

FILMS: CLIMBING INTO CULTURE'S BACKYARD

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Abstract: Learners of a second language must also learn about the culture of that language, not just as a way of supporting their linguistic competence, but as a way of understanding the role of the language in individuals and in society. Cultural Studies courses are a way of providing support for this need, and Moran (1992) suggests a useful framework for the learning/teaching of culture. Film is commonly used as a medium in teaching, and is an excellent resource for intercultural teaching because it is seen as being 'more than just a text. A case study at Soegijapranata Catholic University showed that films were preferred to other teaching methods, and were considered the best medium with which to teach culture, provided that discussion time was also provided. Student responses were overwhelmingly positive. The course was enjoyable, the film selections were regarded as useful sources of culture, and the course format and syllabus were considered effective. However, offence could be caused by sexual or violent content of films and suggestions are given to overcome this problem. Ways to support this teaching method include the introducing of cultural themes and backgrounds to students before films are presented, and the careful selection of films that are limited to one intercultural theme. Cultural Studies should be taught without any teacher-oriented preconceptions. Also, the medium of films should be included in a syllabus to improve the teaching/learning process and not for any other reason that could be seen as a misuse of this medium.

Keywords: Cultural Studies, film, source culture, target culture

INTRODUCTION

As language teachers we must be interested in the study of culture not because we necessarily want to teach the culture of the country but because we have to teach it (Politzer 1959:100, cited in Brooks 1986:123).

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There are many definitions of the word culture. Many of them are applicable to the use of the word as I intend it here, so let me choose one, from Commager, which defines culture as “a bundle of patterns of behavior, habits of conduct, customs, laws, beliefs, and instinctive responses that are displayed by a society” (Commager 1970:161, cited in Blatchford 1973).

The need for culture to be taught alongside a foreign language has been well documented and I do not intend to elaborate on that here. It is already established that teaching a language will involve teaching the culture of that language, even if this just means the culture that is implicit in the linguistic forms of the language. The teaching of culture to the second language learner *may* be viewed as this: a secondary consideration that is forced upon the teacher as a necessity in the teaching of a language. For example, in a speaking class a teacher will need to explain the cultural associations that differentiate between the requests *close the window* and *would you mind closing the window*, and within what societal context each utterance is appropriate. However, what I would like to focus on is the teaching of culture much more explicitly in the form of Cultural Studies classes that are taught in parallel to the main body of linguistic and literary courses offered to students of second languages.

MORAN'S FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING/TEACHING CULTURE

Moran (1992, cited in Griessen 1998) produced a framework for the learning and teaching of culture that divided the field into four areas:

1. *Knowing about (getting information)* – giving students facts
2. *Knowing how (developing behaviors)* – teaching students what to say and how to say it in a culturally appropriate manner
3. *Knowing why (discovering explanations)* – students use powers of analysis and intuition to draw conclusions about cultural information
4. *Knowing oneself (personalizing knowledge)* – looking at a student's own values and reactions to those of the culture

While the second of these areas is the focus of cultural application in skills classes (for example, how to apologize in certain situations) and to a lesser extent in Cultural Studies, the other areas should form the basis of any class studying culture.

FILM AS 'MORE THAN A TEXT'

"Television, videotape and film are more frequently used in [American] high school classrooms than any other media resource" (Hobbs 1998), and have already proved more than adaptable to a second language learning application. This format is usually used in listening classes, speaking classes, and also in literature classes to supplement the reading of a particular novel because "movie renditions can introduce and help students comprehend these works" (Frieden and Elliott 2004). Film is also an increasingly viable option in the Cultural Studies class, providing "students an opportunity to witness behaviors which are not obvious in text[book]s. Film is often one of the more current and comprehensive ways to encapsulate the look, feel, and rhythm of a culture" (Peterson and Coltrane 2003).

It is this idea of being 'more than a text' that shows the benefit of film as a method of teaching culture. Books can only give a reader so much, and in a static manner, leaving much to the imagination of the reader. The presence of a native speaker in the role of teacher still falls short of being able to recreate in the classroom the cultural norms and values employed within the physical or geographical boundaries of that culture. A native speaker does have a lot of cultural values that can be observed by, or shared with, the students; two native speakers conversing together even more so.

Foreigner-watching – the observation of members of the target culture within the students' geographical limits – can provide further insights. Students can notice a lot by merely observing or even communicating with foreigners, for example, in the malls or hotels of Jakarta, or at tourist attraction sites (Borobudur temple) and resorts (Kuta, Bali). But these are marginalized representations of that culture, always affected either consciously or subconsciously by irregular contexts and surroundings and second culture influences. To really view a culture in action is to climb into its backyard, to see it in its natural habitat. Just as zoologists can learn about the lives of elephants by studying those groups living in zoos and parks, so they can learn much more by observing elephants living wild and naturally in Africa.

As it is with zoology, so it is with culture. Being able to fly language students to the United States, to China, to Spain or anywhere else, is more often than not an unrealistic goal for second language teachers as it is limited by time constraints, economic restrictions or simple logistics. This is where film champions itself. Film can offer us a way of 'climbing into the backyard'

of the target culture without leaving the safety of our own seats; it can take us *there* while we remain *here*.

FILM-BASED CULTURAL STUDIES: A CASE STUDY AT SOEGIJAPRANATA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF SEMARANG

The case study with which I will demonstrate the value of film in Cultural Studies was undertaken in the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University, Indonesia, from August to December 2004. The participants were forty-five second year (third semester) undergraduate students taking Cultural Studies as a compulsory component of a four-year English degree. The lesson material was heavily based on film.

The selected films were grouped together under five cultural themes: youth attitudes; ethnic minorities in the UK; personal freedom and civil rights; fame and the media; and marriage and relationships (see table 1). There are of course any number of themes that could substitute any one of those used such as politics, working class life, school and education and so on, depending on the thematic aims of a selected course.

Lesson	Selected film
	Theme: youth attitudes
1	<i>thirteen</i>
2	<i>Friends / MTV Explained</i>
	Theme: ethnic minorities in the UK
3	<i>Bend it Like Beckham</i>
4	<i>East is East</i>
	Theme: personal freedom and civil rights
5	<i>The People vs. Larry Flynt</i>
	Theme: fame and the media
6	<i>EDtv</i>
7	<i>Natural Born Killers</i>
8	<i>My Little Eye</i>
	Theme: marriage and relationships
9	<i>Four Weddings and a Funeral</i>
10	<i>Wonderland</i>

Table 1:
Cultural Studies lesson schedule Aug – Dec 2004

Ten of the fifteen classes were devoted to watching eleven films. All films were feature length, being at least 1 hr 15mins long, with the exception of Friends (30 mins) and MTV Explained (50 mins). The remaining third of the schedule, denoted by blank spaces in table 1, were classes set aside for discussion time. The discussions provided a chance to talk about the films, as well as introducing supplementary sources to support the learning process. Viewpoints were shared, questions and details discussed, group and class activities were undertaken. *The People vs. Larry Flynt* shown in lesson eight was the only film that was allocated no discussion time. This is because this film was used as the source for the mid-semester examination.

A. Case Study Results

After the completion of the course, students filled in questionnaires. The questionnaire contained closed questions relating to each individual film, and also open questions with a more general nature about the course as a whole.

1. Would you prefer Cultural Studies to 'film based' or 'regular-class based'?		
Film-based: 93%	Class-based: 2%	Balanced: 5%

Table 2:
Question one results



It can be seen in table 2 that 93% of students prefer a film-based syllabus for Cultural Studies. Reasons cited for preferring a film-based model included: students felt the lessons were clearer and easier to understand; they thought the lessons were more interesting and did not feel bored; they found the lessons enjoyable and felt they could relax more which helped them in the learning process; they felt that they received more information from a film than they would from a teacher or text based lesson.

Two interesting concepts that emerged were a) the use of students' individual perceptions and b) the perceived difference of theory and reality. Students felt they could interpret and analyze the film using their own perception (personalizing knowledge) without the bias of an author or teacher to influence them. They valued this independent role of comprehension and evaluation. They also felt that books gave theories of culture, but films gave

them an actual view (albeit from a director’s viewpoint) of reality: a moving and living glimpse of a culture rather than the purely lexical view from the two-dimensional pages of a textbook.

2. Is film the best medium to learn about culture. If not, what mediums would you suggest?	
Yes: 89%	No: 11%

Table 3:
Question two results

Table 3 shows that 89% of students felt that film was the best medium in which to learn about culture. Two popular reasons supported this result: first, students felt film could show cultural realities in a way other sources would struggle to match. Second, students highlighted the unlimited available choice of movie titles and themes as a supporting feature. The 11% who felt other mediums could better serve Cultural Studies provided three alternatives. The most popular and predictable alternative was books. These are usually accepted as the bulk source material of any university-level course. What was interesting was the close relation between film and the other two alternatives suggested. 40% of the total ‘no’ respondents suggested the internet (itself a visual medium, often using moving pictures) or reality shows (television programmes as opposed to cinematic motion pictures). It is apparent that *seeing* a culture in action is regarded as the optimal method for learning about a target culture.

3. How would you change the format/syllabus of this course, if you could?	
No change: 93%	More explanation/discussion: 7%

Table 4:
Question three results

Table 4 seems to show that nearly all students were satisfied with the format and syllabus of the course. It should be taken into account that it is possible that some students counted in that 93% were actually dissatisfied with the course, but had no suggestions to make about how to change or improve the course. And the 7% wanting more explanation or discussion time?

First, time constraints, for example, the length of a lesson, do not have to be constraints. Films that do not fill the allocated lesson time can be discussed in the same lesson period.

Second, in Indonesia, the popular format of visual media is VCD. Feature-length films using this format comprise two compact discs. This offers a guaranteed break in the playing of the movie that can be utilized as a good time to air opinions, ask questions, and provide clarifications.

These intervals can be further developed into activity intervals of the 'what will happen next' or the 'what would you do in this situation' variety. It is also possible using a two-disc format (or just a 'stop' button on a video or DVD) to split the viewing of a film over two sessions so fully maximizing possible discussion time. However, this time lapse could be detrimental to the student – at the least, the sense of atmosphere that the film had built up will be lost, and at worst the student will forget some or all of the events in the section of the film viewed previously.

Other suggestions noted were to hold a 'student poll' to decide which film title to watch in the lesson. While this might please the students immensely, it has the obvious drawback of a film being chosen for its popular appeal rather than its cultural content, so this method is not recommended. A teacher could explore the possibility of a compromise: providing two or three titles based on a particular cultural theme and letting a student poll decide which of these films is played. Caution should be taken with this method – the teacher's aim is to educate rather than entertain and this option gives the students the chance to vote for the film that is most appealing to *them*. Teachers should understand that it is their position and experience as teachers that allow them to make considered judgments about which films are suitable for the requirements of their course, much more so than most students can.

Another suggestion was for the film selection to change each semester or term in which the course was offered. Due to the huge choice of cultural themes, and the equally large choice of suitable film titles within these themes, this is a viable prospect. This would be particularly useful in education systems that allow for 'repeat students', those students who take the same course more than once. This repeating of a course may be by choice (for example, to improve on the grade received the first time of taking the course) or may be enforced (students must obtain set minimum grades in a course, and those failing to do so are required to repeat the course until they can achieve the necessary minimum mark). The revising of course content would prevent

a repeat student from literally repeating film-for-film the content of the course, thus ensuring higher levels of motivation and higher levels of exposure to the target culture. This in turn should lead to higher levels of intercultural knowledge.

4. What are your general comments about this Cultural Studies course?	
Only positive comments: 83%	Positive and negative comments: 10%
Only negative comments: 0%	No comments given: 7%

Table 5:
Question four results

It was very encouraging that while 83% of students had only positive comments, no students gave only negative comments about the Cultural Studies course (see table 5). However, some students expressed that they wanted to see films that were “more modern”, “easier to understand”, or “more exciting”.

B. Sex and Violence in the Cultural Context

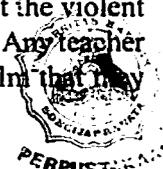
Most negative comments given by students (see table 5) were concerned that there was too much violence and/or sex in the selected films. This is a very important criticism and one worth paying attention to as it is these two areas of film that most commonly cause offence throughout the world. The objections could be related to the source culture. Indonesian culture considers sex as a taboo, and nudity and sex scenes, as well as certain depictions of violence, are censored in all media forms. A way to overcome this that was applied in this case study was to purchase the films within the territory of the source culture.

Nine of the eleven selections in this case study were Indonesian produced and therefore already met local standards permitted by law (this practice of course is also extremely advantageous in that locally bought media resources tend to include source language subtitles to accompany the original audio track). Thus *The People vs. Larry Flynt*, a true story of a pornographic magazine owner’s court battles to protect his individual right to freedom of speech and the nation’s right to a free press, can be shown with its cultural context intact but without any of the nudity or sexually related scenes of the original version that could cause offence to some students.

Often a teacher cannot find the desired films in the source culture, and indeed two of the films in this study (*Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Natural Born Killers*) were originally purchased in the UK, but were deemed relevant to the aims of the course. With the advantage of hindsight, *Natural Born Killers* will be removed from any future syllabus. The comments and opinions towards this film make me realize that the violent content of the film was inappropriate for the Indonesian culture. Any teacher should be wary of any gratuitous violence that appears in a film that they have selected for a classroom showing:

Graphic violence in a film desensitizes the viewer not only to the victim's pain but also to the debasement of the perpetrator. In many instances, these films glorify violence and the persons who commit it. When parents or teachers bring violent films into the home or the classroom they encourage the viewing of brutality for entertainment and implicitly endorse the acceptance and celebration of savagery. Significantly, adults who propose the viewing of graphically brutal films also lose the opportunity to show by example that in all but the most extreme cases the use of violence, even viewing it for pleasure, is intolerable. This loss of moral stature by trusted adults is detrimental to the children they seek to raise or teach. (Frieden and Elliott 2004)

While my primary intention (the cultural context required for that particular lesson) was to show the elements of celebrity-worship in the media that appear throughout this film, this could have been done using a different film and thus without resulting in the offending of students. A prerequisite for any film selection is its viewing by the teacher before it is played to the class (as opposed to relying on the memory of having watched it some time in the past), just to ascertain how useful (or not) a film will be. In doing this I had noted the violent content of *Natural Born Killers*, but felt it could also aid intercultural understanding. On a secondary level, students could realize to what levels violence is tolerated within the media of the target culture. Students could consider the 'dumbing-down' of violence in western society. Primarily, the film seemed to be a very strong example of the power of celebrity in the target culture and how that magnetism can be prioritized over and above all



other concerns, even that of being wanted criminals. However, I now realise that these advantages are small in comparison to the potential damage such a film could cause. If a film, any film, causes offence to the students, then it should be immediately removed from the syllabus.

Teachers, particularly native speakers who may be less aware or naïve of local custom, must be receptive to, and also respectful of, the source culture. Film choices should be thoroughly scrutinized before any final decision by the teacher. Is the cultural point you want to make necessary? Do other films show this point equally well but with inoffensive material? Remember, even the *non-selection* of a film can itself become a starting point for an intercultural discussion in the classroom without having to resort to showing the film.

C. Further Results

The students provided many ideas for films that could be added or substituted into the course. Suggestions included talk shows (e.g. *The Oprah Winfrey Show*), situational comedies (e.g. *Mr. Bean*, *Sex and the City*) and films (e.g. *Billy Elliot*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*), all of which could contribute to cultural studies. Indonesian films were also suggested such as *Virgin*, a recent local release about the lives of three 'modern' teenage girls, which could complement the showing of *thirteen*, a similarly themed American film used in this case study, creating intercultural dialogue in the comparison and contrast of the two films.

Many 'Hollywood blockbusters' were suggested, but generally these tend to have little use in the classroom. Again, it is the role of the teacher to distinguish between entertainment and education. There is not enough cultural value in the average action-thriller, horror movie, comedy and so on. While useful examples can be found in these genres (*American Pie* offers a good insight into young American relationships and dating), it is often the more 'serious' or 'art-culture' end of the market that will offer a better quality of titles for the teacher to select from.

It emerged that students could differentiate between 'good' entertainment and 'good' educative material. Six of the films had some students responding that they did not enjoy the film but they felt that it was still a useful source of culture and should remain in any future course syllabus. Conversely, each movie also had students who had enjoyed their viewing experience but felt the film should not be part of a Cultural Studies syllabus

because it lacked educative value. This suggests that students are able to recognize, understand and appreciate the educative context of a film irrespective of its entertaining qualities. A prime example of this was *Wonderland*. This film could be labeled 'arty' due to its non-standard cinematic techniques, lack of plot (while at the same time aiming for a high standard of realism) and image-laden photography. One respondent commented that it was 'too dark,' and another 'the most boring film I have ever seen,' yet both respondents agreed that it should remain on the syllabus as 'that's showing the real life of western.'

Overall responses were very positive: some enjoyed the change it brought to the structure of the lesson – 'I've never had class like this before; cool;' some wanted to see the process repeated elsewhere – 'please make it again in another lesson if it's possible;' and some found it increased their motivation to learn – 'the only class that I've never been absent from.'

	Did you enjoy watching this film?	Was this film useful to help you learn about culture?	Would you keep this film in the Cultural Studies syllabus?
thirteen	Yes – 86%	Yes – 98%	Yes – 75%
<i>Friends</i>	Yes – 81%	Yes – 88%	Yes – 60%
<i>MTV Explained</i>	Yes – 52%	Yes – 86%	Yes – 51%
<i>Bend it Like Beckham</i>	Yes – 100%	Yes – 100%	Yes – 95%
<i>East is East</i>	Yes – 83%	Yes – 93%	Yes – 71%
<i>The People vs. Larry Flynt</i>	Yes – 68%	Yes – 91%	Yes – 66%
<i>EDtv</i>	Yes – 83%	Yes – 85%	Yes – 73%
<i>Natural Born Killers</i>	Yes – 33%	Yes – 52%	Yes – 24%
<i>My Little Eye</i>	Yes – 64%	Yes – 58%	Yes – 41%
<i>Four Weddings...</i>	Yes – 95%	Yes – 95%	Yes – 83%
<i>Wonderland</i>	Yes – 43%	Yes – 90%	Yes – 51%

Table 6:
Selected questionnaire results

As can be seen in table 6, nine of the eleven films received positive responses from 85-100% of students when asked if they felt that the film was useful to help them learn about the target culture. Even the two exceptions still registered over 50% positive responses.

More than half of the films were enjoyed by 81-100% of students. There are possible factors that could contribute to the lower number of positive responses to the other films: *The People vs. Larry Flynt* was the only film that was allocated no extra time for discussion; *My Little Eye* belongs to the horror genre so is by its very nature is defined as not being 'enjoyable' in the traditional sense of the word; *MTV Explained* was the only documentary included in the selection of films and may have been considered 'less exciting' than a film; *Natural Born Killers* was the least enjoyed film – one factor could be that this was the only film shown that did not have subtitles to aid listener comprehension. *Wonderland*, like *Natural Born Killers*, was considered too 'arty.' On the other hand, *Wonderland* was the only film where the number of students suggesting that it should remain as part of the syllabus was greater than the number of students who actually professed to liking the film.

D. Conclusions of the Case Study

Films without subtitles were much less effective in the teaching of culture than films with subtitles. Students complained of being confused and bored if there were no subtitles. The student's understanding is essential to any cultural studies exercise. Only after students have understood a message can they then analyze or evaluate it.

Introducing themes and films to the students before a film show is important. This can facilitate student interpretation and analysis of the material. If a student knows what to look for in a source, it should be more easily recognized. Introducing the cultural context of a film before it is shown to the students can focus their concentration and awareness. It can also provide useful background knowledge that will aid interpretation. The film *East is East* is set in the Manchester, North-west England of the 1970s. This fact is quickly picked up on by the Briton – visual clues within the opening credits of the film include fashion, transportation, background settings (e.g. a window-poster of a politician who was popular at that time) and even the music of the film soundtrack. These cultural markers and icons are often less obvious to foreign students and may not be recognized at all without some priming from the teacher before the film is presented.

Students appear to gain much more intercultural knowledge if the cultural context of a film is obviously limited to a single theme. The three films consistently gaining the highest number of positive responses in each

category in table 6 were *thirteen* (this deals with the lives of young teenagers in an American city), *Bend it Like Beckham* (this film follows the lives of a first- and second- generation Indian family living in London) and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (this film shows four weddings and a funeral within one social network of British friends). Each of these films was very detailed in their portrayal of each cultural context, but at the same time they did not cross thematic boundaries. This results in the student getting a huge amount of information, but all within a specific and relevant area. Each theme was multi-layered, resulting in a richness and density of knowledge available to the student, and the determined focus on one singular theme meant that students were not distracted from the cultural theme by other obtrusive cultural elements of the film.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REMOVING BIAS IN CULTURAL STUDIES

In the use of films, and indeed any materials that are used as aids to teach culture, “the cultural information should be presented in a nonjudgmental fashion, in a way that does not place value or judgment on distinctions between the student’s native culture and the culture exposed in the classroom” (Peterson and Coltrane 2003). Cultural Studies should be looked upon not as a door, but as a window. A teacher is not opening the door of another culture and inviting a student to come inside and ‘join’ this culture, nor should a teacher force a certain cultural viewpoint on the student. The teacher can bring neither cultural preconceptions nor bias to the cultural studies class. Teachers (especially native speakers) often do this, and are unaware that they do this, often in their belief that a certain practice in the target culture is better than or more worthy than, is more logical than or more understandable than, a different practice in a similar social context in the source culture. The teacher’s role is not to push a student through the door into the target culture, but instead their role is to draw back the curtains and reveal the practices and values of the target culture, give the student something to look at rather than something to be swallowed up in. This ‘looking at’ should not of course persuade or dissuade a student’s judgment, but should just *present* the target culture to the student.

This idea is supported by McKay, who equates culture with the term *ethnography* or “the study of the world of people” (Yates 1986:61, cited in McKay 1992:51). She recommends that in ethnographic research, cultures

should be studied from the viewpoint of members of the culture rather than from the viewpoint of those studying the culture. This perspective is labeled *emic*, and in contrast to its antonym *etic* (which studies cultures from an external perspective), tends to minimize the interference of ethnocentricity. As Damen (1987:52) states, cited by McKay (1992:53):

any efforts aimed at understanding another culture should be guided toward the identification of salient cultural patterns and themes, that all efforts should be made to overcome ethnocentric bondage and blindness, that the internal 'logic' of given cultural systems provides a unique 'world view' or their bearers, that this world view is best conveyed by reference to the perceptions of those who share these patterns, and that no cultural group should be judged as being inherently superior or inferior to another.

There is no better way to try and understand a culture than to see it from this 'native' view, for any external view will undoubtedly be tarnished by judgment and comparison. In this way, the teaching of culture can foster various aims. Among these aims are the ideas of international understanding, the possibilities to motivate students, facilitating the students' possible future visits to foreign countries (McKay 1992:56) or their local interactions with foreigners in the workplace, the education institution or the social arena, and the development of knowledge levels that support second language acquisition.

THE MISUSE OF FILMS AS A CULTURAL MATERIAL

The use of film is a great way to promote cultural awareness and discussion in the class. However, the teacher should be aware of the relevance and context of each film within the parameters of a syllabus and the goals of both the institution and the students themselves. Despite the requirements involved in teaching culture, each theme must be carefully considered within the value system of the source culture. Griffith points out that it is possible to choose a topic that seems neutral and interesting to the teacher (who considers it an essential part of the target culture), yet this topic is controversial, and therefore unsuitable, to students from the source culture. For example, a class on British pub culture may not be well received in Saudi Arabia; a feature on colonialism could prove uncomfortable to Aborigines; or "asking

questions about foreign travels would be tactless in many places where few will be able to afford international travel" (Griffith 1999:119).

It is very easy for the use of a film in class to replace other materials for all the *wrong* reasons. Hobbs (1998) suggests five misuses of media resources that should be avoided in the classroom:

1. *Students view videotape with no opportunity to discuss, ask questions, pause or review material.*

If time is limited in a classroom (the classes in the above case study were 1 hour 40 minutes in duration), and a teacher is worried that time spent on discussion will simply not be available if a complete film is to be shown, then time should be allocated in other ways. In the case study above, two films were shown in two classes while the third class was used as an opportunity to ask and answer questions, and to discuss ideas and opinions. This time allocation can also provide an opportunity to bring in supporting materials in the form of new texts (e.g. handouts) or other secondary materials that can enhance or further the cultural context of the film.

2. *Teacher mentally disengages while the TV is on in order to get "real work" done.*

A teacher should always view the film together with the students. First, it offers teachers a chance to re-familiarize themselves with the content of the film. Second, the teacher is usually regarded as the figure of authority in the class, and therefore an example to be followed. Students may feel more inclined to be inattentive if a teacher is also seen to be uninterested in following the film, or has even left the room altogether while the students 'get on' with watching the film.

3. *Teacher uses TV viewing to reward the class.*

Students are more often than not conditioned to see films as entertainment. Teachers must also show students that films are equally valid as texts (Davis 1998). The use of TV as an incentive hinders this process, merely strengthening the pre-conditioning of the students. It is also unimaginative, using up valuable teacher-student time that could be used for other equally- or more- rewarding activities such as games. It is recognized, however, that 'having fun' can, according to many teachers, be an acceptable motive for any teaching tool, and that watching a film can have benefits in relation to group dynamics and bonding achieved via shared, informal pleasures.

4. *Teacher uses media only to get students to pay attention to the subject matter*

This may not necessarily be construed as a misuse exactly, but suggest a teacher's belief that the students cannot or will not learn unless they *choose* to focus their attention to a particular activity, i.e. they will not read the chapter set as homework, deeming it boring or too long, but they will happily watch a movie, considered fun and an 'easy' cognitive activity. Films should be chosen only because they are the best available material for the planned lesson rather than for any other reason.

5. *Teacher uses video to keep students quiet and under control.*

Again, the goals and aims of a media resource used in this fashion are inconsistent with those of the teaching-learning process.

CONCLUSION

Film is an authentic and effective resource in the teaching of culture to second language learners. Films show a richness and density often lacking in other source areas, and can quickly create an interesting and enjoyable learning environment.

A certain onus, as always in any teaching-learning process, is on the teacher to integrate these resources successfully in the classroom. A teacher will provide suitable films with clear but detailed cultural contexts, as well as the chance to discuss, comment upon and review (both *before* and *after*). Cultural Studies should always, whether based on film or not, use a communicative approach. Only through thought and discussion can intercultural knowledge be shared and learned.

The choice of films, like any selection of materials, is vital. Compatibility of the resource and the cultural context within it should be considered in regard to the goals of the lesson, the student, the institution, and the source culture itself. The films must be useful in presenting or highlighting the chosen area/theme of the target culture that is being studied. *Harry Potter* does not show a regular British high school situation, but a fantasy setting. Sean Penn's *I Am Sam* would not be a good selection to introduce one-parent families even though this is the relationship that the two main characters find themselves in, but it could be used as an excellent source to show the legal and social view in America toward people with mental disability. *Tea With Mussolini* is not the best film to present a class studying the World War Two, but it could prove useful if the focus of the class is to look at the post-

Empire attitudes of the British. *American Beauty* does not portray the average American family, and could not be presented in this context. However, it could spark discussion based on the different perspectives it offers concerning the western embrace of capitalism and consumerism, and happiness and human desire.

A teacher who is prepared to consider carefully the context of a film choice in these wider roles, and who is prepared to spend an appropriate length of time developing the students skills of critical analysis, reasoning and communication in the context of viewing a film, can indeed have a very rewarding experience teaching Cultural Studies using film as the major source of materials.

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