

Film appreciation as a didactic tool and learning styles in students of Communication Sciences at a public university in Lima.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explain how film appreciation as a didactic tool and learning styles are developed in Communication Sciences students at a public university in Lima. The participants were 300 students of both genders. The research is of mixed approach, the scope is explanatory and the design is sequential transformational. The results show that film appreciation strengthens students' learning styles. Through motivation, analysis and aesthetics, the student elaborates concepts, searches for meanings at the audiovisual level and experiences aesthetic enjoyment. In addition, the fragments of films proposed by the teacher are integrated to their perception, allowing them to better understand the different topics programmed in a course. The main conclusion reached is that in any scenario where an action linked to learning is developed, film appreciation influences the student, provoking his enthusiasm to integrate new

Key words:

Film appreciation, learning styles, motivation, analysis, aesthetics.



knowledge to his previous knowledge, encouraging him to live experiences that, while still having a playful spirit, provide him with a 'lesson' or awaken his interest in knowing and examining historical, political and cultural contexts.

La apreciación del cine como herramienta didáctica y los estilos de aprendizaje en estudiantes de Ciencias de la Comunicación de una Universidad pública de Lima

Palabras clave:

Cinema appreciation, learning styles, motivation, analysis, aesthetics.

Resumen

La presente investigación tiene por objetivo explicar de qué manera se desarrollan la apreciación del cine como herramienta didáctica y los estilos de aprendizaje en los estudiantes de Ciencias de la Comunicación de una universidad pública de Lima. Los participantes fueron 300 estudiantes de ambos géneros. La investigación es de enfoque mixto, el alcance es de tipo explicativo y el diseño es transformativo secuencial. Los resultados muestran que la apreciación del cine fortalece los estilos de aprendizaje del estudiante. A través de la motivación, el análisis y la estética, el estudiante elabora conceptos, busca significados a nivel audiovisual y experimenta un goce estético. Además de ello, los fragmentos de películas propuestos por el docente se integran a su percepción, permitiéndole entender mejor los diferentes temas programados en un curso. La principal conclusión a la que se llegó es que en cualquier escenario donde se desarrolla una acción ligada al aprendizaje, la apreciación del cine influye en el estudiante, provocando su entusiasmo por integrar nuevos conocimientos a sus saberes previos, impulsándolo a vivir experiencias que, sin dejar de poseer un espíritu lúdico, le brinden una 'lección' o despiertan su interés por conocer y examinar contextos históricos, políticos y culturales.

1. Introduction

Research on the appreciation of cinema as a didactic tool and learning styles in university higher education is scarce, which reveals that cinema as a pedagogical resource in the classroom is still a pending task in the work of professors, who need to be aware of the care required for this pedagogical practice, since previous skills are needed to read and interpret cinematographic fiction (knowledge of audiovisual language, for example).

The evolution of teaching has led different schools of thought and many academics to develop theories in order to optimally guide this phase. One of the most valuable approaches in current education is the cognitive approach, which considers that the student builds his knowledge from a preliminary practice, from the environment where he develops his learning and from the exchange of knowledge with the facilitator.

The use of film as a resource for learning styles is not a new topic. Previous research shows that film not only serves as a didactic tool to support academic content, but also has narrative and aesthetic characteristics capable of generating in students not only identification and motivation, but also a considerable increase in their reflective capacity. A fiction can encourage them to assume a critical position with respect to their environment.

It is common knowledge that the current Peruvian university system offers students a vast field of knowledge to develop their intellectual potential hand in hand with new technologies. However, this learning, which is obtained at a humanistic and scientific level, intimidates a sector of new entrants due to the academic rigor (reading requirements, for example) and the lack of connection with the references that until then characterized their daily lives.

A note that is linked to this problem is in the latest PISA test report (2018), which states that a difficulty in the way of learning of students who complete secondary education occurs in the area of textual comprehension. There it speaks of a deficit in the ability to obtain specific information from a text, of limitations to relate and elaborate meanings and to reflect on content. It is unpleasantly surprising that of the seven levels of reading proficiency performance established in

the aforementioned test, Peruvian students who opt for higher education barely pass the penultimate level.

At the beginning of their university career, shortly after arriving at a faculty or academic program, some students show interest in their studies and others -a great majority- must face the learning of subjects that are taught in a diametrically opposed way to the rhythms, cadences and demands of the school stage they recently left behind. These days are marked by a certain uncertainty, which diminishes as they become aware of the beginning of a professional life project, accentuated by new routines, academic habits and the integration to another social circle.

The new student is defined by diverse interests, profiles and complexities, mostly linked to the Internet and social networks, which he accesses from a smartphone, allowing him to connect with the world in real time. With him, the reductionisms associated with the juxtaposition of black and white are not valid, but rather a scale of grays that support his heterogeneity, his unique and different status.

Without sufficient psychological maturity, coming from different economic and social realities (some more complex than others), the new group of students of the Communication career is diverse, varied, disparate, with the complexity in teaching that this entails. How to integrate them in the learning of a subject? What conceptual approach will allow to have a more or less precise knowledge of such a diverse audience? What process will be the most adequate to activate cognitive, metacognitive or affective-motivational variables?

If, as Feldman (2005) says, teaching is linked to a progressive change in a person's behavior generated by experience, then cinema - a reference associated with leisure time, but also a powerful means of communication, capable of generating a more participatory environment in the classroom - emerges as a valuable didactic tool for the student to achieve solid learning and, incidentally, to integrate with enthusiasm into the professional career and undergraduate courses.

It should not be forgotten that today's students are already familiar with cinematographic fictions, with the dynamics of their stories, with their aesthetics and with the fascinating flow of their images and

sounds. Cinema is, therefore, a necessary resource in today's teaching because it contributes to raising the student's level of perception and his or her capacity to exercise critical thinking.

In Peru, the integration of audiovisual support and ICT in the renewal of university education is key to make the final leap towards modernity, promoting creativity and innovation of students in the classroom. This situation remains a challenge for university progress, since even today, despite having the technological ally (Internet offers thousands of titles through specialized portals), many educators do not take advantage of it for lack of time, knowledge or interest.

Films (complete or fragmented) are capable of transmitting information and knowledge. The stories presented by films in their fictional aspect constitute one of the few practical approaches that the student has to complement the theory taught by the teacher. Films operate as an important pedagogical resource, an ally of the student and the teacher, from their own language nature, capable of connecting the senses with the emotions and values that are part of learning, in addition to generating a more active participation in the classroom.

In spite of the fact that the media and technological society in which we live today is prone to audiovisual stimuli, the appreciation of cinema as a didactic tool has not been explored or exploited in all its possibilities, it is not widely practiced in undergraduate courses, nor does it seem to find a place as a methodological proposal in the treatment of learning styles when reviewing the syllabi of the various subjects that make up the curricula of university careers.

This paper aims to show, with simple concepts, how film appreciation used as a didactic tool (through complete or fragmented films), can help undergraduate students in the development of their learning styles. Research in this field can be useful to continue insisting on modifying the traditional teaching system and offer an interesting and motivating option to the undergraduate student. It also seeks to verify how students strengthen their learning styles through the appreciation of film as a mediating entity and valuable pedagogical resource that awakens their interest and motivation in the classroom. In addition, it wants to verify their predisposition to access new knowledge, without losing sight of the teacher who accompanies the student not only in

acquiring it, but also guiding him in his transformation from a passive subject (within the university classroom) into an active subject, conscious of achieving the learning objective.

2. Methodology

The approach is mixed, defined by Hernandez (2010) as "the systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study in order to obtain a more complete 'photograph' of the phenomenon, and points out that these can be combined in such a way that the quantitative and qualitative approaches retain their original structures and procedures".

In terms of scope, it is an explanatory type of research that is interested in answering why a phenomenon occurs and under what conditions it manifests itself or why two variables such as those of this research are related. In addition, it is explanatory because it aims to provide answers that contribute to solve a specific phenomenon in a given space and time.

It is a sequential transformational design: the dimensions of the first variable are basically measured by applying a questionnaire and then, in order to collect complementary qualitative information, a focus group is applied.

The population consisted of 520 students enrolled in the School of Communication Sciences of a public university in Lima, from socioeconomic sectors B, C and D, and whose ages ranged between 18 and 23 years, 48% female and 52% male.

The sample was of 300 students and the criteria for its conformation were the following: to be a student of the Faculty of Communication Sciences and to be enrolled in the 2019-II semester.

The technique chosen was the survey and the instrument applied was the questionnaire. Two questionnaires were elaborated, the first one corresponds to the variable 'appreciation of cinema as a didactic tool' and consists of 15 items according to the indicators and dimensions evaluated (motivation, analysis and aesthetics); the second one -an adaptation of the form devised by Honey and Alonso- corresponds to the variable 'learning styles' and consists of 80 items according to the indicators and dimensions evaluated (active, reflective, theoretical and

pragmatic). In addition, this research complements the information gathered through a focus group, an instrument that studies the opinions or attitudes of a specific audience.

4. Results and discussion

In relation to the appreciation of cinema as a didactic tool, the information was organized by dimensions such as: motivation, analysis and aesthetics, from which the following results were obtained:

About motivation. Cinema motivates at a discursive level, has an impact as an audiovisual story and provides a high degree of entertainment. In addition, it has a humanistic message that generates emotion. This motivational capacity extends beyond the academic sphere, and has repercussions on a spiritual and experiential level, in a sort of panoramic and rich vision of life itself. Through the content of a film, the way it is narrated and the acting performance, the student becomes enthralled with transcendental characters who struggle against adversity to achieve their goals. The student empathizes with biographical trajectories. They are fictions that acquire the status of 'life lessons'. A film awakens the student's interest and curiosity, allows him to learn about the psychology of a character and the social context in which he moves; it broadens his vision of history and of societies he does not know. Film motivates him to want to learn more about related professional disciplines (such as psychology) and other social environments.

About analysis. A film presents facts and allows the student to elaborate concepts without the need to delve into theories. Films serve to assume a point of view; meaning is obtained through analysis. There is not only one way to watch a film; not everyone has the same perception. The exchange of opinions enriches this perception. The dramatic content, the narrative scheme and the stylistic finish of a film allow the student to discover its meaning. This discovery is renewed and prolonged when he integrates new films into his perception, which allows him a constant exercise of appreciation, in addition to assuming a critical stance and a vision of the facts. The film generates an

awareness in the student, leading him to adopt a reflective position. The analysis is produced from the actions that the protagonist or the main characters perform throughout the film, so that the student's perception is subordinated to these actions that have sociopolitical contexts as a backdrop.

In relation to aesthetics. Whether they are 'ugly' or 'beautiful' images, cinema moves and is perceived by students as an artistic expression. Aesthetic enjoyment is conditioned by the content of the film and the state of mind when appreciating it. Some qualify their perceptive experience as an 'explosion of the senses', to which the performance of the protagonist, the photographic work and the use of music contribute. An image may convey a sense of sadness and desolation, but it is its formal construction (sound and visual) that generates aesthetic enjoyment. The same is true of warm, sweetened, 'pretty' images or those that lean towards the 'aesthetics of the grotesque'; it is their 'unreal touch wrapped in fantasy' that captivates. The students are captivated by the colors and the photographic register, by the treatment of the music (associated with 'climatic moments' of the film) and by the work of the actors; the whole in harmony provokes a transcendental sensation in them. It seems to them that the most moving thing on an aesthetic level is when the director does not underestimate the viewer and builds a film with subtlety.

On the other hand, based on the theory, the information on learning styles was organized into: active, reflective, theoretical and pragmatic according to the learning styles questionnaire proposal of (Alonso & Gallego, 2000).

In relation to the Active learning style. The student acts freely and assumes life without too many formalisms. This way of behaving is generated on the mental level (preference for original and novel ideas, even if they are not practical) and derives from active listening rather than verbal exchange. He is bored by methodical works that demand a detailed finish. He expresses a preference for what is current, and better if the temporal anchorage is wrapped in a technological mantle. He is attracted to parties without limits. He thinks it is better to enjoy the present time than to delight in remembering the past or planning for the future. His attitude confirms that the time he lives is ephemeral,

fleeting. The transcendental happens here and now.

In relation to the Reflective learning style. The student researches various sources before performing an academic task. Bibliographic consultations go through the filter of their interpretation before arriving at a result. Caution guides his deductions. He needs to gather a lot of data to analyze a subject. He takes distance from the facts to observe them and make a value judgment. He enjoys preparing a work with time and carrying it out conscientiously. You find deadlines overwhelming and are annoyed by people who rush you in the achievement of your objectives. You are a perfectionist, you make drafts before the final draft of a document. You are satisfied with working conscientiously.

In relation to the Theoretical learning style. The student solves problems following a rational procedure that allows him to reach an objective. He tends to be a perfectionist and often detects gaps and weak points in the explanations of others. He does not let himself be guided by assertions; he tries to discover the principles and theories on which they are based. His work is orderly and methodical. He prefers a time for everything, an order or 'structure', rather than disorder or the seduction of chaos. Such a system helps him to organize his academic life, as well as to satisfy basic needs (eating, exercising, sleeping). This is in addition to the recreation time (researching on the Internet, watching movies) that he sets up at will.

In relation to the Pragmatic learning style. The student expresses his ideas clearly and without beating around the bush. Characterized by getting straight to the point in a discussion. Takes on a debate head-on and never goes off the deep end. They get impatient when they are given irrelevant, incoherent and inconsistent explanations. He does not allow digressions, nor does he 'theorize' before issuing a response. He prefers to concentrate on practical matters, on what is useful or generates material benefits: listening to an idea and thinking about how to put it into practice in order to obtain benefits of various kinds. This 'practicality' is also reflected in personal relationships, which motivates him to establish bonds with 'realistic' and 'concrete' individuals.

Regarding the discussion of results related to the appreciation of cinema as a didactic tool, we can highlight that, in relation to motivation, the results show that cinema motivates students in their learning and influences their development as human beings. The focus group reveals that cinema awakens interest and curiosity, facilitates the assimilation of content, motivates to know the psychology of a character and the social context in which he moves, broadens the vision of history and social environments that are not known. This research finds that motivation also allows students to empathize with the trajectories they see on the screen and to follow with interest the life course of a character, observing with attention his drift, his constant transit or his race to nowhere; fictions acquire the status of 'life lessons', loaded with a motivational component.

Regarding analysis, the results show that when watching a film, the student elaborates concepts without the need to delve into theories; it is a construction of meaning that, as Pulecio (2008) states, "is revealed at the first glance, it is personal and the student builds it through the perceptive exercise". Films allow him to assume a point of view, to wield arguments, to find meanings through analysis, employing the "subjectivity of the observer". Likewise, the way a film is constructed and its generic affiliation (drama, horror, comedy) is what allows the student to analyze, discover meanings and generate meaning, in addition to assuming a critical stance. The analysis focused on cinema as an 'autonomous universe' has description and interpretation as its main tools and the components of cinematographic language (visual, sound, syntactic codes) as the objectives to be examined.

Regarding aesthetics, the student understands cinema as an artistic expression, aligned with the concept pointed out by Aumont (1985): "aesthetics encompasses the reflection of the phenomena of signification considered as artistic phenomena, it studies cinema as art and films as artistic messages". The student is able to discern between 'beautiful' or 'ugly' images, typical of a cinematographic fiction, establishing an emotional link with them, and expanding the conceptual sphere that links aesthetics to the 'beautiful', assuming other categories present in the plastic arts, which boast transgressive, pretentious and 'bad taste' components, and which are found in filmic narratives built with dirty, rough textures, typical of an 'ugly' or

'negative beauty' aesthetics. The student believes that aesthetic enjoyment is conditioned to the content of the film and to his state of mind when appreciating it, a perceptive experience that is qualified as an 'explosion of the senses' and that is assumed as an experiential activity and celebration of the 'subjective gaze'.

Regarding the discussion of the results on learning styles, we can highlight that, in relation to the active learning style, the results show that a majority of students exploit their innovative capacity, show flexibility when facing a didactic process and assume life without too many formalisms. Intuition drives them to understand a thematic content quickly and to perceive a foreign idea clearly, but they must make an effort to rationalize such thinking and organize it in a methodical work that demands a detailed finish. Perhaps his ideology is not based on a partisan creed or he does not seek shelter on opposite sides -right or left- of the old political spectrum, but he is questioning and usually expresses his feelings openly. The attitude of feeling fully free guides his steps and he is always ready to "assimilate information and turn the learning experience into a constant challenge" (Lockett, 1999).

Regarding the reflective learning style, the results show that most of them reflect before doing or saying something. The student researches several bibliographic sources before carrying out any academic task or written document; he gathers a lot of data in the previous stage of the analysis of a subject and -as if it were a polyhedral look, full of intellectual curiosity- in his readings he deploys a filter of interpretation before arriving at a result. He is cautious and takes a distance from a specific fact in order to observe it better and make a value judgment. In this regard, he follows the path of "reflective observation that allows him to reason about various phenomena and observe them from multiple perspectives" (Pezo, 2017).

Regarding the theoretical learning style, the student is attracted to dual cognitive operations (representation and interpretation), through which he tries to discover the value system that governs the lives of others and the criteria that drive his relationship with the world. He finds it difficult to be creative, impulsive and to live without purpose or perspective about his future. He avoids ambiguity, expresses his

ideas clearly and moves around the theory contained in books. He solves problems following a rational procedure that allows him to achieve his goals. He tends to be a perfectionist and often detects inconsistencies and weak points in the arguments of others. He does not allow himself to be guided by the assertions of others; he tries to discover principles and theories from their basic formulation. His academic work conforms to an order and is disciplined in the fulfillment of academic tasks.

Regarding the pragmatic learning style, the results show that a large sector of students want things to work. Functional in this case is associated with what is useful, practical and beneficial, in a range that covers various aspects of their daily lives (political, economic, social, etc.). And if the system in which he operates fails, he does not hesitate to express his discomfort clearly and bluntly, with arguments that go straight to the point, arguing head on. He also gets impatient when the interlocutor of the moment offers irrelevant explanations or when the opponent in a debate goes off the deep end with some incoherent soliloquy. He does not admit digressions, nor does he 'theorize' before issuing a response. "His beliefs, expectations and attitudes condition his verbal statements, his behavior and the way he acts" (Woolfolk, 1999).

5. Conclusion

Film appreciation is developed as a didactic tool that integrates naturally into the styles that characterize the student's learning, motivating his free and unrestricted response, awakening his curiosity or internal questioning (mental, spiritual), encouraging a search for logical and rational solutions. A film also generates ideas without formal limitation and pragmatic expressions that celebrate the subjective gaze. In any scenario where an action linked to learning takes place, the appreciation of film influences the student, provoking his enthusiasm to integrate new knowledge to his previous knowledge, encouraging him to live experiences that, while still having a playful spirit, provide him with a 'lesson' or awaken his interest in analyzing historical, socio-political and cultural contexts. A film stimulates him to elaborate concepts and search for meanings at the audiovisual level,

perceiving cinematographic fiction as an artistic expression and basing the aesthetic enjoyment that comes from appreciating it.

Film appreciation motivates students in their learning and influences their development as human beings. In addition to facilitating the assimilation of theoretical content, film awakens their interest and curiosity for subjects that, at first glance, seem difficult; it brings them closer to social, cultural and historical contexts that in the classroom can only be recreated through cinematographic fiction; it allows them to adopt a point of view, wield arguments, discover meanings through analysis and generate meaning, in addition to assuming a critical stance. The student understands film as an artistic expression that has a spectacular and fun side, as an experiential activity that allows him to give free rein to his perception and subjectivity. The film work is a promoter of a singular 'enjoyment' and can act as a mediating entity in the achievement of meaningful learning.

Today's students move on the margins of a range of styles that typify their way of learning. For some, intuition is the driving force that allows them to understand a certain thematic line or the content of a course with certain ease; for others, a concrete methodology of analysis prevails, supported by a sharp and consistent observation and a solid level of reflection; while one sector avoids ambiguity, expressing their ideas clearly and moving around the theory contained in books or solving problems according to a procedural order and meticulous work that allows them to achieve their objectives; another group is attracted by experimentation and is enthusiastic about technological novelty, their rebellious attitude and their eagerness to live in the present condition their verbal expressions, their behavior and their way of acting in public.

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