

Didacticizing the use of the adapted film in teaching/learning French as a Foreign Language (FLE)

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Abstract

This essay explores the impact of technological advancements on pedagogical approaches in French as a Foreign Language (FLE) classrooms, emphasizing the necessity of placing the learner at the heart of the learning process of literary texts. In a context marked by increasing challenges in knowledge acquisition, the goal is to cultivate student engagement by providing a stimulating and captivating learning experience. The judicious integration of film supports in FLE classrooms not only merges literature and cinema but also encourages learners to become enlightened consumers of artistic works. Through a range of diversified activities, learners can enhance their linguistic skills and cultural understanding while reigniting their enjoyment for the study of literary texts.

Keywords: FLE; Literature; ICT; Film support; Adaptation

1. Introduction

In recent years, it has become evident that the introduction of modern technologies into educational spaces has led to a significant transformation of pedagogical strategies. In the particular context of teaching and learning literary texts in French as a Foreign Language (FLE) classrooms, it seems that most teachers still primarily favor a text-based approach, assuming that learners' deficits are primarily lexical. This method maintains a traditionally vertical pedagogical dynamic between the teacher and the student. To transcend this reality, it becomes imperative, even indispensable, to refocus learning around the student, empowering them with an active decision-making role. Language teaching is not merely about the exhaustive transmission of knowledge; rather, it aspires to provide each learner with an enriching, beneficial, and unique experience, stimulated by the use of innovative and motivating educational resources.

The major challenge for the teacher is to engage students, a task that becomes increasingly difficult in the face of growing learning difficulties. Teachers often encounter a lack of interest from learners, necessitating the adoption of new, adapted methodological approaches.

Language learning encompasses mastery of verbal and non-verbal signals, including not only speech but also facial expressions, gestures, intonations, speech rhythm, the psychology of the speaker, and their silences. In this regard, audiovisual tools, often perceived as information and communication technology, capture the dimension of "total" communication with superior acuity and prove to be an excellent vehicle for a more attractive pedagogy. This pedagogical modality makes the student more involved in their learning, marking the end of the era of traditional

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methods. In the past, knowledge was exclusively transmitted through written text; today, thanks to modern learning methods, it is also disseminated through audiovisual media. The latter presents numerous significant advantages for French acquisition, stimulating learner motivation and promoting autonomy, thereby making the language classroom more dynamic and vibrant than ever before.

The ambition of this approach should be to strengthen learners' intrinsic motivation, consolidate meaningful learning, and promote self-learning in the context of language acquisition.

Numerous audiovisual supports are usable in French as a Foreign Language (FLE) classrooms, and in the particular domain of literature teaching, film stands out as a preferred medium. Here, we specifically focus on cinematic adaptations and theatrical representations derived from literary works. This approach follows the trajectory of research that has addressed the challenges and perspectives of the didactic use of cinema in French teaching [1]; [2]; [3]; [4]; [5].

Our exploratory study aims to analyze, from both theoretical and methodological perspectives, how cinematic art, integrated into FLE classrooms, could not only address students' learning difficulties, combat their demotivation and disinterest in the French language but also place the quest for meaning at the heart of the teaching-learning process of this language-culture. Furthermore, this integration of cinema aims to "define a professionalism more in line with the evolution of the research field in French didactics and the changes undergone by the contemporary world" [6].

Our objective is to offer in-depth reflections on the role of film adaptation as a crucial tool for literary analysis. We aim to strengthen the study of literary works as entities rich in images and meaning while increasing the enjoyment associated with text study. This approach could open new avenues for a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of literary texts, thus transforming the way literature is taught and perceived in the context of FLE.

2. Objectives of integrating film support

Throughout its evolution, language teaching has long relied on interpersonal media, such as the teacher's speech and gestures, as well as traditional tools such as the blackboard and textbooks. Attempts to integrate authentic visual aids have been rare and sporadic, due in part to the lack of technical equipment, insufficient teacher training, the absence of a clear educational policy, and sometimes even ideological mistrust of technology and imagery. However, according to [7], "languages offer a fertile ground for initiating a process of mutual adaptation between the media and the school, which have often evolved in a relationship of mutual distrust."

Today, the introduction of art in general, and cinema in particular, into schools is widely regarded as obvious, even necessary. According to [8], "artistic and cultural education aims to educate citizens engaged in cultural life, capable of actively participating in the preservation of cultural meaning and the construction of a common identity. Artistic practices play a crucial role in school activities, offering learners the opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of art, develop their creativity, acquire skills, and discover new imaginative horizons."

Considering the filmic approach as a lever for literary analysis, we identify this medium as a dialectical means facilitating the approach to literature, despite the inherent semantic differences between film and literary text. Integrated into the educational context, these two forms of linguistic expression, although distinct, interact with each other, "thus offering foreign language learners ways to approach literature in a deeper, more subjective, sociological, ethnographic, and historical way," as [9] points out. The overall understanding of a work is generally more immediate with moving images than with written text. Furthermore, it seems that learners more easily appropriate film analysis tools than literary analysis tools because the film medium conveys a media culture that, as a culture shared massively by learners, is worth integrating into French courses for study, analysis, or simply to serve as a "zone of proximal development." [10] theorized this concept of the "zone of proximal development," which refers to the distance between what a student can do alone and what they can do with external assistance. Beyond this zone, they cannot succeed even with the help of others.

Although literary language is inherently evocative of images, the use of visual support is crucial in foreign language learning, especially for beginners, where the polysemy of the text can be an obstacle to understanding. Adding to this is the cultural aspect, which, according to [11], "allows the school to rediscover everyday and erudite culture, as cinema synthesizes aesthetics, leisure, ideology, and social values in a single work of art."

Media have always played a crucial role as tools facilitating the transmission of knowledge and the learning of languages and literatures. As highlighted by [12], film particularly stands out as a privileged tool for the transmission of these knowledges, for several reasons:

- The visual dimension stimulates the real context of a scientific experiment and a language communication situation.
- The diverse and rich offering of films facilitates the selection of materials according to pedagogical objectives and the level of learners.
- Films can be accessed outside the school context, especially at home or in cyber cafes.
- The technical and aesthetic qualities contribute admirably to the memorization and analysis of learned phenomena.

Furthermore, the cinematic work offers the learner the opportunity to observe, appreciate, critique, and judge what they see. They acquire the ability to decode images, sounds, and cultural situations, while stimulating their imagination. The film encourages the learner to anticipate, formulate hypotheses, and develop skills in production, reformulation, summary, and synthesis, thus contributing to the construction of their knowledge.

In summary, film supports are motivating as they arouse curiosity and maintain the learner's interest. They promote the pleasure of listening to and understanding the foreign language through technical possibilities such as pausing on the image, replaying sequences, fast-forwarding, and volume control, which facilitate activities focused on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, enunciation, description, narration, etc. Subtitles and intertitles also help improve spelling, writing, and reading. Thus, learners are actively involved in a stimulating and motivating learning process.

3. CEFR and guidelines

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) - Learning, Teaching, Assessment represents a publication by the Council of Europe in 2001, aiming to establish levels of language competence based on the skills required in various domains. In its desire to provide language practitioners with as comprehensive a tool as possible, the CEFR strives to define and meticulously describe the general and communicative skills necessary for any user or learner of a foreign language. The general skills developed in Chapter 5 of the CEFR explicitly highlight the importance of sociocultural knowledge, intercultural awareness, and intercultural skills and know-how in the process of learning a living language.

It is widely recognized that every text carries a cultural load and is influenced by the social context, just as verbal and non-verbal communication conveys the social and cultural values of a society. Cinema today embodies an inexhaustible source of cultural elements representative of a country or social group and constitutes a pedagogical tool offering a variety of situations and languages. In this perspective, cinema exerts a powerful attraction both on students and teachers, due to the diversity of content, vocabulary, characters, and stories that combine entertainment and learning. Unlike textbooks, cinema expands learners' cultural horizons by offering lively testimonies of contemporary civilization and a cultural and social reality in constant evolution.

"Language learners are social actors required to perform tasks in specific contexts in order to develop 'sociolinguistic skills' [13]." It is therefore evident that the values, semiotic codes, implicit meanings, and social conventions specific to a language must be integrated into the classroom, and the use of filmic supports represents one of the most effective methods to achieve this.

4. The pedagogical use of film support

The pedagogical exploitation of films adapted from novels in French as a Foreign Language (FLE) classrooms represents a stimulating approach conducive to learning. The use of these films offers learners a unique opportunity to explore Francophone literature in a visual and immersive way, while developing their linguistic and cultural skills. Cinematic adaptations enrich the learning experience by providing an additional visual dimension to the story, allowing learners to visualize the characters, settings, and situations described in the original novel.

In the case of a literary adaptation, addressing the work in FLE classrooms enables learners to focus their reflection on the particularities of the adaptation. It becomes possible to raise awareness in the class that adapting a book is not simply a matter of transposition but involves a transformation into another language, that of cinema. Cinematic adaptation often stands out for its creativity and interpretation, rather than for a faithful reproduction of the text, since production and staging follow different rules from writing.

The integration of film support in the classroom aims to establish a subtle balance and genuine harmony between the film and the text. It is essential to remember that each new pedagogical medium complements the previous ones without competing with them. Thus, the film becomes an ally of the text and the teacher in the success of a pedagogical approach.

Focusing on this specific teaching context, certain considerations can be made regarding the reading process. According to [14] on working with literary texts in the FLE context, this process relies on three fundamental operations: anticipating (pre-reading), identifying (reading), and verifying (post-reading). The anticipation stage, crucial in reading literary texts, requires careful preparation, especially in the FLE context. This is where the film comes in as a facilitating element of reading.

The use of film as a preparation for literary reading occurs from the learners' first encounter with the work, even before they begin reading the text itself. This approach corresponds to the pre-reading phase and provides information that can be used to construct the meaning of the text or mobilize the vocabulary necessary for its understanding.

In this perspective, cinema, as a form of intersemiotic translation, is considered a carrier of these evoked pieces of information. In addition to conveying elements of the literary work, the film enriches the experience by providing additional elements such as dialogues, characters, and their emotions, shaped by the filmmakers. These elements, subtly incorporated, lighten the reading of the written text, allowing students to begin the identification phase with prior knowledge acquired through the cinematic medium.

Analyzing a film sequence proves to be a complex endeavor, for which [15] propose the application of the "methodical reading" technique. This approach, familiar to French teachers regarding the analysis of a literary text, involves precise and nuanced observation of the forms and structures present in the sequence, as well as an analysis of their organization, leading to a progressive and synthetic interpretation of the whole. The objectives of this method are to equip learners with textual analysis tools, specific know-how, and to promote their autonomy in interpreting works.

In the case of analyzing a film sequence, the approach remains similar, although the text is replaced by successive visions of the sequence. The focus then shifts to visual elements such as settings, characters, and camera movements, thus highlighting the specificity of film analysis compared to traditional textual analysis.

In the same vein, [16] proposes a three-step framework for pedagogically exploiting a film:

- **Introduction and Sensitization:** During this initial stage, the teacher situates the chosen film or sequence within its context, enabling learners to understand the relationships between the characters and formulate hypotheses about future actions. It is also conceivable, at this stage, to begin by viewing the beginning of the film and inviting learners to make hypotheses regarding the characters, the space, and the plot, in order to sensitize them to the images and guide them in their immersion in the film.
- **Discovery, Reference, and Identification of Information:** In this second stage, Arkel suggests focusing first on the visual channel before addressing the auditory channel. The teacher presents the scene without sound, allowing learners to identify the main action as well as illustrative images. Then, he records the learners' observations on the blackboard and encourages them to share their comments, as well as to evoke similar experiences from their own lives. Once work on the visual channel is completed, the complete scene is viewed with sound, in order to identify all the necessary information for describing the spatiotemporal setting, characters, actions, language register used, characters' emotions, and present tones.
- **Performing Expression Activities:** This final stage involves activities such as debates on the film's theme, role-playing games, summaries of the story, imagining possible sequels, creating scenarios based on the film's plot, etc. These activities can be conducted in writing or orally. Thierry Lancien (1986) emphasizes that "working from video only makes sense if there is a constant back and forth between oral comprehension [...] and oral and written production."

5. Activities proposed with film sequences

5.1. Using the image without sound

The learners will be presented with the image without sound, prompting them to note anything that seems relevant. Subsequently, oral production will be solicited. Initially, the duration of the sequence should not exceed 5 minutes. It is

important to note that a single viewing will not suffice, and it should be supplemented by a second, or even a third viewing.

During the first viewing, learners will be encouraged to identify the spatiotemporal setting and describe the characters. The image alone should enable them to answer these questions.

For the second viewing, learners' attention will be directed towards the actions of the actors in the video sequence and the succession of events. They will be prompted to verbally describe what they have observed and formulate hypotheses.

Learners may need a third viewing of the sequence, during which they will be encouraged to imagine the dialogues between the characters.

5.2. Using the image with sound

This mode of use differs in that learners are prompted to focus their attention on both the image and the sound.

While viewing the selected sequence, learners will be prompted to identify any information that will later enable them to describe the spatiotemporal setting, the characters, the actions, the language register used by the characters, as well as the feelings of each character and the tones present. These elements can be determined from the voices and the tone used. The soundtrack thus provides an opportunity to deepen the analysis.

5.3. Using the film scene: completing a story

Select a key excerpt from a film. Learners will watch this crucial sequence in the action and will be invited to imagine the reasons that led to this situation. You will ask them to imagine the preceding scene that led to this event. They will once again work on hypotheses, exploring all conceivable possibilities.

5.4. Using the film scene as a debate starter (advanced level)

The use of videography serves as a privileged vehicle to initiate debates on cultural or controversial themes. It is advisable to select a film excerpt that reveals a pertinent aspect of society for this purpose. Each film sequence is imbued with characteristics inherent to a given culture or society and can easily spark in-depth discussions.

After the projection of the chosen excerpt, participants will be invited to conjecture on the central theme before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the situation and narrative progression.

To invigorate the debate, forming two opposing factions is advisable: one defending the viewpoint proposed by the excerpt, the other contesting it. These groups should substantiate their positions by drawing on the elements observed during the film sequence.

In the context of this activity, your role will be to act as a moderator, ensuring the smoothness and fairness of exchanges.

5.5. The “video blank” exercise

It can be enriching to manipulate a video tape by obscuring certain parts of it with blanks. Thus, learners will be presented with an incomplete sequence, challenging them to conjecture the missing content. This technique stimulates the participants' imagination, actively engaging them in narrative reconstruction and contextual understanding of the viewed excerpt.

5.6. Using a fully watched film and synthesizing it (advanced level)

Films in the French language can be pedagogically exploited in two distinct ways:

- **Continuous Viewing:** The teacher chooses to screen the film without interruptions, allowing learners to experience it in its entirety. This approach promotes total immersion and a comprehensive understanding of the cinematic work.
- **Segmented Viewing:** Alternatively, the teacher may opt for a segmented screening of the film, pausing at key moments. This method provides the opportunity to insert targeted pedagogical activities, such as checking comprehension through multiple-choice questionnaires followed by detailed explanatory corrections, or leading discussions guided by open-ended questions.

Regardless of the chosen method, watching the film entails a specific task for the learners. By opting for interruptions during the viewing, the teacher can effectively assess students' understanding through multiple-choice questionnaires followed by detailed and explained corrections, or through orally posed open-ended questions managed directly by the teacher.

Conversely, choosing not to interrupt the film invites a type of activity primarily focused on written expression. In this context, several exercises can be considered for learners:

- Writing a summary of the story,
- Engaging in a debate on the film's main theme, with a topic predefined by the teacher,
- Designing a potential sequel for the film,
- Imagining future developments in a character's life after the end of the film,
- Developing a screenplay inspired by the themes and narrative structure of the viewed film.

The chosen approach will depend on the pedagogical objectives and the level of comprehension of the learners, with each method having its own advantages for enriching French learning through cinema.

5.7. Using a selected film passage for a grammar activity

Using films in language classes provides a dynamic method for addressing the nuances of French grammar. Selecting film excerpts that feature recurrent use of a specific grammatical point can be particularly effective for teaching. These passages, through their natural and dynamic context, facilitate the understanding and assimilation of grammatical structures by learners.

To implement this approach, it is advisable to choose scenes where the targeted grammatical point is frequently used. For example, imperative (select scenes where characters give orders or advice), subjunctive (opt for excerpts expressing wishes, doubts, or necessities), imperative (choose moments where characters issue direct commands).

Once the excerpt is chosen, here are the steps for an effective learning session:

- **Viewing:** Have the learners watch the sequence, advising them to pay attention to the use of the studied grammatical point.
- **Identification and Analysis:** After viewing, engage the learners in an activity where they identify instances of the specific grammatical point. Discuss each occurrence so they understand its usage and function in the context.
- **Grammatical Conceptualization:** Introduce a more formal explanation of the grammatical point, illustrating with examples from the excerpt. Explain the rules, exceptions, and variations in usage.
- **Targeted Practice:** Provide exercises or activities where learners must actively use the grammatical point. This may include sentence transformation exercises, creating dialogues, or role-playing games based on the film.
- **Feedback and Correction:** Provide constructive feedback on their use of the grammatical point, correcting errors and reinforcing correct usage.

This method not only makes grammar learning more interactive and engaging but also helps learners better integrate these structures into their language proficiency by seeing them applied in real and communicative situations.

6. Conclusion

In the context of teaching French as a Foreign Language (FLE), the integration of literature and cinema significantly contributes to the development of learners' ability to interpret literary texts and understand the world in a broader sense, thus fostering a considerable expansion of their intellectual and cultural horizons. This pedagogical practice not only enriches their linguistic experience but also turns them into knowledgeable and independent consumers of two distinct art forms. Moreover, it fosters a critical mindset towards their immediate environment, stimulated by an encouragement to literary exploration, thereby serving as a bridge between classroom learning and their perception of the external world.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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