



Film as a pedagogical mediator in literature education: Insights from an action research study

El cine como mediador pedagógico en la enseñanza de la literatura: aportes desde una experiencia de investigación-acción educativa

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Abstract

This article examines an innovative teaching practice implemented at the Colegio de Bachilleres in the state of Quintana Roo (Mexico) and explores the pedagogical affordances of film as a medium for upper-secondary literature instruction. Grounded in an action research design, the study investigates how integrating audiovisual semiotics can promote meaningful, critical, and culturally responsive learning in virtual classrooms characterized by limited technological infrastructure. The theoretical framework draws on meaningful learning theory (Ausubel et al., 2000), critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005; Giroux, 2015), and audiovisual literacy (Ferrés, 1994; Novillo-López, 2020). Findings indicate that film, when used through intentional pedagogical mediation, operates not merely as a motivational aid but as a pedagogical language that articulates emotion, cognition, and culture. Students demonstrated enhanced symbolic interpretation, reflective thinking, and collaborative engagement. The study concludes that teaching literature through film is both pedagogically viable and epistemologically fertile, offering a pathway to strengthen teacher

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education in audiovisual literacy and to advance the renewal of humanistic and arts-based learning within the Mexican public education system.

Keywords: Educational cinema; Literature teaching; Meaningful learning; Critical pedagogy; Audiovisual literacy.

Resumen

El presente artículo analiza una experiencia de innovación pedagógica desarrollada en el Colegio de Bachilleres del Estado de Quintana Roo, donde se exploró el uso del cine como recurso para la enseñanza de la literatura en el nivel medio superior. La investigación se realizó bajo el enfoque de investigación-acción educativa, con el propósito de comprender cómo la integración del lenguaje audiovisual puede favorecer el aprendizaje significativo y crítico en contextos virtuales y con recursos limitados. El estudio se sustenta en los marcos teóricos del aprendizaje significativo (Ausubel et al., 2000), la pedagogía crítica (Freire, 2005; Giroux, 2015) y la alfabetización audiovisual (Ferrés, 1994; Novillo-López, 2020). Los resultados muestran que el cine, más que un apoyo motivacional, puede constituirse en un lenguaje pedagógico que articula emoción, pensamiento y cultura, promoviendo la interpretación simbólica, el análisis reflexivo y la cooperación entre estudiantes. Se concluye que enseñar literatura con cine es pedagógicamente viable y formativamente fecundo y que su implementación puede fortalecer la formación docente en alfabetización audiovisual y contribuir a renovar la enseñanza humanista en la escuela pública mexicana.

Keywords: Cine educativo; Enseñanza de la literatura; Aprendizaje significativo; Pedagogía crítica; Alfabetización audiovisual.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of literature at the upper secondary level today faces the challenge of reconciling the written word with new cultural forms of meaning. In a context in which young people interact daily with screens, series, and audiovisual networks, the Mexican public school system continues to prioritize practices based almost exclusively on textual reading and verbal transmission. This gap between school languages and media languages limits students' ability to find a meaningful experience in literature.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this tension became more evident. The forced transition to virtual education revealed inequalities in access to technology and the difficulties teachers face in adapting their classes to digital environments. In this context, the teaching of literature—traditionally associated with the classroom, shared reading, and face-to-face interpretation—required new pedagogical strategies to articulate the aesthetic and technological dimensions of learning.

Faced with this situation, film emerged as a viable educational tool, closely aligned with students' cultural background and capable of rekindling interest in literary texts. Its

potential lies not only in its artistic value but also in its capacity for cognitive and emotional mediation. As Ferrés (1994) argues, educating in the 21st century involves “teaching how to see,” recognizing the formative power of images and their role in developing critical thinking. Similarly, Novillo-López (2020) notes that film can enhance reading comprehension and symbolic interpretation when the center serves as a mediator.

This article presents a pedagogical innovation experience developed at the Colegio de Bachilleres in the state of Quintana Roo (CBQ), Plantel Chetumal 1, during the period October 2020–January 2021, within the framework of the subject Literature II. The objective was to explore the methodological possibilities of film as a resource for teaching literature in upper secondary education, under conditions of technological and cultural inequality.

The research was developed under the educational action-research approach (Elliott, 1990; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), understood as a reflective process in which the teacher analyzes their practice, transforms it, and produces knowledge from their experience. Along these lines, three specific objectives were set:

1. Describe the methodological process of teaching literature through film, identifying its phases, resources, and strategies.
2. Analyze the theoretical foundations that support the use of cinema as an educational mediator.
3. Reflect on the methodological implications and pedagogical learning derived from the experience.

The question that guided the study was:

Is it possible to teach literature through cinema in the contemporary Mexican educational context?

Answering it required observing the practice as a field of knowledge and cinema as a pedagogical language capable of uniting art, emotion, and thought.

The article is structured in five sections: the first presents the context and purpose of the study; the second develops the theoretical and conceptual framework; the third describes the methodological design; the fourth discusses the results from the perspective of critical pedagogy and the literacy-audiovisual; and the fifth offers the conclusions and implications for teaching practice..

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The pedagogical proposal of teaching literature through film is based on three complementary conceptual axes:

1. Meaningful learning (Ausubel et al., 2000)
2. Critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005; Giroux, 2015)
3. Audiovisual literacy (Ferrés, 1994; Cotín, 2005; Novillo-López, 2020).

These three approaches converge in a pedagogical vision that conceives of learning as a cultural experience. Audiovisual literacy provides the tools to critically read the image; critical pedagogy, the ethical and political dimension of the educational act; and meaningful learning allows both to be linked with the cognitive construction of the student.

Meaningful learning and cognitive mediation of art

According to Ausubel et al. (2000), learning is meaningful when the new knowledge is substantially related to the student's prior knowledge. In the teaching of literature, this means that works should not be presented as isolated content but as cultural experiences that engage students' lives. In this sense, film acts as a mediator between the known and the new: young people recognize references to their own environment in cinema's images, characters, and conflicts, which facilitates the transition to literary understanding.

According to Eisner (1998), integrating art into teaching allows us to "think with our senses" and transform the aesthetic experience into reflective learning. From this perspective, cinema does not merely illustrate literature, but generates an active learning context in which emotion becomes the driving force of understanding.

Critical pedagogy and aesthetic education

The philosophical basis of this proposal is found in Freire's critical pedagogy (2005), which holds that education is a process of dialogue and awareness. Teaching literature combined with film involves fostering in students a reading of the world that blends artistic sensibility with social analysis. In the experience analyzed, film worked as a space to read the word and the world, as Freire proposed, by articulating narrative conflicts with the ethical and cultural dilemmas of everyday life.

In addition, Giroux (2015) argues that art and popular culture are territories of resistance in which young people can reconstruct their identities in the face of dominant discourses. From this perspective, teaching literature through film is also an emancipatory practice: it invites students to critically interpret cultural messages and to actively participate in their own learning process.

Audiovisual literacy and critical reading of images

The concept of audiovisual literacy — developed by Ferrés (1994) and expanded by Cotín (2005) — argues that the education system should train not only readers of texts, but also readers of images. In an environment saturated with visual stimuli, mastery of cinematic language becomes as important as mastery of written language.

Ferrés argues that the school should be an institution that helps students interpret audiovisual media, enabling them to understand how media reality is constructed. In turn, Cotín (2005) emphasizes that film can be a tool for cultural literacy, as it allows the analysis of symbols, metaphors, and discourses present in contemporary society.

Novillo-López (2020) points out that the pedagogical use of cinema is not limited to the projection of films, but should be integrated into a teaching strategy in which the

teacher guides interpretation, promotes debate, and links the audiovisual experience with the curriculum content. The author emphasizes that “the teacher must help students understand the intricacies of films, taking into account prior training and an appropriate methodology that must respond to a dual objective: to teach and to learn” (p. 22).

Conceptual synthesis

Taken together, these approaches form a comprehensive vision of teaching literature, where film is conceived as a means of meaningful, critical, and culturally relevant learning. From an Ausubelian perspective, the audiovisual image serves as a cognitive anchor; from Freirean pedagogy, as a vehicle for dialogue and emancipation; and from audiovisual literacy, as a tool to develop critical thinking.

At the intersection of these frameworks lies the pedagogical experience of the Quintana Roo Colegio de Bachilleres: an attempt to transform art into knowledge and the classroom into a space where watching, reading, and understanding are articulated as dimensions of the same educational practice.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN OF THE PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS

Focus and purpose

Given the purpose of the study, a qualitative approach was adopted, grounded in action research and situated practice, such as teaching literature with film in a Mexican public context marked by material and technological limitations (pandemic, connectivity, unequal and heterogeneous cultural capital). The information was obtained through participant observation of virtual classes, semi-structured interviews with students, the teacher’s log, and a focus group. To ensure ethical conduct, participants were asked for authorization to use their information. The data were analyzed using an interpretive approach, articulating emerging categories with the conceptual frameworks of reference.

In classical terms, action research is conceived as a cyclical process that plans-acts-observes-reflects, and that can be repeated in a spiral; its modern genealogy refers to Lewin (1946) and his proposal to articulate theoretical progress with social change through phases that include analysis, information retrieval, conceptualization, planning, execution, and evaluation. The unit of observation was specified in the four phases presented below (planning, implementation, formative evaluation, and interpretation), already foreseen in the methodological literature employed in the case.

This framework does not intend to impose a rigid “protocol”, but to improve practice from within through participatory work that enriches, recognizes, and transforms the teaching actions themselves. In fact, the corpus with which we worked emphasizes that action research can optimize current educational practices and is developed in a participatory manner, oriented towards improving practices.

From this perspective, the aim was to transform teaching practice into a reflective and collaborative experience, consistent with critical pedagogy. Two ideas from Freire underpin the dialogical sense of pedagogical inquiry. First, dialogue is a condition of possibility for education; that is, without it, there is no communication and, much less, a true education, since dialogue intervenes between the educator and the student and enables cognitive achievement. Second, the unity of reflection-action is a constitutive feature of educational work. In that sense, the cyclical relationship between educators and students becomes a reflection on action and critical positioning. Consequently, the Literature II class was conceived not only as an application space but also as a research and co-construction scenario, where film mediation enables questions, interpretations, and shared decisions among teachers and students.

In summary, the approach and purpose align the guiding question with a traceable methodological path: planning with didactic criteria, acting with audiovisual mediation, observing with qualitative instruments, and reflecting with analytical categories that restore pedagogical depth to the practice.

Case context

The pedagogical experience analyzed was developed at the Quintana Roo State Colegio de Bachilleres (CBQ), Chetumal 1 Campus, within the framework of the Literature II course, corresponding to the fourth semester of upper secondary education. The process took place between October 2020 and January 2021, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This necessitated the implementation of a virtual modality through the combined use of Google Meet, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp groups as channels for academic and personal communication.

The group consisted of 30 students, whose material and cultural conditions were diverse: some had a computer and stable internet access, while others relied on mobile phones and limited data connections. This heterogeneity constituted one of the main methodological challenges, as unequal access to digital resources compounded the differences in cultural capital and the existing reading gap prior to the lockdown. As one student expressed, “at the beginning it was difficult because some teachers didn’t know how to use the application” (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 220). The health crisis transformed the classroom into a space for pedagogical experimentation where film was proposed as a mediator between the literary text and the students’ everyday experience. In the absence of the physical classroom, the audiovisual medium became a common environment for learning and dialogue. The students recognized this as follows:

It’s a form of learning because it’s not only an auditory medium but also a visual one. They complement each other and can create an atmosphere that intrigues us. Many means are used to create sensations and to leave the viewer impressed. I consider it an excellent form of learning (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 226).

These conditions shape what Freire (2005) calls a “context of situated education,” in which teaching involves starting from the concrete reality of the subjects to foster meaningful learning. In this case, virtuality, far from being an obstacle, was embraced as an

opportunity to rethink didactic mediation and to link audiovisual language — common in the lives of young people — with literary reflection.

From Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective (1978), this hybrid environment allowed the creation of a zone of proximal development mediated by image and emotion, where the teacher acted as a guide and the students collaboratively constructed meaning. The context, therefore, is not limited to a physical or temporal framework: it is defined by the dialogic relationship between subjects, technology, and culture, which made it possible to redefine the teaching of literature in times of crisis.

Stages of action research

Diagnosis

The first phase of the process was the participatory diagnosis, intended to identify the group's actual conditions before implementing the teaching proposal. According to the principles of educational action research, this stage is not limited to data collection but seeks to understand the context from the perspective of its protagonists to guide pedagogical decisions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

In the case of CBQ, the teacher began planning by reviewing the students' study habits and media practices. According to the thesis records of López-Martínez (2022), "only 21% of students responded that they use audiovisual material" (p. 153). This data showed a limited use of audiovisual language in learning processes, even though the students were immersed in a visual and digital culture in their daily lives.

This situation reflects what Ferrés (1994) called the "communicative paradox of the school": while the social environment of young people is organized around images and screens, the educational system remains anchored in a predominantly textual and verbal logic. In this sense, the author warns that "the school cannot continue acting as if the media did not exist, because educating today also implies teaching how to see" (p. 16).

Similarly, Novillo-López (2020) argues that audiovisual literacy should not be understood as an aesthetic complement but as an essential cultural competence in the comprehensive education of students, since "with film it is possible to develop communication skills such as debate, commentary, analysis, or interpretation of works" (p. 22).

The participating teacher identified this discrepancy during her practice:

Sometimes I get tired of seeing education today. We continue to teach classes as we did twenty years ago, but children live surrounded by images, videos, and social media. It's as if we speak different languages (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 206).

The diagnosis, therefore, not only revealed a technological gap but, above all, a cultural gap between the students' communication codes and traditional teaching methods. In pedagogical terms, the initial finding revealed that the school was out of step with young people's audiovisual culture and that any attempt to teach literature should start with a reconciliation between these languages.

From this perspective, the diagnosis is not limited to identifying shortcomings: it constitutes the starting point for a methodological transformation. Understanding the gap between school and audiovisual cultures made it possible to recognize the need for a pedagogical bridge, in which film could serve as a mediator between students' sensibilities and the literary content of the curriculum.

Planning

Based on the initial assessment, the teacher designed a reflective teaching sequence to link literary reading with audiovisual experiences. This stage corresponds to what Buendía-Eisman et al. (1998) call "reflective design," understood as an open planning process in which the teacher anticipates the educational action, considering its context, its aims, and the possible formative effects of the experience. Similarly, Eisner (1998) argues that planning in arts education should be conceived as "a way of thinking that seeks to create conditions for significant experience, rather than as a rigid scheme of tasks" (p. 112).

Based on these principles, the teacher and the external agent (EA) developed a proposal that integrated elements of action research and the didactics of literature. The activity was structured in three stages: before, during, and after the film screening. The design was based on Ausubel's assumption of meaningful learning, in which the student can integrate new knowledge with what they already know (Ausubel et al., 2000). This implied taking advantage of students' prior cultural and audiovisual knowledge as a starting point for understanding literary texts.

In operational terms, the central strategy consisted of using film as a mediator of literary learning, articulating three didactic components:

1. Contextualization and activation of prior knowledge, through brief presentations about the author, the era, and the main themes of the literary work.
2. Partial or total screening of the adapted film, with pauses for the analysis of characters, symbols, and narrative elements.
3. Reflective production, through comparative reviews, debates, and podcasts in which students expressed their personal interpretations.

During this planning stage, it was proposed to begin the experience with the guided reading of the text *Introduction to the language of cinema* (Fernández-Rodríguez, 1976), which introduced students to basic concepts such as the shot, the montage, the narrative rhythm, and the framing. This theoretical introduction allowed us to recognize cinema as a language, and not just as entertainment. In the words of one student:

"After reading and analyzing it, it was easy to identify, with respect to the film, as it was similar to the book it was easy to identify; we were able to extract the aspects of the book and the film" (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 267).

This planned action aimed to balance the technical component with the aesthetic and critical one (literary interpretation). At this point, we return to the reflection of Novillo-López (2020), who states that "a film can allow students to see and try different elements at a level that a written document [...] cannot achieve. The film may be, therefore, a vital teaching tool for the classroom" (p. 20).

Planning thus became a collaborative design space between the teacher and the external agent, where theory was transformed into a viable action plan within the conditions of virtual education. The strategy was not intended to replace literary reading but rather to activate new routes of understanding, recognizing that students could construct meanings from their familiarity with visual languages.

In summary, planning constituted the bridge between the critical diagnosis of the context and transformative educational action, configuring a classroom model that integrates reading, emotion and critical thinking in the same educational process.

Action

The action phase constituted the core of the pedagogical process. In this phase, the planned teaching sequence was implemented, linking literary reading with film screenings and analysis. Classes were conducted virtually via Google Meet, with support from Google Classroom and WhatsApp, enabling continued communication, continuous training and building a collaborative environment despite technological limitations.

Following the plan, each session was organized into three methodological parts—before, during, and after the screening—according to Cotín's (2005) proposal on film mediation. In the first moment, the teacher contextualized the work and sparked initial dialogue; in the second, she made strategic pauses during the film to guide critical observation; and in the third, she promoted student discussion and written or audiovisual productions.

According to López-Martínez (2022), several film adaptations of works from the Literature II program were developed: Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Julie*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Francesco Rosi, and *Animal Farm* by John Halas and Joy Batchelor. These films were chosen for their online accessibility and for their ability to address universal themes such as love, destiny, social violence, and freedom.

During the first few classes, film sparked immediate enthusiasm. The students, accustomed to the fragmented reading of manuals or guides, found in the image a point of connection with literature. In the words of two students:

Learning something new, I think I am very auditory, is something that excites me because maybe it can be used in other subjects, listening more and learning (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 249).

Well, I'm going to gain a better understanding of the book. I feel like I'll have a more open mind (...) to have an idea and expand on it. Now that I'm reading a book I like, I feel happy, joyful (...) this new project is very interesting, I'm eager to do and learn new things (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 249).

Another student described the experience as an aesthetic discovery:

The way of seeing and understanding artistic expression that can be used in literature, which is one of the fine arts, just like cinema (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 249).

These testimonies express a cognitive and affective transformation: learning ceased to be the reproduction of content and became a reflective experience. The teacher obser-

ved that as the sessions progressed, the students participated more actively in the debates and related the films' themes to their own reality.

This attitude coincides with what Freire (2005) conceives as an emancipatory learning process in which the student “recognizes their capacity to think critically about reality in order to transform it” (p. 84). Similarly, Giroux (2015) emphasizes that art and popular culture can serve as practices of resistance by allowing young people to interpret and question dominant discourses.

From this perspective, the pedagogical action was not limited to showing films, but rather generated conditions for critical thinking and the collective construction of meaning. Guided by the teacher's mediation, the students went from passive recipients of information to producers of meaning, capable of articulating their emotional experiences with the conceptual analysis of the texts.

The virtual classroom thus became a space of symbolic emancipation, where audiovisual art and literature came together to reactivate the humanistic dimension of learning. As the teacher herself noted at the end of the experience:

I see the connection because scripts have to be written. Carefully crafted dialogue. Some series have very literary dialogue. Film is a very holistic endeavor because it generates emotions (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 225).

This phase showed that when art is intentionally integrated into the pedagogical curriculum, teaching becomes a reflective practice: students learn to look and read critically, while the classroom — even in its virtual form — becomes a space of intellectual freedom and sensitivity training.

Observation

The observation phase allowed recording the pedagogical effects and the cognitive transformation processes generated during the implementation of the teaching sequence. From the perspective of action research, observing involves not only describing but also interpreting the interactions and learning processes that emerge in practice (Elliott, 1990).

During this stage, the teacher and the external agent systematically monitored the feedback sessions on Google Meet, where students shared their progress, reflections, and difficulties. These virtual meetings served as spaces for formative assessment, where the transition from an intuitive understanding to a more structured reading of cinematic language was evident.

The class records documented expressions such as the following:

[...] I learned to recognize some details of cinema and I will see cinema from other perspectives (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 267).

Well, the analysis of a literary work itself involves: the time period, the type of work, the genre of literature, the era, and the characters. This is a lesson learned from what an analysis entails. I learned in literature by knowing how to conduct an analysis (...) as you read, you retain that knowledge (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 257).

These testimonies show the transition from passive spectator to critical audiovisual reader capable of identifying narrative, temporal, and symbolic categories in the construction of filmic meaning. As Cortés-Galán (2018) explains, film analysis can become a complex cognitive strategy, since it requires “the identification of narrative structures, the interpretation of visual signs, and the articulation of meanings between image and word” (p. 74).

From this theoretical framework, the observation and discussion exercises in class allowed for the consolidation of what Vital-Rumebe et al. (2021) call “critical audiovisual literacy”, a competence that combines aesthetic reading, discourse analysis, and cultural awareness. Observation of the sessions showed how the students developed analytical skills transferable to other subjects, since film reading strengthened their attention, their ability to synthesize, and their artistic sensitivity.

The teacher noted in her logbook that: “We talked about the montage, about how the color palette changes a lot [...] Similarly, within the shots, we talked about the use of photography to convey what the character is feeling” (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 356). This observation indicates that the process not only consolidated literary learning, but also critical thinking and oral expression skills.

As the project progressed, it became clear that the students were no longer just watching films; they were reading them. They recognized in cinema a language as structured and symbolic as literature, capable of being analyzed, interpreted, and taught. This transition marked the high point of the observation phase, where pedagogical practice became an experience of both aesthetic and cognitive understanding.

Reflection

The final phase of the process corresponded to pedagogical reflection, a moment in which the teacher, the agent external, and the students jointly analyzed the learning achieved and the implications of the work carried out. This feedback was carried out in January 2021 through a virtual focus group, where participants shared personal and collective reflections on the use of cinema as an educational resource.

The final reflection revealed a shift in the appreciation of art and in the way the relationship between emotion and knowledge was understood. The students expressed that the experience allowed them to recognize the formative value of art and to establish connections between literature, music, and film.

The film is captivating. It's a very exciting movie; there are several aspects that make you reflect, and it's great. The setting is the not-so-distant future, the atmosphere of the maze. It becomes somewhat suspenseful because of the monsters and the characteristics of each character. The background music draws you into the suspense and action. The atmosphere, the maze, had a frightening feel. The dialogue: there were some lines spoken by the character Newt about the bond that exists. The plot structure: beginning, development, climax, and conclusion. I liked the characters (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 267)

The rhetorical images they mention in our heads were those used in film scenes. One derives from the other. They are practical foundations that could be used. It is an innova-

tion, something more practical for explanation. I would like to use it as a new learning tool (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 274).

One of them summarized the experience by saying:

I learned a little bit about the technical aspects. I learned how the director has to handle the film in order to express what the book's author wanted. The director has to know how to represent the book. I valued the art, film, literature, and music more (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 267).

From the teacher's perspective, the closing of the experience also involved a recognition of shared responsibility in the learning process:

The students did their part to learn. They put the values into practice. They showed their creativity; it's not about copying something, but about contributing their own ideas so that others can learn. Students (...) some are more visual, others more auditory. We have to adapt to what is available (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 266).

These voices reflect the dialogical sense of learning that Freire (2005) considered essential in all transformative educational practice. The author states that "no one educates anyone else, no one educates themselves; people educate each other, mediated by the world." (p. 79). In this case, cinema acted as a symbolic mediator of that shared world: a way to dialogue, think, and feel together, even in the distance imposed by virtual education.

The joint reflection also made it possible to identify that the learning was not merely cognitive, but meaningful in the Ausubelian sense. As Ausubel et al. (2000) argue, knowledge becomes meaningful when new material acquires aspects that are non-arbitrary and substantial to what the student already knows. In this process, the students' prior experiences with film became an anchor for understanding abstract literary concepts, while the emotions aroused by the films facilitated the consolidation of learning.

In this way, cinema functioned as a symbolic mediator that articulated emotion, knowledge, and collaborative work. Through the experience, three dimensions of learning were strengthened:

1. The affective dimension, by arousing interest and empathy towards the characters and works.
2. The cognitive dimension, by fostering the understanding of narrative structures and literary resources.
3. The social dimension, by promoting cooperation and dialogue among peers.

In the teacher's words,

Meaningful learning is the real learning [...] One guides it through the tools and strategies one designs and the activities we devise. But really, it is the student who constructs that meaningful learning (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 206).

This phase showed that pedagogical practice can be transformed into knowledge when it unites reason and sensitivity. Teaching literature through film has proven to be a fruitful experience. By integrating art and reflection, it transforms learning into a form of shared creation.

Institutional limitations and lessons learned

Like any situated experience, the pedagogical process faced structural and operational factors that limited the scope of the proposal. One of the most significant was the lack of specific teacher training in film analysis and audiovisual literacy. This created a methodological gap during the initial implementation phases. Faced with this situation, the professor had to develop her own working framework, combining pedagogical intuition, a review of theoretical materials, and external support to integrate film into the curriculum without losing sight of the literary objectives. This process involved dedicating significant time to exploring how to articulate cinematic languages with the content of Literature II, which highlighted the institutional need to strengthen teacher training in media skills and audiovisual mediation strategies.

Another major challenge was the time and technological limitations. The course was developed in the midst of a health crisis, in a virtual environment with unstable connections, differences in devices, and unequal access to digital resources, which affected both class continuity and group coordination. Some students expressed:

The videoconference connection was difficult due to the timing, but we all managed to connect in order to write. Some didn't have a connection, others didn't have the equipment, but in the end we did it (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 374).

We lacked communication to do a better job. I was a little dissatisfied. I would have liked it to have turned out much better, but it's over now and it's a lesson I learned. Communicating well is key to achieving better results. Values are also important. I believe that in everything we do, yes, because without feeling or without analyzing certain things, we won't see that there are values (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 375).

Despite these difficulties, the experience yielded important institutional lessons. On the one hand, it demonstrated that pedagogical innovation does not depend on abundant resources, but rather on the teachers' willingness to experiment and reflect on their practice. On the other hand, it showed that film, when used for educational purposes, can become an accessible and powerful resource for strengthening the learning community and fostering student creativity, even in contexts of hardship.

At the institutional level, the experience highlighted the need for teacher-training programs in media literacy, as well as for spaces for teachers to exchange interdisciplinary teaching strategies. The systematization of this process also made it possible to highlight that virtuality does not eliminate the possibility of aesthetic and collaborative experiences, but rather requires redefining pedagogical mediation.

Finally, the methodological reflection that emerged from the case led to the recognition that film, more than a replicable procedure, constitutes a situated pedagogical perspective, adaptable to the conditions and cultures of each school. In this sense, the experience does not offer a closed model, but rather a way of understanding the link between art and education from practice. This methodological approach does not aim to offer a replicable model, but rather a path to understanding. Working with the CBQ case allowed us to view cinema as an educational phenomenon in all its complexity: a medium, a language, and a pedagogical practice all at once. The methodology was, ultimately, a way of seeing: an attentive, situated gaze, open to interpretation.

This statement summarizes the meaning of the entire experience: pedagogy not as a universal technique but as a reflective, situated act capable of building knowledge from the concrete realities of those who teach and learn.

DISCUSSION

The experience at CBQ demonstrates that teaching literature through film is both possible and pedagogically relevant, provided it is grounded in reflective lesson planning and conscious teacher mediation. Film, more than just an auxiliary resource, revealed itself as a pedagogical language that articulates emotion, thought, and culture. Its incorporation restored an aesthetic and critical dimension to the teaching of literature, a dimension frequently absent from traditional school practices.

However, several studies warn that the use of film in the classroom is often limited to its motivational or illustrative function. Authors such as Novillo-López (2020) and Vital-Rumebe et al. (2021) note that films are often used to capture attention or simplify content, thereby limiting cinema's role to an instrumental position within the teaching process. However, Novillo-López himself (2020) clarifies that "film is more than a didactic resource to motivate students; it is a transmitter of values and content that allows the development of critical and reflective thinking" (p. 24). Along the same lines, Meléndez-Chávez and Huerta-González (2023) note that cinema fosters observation, analysis, and reflection within social and academic environments. This study subscribes precisely to this second perspective: unlike the positions that conceive of it as a simple visual stimulus, here cinema is understood as a language of analysis and production of meaning, capable of articulating thought, emotion, and culture.

As Ferrés (1994) warns, school cannot continue to operate without the presence of the media, since this involves watching and interpreting audiovisual messages. Along the same lines, Novillo-López (2020) points out that film can "facilitate critical thinking and understanding, provided there is teacher mediation that guides the reading of the images and their relationship to the texts" (p. 20). The practice at CBQ confirms both premises: the students went from superficial reading to symbolic interpretation, developing analytical skills comparable to those required for literary reading. The voices of the participants—"I learned to recognize details in film and I will see movies from other perspectives" (López-Martínez, 2022, p. 267)—demonstrate the appropriation of audiovisual language as a form of knowledge.

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, this process represents an exercise in cognitive emancipation. Freire (2005) reminds us that "no one educates anyone, no one educates themselves. They educate each other, mediated by the world" (p. 79). In this case, cinema was precisely this mediator of the world, a symbolic space where students could reflect on their own reality through art. In Giroux's terms (2015), the classroom became a cultural stage of resistance, where popular culture and the school converged to talk and produce new meanings.

The pandemic context highlighted that educational innovation depends not on large infrastructures, but on teachers' creativity and reflection. Despite connectivity limitations and a lack of specific training in audiovisual literacy, experience has shown that Mexican public schools retain enormous potential for pedagogical innovation. As Bourdieu (1997) points out, educational practice is conditioned by available cultural capital, but it can also transform it; in this sense, film served as a bridge between young people's everyday cultural capital and school knowledge, fostering a more inclusive symbolic appropriation.

From a methodological perspective, experience validates the relevance of action research in educational practice as a professional development strategy. The four phases of the process—diagnosis, planning, action, and reflection—demonstrate that practice can become research when it is observed, documented, and interpreted critically. In the words of Eisner (1998), art education requires the existence of scenarios of meaningful experience rather than the generation of a scheme of duties, and the case of CBQ embodies precisely that idea: the teacher designed a flexible methodology that linked art and knowledge.

Overall, the results of this experience confirm that cinema can play a decisive formative role in the teaching of literature, provided it is framed within a situated, critical, and reflective pedagogy. Its strength lies in uniting emotion and thought, aesthetics and analysis, imagination and reason. In educational contexts characterized by inequality, cinema not only enriches teaching practices but also restores the humanistic sense of education, reminding us that teaching also involves seeing, feeling, and thinking about the world through words and images.

CONCLUSIONS

The experience developed at CBQ demonstrates that it is possible to teach literature through film, provided that this practice is based on reflective instructional design and conscious pedagogical mediation. Film was not used as a mere motivational resource, but as an educational language capable of activating cognitive, aesthetic, and critical processes in the virtual classroom.

The study showed that meaningful learning, as proposed by Ausubel et al. (2000), is strengthened when new content is linked to students' prior experiences. In this case, familiarity with film served as a bridge to grasp abstract literary concepts, transforming reading into a more intimate and sensory experience. At the same time, drawing on Freire's critical pedagogy (2005), the experience enabled dialogic knowledge construction: teachers and students learned together, mediated by art and visual culture.

Methodologically, the use of educational action research proved key. The phases of diagnosis, planning, action, observation, and reflection allowed for the transformation of practice into systematized knowledge. This process confirmed that teacher innovation arises not from improvisation, but from systematic reflection on practice, as Elliott (1990) and Eisner (1998) maintain. The CBQ case demonstrates that schools can be laboratories for pedagogical creation even in contexts of precariousness.

Among the main institutional lessons learned, three stand out:

1. The need for teacher training in audiovisual literacy to take advantage of the pedagogical potential of images.
2. The importance of fostering spaces for exchange and support among teachers that allow for the sharing of innovative experiences.
3. The recognition that pedagogical creativity is a legitimate form of investigation and resistance to structural limitations.

The results suggest the need to incorporate media literacy into teacher training programs and to expand research on its effects on reading comprehension and written production. This line of work can strengthen the links between art, technology, and humanistic education in public schools.

The documented methodological proposal does not constitute a replicable model but rather a situated pedagogical approach, adaptable to the conditions of each school. Teaching literature through film involves articulating emotion, knowledge, and critical sensitivity; it also involves conceiving of education as a cultural practice and not merely an instructional one.

In its deepest sense, film can and should occupy a place in the teaching of literature as a mediator between art, thought, and society. In unequal educational contexts, it represents a way to democratize the aesthetic experience, strengthen reading comprehension, and renew students' relationship with humanistic knowledge. Ultimately, experience confirms that educating with art is educating to think, and that pedagogy, when it opens itself to dialogue between word and image, recovers its transformative power.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

María-Teresa López-Martínez Project management; Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Data curation; Writing - original draft; Writing - revision and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Supervision; Validation; Visualization.

Marco-Antonio Muñoz-Madrid: Project management; Formal analysis; Conceptualization; Data curation; Writing- Original draft; Writing - revision and editing; Research; Methodology; Resources; Supervision; Validation; Visualization.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest, nor financial, academic, personal, or institutional factors that may have influenced the preparation, analysis, interpretation of the data, or wording of this manuscript.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

Although formal written informed consent was not obtained, in accordance with the General Law on the Rights of Girls, Boys, and Adolescents, this requirement applies when information that could identify a minor is not disclosed. In this study, no names, images, recognizable voices, or personal data were recorded; all information was anonymized and used solely for academic purposes. Activities were developed within the framework of regular teaching practices during the pandemic, and general authorization was obtained for the academic use of the material, guaranteeing at all times the right to privacy and the protection of the identity of children and adolescents.

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