

"Film in Action" by Kieran Donaghy

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Book review

The role of film in the society has changed from a passive form of entertainment and merely source of enjoyment in the 20th century to one demanding viewer's active involvement. This has been achieved through blending film with other forms of art: music, storytelling and the visual arts in the 21st century. Moving images surround us all the time as they are easily accessible by different means and on various electronic devices. This has turned film and moving images not only into a way of socializing and doing business, but also into one of the major forms of communication, as well as a teaching and learning aid. Especially with the advent of YouTube and its, still growing in popularity, short videos, moving images have been recognized for their potential to motivate and entertain learners, inform and educate them, enhancing at the same time the language learning process. In the 21st century we do not only watch movies. We can encourage students to create their own films, allowing them to express themselves not only through written or spoken texts, but also through this new form of communication.

The latest publication from the Delta Teacher Development Series, "Film in Action" by Kieran Donaghy, provides methodological background and practical solutions for those language teachers who are willing to incorporate film into their teaching curriculum.

The book is divided into three parts. Part A describes the role of film in society and in education, and presents a brief overview of how film can be used in education, especially in language education, and what benefits it can bring.

The author rejects the good-old way of simply viewing films in English as a 'treat', but recommends effective integration of film into the classroom. The latter involves a few steps: careful selection (based on the age, interests and level of the students), setting clear pedagogical goals (be it raising awareness or using it as a springboard for discussion, or simply practicing a specific language point), thoughtful preparation and staging of the lesson, i.e. dividing it into three stages: before, during, and after the viewing.

Although both, feature-length and short films, can be effectively used in a language classroom, the rise of the easy to handle short film provided new opportunities for language teachers. Such short films capture and hold attention of the students, and can be fully exploited during one class session. At the same time, the author encourages teachers to promote film literacy among their students.

In his book, Kieran Donaghy introduces the reader to a variety of film genres, possibly less popular and less known, such as split-screen shorts, response films, mash-ups, and others which can be used in language teaching and learning.

At the end of Part A, the author recommends websites where teachers can go and find more about film and discover plenty of resources to be used in class.

Having discussed the benefits of using film in and beyond the language classroom, the author turns to some practical activities in Part B, which is divided into two chapters. Chapter One, "Watching actively", focuses on the possibility of developing all four language skills while exploiting moving images in class and developing an understanding of how sound and image convey meaning by getting the students involved in a wide array of written and oral communication tasks. Chapter two, "Actively producing", suggests that 21st century learners should be able to both understand and produce not only written or spoken messages, but also moving image texts. This, among other benefits, allows the students to unleash their creativity and develop soft skills which are in high demand in the up-to-date job market.

The last part of the book, Part C, recommends ways in which schools can develop film culture and film can be incorporated in the syllabus and the teaching/learning program in a broader sense. This would involve the implementation of the "three C's approach", i.e. cultural access (to a wide range of films), critical understanding (in other words, developing the learners' ability to analyse a film critically), and creative activity (which would allow the learners to create their own moving images). This would involve starting a film club, running an *English Through Film* course, getting the students involved in film projects, referred in the book as "film chronicles", or by getting them engaged in a highly communicative role-play task called "film circles" in which students take on different roles and are first taken through critical understanding stage when they appreciate the film of their choice as a piece of art, and then create a moving image in response to that film.

The book covers all aspects of teaching English through film and teaching film and creative expression through English. It provides over a hundred ready-to-use and, most of them, easy-to-apply lesson plans and activities: a real time-saver for the teacher. An extensive list of additional resources adds to the pool of ideas. Kieran Donaghy's book is written in a very approachable manner and, by following clear guidelines and procedures, makes it easy for even a less experienced teacher to implement the ideas in the classroom.

By Margarita Kosior