom or school setting;

thus, it is expected that the data of this study can be found in an adequate number to observe the linguistic style of instructional language used by John Keating. This study is different from any other studies conducted within the framework of teaching or educational topics that conclude on how teachers use instructional language in their teaching process in the classroom. This study gives emphasis on the linguistic features found in the instructional language used by John Keating in his role as a teacher.

Literature Review

Movie in EFL Teaching

Many studies about the using of movies in EFL classroom have been conducted. Most of the results of the study show that movies bring positive values toward both the teachers and the students as movies are empirically proven to improve the learners' language skill (Donaghy, 2014; Kabooha, 2016; and Goctu, 2017). By watching movies, learners may learn a wide range of vocabulary used in a movie, various expressions used by the characters in different situations, and other paralinguistic features. Learners will also be motivated to speak more confidently as they can use the movie as their speaking model.

Movies also bring another advantage for both the teachers and the students. Movies provide them with authentic and varied language (Donaghy, 2014). By bringing authentic material to the classroom, teachers can promote learners to be exposed to the target language (Roberts and Cooke, 2009). This develops an implication that learners may develop their linguistic, pragmatic, and discourse competence of the language. Movies, which resemble real life situation, help learners to improve their linguistic competence by looking at the communications between the characters, listening to their intonations, rhythm, and even using gestures or body language as linguistic clues. This, in turn, may help them to understand the pattern of communication between the characters and understand the meanings. The authenticity nature of the movies over the books provide the students with language models that cannot be found in the book. Ismaili (2013) also stated that movies bring enjoyment and can be a source of language acquisition. This also explains why many teachers or EFL practitioner prefer using movies that are adapted from wellknown books or novels, because movies attract the learners' attention greater than the novels. Movies, with their audio-visual characteristic, help learners to understand scenes described in novels while giving entertaining effect and experience. Thus, movie time is often employed as an additional task of reading class.

Nonetheless, Kabooha (2016) also noted that movies used in the classroom should be chosen based on the pedagogical objective. The movies should not only provide the students with enjoyment, but they must also provide them with a rich pedagogical content that can motivate the learners and enhance the learning process (Stephens, Ascencio, Burgos, Diaz, Montenegro, and Venezuela, 2012). This is to ensure that the students can achieve the pedagogical objective set by the teachers. Though this may seem a big challenge for teachers to choose an appropriate movies, Goctu (2017) claimed that the advanced technology of the Internet can help teachers to access online resources in order to get appropriate materials.

Language Style and Stylistic Analysis

As this study investigates the linguistic features of instructional language, it is necessary to look at some theories of language style. According to Leech and Short (2007), a style can be referred as language use by certain people, in a specific situation, for a specific purposes. Keating, who is a character of a teacher, used English as his language of instruction in his classroom for a specific purpose, that is teaching his students. The use of English by Keating as a teacher show that his utterances are considered to have a distinct style that differentiate it from his other utterances in the movie. While teaching in the classroom, Keating uses English to explain his material or to give classroom instructions, whereas when outside the class, he could speak to other characters as a common man, such as a colleague, instead of a teacher.

Regarding the situation, a stylistic analysis should be conducted to investigate the use of language style within a text. According to Crystal and Davy (2013), the approach taken within a stylistic analysis is considered similar to the application of descriptive linguistics. Its primary purpose is to reveal and to group linguistic features by using the framework of linguistic theories. It aims to find interrelated contrast within a set of data. In using a language, either orally or written, an utterance contains linguistic features that inform the identity of the speaker, such as his language and social backgrounds seen from different points of view. Language, in its specific usage, may produce a register, for example language in newspapers, songs, advertisements, or other texts. Every register has its own linguistic features that differ one register from another. The linguistic features can also be employed to differentiate oral from written language; for instance, in an oral language, the analysis can be started at phonological level to analyze the use of certain sounds, intonation, rhythm or other phonological features. Whereas, in a written text, the analysis should be initiated from graphological level, i.e. to analyse the use of written words, the layout of the text, etc. Moreover, an oral text implies an immediate and non-permanent nature, while the written text tends to be indirect and permanent. This ideas of stylistic analysis should be taken into account while doing the analysis in this study. The data of this study will be in form of movie transcript, which is regarded as a written text; nevertheless, the script is a written form of oral conversation occurred in the movie of *Dead Poets Society*. Therefore, in doing the analysis, the writer should also considered the scenes taken from the movie itself.

Furthermore, Leech and Short (2007) also explained the stylistic analysis in general could be applied on both oral and written text, either those found in literary texts or non-literary. The study engages with the use of language in a specific context, by specific people, for specific purposes. Therefore, this study has never been conducted for its own sake, it rather describes the relation of the use of a language and its purposes. They also added that this study can also be applied to formal text – like a book or a formal speech. They, then, provide a list of linguistic and stylistic categories: lexical category, grammatical category, figures of speech, as well as cohesion and context. The category of semantics is not separately mentioned as this can be explained more easily using the other categories. In practice, those four categories could be combined or overlapped.

A linguistic feature, according to Crystal and Davy (2013), can be defined as a linguistic form found in oral or written text produced by someone while making an utterance and have a specific meaning in its specific context. The linguistic features will characterize the language style of a speaker or a writer. This is supported by Leech and Short (2007) who stated that a linguistic feature is “simply as the occurrence in a text of a linguistic or stylistic category.” The linguistic category refers to, for instance, nasal consonants, nouns, verbs, interrogatives, negation, and others; whereas, the stylistic category refers to, for example, alliteration, personifications, anaphora, and so on. The latter category is often more difficult to be identified within a text. In addition, they also claimed that the linguistic categories are contrastive – when one appears, others will disappear; for example, a noun can not be replaced by other parts of speech when it is used as the subject of a sentence.

Moreover, Leech and Short (2007) then proposed an illustration of a language as a code. Being a code, language has several levels, i.e. semantic level, syntactic level (lexicogrammar), and phonological level.

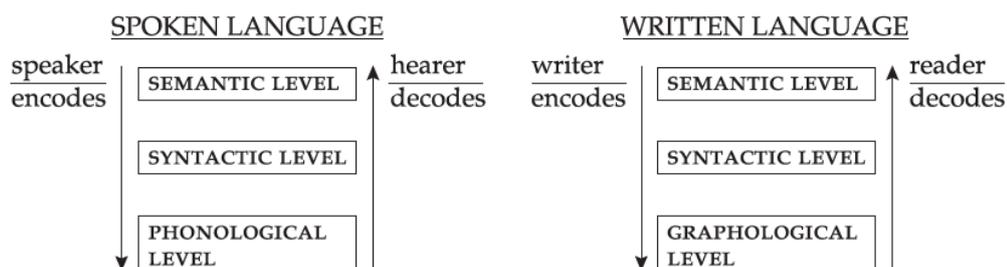


Figure 1. An analogy of language as a code with several levels

When using a language to communicate, a speaker or a writer will try to convey a message; so, a language is used as a means of communication. During the communication process, speakers or writers convey the message by using language to take a message from a reality model to be encoded; the encoded message is then transferred to the hearers or readers who will decode the message by using the reality model that they already possess. This process occur similary in both oral and written text; thus, what is illustrated in written text can also be applied to oral text.

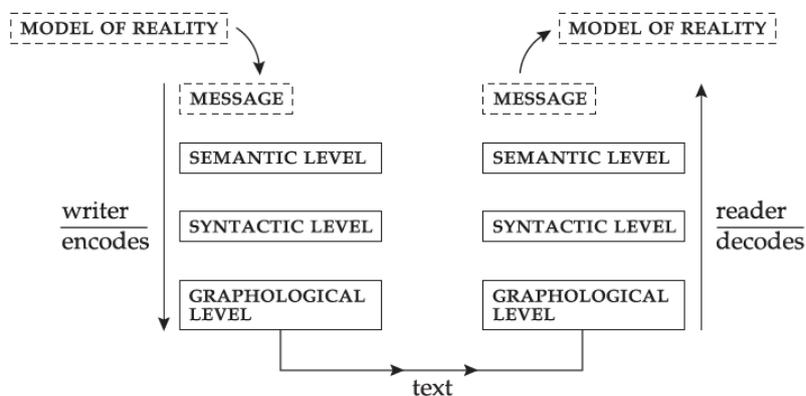


Figure 2. The process of communication in written text

Accordingly, a text can be analyzed on its linguistic levels. The semantic level allows the study of meaning of utterances produced by speakers or writers; the syntactic level, which become the middle one, connects the semantic level to the phonological level – it studies the use of lexical choices. The stylistic analysis is, then, can be applied as an initial study to investigate the habit of language users. The model of stylistic analysis as proposed by Leech and Short (2007) is adopted in this study to analyze the research data. It is expected to give a comprehensive illustration and guidance in doing the analysis and in drawing conclusion.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative study using a discourse analysis approach. Igolkina (2016) synthesizes opinions from different perspectives, i.e. Nunan (1991) that differed researches into two distinct groups, classroom research and classroom-oriented research, which differences lay on the natural setting of the classroom; and from Ellis (2008) who proposes that classroom research can follow two general approaches, descriptive and confirmatory. The descriptive studies can be qualitative or quantitative, as they focus on the form and functions of classroom interaction, how these interactions are shaped and become meaningful, and what the implications may be for the students learning. As this study is using a discourse analysis, this study can be included into a descriptive research.

Data and Data Source

The data of this study were taken from the movie script of *Dead Poets Society* movie written by Tom Schulman in 1989. Though this movie was released in 1989, it is still considered relevant to be the source of data of this study, because this study focuses on the use of English as the language instructional found in the movie. The data are in form of utterances – all utterances spoken by John Keating in his teaching sessions in the movie.

There are 123 utterances spoken by Keating in various situations in this movie. By using reduction technique, 83 utterances were taken as the data of this study as they are all

spoken in teaching context. Those 83 utterances were spoken by Keating during his teachings sessions as parts of the movie scenes.

Method for Collecting the Data

To answer the problems formulated in the study, the data were collected by using documentation method. The writer marked and wrote all utterances spoken by Keating in his context of a teacher in his class. In collecting the data, the steps are explained as follow:

1. Watching the *Dead Poets Society* movie several times to match the movie script with the movie itself. In this step, the writer validated the data source so that all the data taken from the script were considered to be valid;
2. Marking all utterances spoken by Keating that are related to the teaching context on the movie script;
3. Recording all the marked utterances on data cards and identifying them with numbers to facilitate grouping and analyzing processes.

Method for Analyzing the Data

After all data have been collected, the writer then analyzed them using reduction technique. All data directly related to the study were grouped together, while utterances spoken by Keating yet did not contain any expressions of instructional language were removed. The remaining data were then analyzed further using eclectic approach. The eclectic approach is one of research methods that allows researchers to combine several theories and methods to achieve the research objective.

In analyzing the data, the model proposed by Crystal and Davy (2013) was adopted as the stylistic analysis model. This model allows the investigation to be conducted on different levels of language, i.e. phonological, lexical, syntactical, and semantic levels. On each level, the investigation focuses on revealing the linguistic features found in the text to be the findings of this study. Combined with the model, the writer also employed the theory proposed by Leech and Short (2007) that provides a checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories to reveal the linguistic pattern of instructional language.

By conducting the study using both method and theory, the writer could reveal linguistic features that characterize the instructional language. In this step, the writer concluded the result of the study by investigating the findings of the study.

As this study is a qualitative one, the result of data analysis was presented using descriptive technique by using words or symbols. Mahsun (2005) stated that there are two options in this step: (a) formulating the result of the study by using words, including using special terms or technical terms; (b) formulating the result using symbols. In this article, the result of this study is presented using words, including some technical terms related to linguistics.

Findings and Discussion

Keating, in *Dead Poets Society*, used English as his medium of instruction. This is highly related to the subject that he taught, English poetry. While teaching, Keating often cited parts of poems and then explain it to his students. He also often asked them to cite the poems or even to make their own poems. Based on the analysis on his utterances, there are four linguistic features that can be revealed.

a. Phonological Features

In his teaching, while citing the works of English poets, Keating used various level of intonation. He could speak in flat intonation or shouted using high intonation. Keating also use rising pitch to form question without using interrogative structure; for example when he asked his students' names.

KEATING

Very good, Mr. ...?

The variety of intonation can help teachers emphasize on certain parts of their teaching materials to grab the students' attention; it can also help them indicate parts of material that are more important than others. For EFL students, the use of various pitches or intonation may help them differentiate forms of sentences, as they have learned that a declarative sentence tends to have flat intonation and then falling intonation at the end of the sentence, while rising intonation is usually used at the end of an interrogative one. Different pitches can also serve as a hint for learners, e.g. high pitches in imperative or exclamatory sentences. Different pitches or intonation can also be found in the exclamatory sentences used by Keating, for example when he praised his students for their efforts.

Other phonological feature that could be observed from Keating lines is the use of pause. This feature is used for different purposes: in one scene, Keating used a pause to let the students think about his words; in other scene, he used pauses to switch from a poem he cited to his own material, that is when he explained about the poem.

b. Lexical features

The lexical features deals with the vocabulary used in instructional language, that is words commonly found and related with English as a medium of instruction. In the movie, Keating used several expressions of classroom language when giving instructions to his students. The vocabulary used related to the class activities, such as open your book, go to page, follow me, read your lines, and so on. Since Keating taught English poetry, many of his words used specific terms of poetry, like verse, rhyme, meter, or stanza. Using specific terms of the subject that we teach can help students memorize and understand the materials better. It can also help them grab a comprehensive understanding of the materials given. Students do not need to find common words for those special terms, as they may come into false understanding if they cannot find appropriate equivalent words for the terms.

In addition, Keating also used several words from old English to emphasize his materials while teaching his students, e.g. lads. This is highly associated with his subject, English poetry, so that it gives his students feel different atmosphere of English poetry.

c. Syntactical features

The analysis conducted on the utterances of Keating revealed that while teaching he used all forms of sentences, i.e. declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory. All sentences are characterized by simple syntax. Keating tends to use simple sentences when

explaining about his materials. In one scene, however, he used quite a long sentence, that is when he introduced himself to his student. This might happen in a spoken context, as the text is produced immediately by the speakers.

KEATING (CONT'D)

*It was written by a poet named Walt
Whitman about Mr. Abraham Lincoln.
In this class you may refer to me as either
Mr. Keating, or Oh Captain, My Captain.*

KEATING (CONT'D)

*So that I become the source of as few
rumors as possible, let me tell you that
yes, I was a student at this institution many moons ago, and no, at that time I did not
possess this charismatic personality. However, should you choose to emulate my
manner, it can only help your grade. Pick up a textbook from the back, gentlemen,
and let's retire to the honor room.*

The declarative form is normally used to explain the subject materials. When using declarative, Keating tends to use simple sentence in one speech.

KEATING

*This is battle, boys. War! You are
souls at a critical juncture. Either you
will succumb to the will of hoi polloi
and the fruit will die on the vine--or
you will triumph as individuals. It may
be a coincidence that part of my duties
are to teach you about Romanticism, but
let me assure you that I take the task
quite seriously. You will learn what
this school wants you to learn in my
class, but if I do my job properly, you
will also learn a great deal more. You
will learn to savor language and words
because they are the stepping stones to
everything you might endeavor to do in
life and do well. A moment ago I used
the term 'hoi polloi.' Who knows what it
means? Come on, Overstreet, you twirp.*

(laughter)

Anderson, are you a man or a boil?

To ask the students some questions, Keating used a simple structure of interrogative. In some other scenes, Keating used incomplete form of sentence, although he indicated the question by using rising pitch or intonation.

KEATING (CONT'D)

What will your verse be?

KEATING

Perry? (no answer) Neil Perry?

Keating used imperative form extensively during his class. He gave many instructions to his students related to the class activities. In many of his instructions, he used imperatives with implied subjects.

KEATING

(to the blushing boy)

Don't be embarrassed.

KEATING

(soft and soothing voice)

Boys, quietly open your texts to page 54.

KEATING

Answer "present." please. Chapman?

In some other lines, Keating used imperatives with subject.

KEATING

This is battle, boys. War! You are souls at a critical juncture. Either you will succumb to the will of hoi polloi and the fruit will die on the vine--or you will triumph as individuals. It may be a coincidence that part of my duties are to teach you about Romanticism, but let me assure you that I take the task quite seriously. You will learn what this school wants you to learn in my class, but if I do my job properly, you will also learn a great deal more. You will learn to savor language and words because they are the stepping stones to everything you might endeavor to do in life and do well. ...

To make varieties in the teaching activities, teachers can use different forms of imperative. This will also help students improve their language skills by comprehending different structures of sentences.

The last form of sentence, exclamatory, is also employed by Keating during his classes. This is likely found in the movie, because Keating taught English poetry that is full of emotional expressions.

KEATING

Rhythm, boy! Rhythm is important.

KEATING (CONT'D)

Good god, boy! Yell!

KEATING (CONT'D)

Again! Louder!

The exclamatory form can be used to emphasize certain parts of teaching materials or to praise the students for their efforts. This can also help teachers motivate their students during the learning process.

d. Cohesion and Context

During his classes, Keating moved from asking, explaining, to praising in order to help him deliver his materials. In most of his lines, he used first person point of view to refer to himself. When referring to his student, he switched from using the students' given names or family names. In some lines when he wanted to show his appreciation to his students, he opted to use their given name; in that way, he formed a closer bond with his students. He shortened the distance appeared as their roles of teacher and student. In most other lines, he addressed his students using a title (Mr.) followed by their family names. Addressing people using a formal form, e.g. Mr. Anderson, Mr. Pitts, is often used in a formal setting. In this movie, Keating regarded his classroom as a formal setting, therefore, he often addressed his students formally. By doing this, Keating created a distance between him as the teacher and his students. He indirectly showed the clear distinction between them.

Related to his subject, Keating employed a great deal of figures of speech; some that can be observed are anaphora (sentences or phrases begin with the same word) like in the following lines,

KEATING (CONT'D)

*Treacle! Mawkish treacle! Rip it out
of your books. Rip out the entire page!
I want this sentimental rubbish in the
trash where it belongs!*

Or hyperbole

KEATING

*This is battle, boys. War! You are
souls at a critical juncture. Either you
will succumb to the will of hoi polloi
and the fruit will die on the vine--or
you will triumph as individuals. ...*

Based on the above explanation, it is clear that *Dead Poets Society* can be a source of linguistic model of instructional language. Students of English Education Program can learn about how teachers can use different pitches and intonation for different purposes, to indicate the end of the sentence, to form a certain form of sentence, or to give emphasis in their speech. At lexical level, this movie also provides a great amount of instructional language vocabulary, especially those related to teaching instructions. Although the movie is set in an English poetry class, thus there are many terms related to poetry; this movie can still be a good example of how teachers should employ certain terms related to their own subjects during their teaching process. Teachers do not need to find more common words for any special terms, so that they can also help the students relate the words with appropriate context and learn how to use the terms in sentences. In the next level, syntactic level, the use of simple structure of sentences, like the ones used by Keating, can help

students understand the materials easily. Teachers can use declarative form to explain their materials; the interrogative to ask questions to their students or to check their understanding; the imperative to give instructions to their students; and the exclamatory to give praises and motivation to them. The last, at the semantic level, teachers may employ different strategies in addressing their students. They can opt to call them by their given names to show close relation, or to call them by a title and their family name to create distance between both of them. The latter strategy reinforces the position of a teacher who hold the authority of the class.

Keating, in the *Dead Poets Society* movie, also showed a clear role of a teacher during the teaching-learning process. The movie gives an ample example of how a teacher uses English as his instructional language. As a teacher, Keating taught his class using a good sequence of teaching activities. At the first meeting, he started his class by greeting the students, introducing himself, registering the students by calling their name using a roll, explaining his material by giving example, and finished the class by giving them assignment. By watching this movie, students of English Education Program can learn about how teachers teach in the classroom. They may use the movie as a real example of a teacher teaching in the class. Students can observe the way Keating addressed his students, praised his students, and motivated their students. This gives them twofold benefits: having an authentic example of a teacher's activity in the classroom and having enjoyment from watching the movie.

Conclusion

Students who learn in English Education Program need a model to strengthen their learning process to comprehend the work of a teacher. Other studies conducted in educational researches give them models of a teacher in pedagogical context. This study, however, can serve as an alternative for them to learn about the instructional language used by a teacher in the classroom. By observing the language used by Keating, students can learn how his language characterized by distinctive linguistic features. Keating used various pitches and intonations to form different sentences, a great deal of teaching vocabularies in giving instructions, simple syntax of sentences, and some figures of speech to create different atmosphere in his teaching activities. In conclusion, by looking at the movie from linguistic perspective, we can see how this movie provides us with various linguistic features that characterize instructional language used by a teacher.

Nevertheless, there are other considerations that should be taken in using movies as a linguistic model. A movie chosen should be assured to provide a number of utterances containing specific linguistic features, having an ample number of data that can be retrieved. We can also choose to use movies that are set in educational setting. This can be difficult, as there are limited number of movies with educational setting, though we can consider having more than one movie to provide us with a more complete model that we need. While watching the movie, it is important that the students focus on the utterances spoken by the movie characters rather than to read the subtitle lines, which translate the utterances into their native language. This can be a challenge to EFL students, since their English language skill is often at low to intermediate proficiency level. Thus, they often

have difficulties in understanding all the words spoken in a movie. Teachers can help them by giving additional activities, like discussing vocabulary, discussing important scenes and lines, or other post-viewing tasks. Stephens et al. (2012), moreover, also proposed pre-viewing activities to enhance the students in understanding the movie.

To conclude, it is interesting to note that the use of *Dead Poets Society* movie as a source of data that provide a linguistic model for instructional language can be empirically proven in this study. This study gives an alternative research on investigating the use of movies in classroom. The result of this study also supports other studies conducted in educational areas, as it also found that movies are a valuable tool in teaching and learning process. Movies can help teacher bring authentic materials yet rich in content to help their students improve their language skills.

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