

# TEACHING AS COMMUNICATION: AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENGLISH TEACHING METHODOLOGY FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY.

## FILM AS COMMUNICATION

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### CHAPTER I

This final section will attempt to show the importance of using film as a text around which a communicative pedagogy can be built, emphasizing the role of emotions in motivating learning. Since film can carry an extraordinary affective impact, the radical selection of artistically powerful work where narrative, image and sound engage the full attention and interest of students, can elicit the commitment from students to making the effort to think and communicate in English. As with literature, “reading” film for the subtext and a deeper level of meaning should be regarded as a central organizing element of the pedagogical method.

### CHAPTER II

Although film studies are now accepted in academia as a legitimate subject of scholarly concern, film is still regarded by many English departments with suspicion as a disconcerting, even threatening presence. Whether film has a meaningful role in language teaching, is still an open question for many with reservations about its legitimacy as a teaching tool (see Visscher, 1990), but it must be conceded that film is the quintessential 20th century art form, occupying a place of importance in our lives since it defines our imagined reality with its endless reproduction of images.

The revolution wrought by the media in our apprehension of the world through images has had an impact on education, growing ever stronger with each student generation’s exposure to mass culture. As J.D. Basinger, Wesleyan University film

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professor says: "Educators are still struggling against the idea that television-and, by extension, movies on television has overwhelmed other forms of culture as the source for metaphor and points of reference" (*Daily Yomiuri*, Jan. 9, 1996).

Thus educators who ignore the role of popular culture in the lives of students are losing an opportunity to build on their cultural capital and experience; at the same time student ignorance, occasioned ironically by their conditioning under commercial culture, can also suggest materials and methods that can help them develop the personal resources for what Noam Chomsky calls "intellectual self-defense" (Schostack, 1993).

Lazere (1987) identifies the problem, paraphrasing the argument of Stanley Aronowitz's "Mass Culture and the Eclipse of Reason: The Implications for Pedagogy":

...the ultimate "literacy crisis" today is not the decline of mechanical skills stressed by the back-to-basics movement, but the socially induced destruction of the capacities to learn, remember, think critically, and distinguish meaningful language from doublespeak and hype. Indifference to the quality of language and reasoning is further engendered by the one-way communication of mass media; the absence of personal interaction between audiences and distant celebrities, politicians, corporate officials, news reporters, and advertisers stifles dialogue, debate, and any sense of control over public policy. (11)

The above remarks are equally relevant to Japan whose deeply rooted authoritarian traditions and Neo-Confucianism continue to exact a rigorous degree of conformity and obedience as the price of socialization.

Not surprisingly, many Japanese students have told me that they more or less believe what they read and see in the media. Lacking the knowledge and experience to process the deluge of "information", most students seem to accept things uncritically as the easiest way to deal with the confusing mish-mash of fact and fiction characterizing the opaque media-driven virtual reality of our fin-de-siecle "information age". This crisis of our comprehension and perceptions is aptly described by John Berger:

Between the experience of living a normal life at this moment on the planet and the public narrative being offered to give a sense to that life, the empty space, the gap is enormous. The desolation lies there, not in the facts...this is also why people dream of "virtual reality." Anything-from demagogy to manufactured onanistic dreams-anything, anything to close the gap! In such gaps people get lost, and in such gaps people go mad (*Guardian Weekly*, Jan. 12, 1992).

Since students receive much information via the electronic mass media, delivered in the form of images, one might expect a sophisticated knowledge of image-based information. Having grown up with television they feel at ease with the electronic media, yet as Aronowitz's argument cited above indicates, it seems that few students have more than a superficial understanding of what they see; most appear to be either gullible victims of the system described by Chomsky and Herman (1988) as "manufactured consent", or else depoliticized cynics and "drop-outs", alienated by the government/media manufacture and management of public discourse which is viewed with suspicion as *itsuwari no reariti* (fake reality), to use van Wolferen's term (1994), a perception not unlike that of the boy in Hans

Christian Anderson's "The Emperor's New Clothes", but without the latter's clear perception. In any case, the paradox remains of a so-called media-savvy young generation unaware of how the media industry works, and of how and what moving photographic images communicate.

The implication for pedagogy becomes clear when we consider the neglect of visual literacy in education. As David A. Cook (1996) aptly describes it, most people have the visual literacy of three-year olds, and are consequently easy prey for manipulators of (visual) language: "subject to the control of any minority that understood the language from the inside out and could therefore establish an authority of knowledge over them..." More ominously film language has been, "*perceived* not as a language at all but as a medium of popular entertainment-that in this guise the language was gradually allowed to colonize us..." and only late in the day have we discovered that "we had mistaken language for a mode of dreaming and in the process become massively illiterate in a primary language form, one that...had invaded our minds as well." (xvii). He concludes with an irrefutable diagnosis and the challenge it presents for pedagogy:

The language of the moving photographic image has become so pervasive in our daily lives that we scarcely notice its presence. And yet it *does* surround us, sending us messages, taking positions, making statements, and constantly redefining our relationships to material reality. We can choose to live in ignorance of its operations and be manipulated by those who presently control it. Or we can teach ourselves to read it, to appreciate its very real and manifold truths, to recognize its equally real and manifold deceptions. (xvii)

Gerbner and Gross similarly indicate the need for educators to intervene in the struggle for meaning waged by the hegemonic forces of the visual media: "Through media, individuals enter a world of symbols that demonstrate to them how society works by dramatizing its norms and values and by showing its prevailing outlook and social relationships" (1976: 173). The role of film in language pedagogy can no longer be doubted; verbal and visual literacy have become so intertwined in public discourse that it is becoming increasingly difficult to participate in social life as an educated and informed person with verbal literacy alone. The time is long overdue for the acceptance of film as an integral part of the content and apparatus of education.

Interestingly, Thomas Edison predicted as early as 1913 that film would become the ultimate educational tool: "I intend to do away with books in the school...When we get the moving pictures in the school, the child will be so interested that he will hurry to get there before the bell rings, because it's the natural way to teach, through the eye." (Naremore and Brantlinger, 1991: 7). Edison's prediction was a prescient acknowledgement of visual culture as an aid to learning; unfortunately, it has taken 70 years until the development of a video technology to bring the cinema to the classroom.

But even though today more educators are aware of the educational potential of film, Edison's words still remain a challenge to be taken up by the education establishment (film theory and aesthetics are not yet curriculum subjects in Japanese secondary education). Elitist attitudes prejudiced against popular culture, and the resistance of powerful,

entrenched interest groups reflected in outmoded copyright laws are hampering the spread of visual literacy. Thus Camille Paglia (1994: xxiii) pleads for "...a national film consortium, designated to produce and protect mint-condition prints of great films for constant circulation among primary and secondary schools."

### CHAPTER III

Film is a medium eminently suited to communicative aims in language teaching since, according to Sobchak (1991: 9), the film experience is inherently "a system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious expression", and paradoxically, because it is not primarily a verbal medium; the privileged audiovisual properties of film with their appeal to the eyes and ears take precedence over the verbal because of their overwhelming affective impact on the spectator/listener.

The predominance of the affective aura of the audiovisual is not to deny the importance of dialog; the presence of language can be a plus for the language learner, but it is film's peculiar affective properties that Edison no doubt recognized as a motivator in the learning process: the directness of the audiovisual and the immediacy of its emotional impact endowing film with a power the printed word cannot emulate.

Thus bringing cinema into the classroom can release human emotion from its repression in the education system and restore it to its rightful place in the learning environment; teachers need to give due recognition to the fundamental role of the learner's emotional resources in facilitating and fostering a successful learning outcome.

Student boredom and apathy result from the way English is taught in Japan; lack of motivation shows the absence of emotional involvement in the learning material, suggesting an increase in affective content might be the right direction for pedagogy. Since many students (especially in science and engineering) watch TV, videos etc., rather than read literature, it makes pedagogical sense to employ a medium of communication with which they are familiar and which can better hold their interest.

Pedagogy can utilize the fact that the experience of watching film is often accompanied by emotional katharsis. Investigating film's emotional ambience Durgnat writes in *Films and Feelings* (1971: 15) that, as a result of the dovetailing of diverse aesthetic elements as well as of the moral-emotional-intellectual elements which the film spectator recognizes or identifies with as the "whole interplay of human culture and human life", film as art "may communicate before it is understood", and may, indeed, "communicate even when it is misunderstood". Criticizing the (hypocritical) tendency of some film criticism to downplay the emotional element, brandishing an "anti-emotionality" and a "phoney rationalism", Durgnat pleads, "Isn't it time we plucked up our courage and allowed our hearts as well as our heads to go to the pictures?", and referring to Alan Resnais' film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) as a film that "is about the acceptance of emotion" (164), he may likewise have a valuable lesson for teachers: we should also allow our hearts and especially the hearts of our students to go to the classroom if we wish to seek new

directions in pedagogy (see hooks, 1993).

The affective element thus makes film an excellent tool of communication, offering intriguing opportunities for teachers interested in exploring the ramifications for pedagogy with advances in theory and research in the new field of affective science.

One might even claim that “affective” pedagogy is “effective” pedagogy: according to Schweder (Ekman and Davidson, 1994: 42):

A somatic or affective experience is an invitation to wonder why, to ask what those feelings reveal, to investigate various orders of reality (biochemical, interpersonal, moral), to diagnose one’s biochemical, interpersonal and moral standing in the world and to make plans accordingly.

while Scherer states emotion “serves to decouple stimulus and response”, ie., a “relevance detection and response system”; since this function is tied to motivation, information processing and monitoring what is relevant or is of concern for the organism, “it integrates information about external and internal events and thus allows representation in memory, thereby facilitating learning.” (Ekman and Davidson, 127-30).

Learning can be a natural consequence of emotion because cognitive involvement is always present as N.H. Frijda explains:

When an emotion occurs, something like “unexpectedness” or “mismatch with one’s cognitive schemas” or “uncertainty about the sufficiency of one’s coping repertoire” is implicated, and most of the time with the utilization of additional cognitive elements such as the presence of intentional agency in the eliciting event (Ekman and Davidson, 202).

Unexpectedness and surprise are often elicited by works of art, accounting in part for the affective impact of art on the human mind. The psychological effect of upsetting the expectations of the spectator (or reader) can greatly stimulate cognitive activity, thus promoting the learning process. Accordingly, “surprise” and “the unexpected” have an important pedagogical role and should be criteria for privileging materials that incorporate elements of surprise and unpredictability in their structure.

As in the case of reading materials where short stories often contain ironic twists in the plot or “surprise” denouements that enable students to compare their initial expectations with their final assessment by creating a “before and after” effect, open-ended films which tease with their unconventional plot lines, or depart from commercial formulae, confound spectator expectations with subtle characterizations, and ironical or paradoxical relationships between the characters, can make students reflect on their prejudices and preconceptions, thus stimulating not only their powers of ratiocination but also enhancing their emotional intelligence (e.g., films of the Coen brothers, especially *Blood Simple* [1983], *Barton Fink* [1991], *Fargo* [1995]).

That intellectual and emotional sophistication can be fostered via the affective power

of film aesthetics has not been sufficiently acknowledged by educators, but Camille Paglia (1994) is surely correct in her observation that:

Art films are a superb educational tool to introduce students to foreign languages as well as to dramatize the fleeting ambiguities and hypnotic compulsions of sexuality. Cinema is far more accurate about sex than is feminist theory. (xxiii)

Screen sexuality is an obvious source of intense affective reactions in the spectator, and diverse genres such as drama, music and humor can likewise elicit powerful emotional reactions as Clore points out (Ekman and Davidson, 386-93); the principle of *expectation deviation* is hypothesized to be one of the key determinants of affective intensity because it involves cognitive restructuring e.g., the experience of suspense:

What makes suspense an intense experience may be the fact that one alternately entertains first one outcome and then another, each with opposite implications. As one's cognitive model of the situation flip flops in this way, a lot of cognitive restructuring is experienced and the overall experience of intensity increases correspondingly. (392).

In a drama, "the introduction of one new fact can change completely one's cognitive construction of the events and people involved" (393). Thus cognitive reorganization seems to be perhaps the main factor underlying emotional intensity. Clore concludes that, "The potential for such restructuring exists whenever one is sufficiently invested to generate an elaborate model of the situation and to attend fully to it" (393). If Clore's hypothesis is correct, it might have a promising pedagogical application, especially when taking advantage of the affective audiovisual properties of the film medium.

One of the most important ways in which emotion contributes to cognitive activity is its through its powerful influence on memory, "mediated through its influence on *attention*;" according to G.H. Bower who adds:

...attention in turn enhances later memory for the attended event. Attention is largely controlled by the "interestingness" of the event; that is partly determined by the unexpected character of the event (an "anomaly") and its affective significance (e.g., sex and violence).

A central idea in learning theory is that learning is driven by expectation failure; when events don't happen as expected, we have to learn more, to adjust our expectations to a changed reality. Such expectation failures are also likely to be causes of emotional reactions... (Ekman and Davidson, 303).

It may be not unreasonable to claim that certain kinds of literary works and certain artistically sophisticated films may have the power to evoke the psychological processes described above in the reader or spectator (already in 1939 Benjamin could write [1982: 177]: "In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle." Film with its immediate affective impact can be expected to hold the attention and interest of students more than literature. Once students have been aroused by powerful stimuli (e.g. sex and violence), we can expect the impact of expectation deviation promoting cognitive activity to be enhanced.

Bower (304) claims that emotions play three distinct roles in learning; apart from

accompanying “failed expectations (or interruptions)”, thus directing attention “to accompanying events as important items to be learned”, emotions also:

mobilize attention to those features of an external situation that learners judge to be significant or predictive of the cause of the failed expectation, and, in so doing, cause greater learning of them.

Emotions also affect learning through “the inertial persistence of the emotional arousal, and its slow decay” which “leads to continued recycling or rehearsal of those encoded events viewed as causally belonging to the emotional reaction.”

The latter point should interest educators faced with students who switch off their attention at the end of the class until the next session; such behavior constitutes a serious obstacle to learning, for without time devoted to follow-up study outside the classroom, little progress in language learning can be expected (Goleman, 1996: 93). I have observed that compared to the written word film seems to produce a longer lasting “carry over” effect to the following week when students return to class with comments and questions, or to continue watching the film. This may, in part, be attributable to the “inertial persistence of the emotional arousal” and its “slow decay”.

Showing a film in two or three class sessions has the disadvantage of interrupting attention and memory, but it also forces students to make notes on what they have seen, to remember significant points of plot and character, or to note down questions about images or scenes they do not understand. Furthermore, an interest in the problems and issues raised may enable them to sustain a continuous dialogue with the film until the denouement or resolution in the follow-up lesson; students eager to relieve the suspense created by the interrupted narrative often experience the “Scheherazade effect” (alluding to the suspense created by the astute story-teller of the *Thousand and One Nights*), when they return to class in excited anticipation of the denouement.

It seems that some of the communicative power of film derives like that of narrative literature from its story-telling which is able to elicit the attention and ego-involvement of the spectator (Bordwell, 1985; Jesionowski, 1987). The presence of emotion, aroused in this case by narrative, is always an indication of cognitive processing (i.e. learning), involving appraisal and evaluation (see Ekman and Davidson). The power of narrative to elicit emotion may be explained by appraisal theory and the functional role of emotions; as Scherer hypothesizes, “*the evaluation of a stimulus or event as relevant to one’s goals and needs* is in fact the minimal requirement for the elicitation of an emotion” (Ekman and Davidson: 230). Since narrative seems to elicit emotional responses i.e., ego-involvement, it can motivate students to engage in cognitive processing at the same time as they are learning to manipulate language for communication and self-expression.

Having established the role of emotion in the learning process, we may regard the use of film in the classroom as providing the teacher with the means to establish an emotional ambience that acts as a ‘zeitgeber’ for the lesson (see Goleman [114-17] who appropriates the term from biology to convey the idea of “the power to determine emotion”; stressing the curious phenomenon of “emotional contagion”, he concludes that, “Emotional entrainment is the heart of influence”).

## CHAPTER IV

In order to take advantage of the affective potential of film as a teaching instrument, and to maximize the effect of “emotional entrainment” for the purpose of producing the greatest impact on the student’s perceptions and their intellectual and emotional faculties, teachers need to exercise great care in the selection and sequencing of films. While it makes sense to consult the students regarding what topics they are interested in, it makes no sense to surrender control of film selection merely to satisfy an ideological fetish of “student-centered” learning. Students have had no film education, so although they may have been exposed to vast amounts of TV viewing, and frequent the cinema, their experience is severely limited as consumers of commercial cinema to the genre of Hollywood entertainment movies or their anodyne Japanese epigones.

For the English teacher the central question is what films are best suited for students and how can the films be integrated into a language pedagogy? The approaches and methodologies will depend on the purpose of instruction and the characteristics of the student group. Since the subjects of this paper are unmotivated non-major students of English, the first task is to create an atmosphere that facilitates learning by engaging their attention and motivating them to communicate in English.

In 1916 Munsterberg (1970), investigated the psychologically constructed reality of the film image suggesting audience participation in creating meaning, an activity that may help induce the experience of “flow” in the students (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990/1993), a state of mind requiring emotional intelligence, which is, according to Goleman (1996: 90), “perhaps the ultimate in harnessing the emotions in the service of performance and learning. In flow the emotions are not just contained and channeled, but positive, energized, and aligned with the task at hand.”

Hence, one may specify that only films which exhibit a complexity of outstanding aesthetic, intellectual and humanitarian qualities, capable of eliciting powerful emotional responses from the spectator, are indicated for pedagogical purposes.

This criterion would exclude films which aim to “teach the language”. Educational films lack the artistic and affective power to induce “flow” and capture the interest of young adults; such commercial films teaching grammatical, syntactical and lexical items are paradoxically unable to motivate language learning since the formulaic plots and ham acting are unconvincing to students schooled in Hollywood entertainment movies (some students naively opine that they want to “learn the language” from the latter type of film). Language education films designed for repetitive study (an aim ironically negated by their low-level artistic qualities), like textbooks, soon bore students and lead to absenteeism. Thus even using a medium as attractive as film, a pedagogical approach that places all the emphasis on language instruction, without giving due consideration to the significance and relevance of the subject matter for human beings living in the real world (with its historical and cultural complexity), risks losing the attention and interest of young adults preparing



themselves to enter society (see Natusch, 1990: 19-21).

Film selection must therefore be the crucial first step; while the criteria for selection depend on the teacher's knowledge, and the goals of the class, for the purposes of this paper the following criteria suggest a useful framework. Selection, as Goodman advocates (1995:193-96), should favor films that students do not know, have never seen, are not able to see (TV for political reasons will not broadcast them ["self-censorship"]), cannot find for themselves (in stores or rental video shops), or would not choose to watch them (because of the unfamiliarity of a film's theme, its perceived difficulty or "dark" and "serious" subject matter-categories shunned by the majority of Japanese youth: world cinema [non-Hollywood], old films [silent, black and white], films with subtitles, documentaries ["out of fashion"]). Films that may be characterized either as *geijutsusaku* (i.e., serious "artistic" films) or *mondaisaku* (literally "problem" works-feature films dealing with problems relating to social problems or human relationships) can promote educational goals precisely because they are ignored by the young whose lack of knowledge and narrow range of experience have limited them to film genres characterized by escapism, blockbuster thrills or sentimental romances with happy endings, i.e., perhaps the kind of movies that prompted director Tim Burton to declare: "That's why I hate most movies. They kind of simplistically tell you what they are all about. They don't capture what life is about in any way" (Breskin, 1992: 350). Young people, familiar with only a narrow range of artistic expression, often have prejudices against the unfamiliar and unknown, and the term *kuwazugirai* (to dislike something without tasting/trying it) also applies to their consumption of culture.

The ignorance and prejudices of students can thus provide entry points for a transformative pedagogy that aims undogmatically to enlighten and expand their awareness. Students exposed to new knowledge can broaden their vision, make connections between an unlearned past and an indecipherable present, take their intellectual inquiries beyond the narrow confines of *waga kuni* ("our country"-a frequent appellation for Japan, smacking of xenophobic smugness; see Dale, 1990) to embrace the wider concept of *waga sekai* ("our world")-creating an expanded sense of Self and belongingness, a mental leap of no mean challenge to the intellectually impoverished minds of Japanese youth shrunken to bonsai proportions by the exigencies of an examination-oriented education system and a suffocatingly conformist society (see Honda, 1993). Hence, there is much value in exposing students to non-Western cinema e.g., the work Satyajit Ray, Yilmaz Guney, Lino Brocka (Armes, 1987), post-1980 Chinese cinema for insights into an unfamiliar culture, and pre-1980 Japanese cinema to reacquaint students with their "forgotten" heritage (Ehrlich and Desser, 1994), or their common heritage with Asia (see Dissanayake, 1993).

Ignorance and prejudice, far from being formidable foes, can, in an aikido-like maneuver, be pressed into the service of pedagogy, thus transforming these enemies of enlightenment into allies to feed the appetites of students hungry for self-knowledge; in a society where "shame" and "losing face" are key mechanisms governing social behavior (Benedict, 1954; Doi, 1973), giving students the opportunity to reflect on their ignorance, prejudices and moral cowardice invariably produces a sense of shame which for some at

least can become a spur to study and “self-polishing” (the latter term expresses the serious attitude to self-improvement so highly valued by the Japanese).

Taking cues from the lacunae in the knowledge and experience of students, the teacher, when selecting films, should utilize the fact that concepts such as discovery, novelty, freshness, originality, strangeness, the unknown, the foreign or alien, laden with the potent affective elements of surprise, shock and delight, can serve as stimuli to facilitate the learning process. Hence, instead of a haphazard approach to film selection using the spurious criteria of mere popularity, the celebrity of the cast, the mere fact of English dialogue, or simply because the film is easy to obtain, it is more conducive to a learning outcome, if consideration is given to the purpose of the class and the ways in which a film can contribute to the teacher’s pedagogical goals in meeting the intellectual and emotional needs of the students.

## CHAPTER V

Content-based teaching would appear therefore to be the best way to utilize film for pedagogical purposes. Instead of a random selection of the teacher’s or student’s favorite films, a common approach which, even when masquerading as “edutainment” (Berman, 1990: 11-13), cannot conceal its intellectual inadequacy, (as director David Cronenberg says: “... it’s very rare that it [Hollywood] allows you to tell the truth. Because the Hollywood structures, the forms, were never created for the truth” [Breskin, 1992: 231].), a more considered selection of films is called for: films that on the strength of the artistic vision of the director and their excellence in regard to script, casting, image, sound, story, depth of psychological characterization and development, can offer insights into the complex reality of human sexual and social relations, and make a positive contribution to the cognitive, emotional, intellectual, moral and aesthetic development of the students. After all, the work of the spectator is to think, and director Spike Lee’s condemnation of the industry illustrates the danger of casually selecting films that do not meet the most rigorous artistic and intellectual criteria: “No subtlety, playing down to the lowest common denominator all the time, making films for the intelligence level of retarded twelve-year-olds” (quoted in Breskin, 1992: 181).

While entertainment is not incompatible with education; it is not a Hollywood monopoly. Since contemporary Hollywood movies are well known to the Japanese, it makes sense to pass them over in favor of unfamiliar cinemas. Of course, there is much more to the Hollywood film than simple entertainment (see Kolker, 1980; Ryan and Kellner, 1988; James, 1989; Dittmar and Michaud, 1990), but ironically, to discuss the “simple” entertainment movie from a deconstructionist (educational) position requires an intellectual positioning involving points of view alien to most Japanese educated and raised in a conservative, conformist society; it also presupposes a knowledge of aesthetics, ideology, culture and criticism that would demand too much of Japanese learners. Such a project might be possible, but extremely time-consuming, meaning that few films could be studied

and discussed in the course of a year.

A common approach is indeed to use just one or two films a year studying the script. Though unobjectionable from a language learner's point of view, the drawback is few scripts have a literary quality that merits close scrutiny. Using short sequences might be a solution (Stempleski and Tomalin, 1990) but here again the approach is mainly a utilitarian emphasis on the language itself to the neglect of the artistic and visual aspects of the film text which offer students the chance to make more exciting discoveries for, as David Cronenberg aptly puts it: "An artist wants to give you what you don't know you want. Something you might know you want the next time, but you never knew you wanted before" (Breskin, 1992: 265), and director Robert Altman's observation: "The audience will never sit there and say, 'We want to see something we haven't seen before.' But that is what they want to see. They want to be surprised" (ibid: 296), thus reconfirming the pedagogical use of surprise for motivating students.

There is no "right" way to use video but the emphasis of my approach is to present films that combine entertainment (i.e., plot, characterization) to affectively engage the attention and interest of spectators with anti-entertainment that Cronenberg says can "deny people their most ordinary expectations", "surprise them and confound them and intrigue them and jar them out of their expectations" (ibid.), i.e., films that have a complexity requiring sophisticated cognitive, aesthetic and moral responses from the audience. Such films require actively receptive involvement rather than the passive involvement of the TV viewer since in order to more fully appreciate any film claiming the status of a work of art, the spectator must be able to manipulate abstract ideas, think symbolically, and create meaning through diverse mental associations.

Cognitive activity is present in all forms of viewing, but with casual consumption of TV and entertainment movies cognitive activity is secondary to the visually pleasurable and affective engagement of the viewer in a non-pedagogical setting where it is present to a large degree only below the threshold of consciousness (see Miller, 1988; Ewen and Ewen, 1992). Thus one aim of teaching film in a language class could be to train students in the cognitive activities that accompany film viewing (as Altman says, an audience must be "trained": "They have to make the effort. They have to be educated" [Breskin, 1992: 297]), and utilize the affective means employed by film to influence the spectator so that they can hone their cognitive and emotional responses. Hence the value of "defamiliarization" the term coined by Victor Shklovsky which as a pedagogical device can be used even more effectively with film than with literature; as Breskin (1992: 287), speaking of Altman's films, says: "by decentralizing the hero, icon, and by concentrating on the periphery, and by flattening the playing field, the work is intrinsically democratic, left-leaning, less hierarchical", so that the work can subvert, in Altman's words, "set ideas", "fixed theses", "platitudes", foes which any true education must also seek to unmask. Thus in order to comprehend and appreciate the masterpieces of film, and, equally importantly in this age of media manipulation and government disinformation, in order to equip themselves with a means of intellectual self-defense, students need to develop all their resources of perception, analysis and discrimination (Fiske and Hartley, 1992; Silverstone, 1994).

In contrast to random and casual film viewing, a pedagogical approach teaches film as a text that communicates intentionally through image and sound (Livingston, 1996) allowing students to become more actively (consciously) involved in the co-creation of meaning through their reading of the film text i.e., a joint communicative act between film and spectator, one of the important insights provided by post 1968 film theory (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988), as in reader response theory. Altman confirms, students must “take the material in front of them and process it through their own history” (Breskin, 1992: 297). Through viewing practice, accumulating experience, knowledge, and techniques of “reading between the frames” to decode the “hidden” communicative messages of image and sound, and finding parallels and interconnections that give a film its structural cohesion, students can become adept at creating meaning, a skill both pleasurable and empowering. Their resulting mental empowerment makes this approach particularly attractive: seeing a film text with new eyes requires a creative exercise of the mind and senses involving an expansion of perception, which, owing to the powerful psychological changes involved, becomes both a formative and transformative experience that can have repercussions for the student’s personal development long after graduation. As Jean-Claude Carriere (1995: 71) writes, “Every truly powerful work has to disturb. In fact, it is the sign of its power”. This is the power of art that Altman says can startle and change people by scrambling and changing the information they have. Admitting, however, that some people do not allow themselves to be in awe of art, he concludes that teaching is “allowing someone to learn” (Breskin, 1992: 298).

To achieve such a goal it is essential that students be exposed to a diverse range of genres, styles and themes, that they experience the whole work in order to appreciate its artistic integrity (the opposite of the video clip approach); this “shotgun” approach ensures that the students receive adequate exposure to a variety of filmic texts so as to enable them to make comparisons (a vital cognitive exercise), even develop a sense of intertextuality, and gradually build up a repertoire of skills (note this is not teaching film history which involves film criticism, appraisals of works leading to canon formation).

Such an approach to using film in a language class may be informed by an eclectic utilization of film theory i.e., both the ‘classical’ tradition which, influenced by literary studies, was concerned with problems of art, nature, reality, society, work and the author, and the post-1960s modern phase of film theory which, influenced by linguistics, semiotics, Marxist and psychoanalytical approaches, and since the 1980s, by feminism, cognitive psychology, phenomenology etc., has been concerned with systems of meaning and ideology underpinning the communicative character and function of film, and with the spectator’s role in the reception of the medium. However, for pedagogical purposes (i.e., understanding and teaching a particular film, it is more important, as Bordwell points out (1996: 3-36), to take an empirical approach that eschews Grand Theory, and focus on what he calls “problem-driven middle-level research”, thus moving away from subject-position theories in favor of “sharply focused, in-depth inquiry” that should take cues from industry craftsmen and film criticism, all of which suggests for the teacher a return to the textual focus of close reading as in literature. It may be noted here that combining reading and film viewing on

thematically related topics, or comparing the book and film (e.g., *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck and John Ford) are powerful pedagogical methods of highlighting different artistic modes of expression as well as promoting student interest in reading literature.

The obvious parallels between communicative texts of literature and film (Livingston, 1996; Gerrig and Prentice, 1996) means that students unfamiliar with the grammar and syntax of the latter medium also need to learn close reading techniques in order to comprehend a film beyond surface meaning (plot) at the level of its subtext where the overall communicative message (intended or unintended) may be ascertained. As editor Donn Cambern states (1995: 210): “A well-written, well-performed piece will have a subtext...”, and, “...there are so many ways of imparting information to an audience.” Accordingly, approaching the film text from a craftsman-like position can be a fruitful way of teaching the communicative strategies of the auteur for there can be no doubt that with the extremely expensive medium of film as little as possible is left to chance. Thus an empirical (Bordwell, 1989), intentionalist (Livingston, 1996), rather than theoretical approach, offers the best means of making sense of a film’s communicative statements, expressed through image as well as language.

The latter point is especially true in the case of films with Japanese subtitles, which simplify, bowdlerize or distort the original, thus occasionally creating a mismatch of word with image: egregious errors such as in Almodovar’s *La Ley del Deseo* (1987) where a character asks for a little “coke”, and is told to take a bottle from the fridge offer opportunities for amusing discussions. Subtitles are necessary because Japanese can understand little of the original dialog (dubbed versions deprive students of listening practice), and also because the network of associations is greater in L1, facilitating semantic processing and concept development (Cohen and Hawras, 1996).

Since reading subtitles, viewing images and listening to dialog strain the student’s capacity of perception and cognition, the teacher must intervene with the remote control device, technology’s “chalk” which, as Rosolato points out (Bordwell, 1996: 22), is a necessary tool if one wants to speak in detail of a film. This enables us to take control of the film text, impossible for cinema or TV spectators, and by stopping the frame a shot can be studied in detail. As Artaud emphasized, art leads to cognition: “No image satisfies me unless it is at the same time *Knowledge*” (1988: 108). Films that neglect the image are thus unsuitable since they lack express, communicative content; only the “radical” image can suffice for teaching through film (Roberge, 1984). The image must therefore be highlighted by taking it out of the narrative with the remote control to show how the image contributes to the narrative structure or how it can encapsulate a major theme e.g., the rigid class divisions that make communication impossible (see the bowl of rice and the *katana* scenes in *Seven Samurai* below).

The structure of every film is based on the principle of continuity which is comprised of a planned sequence of frames. The cohesion of a film thus rests on how one interprets the shots both in sequence and individually. As in the case of reading, one can use intentionalism i.e., what the director wants to express in a particular scene (the message can get lost in the narrative flow as the spectator concentrates on the foregrounded action and

dialog, missing the communicative function of backgrounded signifiers that enable us to read a scene at a deeper, abstract or symbolic level), as a heuristic device for devising communicative strategies, starting with low-order questions for dealing with concrete facts and then working up to a level of abstraction for dealing with problems that require top-down processing.

An example can be found in Lino Brocka's Manila: *In the Claws of Darkness* (1975) where a male prostitute first meets the hero. The usefulness of English subtitles as a pedagogic device can be seen in the simple dialog, but it is the ambivalence of the image showing the giant neon sign of a Japanese major corporation (which escapes the notice of most viewers) that is interesting: prostitution is merely another form of business, and/or Philipinos are prostituting themselves to agents of Japanese imperialism, or that the wretched social conditions linking both young men are in some way related to the country's domination by foreign economic interests.

The simplicity of diction often found in Third World writing is even more apparent in films such as Idrissa Ouedraogo's *Tilai* (Bukina Faso, 1990), all the more effective when reinforced by the image and a powerful scenario: the hero is informed his fiancée has been taken by their father, instigating a tragedy caused by the clash between tradition and modernity.

In order to learn deeply students need to be impressed; nothing impresses them more than to realize that although they have watched a scene, they have not been able to understand more than the surface meaning, that there is a subtext, a deeper level of communication, accessible only to those who can handle abstract or symbolic systems of thinking. As Sobchak (1991: 262-3) observes, theory has tended to ignore the "invisible", but an empirical approach, close-reading the film text can also locate meaning in the space she describes thus: "Outside the realm of the visible, both the spectator's expressed and intentional vision and the film's perceptive body are 'ghosts in the machine' that produces cinematic meaning", perhaps suggesting deeper communication between film and spectator takes place in an intuitive realm where meaning is nourished by symbols. Post-viewing reveals to students the extent of their "blindness", but the teacher must try to help them go beyond the "shame" they may privately feel to a sense of empowerment as their growing confidence in their perception and cognition enable them to "read" an image or scene more profoundly. These exciting moments of "revelation" crown class discussions conducted like an investigation of detectives seeking clues to solve a mystery. The key point is that the teacher should not give away "solutions", but, as with reading, through hints and associational thinking out loud allow students to find their own way to answers.

A method of uncovering symbolic communication is to find a way that leads from the concrete to the abstract (inductive reasoning), or vice-versa (deductive). As in reading, symbolic communication may be contained in dialog, illustrated below in a scene from Alan Parker's *Mississippi Burning* (1988) whose deep meaning the viewer can easily overlook: Gene Hackman apologizes to Frances McDormand for bringing the "wrong" flowers i.e., pretty insect devouring plants with a "bad smell"; the subtext reads he is actually apologizing for his "unethical" behavior in his plan to entrap her into betrayal of her

husband (a murderer) for which she must pay a heavy price.

Symbolic communication may also be imbedded in the image or action. The example below is from Kurosawa Akira's *Seven Samurai* (1954). The carefully arranged mise-en-scene betrays the high degree of intentionality in film art that supports symbolic reading to discover a deeper level of communication in a subtext. The screen is neatly divided in two by an outsized Japanese *katana* (sword) with Freudian overtones since the owner on the right is only a wannabe samurai who betrays his coarse peasant background again with his unsamurai-like behavior (gulping down sake and spilling it all over himself). The right to bear arms belonged solely to the samurai class thus a symbol of class division, magnificently dividing the image; the samurai in a rare gesture of class reconciliation vainly reaches across the divide to try to communicate with the peasant. Only by his death will the peasant be able to show that he is a samurai i.e., noble for his courage and spirit, if not by birth and manners. He will lie dead on an elevated platform with the samurai standing below symbolically "looking up to him".

Also from the same film is an unusual image, unique in *Jidaigeki* (samurai history drama), an example of defamiliarization (a hand holding a bowl of rice dominates the screen) expressing the great shame and remorse felt by the samurai for their exploitation of the peasants which triggers their decision to help the poor farmers, a moment on which the whole story hinges, and yet it is a scene whose significance may be missed by most spectators.

As mentioned in the section on reading, the selection of an open-ended narrative involving a protagonist facing a dilemma, or a mystery whose solution must be found by the reader is ideal for pedagogy, especially when it exhibits strong elements of irony and self-reflexivity which demand more cognitive work from the audience.

A daring scene, rare in film, exteriorizing mental processing in Michael Wadleigh's "Eco-horror" movie *Wolfen* (1981), shows the hero facing himself in the act of ratiocination, his face refracted in numerous reflections in the metallic curtain strips, an image symbolically playing on the double meaning of the word "reflection", to reveal his divided mind, agonizingly torn between the rational, superficial everyday reality of humans and the irrational, deeper reality of Nature's cosmic forces.

From the same film a sequence of key images illustrating the process of enlightenment (his face illuminated by the light reflected from the helmet he is contemplating symbolizes his "satori") as he discovers the truth: "They kill to protect their hunting grounds" (interestingly with the aid of video), a self-reflexive symbolism that points to the work the audience must also do to find the "truths" the director is attempting to convey via the film text.

Another example of exteriorization can be found in (*Woman in the Dunes*: Teshigahara Hiroshi, 1964) where the camera-eye conveys the inner turmoil of the protagonist in an emotionally intense sequence of images that illustrate the syntax of imagery, the sequential linking of seemingly unconnected images, whose meaning can only be inferred in the realm of the senses, beyond the objectively visible. This sequence perfectly satisfies Artaud's yearning (*Cinema and Reality*) for "a film with purely visual

situations whose drama would come from a shock designed for the eyes, a shock drawn...from the very substance of our vision" (1988: 151). Indeed the man's visual shock begins with the close-up of a woman's nail and naked flesh, then unable to face the eye of Eve that beckons for union with his flesh, he averts his gaze in terror out of a window which offers no escape before it finally comes to rest on the bottle of alcohol that can offer the oblivion he needs to escape from his guilt and self-consciousness. This brilliant tour-de-force displays a visual language, in Artaud's words (*ibid.*), "revealing the very essence of language and of carrying the action onto a level where all translation would be unnecessary and where this action would operate almost intuitively on the brain." Unfortunately, at this level of difficulty translation does become necessary so the teacher must allow students to communicate in Japanese in order to be able to process their ideas before being translated back by students or the teacher. The important point is that students are learning to connect their eyes to their brain and allow intuition, imagination and feelings to operate as engines of motivation promoting better communication.

Finally, "Kore ga Betonamu Senso da" ("This is the Vietnam War". Dir. Ide Akira. Production dates cannot be established.) shows battlefield atrocities on captured NLF soldiers. Cold-blooded murder, almost always censored by state and media organs (not for reasons of "decency" but of politics [Roeder, Jr., 1993]), never fails to shock students who can see boys of their own generation as the killers and the killed. Such powerful films can be juxtaposed with films on the same subject produced by the commercial media; the comparison can deliver a different kind of shock to students who can see for the first time patterns of censorship and suppression.

The absence of the shocking story and image in education is an indication of how far teaching has estranged itself from reality to become complicit in immorality. Susan Sontag writing about Antonin Artaud emphasizes his moralist aesthetics:

...this was the point of Artaud's devotion to the aesthetics of shock. Through the exclusiveness of his commitment to paroxysmic art, Artaud shows himself to be as much of a moralist about art as Plato-but a moralist whose hopes for art deny just those distinctions in which Plato's view is grounded. As Artaud opposes the separation between art and life, he opposes all theatrical forms that imply a difference between reality and representation. He does not deny the existence of such a difference. But this difference can be vaulted, Artaud implies, if the spectacle is sufficiently-that is, excessively violent. The "cruelty" of the work of art has not only a directly moral function but a cognitive one (1988: xxxiv-xxxv).

It is the position of this thesis that communicative pedagogy can learn much from Artaud's credo: Teaching, a unique profession in its ethical *raison d'être*, yet always vulnerable to manipulation by the state, (the author of all war and mass violence) needs more teachers willing to take a moral stand against state violence, in whatever guise it appears, no matter what flag it hides behind. It is not enough for teachers to concern themselves only with developing the aesthetic sensibilities of their charges while neglecting the ethical implications of such acts of violence. It needs to be vigorously argued that "Peace Studies" must have a place in language teaching since there can be no more



important subject of communication between the peoples of the world than what the shocking stories and images of the twentieth century, the bloodiest century in the history of mankind, can teach us about the meaning of “*homo homini lupus*”.

## CHAPTER VI

Finally, the arguments thus far presented should allow us to conclude that the present crisis in university language teaching characterized by the superficial accumulation of course credits to the detriment of studies with a meaningful content, resulting in a poorly motivated student body, will only be solved by changes in the macro-factors i.e., economic and social changes in Japanese society.

Since such changes occur slowly, teachers must in the meantime attempt to implement a communicative approach that motivates students to take their studies more seriously. This will only be possible if powerful teaching materials can be found to appeal to their interests and can inculcate in them a love of learning. Therefore a pedagogical approach must be found that is firmly rooted in a philosophy of education that aims to make education relevant to living the “examined life” by prioritizing intellectual and emotional development, as well as ethical and aesthetic sensitivity.

The key to the success of a communicative pedagogy is selecting appropriate texts (literature and film with a transformative power) that will encourage students to become curious about the condition of Man and the world, and that can motivate them to communicate more as they develop their powers of self-expression. In order for such a project to succeed teachers, too, must continually strive through living and learning to become generalists to impart the knowledge that undergraduate students need and to exemplify the kind of person that students will be able to respect and learn from.

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