

Exploring Challenges and Teaching Strategies in The Movie Entitled “Freedom Writers” By Richard LaGravenese

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Abstract

This research aimed at exploring the challenges faced by Ms. Gruwell, teaching strategies found in the Freedom Writers movie by Richard LaGravenese and the implication of this movie in relation to English Language Teaching. This research used content analysis method. The source of the data is the movie entitled “Freedom Writers” by Richard LaGravenese. Method of collecting the data is through watching the movie. Then, the data were analyzed through triangulation: movie, interview and book review. The finding of this research showed that there are some challenges faced by Ms. Gruwell in the movie entitled The Freedom Writers such as Racial and social discrimination, Mockery and insults actions, unfriendly behavior or negative stereotyping inside the class, History of gang, and Loyalty that had an effect inside the class. Next, it is also found that the teacher applied various strategies such as cultures differences strategies, the fish bowl, free writing, independent study, information-driven and thought-provoking as well as ethnic additives strategies to create a conducive classroom climate that is useful for the teaching learning process and also encouraged her students to get better achievements. In addition, the implication of teaching are using games, tape recorder or song, switching or changing students' seating position, journal writing, reading motivation, and class discussion or debate.

Keywords: challenges, teaching strategies, movie

INTRODUCTION

A literary work is one of the ways to convey or deliver human thought, whether it is based on true events or fiction. It serves as a medium of communication for conveying important messages to audiences. Everyone can be entertained and inspired by it. Literature has been ingrained in our culture. Furthermore, literary works like as novels, movies, dramas, and poetry are not just forms of enjoyment, but also a means of teaching life philosophy and so educating us.

According to Welleck (1979) literature is deemed excellent and valuable if it can use and express the aspects that make up life. Literature has the potential to influence people's lives. Epic, tragedy, comedy, book, short story, film, and creative nonfiction are the most common literary forms. The majority of literary works, like as films, serve social facts. Use words like politics, economy, culture, and society to describe a wide range of phenomena. The film is a literary work that is highly supporting in literature, and it is quite lovely to study because it incorporates various characteristics, such as intercultural dialogue and cultural components.

A movie, often known as a film, is a collection of still images that, when projected on a screen, appear to move. In this optical illusion, the audience senses continuous motion between separate elements when they are examined fast in succession. Films also contain cultural objects from other cultures. They reflect those cultures and have an impact on them as a result. A film can be used to teach children with learning difficulties or other issues, as well as teaching English as a second language and certain aspects of life and living.

Everyone needs to be educated. Without the ability to learn, no one can survive in this world. Everything and everyone in our immediate environment can be used as a learning resource. Something is considered a source of learning if we can learn from it. As a result, we have an infinite number of learning chances at our disposal. For example, both inside and

outside of class, we can attend a language class or enroll in a course to study a foreign language.

English is one of the most widely used languages in the world today for everyday communication. English is a language that is used to express human goals. As a result, English is a vital lesson for the younger generation at this time as an international language that must be acquired in order for them to have a good future in the globalization era and the next years.

However, teaching and learning English is a difficult task. Classroom management, the teaching-learning process, school regulations, students' negative attitude or behavior, and so on are all problems. When teaching English at a school, the teacher will face a variety of classroom management issues, which might stymie the learning process.

According to Harmer (1998) classroom management refers to the ability to regulate and inspire a class as one of the core teaching skills. It is considerably easier for teachers if their pupils believe that they are truly interested in them and that they are available to them. While Richards and Renandya (2002) noted that classroom management is the teacher's purposeful attempt to achieve learning and the effort to motivate students who are not interested in studying, give count rainfall, and make the teacher's position more visible.

Furthermore, classroom management is a purposeful effort to plan, organize, actualize, and implement the monitoring of program and activity in the classroom so that the teaching and learning process may run smoothly and the learners' full potential can be realized (Priansa, 2015). It means that conscious effort leads to the preparation of learning materials, the preparation of facilities, the setting of the learning space, the creation of teaching and learning scenarios and settings, and time management, so that the learning process is good and curricular goals are met.

Outside of the classroom, language learning can take the form of watching movies, particularly English films, and chatting with native speakers. It suggests that we learn from a wide range of sources. By analyzing everything that surrounds them, humans can learn and expand their knowledge. Learning has become an indispensable aspect of human existence. We can learn more about life by using a single source, such as movies.

The film transports us to another universe. It broadens our perspective, and the film's author gives moral worth. Studying movies can benefit our lives in a variety of ways. A film can be simultaneously hilarious, entertaining, gorgeous, and devastating. It takes us beyond our limited life experiences to show us how individuals in different eras live. Film studies assist us in better understanding our history, culture, and, on occasion, ourselves. As a result, it's clear that studying movies may help us learn more about the world, and that watching English films can help us enhance our listening and speaking skills. There is a film that educates us about education when it comes to using movies to teach and learn. The group's name is The Freedom Writers. The strategy and approach utilized in the teaching and learning process are depicted in this film. It was also used to teach and motivate students with poor attitudes to learn.

We commonly hear about learners that have a bad attitude in today's world. The government promoted "character building" at all levels of education in an attempt to remedy students' moral inadequacies and disruptive behavior. And, because students are the country's next generation, we, as teachers, should form their personalities through educational character development based on government programs. We can also obtain inspiration for new techniques and strategies to educate students, particularly those with a negative attitude, by watching *The Freedom Writers*. The film *The Freedom Writers*, directed by Richard LaGravenese (2007) and based on *The Freedom Writers Diary* by The Freedom Writers with Ms. Gruwell, is based on a true story. Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California is the setting for this film. As a new English teacher at this school, Ms. Gruwell had to deal with issues such as racism, gangs among pupils, juvenile delinquents, and disadvantaged children.

In this research, the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers* is chosen because this is educational movie and this movie is good for teacher especially, and the whole viewers

generally. This movie shows us the way to handle and manage the bad behavior of students. The teacher in this movie uses contextual learning strategy on motivating students to learn.

Furthermore, this film contains delicate problems as well as useful references for educational advancement. It discusses issues with educational institutions, racism, student gangs, juvenile delinquents, and underprivileged students. *Freedom Writers* offers certain tactics that have been shown to be effective and can be used in the classroom. In light of the educational ideas in the film *Freedom Writers*, the researcher believes that in order to be a great teacher, we must study from any source that may teach us how to teach effectively.

Therefore, in this research the researcher explores the challenges faced by Ms. Gruwell, teaching strategies, and the implication of this movie in relation to English Language Teaching. The researcher hopes that this research can give solution to the problems of education in our life. Moreover, the researcher hopes this research is good for everybody to apply this value of this movie in daily life, especially for teacher. From the explanation above, it is clear that it is necessary to conduct this research. Therefore, this research is entitled, "Exploring Challenges and Teaching Strategies In The Movie Entitled *Freedom Writers* By Richard LaGravenese".

METHOD OF OF RESEARCH

Design of this research is descriptive qualitative. Descriptive research describes some situations. Generally things are described by providing measures of an event or activity. Descriptive research designs are usually structured and specifically designed to measure the characteristics described in a research question (Hair, Babin, Money & Samouel, 2003). Descriptive research design helps the researcher to gather depth understanding of individual teaching experiences in a movie. The objectives of this research are to explore challenges faced by Ms. Gruwell in the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese, teaching strategies are found and the theoretical implication of the movie to English Language Teaching. The data and result of this research are described into short essay along with the evidence formed in either pictures or text scripts.

This research used movie or film as a research object. Movie is included research object because the researcher cannot interact directly with it. In this research, the research object is *Freedom Writers* movie. This movie or film became the research object of this research because it is not only seen from the storyline but this movie or film has sensitive issues and good references for the development of education. *Freedom Writers* provide some strategies which are proven to be effective and can be applied in teaching. Considering of the educational values in *Freedom Writers* movie, the researcher assumes that to be an effective teacher we have to learn from any sources which provide us how to teach effectively.

The primary data source is *Freedom Writers* movie. It is a 2007 American educational movie directed and written by Richard LaGravenese. This movie is starring by Hillary Swank as Ms. Gruwell, Patrick Dempsey as Scott Casey, Scott Glenn as Steve Gruwell, April Lee Hernandez as Eva Benitez, Jason Finn as Marcus, Imelda Staunton as Margareth Campbell, and Marioas Andre Bryant. *Freedom Writers* was released on March 2nd, 2007 and distributed by Paramount Pictures. Its duration is 118 minutes. The movie talks about problems in education institution, racism, gang members among students, juvenile delinquents, and underprivileged students. The secondary data source was taken from other literatures related to the source. The researcher also took other sources from internet to provide valid and up to date information in order to support and verify facts gained from the main sources.

This research used the direct source of data and the reseacher is the key instrument. Fraenkle et al (2012) stated that the natural setting is the direct source of data, and the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research. Qualitative researchers go directly to the particular setting of interest to observe and collectt heir data. Qualitative researcher may also use written documents to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under research such as autobiographic, diaries, letters, files, reports, books, films, the script of the film and soon. Since this research used film, it used document as the research instrument.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were presented based on the questions of the research. First, the researcher presents what challenges are faced by Ms. Gruwell in the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese. Second, what teaching strategies are found in the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese. Third, the researcher presents the theoretical implication of the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese to English Language Teaching.

Freedom Writers is based on the true story of Ms. Gruwell (Hilary Swank), a teacher who started her first job in Long Beach, California, exactly two years after the infamous L.A. riots. Ms. Gruwell started her new job as an English teacher in class 203 with high expectations and goals of reaching out to a varied group of juniors. Ms. Gruwell immediately realized that her students were capable of paying attention to things other than their daily duties. The students believed that a white woman who had never experienced the violence, bigotry, and hatred that they faced on a daily basis could teach them nothing.

One of Ms. Gruwell's students made horrible racist caricatures while she was lecturing one day. The Holocaust, according to her students, was caused by hatred and misunderstanding. Ms. Gruwell was taken aback when she discovered that none of her students had ever heard of the Holocaust. Ms. Gruwell worked part-time to supplement her income and purchase Anne Frank's diary, *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Zlatá's *Diary: A Sarajevo Childhood*. She also provided each student a journal in which they could write about their thoughts, concerns, and experiences.

Students were taking an interest in academics for the first time. To achieve this historic life shift, the students devised a strategy to obtain widespread media and government attention, in the hopes that their success stories would inspire others. In this film, the books Ms. Gruwell used to educate her students were all real books. She distributed the books to her students in order for them to study. Ms. Gruwell educated that there were many other individuals in the world that are going through the same or worse things than they were.

Ms. Gruwell also took her students to the Tolerance Museum. Students learned about tolerance in a context that is relevant to their lives, such as numerous ethnic groups, faiths, and races. Everyone was given a photo of a little child upon entering the museum, and when they left, they would know whether the child lived or died. Ms. Gruwell's students wanted to be able to bring Miep Gies to class one day. During World War II, she was a woman who shielded the Anne Frank family from Nazi Germany's pursuit. Miep Gies is still alive and resides in the city of Amsterdam, Netherlands.

To bring Miep Gies from the Netherlands to America, her students raised funds by setting up a bazaar at his school. Finally, due to the hard work of her students, Miep Gies was able to come to America. Before bringing Miep Gies, Ms. Gruwell had assigned her students to write letters to Miep Gie. The letters from her students had been sent by Erin and had been read by Miep Gies, before she came to America. The students were finally able to meet face-to-face, had a dialogue and shared with the woman. What Ms. Gruwell did was amazing. But unfortunately, school rules resulted in Ms. Gruwell's students being separated in the next class. Their desire to continue being taught by the teacher was opposed by the school, because Ms. Gruwell was considered a new teacher.

However, because of her persistent struggle, Ms. Gruwell was finally able to teach her students to the end. Ms. Gruwell put together a project. The students were asked to write down the contents of their diaries into the computer. It was turned into a book and published. "Ms. Gruwell's students" called themselves *Freedom Writers*. That by writing, they could change themselves, their families and their environment, and even changed the world. Together with Ms. Gruwell, they eventually formed a foundation called the *Freedom Writers Foundation*. The foundation is moving to provide better learning methods in schools based on tolerance. From the diaries of room 203 students, the book *The Freedom Writers' Diary* and the film *Freedom Writers* were born.

Perhaps this was the apex of their achievements. Students received rewards and flew to New York. Until, at long last, 150 of *The Freedom Writers* completed high school and enrolled in college. Ms. Gruwell's patience and dedication allowed the seemingly impossible

to become possible. The prejudices held by the students at the Long Beach school were a result of their lived experiences of discrimination and violence. As a result, there was a desire to eliminate one another, believing that life would be safer without the presence of a different race. The best-selling book *The Freedom Writers Diary*, which is a collection of journals written by Erin's students in her class, inspired the film *Freedom Writers*.

Challenges faced by Ms. Gruwell in the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers*

From this research it was found out some challenges faced by Ms. Gruwell in the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers*. They are racial and social discrimination, mockery and insults actions, unfriendly behavior or negative stereotyping inside the class, history of gang, and loyalty that had an effect inside the class.

Teaching strategies found in the movie entitled *The Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese

The researcher has explored the Challenges and Teaching Strategies in the movie entitled *Freedom Writers* by Richard LaGravenese. To find out Challenges and Teaching Strategies applied. The researcher has explored directly on the movie then conducted interviews and further explored using book review.

There are a few unconventional teaching strategies that have proven to be effective in handling "unteachable" class 203 students. The first was Cultural Differences, which aims to explain other cultures and their problems that are comparable to their own. Teachers are authorized to vary the curriculum and adapt it to the academic needs, as stated by Nunan (2003); in this situation, Ms. Gruwell chose to focus on the Cultural Differences approach. Ms. Gruwell also used this strategy to teach her students about another culture and the problems that have arisen in that culture, which she then connected to the situation in her class.

Movie, especially *The Freedom Writers movie* based on true story can be used as the media of teaching for the students, because the movie has high motivation to inspiring both teachers and students concerning educational values to teach the students how they should be, it is important to convey educational values through this movie. Moreover, the main and the major characters in *The Freedom Writers* movie show their own dedication and educational values. In *The Freedom Writers* movie, there are some challenges faced by the teacher, teaching strategies used by the teacher to overcome the problem and the implication of the movie in teaching English.

First, in the movie faced with racial prejudice through ridicule among students in class 203, Ms. Gruwell felt compelled to act. Ms. Gruwell faced some problems such as racial and social discrimination, mockery actions, negative stereotyping inside the class, history of gang, and loyalty that had an effect inside the class. The students also believed that Ms. Gruwell as a white woman who did not have any experiences dealing with the violence, bigotry, and hatred that they faced on daily life or basis could teach them nothing.

Second, in order to maintain control over her class, she had to employ specific measures. In other words, she was unable to use traditional teaching strategies or methods in her class; yet, while dealing with ridicule in multicultural class 203, Ms. Gruwell used a variety of teaching strategies or methods. Cultural differences were evident when Ms. Gruwell dealt with the ridicule of an African-American student (Jamal) who was depicted by Latino-American students as a man with enormous thick lips (Tito). She drew a parallel between this situation and the history of the Holocaust in the past, allowing their students to make comparisons. (28 minutes and 49 seconds.)

Ms. Gruwell: I saw a picture just like this once in the museum. Only it wasn't a black man, it was a Jewish man. And instead, a big lip, he had a very big nose, like a rat's nose. But he's wasn't a particular Jewish man, this was a drawing of all Jews. And these drawing were put in the newspaper. By the most famous gang in history.

Students: That's us, dawg.

Ms. Gruwell: You think you know all about gangs? You are amateurs. This gang would put you all to shame. And they started out poor and angry. And everybody looks down on them. Until the one man decided to make some pride, an identity and somebody to blame. You take over neighborhood? That's nothing compared to them. They took over countries. And you want to know how? They just wiped out everybody else.

Students: Yeah. Yeah.

Ms. Gruwell: Yeah, they wiped out everybody they didn't like and everybody they blame for their life being hard. And one way they did it was by doing this. See, they'd print picture like this in the newspaper. Jewish people with big, long nose. Black with big, fat lips. They'd also publish scientific evidence that prove Jews and Blacks were the lowest form of human species. Jews and Blacks were more like animals. It didn't really matter whether they live or died. In fact, life would be a whole lot better if they were all dead. That's how the Holocaust happens.

Ms. Gruwell explained the Holocaust to her students and encouraged them to recognize their folly in drawing a caricature ridiculing African-American men, particularly Jamal, in this scenario. Ms. Gruwell hoped that by connecting Tito's artwork to images of Jews and Blacks, she could deliver a message that negative stereotyping of specific races would have a significant impact and change history.

Ms. Gruwell also used the Fishbowl strategies as a teaching method for her students, in addition to Cultural Differences. Fishbowls are often utilized outside of the classroom to inspire creativity and differentiate students' perspectives. The Fishbowl technique, promotes students to engage in more in-depth conversation and study of previously read works. (60 minutes: 13 seconds).

Ms. Gruwell's manner of teaching them all about the Holocaust impacted Tito's heart, as seen by Tito's speech above. This project was done outside of the classroom to give students a visual depiction of the Holocaust and its impact on different ethnicities. Tito learnt that thousands of people were killed, tortured, and the victims' pains remain untreated as a result of a picture like the one he had created previously after a more in-depth explanation and dispute with a Holocaust survivor. Ms. Gruwell is successful in instilling the value of tolerance in the students in class 203. According to Major (1994), free writing is a method of teaching students that personal and emotional parts of the "self" are acceptable in all types of writing, including academic writing. The use of personal or emotional expression to make a point is often discouraged in high school "academic" writing. (4 minutes and 35 seconds).

According to Pennebaker and Beall (1986) this assignment helps students improve their writing skills while also helping them control their emotions, because writing about difficult, stressful, or emotional experiences has been demonstrated to improve both physical and psychological health. This implies that writing about whatever is on the students' minds will help them resolve their anxiety faster than mocking others.

Next, teaching Technique Dealing with Stereotype inside the Classroom. Ms. Gruwell was required to offer tolerance for diversity to her students as a result of stereotyping issues that occurred in class 203 in order to maintain a calm environment throughout the teaching-learning process. She believed that a pleasant classroom environment was essential for students to grasp the material and improve their skills during the teaching-learning process.

A conducive classroom climate, as the atmosphere created by the teacher inside the classroom, as well as the way the teacher interacts with the students and the physical environment, because the classroom climate influences the students' achievement, self-esteem, and participation in the lesson. Ms. Gruwell's failure to stop her students from developing a negative stereotype, on the other hand, would make constructing a positive classroom climate impossible. As a result, she needed to come up with a teaching technique to deal with the problem.

Creating a hospitable environment, begins with a Knowledge-Driven approach that informs students about many cultures and provides knowledge on various cultures' ways of life in order to broaden the reader's view of cultural variety. Barta and Grindler (1996) pointed out, simply reading about cultural differences may have no effect on the degree of inequality in our society.

A movie can also be utilized as an entertaining learning media for students. The idea is to prevent students from becoming bored with their learning methods. The movie brings the actual content to life and makes it more relevant. Students can describe how they see someone based on social class, gender, age, and ethnicity when discussing films. Films, on the other hand, can help students connect with events that are social dialects. Films are a great technique to get students to empathize with a character. When students view films, some national attitudes toward other cultures seem unfathomable.

CONCLUSIONS

First, Ms. Gruwell faced some challenges in her teaching. They are mockery and insults action, unfriendly behavior or negative stereotype, history of gang and gang's loyalty. Mockery and insult action was shown when someone drew or said something bad about others because of their diversity. Unfriendly behavior or Negative stereotype was shown in someone's attitudes or acts that look down to people from different ethnicity. Next, the existence of gang's life and its history also became another conclusion of how class situation were not conducive for teaching - learning activity, because some students became member of the gang. Then, gang's loyalty also became a problem inside the class, because what they and their gang did outside brought an impact inside the room.

Second, as it is concluded in the movie, the students' behavior had changed since Ms. Gruwell, the teacher applied various strategies such as cultures differences strategies, the fish bowl, free writing, independent study, information-driven and thought-provoking as well as ethnic additives strategies to create a conducive classroom climate that is useful for the teaching learning process and also encouraged her students to get better achievements.

Third, the theoretical implication for language teaching suggested include as follow: Do your research, emulate, but don't copy, always read portions of material in class, set fresh questions, constantly ask "why," there is no room for majority agreement in literature, add history to the subject, and so on. Involve all students equally, pay close attention to their limitations and strengths. Grade the student's thoughts rather than the information, stress references, assign suitable homework, and credit sources.

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