# The Effectiveness of Using Films in Algerian EFL Classes to Develop 21st Century (4Cs) Skills

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**Abstract:**

This paper investigates developing 21st Century Skills through the films' application; one of the widespread multimedia technologies that have become common in the teaching of EFL. The main findings are gained from a research study that is carried out in The First Step School of Foreign Languages in Jijel, Algeria involving a classroom observation of films' application. The results seek to motivate Algerian EFL teachers to incorporate intellectually stimulating techs, as films, that allow students to understand complex perspectives, use multiple media and technologies, and work creatively with others.
**Keywords:** 21st Century Skills, 4Cs, EFL classroom, Films application

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century requires the deliberate incorporation of learning strategies, digital competences and career abilities. Schools in general, and English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, in particular are witnessing a global fashion in teaching; namely the move to developing academic competencies and practice professional language functions (Mishra & Kereluik, 2011). Subsequently, it became an ultimate need to provide students with practices and processes focused on developing, among other competencies; creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and cross-cultural skills (4Cs).

In this regard, Influential frameworks backed by industry leaders, such as the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), are calling out for more assorted instruction arguing for the straightforward amalgamation of these skills in an innovative way incorporating media and literacy skills. On that account, "Cinemeducation" Blumer (2010), a widespread multimedia technology that has become common in the teaching of EFL (Bouzenoun, 2018) seems to be a solution. A study reviewing students' attitudes regarding English teaching revealed that students believed FL classes should be taught in a communicative manner (Incecay & Dollar, 2011), part of data-driven learning which is argued to be an effective means to improve EFL students' ability in this regard (Lin & Lee, 2015). Intellectually stimulating techs, as films allow students to understand complex perspectives, use multiple media and technologies, and work creatively with others.

This raises the question: how do teachers teach the 4C skills? In consensus

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with Schmaltz, Jansen, and Wenckowski (2017), teachers ought to first define skills and yet, as Davies and Barnett (2015, 3) declares, a definition of skills "remains more elusive than ever" especially that of critical thinking. McPeck (2017) also states that "clarifying what critical thinking is may not guarantee an answer to the question of whether it is teachable; let alone how to teach it" (p. 2). Hence, this paper focalizes the utility of films' application in EFL classes in improving 4Cs, an approach advocated by Jhonson and Hambt (2015) who suggest going beyond the plethora of the skills definitions and allowing ways to enhance them communicatively.

Despite its relevance, Algerian scholarly publications suggest that little has been done to infuse the EFL class with some of these ideas. On this basis, this study seeks to answer these questions:

1.     To what extent do films develop critical thinking and creativity?
2.     Does featuring films in EFL Classroom foster students' communication and collaborative skills?

In the light of what has been previously said, the hypotheses on which the present work is based run as follows: Films' application develops 4 Cs 21st Century skills in the EFL classroom.

## 2.  What are the 21st century skills?

The literature is full of frameworks that have been proposed/ set up in order to explain carefully what competencies are most needed in the 21st century to better equip individuals and reinforce their readiness to the world's economy and the workplace, namely; EnGauge, Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATCS), UNESCO 2015 Global Citizenship Framework, Partnership for 21st century skills (P21), National Educational Technology Standards (NETS). (Lemke, 2012, 2013, Lai & Viering, 2012).

According to the OECD Learning Framework 2030, education plays a vital role in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future. It will be essential to learn how to form purposeful goals, work with others with different perspectives, find opportunities and identify multiple solutions to big problems in the coming years. So education needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens (OECD, 2018).

According to Ledward and Hirata (2011), 21st century skills are a mixture of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise, and literacies necessary to succeed in work and life. In the same vein, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2007b) asserts that the impact of industrial and information age models is clear on present schooling and therefore the modern 21st century school must bring together "rigorous content and real world relevance", highlighting cognitive skills as well as those in affective and aesthetic domains.

## 2.1. Partnership for 21st century Learning Skills

One of the most recent adopted frameworks in educational settings is the Framework of Partnership for 21st century skills (P21). Partnership for 21st century skills (P21) is developed in the US based on the involvement of teachers, education experts, and business leaders with the goal of positioning 21st century competences at the center of K12 education. P21 is a national organization formed in 2001 with the sponsorship of the US government and several organizations from the private sector (e.g. Apple Computer Inc., Cisco Systems, Dell Computer Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, National Education Association, etc.) (P21 2009a, b, c, d, e, f).

**Table 1.** *Partnership for 21st Century Learning Skills*

| Framework | Main focus | Sponsors | Countries involved |
|---|---|---|---|
| P21- Partnership for 21st century skills | Identification and definition of 21st century skills/competences Implementation issues Considerations for assessment | US Department of Education AOL Time Warner Foundation Apple Computer, Inc. Cable in the Classroom Cisco Systems, Inc. Dell Computer Corporation Microsoft Corporation National Education Association SAP | USA |

*Note.* By 21st Century Skills for EFL Learners (H. Turgay, 2020)

According to P21, 21st century skills are a broad set of knowledge and character traits that are to be critically important to success in today's world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces. Lai & Viering (2012) believe that once the P21 skills are studied and incorporated into curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they can assist institutions and instructors set up learning environments able to develop the crucial competencies deemed necessary in the 21st century.

Based on the P21 framework (Appendix A), there are three categories:

**1-** ***Learning skills (the four Cs)*** Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity

They are the skills that teach students about the mental processes

required to adapt and improve upon a modern work environment.

**2-** *Literacy skills (IMT)* Information, Media, Technology

They focus on how learners can discern facts, publishing outlets, and the technology behind them there's a strong focus on determining trustworthy sources and factual info to separate it from misinformation that floods the internet.

**3-** *Life skills (FLIPS)* Flexibility, Leadership, Initiative, Productivity and Social

They take a look at intangible elements of a student's everyday life. These intangibles focus on both personal and professional qualities.

*Fig.1.* P21 the 21st Century Learning Framework



*Note.* P21 Partnership for 21stCentury Learning ((Battelle for Kids, 2019)

### 3. 21st century 4Cs incorporation in EFL classes

Foreign language classes in the past days placed a great emphasis on the mastery of "Three Rs" (reading, writing, and arithmetic). In the modern world, however, "Three Rs" are no more enough. "Informationalism" age as termed by Warschauer (2010) has given rise to other competencies that are deemed crucial for the individual and community's development. Consequently, nowadays students are supposed to compete for global society. Therefore, they must also be proficient communicators, creators, critical thinkers, and collaborators (4Cs). Educators must complement all of those subjects with the 4Cs to prepare young people for citizenship and the global workforce. Today's EFL classroom should not focus on grammar, memorization and learning from rote. Rather, it should be conceived of as a space to learn to use language and cultural knowledge as a means to connect to others around the globe (Eaton, 2010).

Davila (2016) states that the 4Cs incorporation into EFL classes transforms an ordinary grammar lesson into something magical where teachers gain an

active role as facilitator and students become inspired, self-guided learners-who still manage to work inside of the confines of the curriculum. She believes that using 21st century skills in the EFL classroom is not really about teaching at all as these skills that will contribute in the success of the students' future.

## 4. Films' application in developing 4Cs

Research in didactics of foreign language all agree on the importance of incorporating films in Foreign Language (FL) learning situation. Besides the fact of being a highly motivating attention catcher for FL acquisition, and enabling skills, such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing, to be put into practice, films provide authentic and cross-cultural contexts exposing students to everyday conversational and spoken language, where learning takes place effortlessly. Actually, films as a popular culture are suitable for 21st century EFL learners' attitude which is considered as the primary gateway to FL acquisition as it determines attention, enthusiasm, and joy of learning or boredom (Burt, 2000).

As a matter of fact, films play the role of the best fit to improve students' problem solving and critical thinking skills. Genuinely, Horn (1998) asserts that the use of moving images and visual language allows for students to "think in more complex ways", and that visual media encourages "problem-solving, negotiation (and) reasoning" (Reid et al, 2002, 3). Moreover, Decoster and Vansieleghem (2014) suggest that "cinema pedagogy" is a means to allow students freedom of interpretation, as "there is no restriction to the capacity of (the student's) thoughts during the cinematographic experience". McLaren and Kincheloe (2007, 195) discuss the benefit of film analysis as involving the "joint activity of making sense" as part of "reader-response" (p. 195).

## 5. Methods

The current study adopted a mixed-method approach in order to answer the following research question:

1- To what extent do films develop critical thinking and creativity?
2- Does featuring films in EFL Classroom foster students' communication and collaborative skills?

The researcher developed a weekly students' observation checklist that contains the four skills in the 4Cs category of the 21st Century learning skills (Appendix B). The skills where further detailed into statements of achieved objectives in regard to the main skills (For example: interference with peers' work, taking initiatives, problem solving…). The statements were rated from weak to outstanding along five weeks.

### 5.1. Administration

Students in the present study devoted forty-five minutes of their two-hour English class to conduct the movie activity over a period of five weeks. They watched four movies throughout that period. The integration of movies in

the classrooms was conducted following the steps suggested by Seferoğlu (2008) for using feature films in language classes:

*Previewing activities*: At the beginning of the activity, students engaged in some warm-up previewing activities such as guessing the topic of the movie from its title and some pictures, some questions to activate their background knowledge and schemata. Students were also provided with some key vocabulary and potentially difficult expressions to facilitate their understanding of the movie scenes (Seferoğlu, 2008).

*Viewing movie segments*: In the current study, the short sequence approach was adopted instead of viewing the whole movie. The students watched the movie clips in their classroom which had a computer with a USB drive and a data projector.

*Viewing worksheets*: Students were provided with worksheets that drew their attention to particular details in the movie and required them to answer very short questions.

### 5.2. Participants

The participants in the study were 18 intermediate level students studying English in the English language School at The First Step School in Jijel . The participants aged between 16 and 18 years old. Two classrooms were utilised for the purpose of the study. The present study employed a convenience sampling method to select participants, which entails easily accessible subjects who are willing to participate in the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

### 5.3. Design

*Movie summaries:* The students were asked to write one short review for any of the movies they watched throughout the module. They were provided with a set of guidelines that helped them in the process of writing the review. Their reviews included a short summary of the movie, their reactions to the theme, the characters and the audio and visual imagery in the film, and how they were emotionally touched by the movie. Students were provided with some specific questions such as, Did you learn anything from the film? What was it? Write a few sentences about your opinion of the movie and what you took away from watching it. What did you like best about the movie? What did you like least about the movie? Why?

*Group work & a role- play:* Students were responsible for preparing a movie role-play in a group of four to six members; they selected and memorised a scene of the movie to role-play in class. In the role-play, group members were required to work in collaboration and that each had an equal share. The instructors demonstrated one movie segment to the class in order to model the activity, and then the students worked in groups where they prepared and acted out the movie scenes throughout the six weeks.

***Films***

Selma I (2014) Martin Luther King: A chronicle of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s campaign to secure equal voting rights via an epic march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965.

The Martian (2015): An astronaut becomes stranded on Mars after his team assumes him dead, and must rely on his ingenuity to find a way to signal to Earth that he is alive.

Suffragette (2015): explores the passion and heartbreak of those who risked all they had for women's right to vote – their jobs, their homes, their children, and even their lives.

Before the flood (2016): A documentary follows actor and activist Leonardo DiCaprio as he travels to five continents to gain a deeper understanding of climate change and its impact on the world.

The hate U give (2018): 16-year-old moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when she witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend at the hands of a police officer.
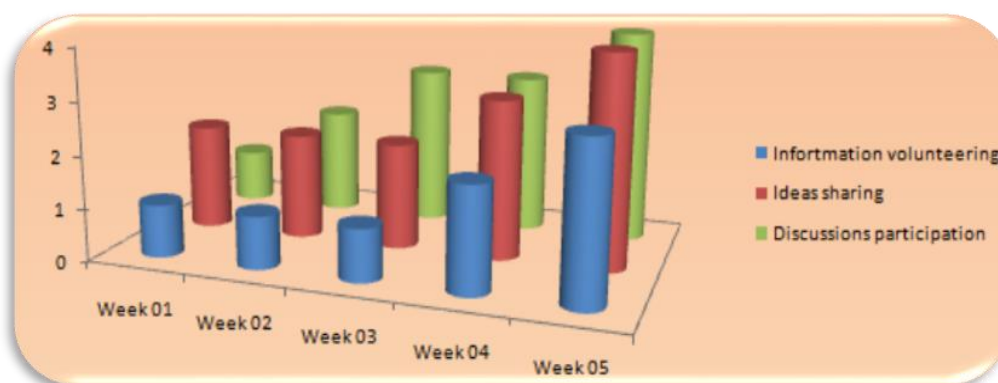
## 6. Results

The upcoming bar charts represent the results obtained from the films' application and classroom observation conducted over five weeks of study.

***Fig.2***. Collaboration skills findings
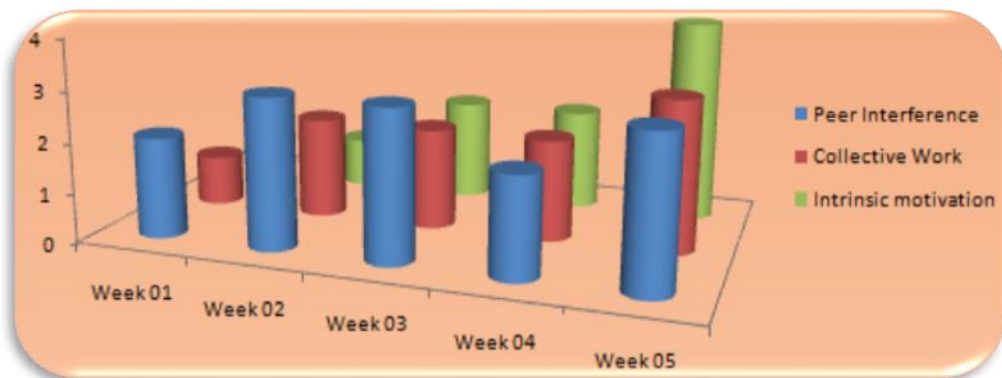


The results from the collaboration skill development in the bar chart above show a significant gradual rise in the collective work and intrinsic motivation bars can be seen along the five weeks. As for the peer interference among students, it remains steady along the second and third week, falls at the fourth week to rise again in the last week of observation.

***Fig.3***. Communication skills findings

According to the results obtained from the bar chart, as communication skills is concerned, an amazing increase in discussion participation between the second and fifth week is marked, joined by the ideas sharing bars that started rising since week 01. Information volunteering, however, noticed an overt escalation in the fourth week to reach its peak in the fifth one.

***Fig.4***. Critical thinking skills findings
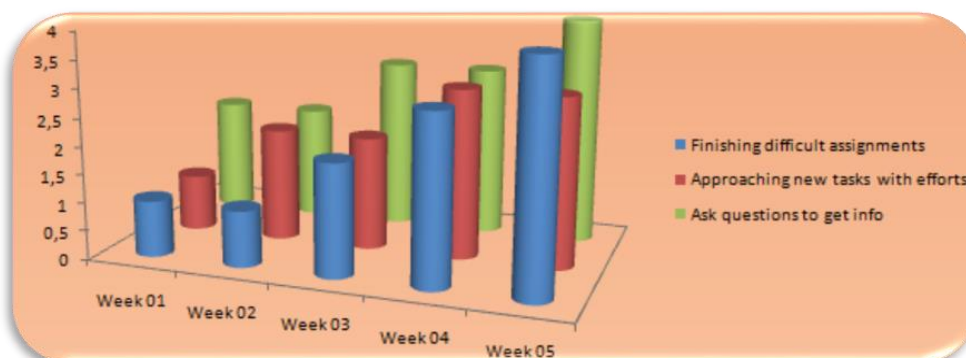


As figure 04 records, there is a noteworthy increase in asking questions to ellicit information in order to complete assignments. The same is noted in finishing difficult assignments that became a ritual starting from week 03 and on. Approaching new tasks with efforts' bar exhibits an inconsistent rise and fall along the weeks of observation, but similar satisfying results were recorded at the end of the study where the bar kept up.

***Fig.5***. Creativity skills findings
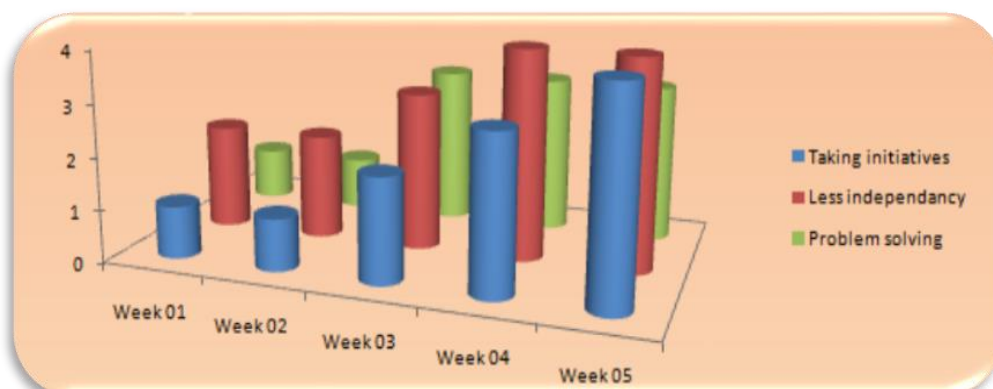
According to the bar chart, taking initiatives and problem solving were worked along with the study where they have risen notably starting from the third week. Surprisingly, independence in work was expressed as less starting from the first week and continued to increase all along up to the last week of study.

## 7. Discussion

The pedagogical aim of this study is to help learners and teachers improve the 4Cs through films' featuring in EFL classes. The findings from the study, that was carried out during five weeks in the School of The First Step of Foreign languages, matched prior works' results in the literature approving the essentiality of films' application in EFL classrooms. Films in video format should not be regarded as only a secondary in a listening class; on the contrary, they can function as the main content and become an integral part of the curriculum (Vandervelde, 2004).

Similar to Tomalin (1986) who states that films "help bring the outside world into the classroom" (p. 9) and enhance students' motivation and support them to communicate with each other, the study indicates a more accessible prompt to stimulate discussion amongst one's peers and a clearly a development in collaboration and communication skills respectively along the weeks.

Regarding creativity skill, the findings arguably illustrate the value of film as far as its potential for in-depth discussion following its screening along from the first until the fifth week. Tanriverdi (2013) reports on the filmic pedagogy that it enhances intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness. Moreover, films have been used for several educational purposes, a term well captured by Blumer (2010) as "cinemeducation" which allows in-depth analysis of matters discussed in films. Decoster and Vansieleghem (2014) concur, stating that students are capable of applying criticality in relation to film (e.g. observation and interpretation) to other areas.

## 8. Conclusion

This research aims at investigating developing 21st Century Skills development through films in the teaching of EFL. The results of the present study conclude that films are powerful instructional tools that can help in developing students' communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Featuring films turned out to foster the communication and collaboration skills of students in EFL classes where it raises intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes towards collective work, sharing opinions and taking part in debates and discussions. The study also indicates that using films in the foreign language classroom could enhance, to a great extent, the students' critical thinking and creativity towards the themes to be taught throughout the units.

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## Appendixes

### Weekly Students' Observation Checklist

Date of observation: …………………         Number of students: ………………
Class being observed: …………………..         Week number: …………………….

| Collaboration Skill | Weak | Emerging | Evident | Outstanding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interferes with peer's work | | | | |
| Attempts to get the work done collectively | | | | |
| Intrinsic motivation to participate in group work | | | | |

| Communication Skill | Weak | Emerging | Evident | Outstanding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Volunteer information to the class | | | | |
| Share ideas and opinions freely | | | | |
| Participate actively in discussions | | | | |

| Critical thinking Skill | Weak | Emerging | Evident | Outstanding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trying to finish assignments even difficult | | | | |
| Approaching new Tasks with sincere efforts | | | | |
| Ask questions to get more information | | | | |

| Creativity Skill | Weak | Emerging | Evident | Outstanding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Taking initiatives/ Less independent | | | | |
| Take independent initiatives | | | | |
| Problem solving | | | | |

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