A Study on the Use of a TV Drama in Korean College EFL Classes

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In many EFL classroom settings, language is still given priority over culture rather than helping students apply linguistic rules or functions to specific communicative contexts. In order to overcome such limited language teaching practices, using media such as movies and TV dramas has been highly encouraged in ELT. Accordingly, this study purported to examine 105 students’ views on using a TV drama Friends in a pre- and post-survey format. In addition, an eight-week long classroom observation and two rounds of the interviews of three students and one instructor were conducted. The results showed that although a majority of students claimed to be learning more target culture through the drama, Chi-square tests showed that there were no statistical differences in their perceptions of the efficiency and understanding of culture content in class. Moreover, a teacher-centered method of using a TV drama appears to limit its potential as a cultural learning tool. Accordingly, instructors who wish to use a drama or other media should utilize pedagogically-informed framework with specific teaching practices in which culture is treated as important as language in more focused learner-centered activities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are deeply enmeshed and fundamentally inseparable. For EFL learners, learning both inherently complex systems of language and culture concurrently is extremely difficult and often frustrating. Many classrooms separate language from culture so that students can better understand the linguistic systems and grammatical forms. The exclusive focus on language may offer the benefit of improved linguistic proficiency, but it often comes at a price. Many students lack contextual knowledge and experience difficulty in applying what is learned to authentic, communicative settings.

In the real world, culture is the structural scaffolding learners use to build their language abilities. Defining culture, however, is not a simple task. It is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a wide range of explicit and implicit factors and characteristics. Broadly speaking, culture exists as the shared products, practices, perspectives, and communications amongst members of a particular group. Culture is not also a static entity; it is continually mediated and refined as a result of the interactions amongst cultural participants.

Attaining knowledge and understanding of how collective cultural products and behaviors function is important in learning language. Having direct access to these elements in the form of cultural immersion is ideal for language learners. However, realistically, this scenario is out of reach for many Korean EFL students. Therefore, TV dramas along with other media have been regarded as good resources to provide EFL learners with much-needed access to language and culture in a meaningful context without real cultural immersion. However, more research should be done on how to use media such as movies and dramas efficiently in EFL contexts despite the vast amount of cultural content they offer and the innate limitation of using it in classroom settings.

This study investigates college EFL students' learning experiences through a foreign TV drama in the two classes totaling 105 students based on the surveys at two points during a semester. The Korean EFL students taking a Movie English course were asked of their opinions of