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New Approaches to Exploiting Film in the Foreign Language Classroom

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This paper begins by arguing that the time has come for film, and film clips in particular, to take on a more central place in the foreign language curriculum. It describes in some detail the Library of Foreign Language Film Clips, a database of 10,000+ clips taken from foreign language feature films and tagged for the spoken vocabulary and for cultural, discourse, and linguistic features prominent in the clip. A number of issues that were confronted in the process of developing the database are described. Three ways in which film clips might be incorporated in the foreign language curriculum are then discussed: 1) by focusing on the spoken language; 2) by focusing on the clip as a representation of the behaviors or values of L2 speakers; and 3) by focusing on the clip as a text, whose meaning is created by the filmic devices and language spoken in the clip.

"Subtitles are only the most visible and charged markers of the way in which films engage…pressing matters of difference, otherness, and translation."
- Atom Egoyan and Ian Balfour

Film has long been regarded as an important resource for foreign language instructors, but, surprisingly, the penetration of foreign language films into the curriculum has been limited due to a variety of technological, pedagogical, and sociological factors.[1] However, we are now witnessing the confluence of a number of trends, which, taken together, is moving film towards the center of the foreign language curriculum. These trends include: the 2007 MLA report calling for a translingual/transcultural approach to language teaching;[2] the general tendency in contemporary culture to supplant the written with the spoken word, not only in entertainment, but also increasingly in Internet-based news reporting and commentary; the Internet as the primary method of video distribution, making it possible to work with video inside and outside of the classroom; film and television as important components of native speakers' cultural capital; and the reduction of legal barriers leading to the greater

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[1] These factors include: the transportation of necessary audiovisual equipment to the classroom (until recently); the difficulty of cuing a DVD to a particular scene; the inability to work with film as homework outside of the classroom; the amount of class time required for film viewing and analysis; the lack of tools to work with a rapidly flowing text stream; the copyright restrictions on manipulating the DVD; and the stigma of showing a film (i.e., supposedly no real teaching is taking place).

[2] http://www.mla.org/flreport. Translingual competence includes grammatical competence, but goes further in expecting students to be able "to operate between languages" and "to reflect on themselves and the world through the lens of another language and culture."

exploitation of copyrighted films in academic settings.[3] Given the increasing importance of video in the modern world, it is incumbent upon us as instructors to provide our students with opportunities to develop their listening skills, cultural awareness, and analytical skills so that they are able to interpret a video text.

In this paper I address the use of film in the classroom, focusing on the advantages to using relatively short clips (of up to four minutes duration). I will also raise two potential pitfalls of working with clips as opposed to the entire film. Then I will describe at length the development of the Berkeley Language Center's Library of Foreign Language Film Clips (LFLFC), created to help instructors find clips and facilitate student access to those clips both inside and outside the classroom. Finally, I will discuss three ways that clips can be used in the foreign language classroom: as a means of focusing on language use; as a reflection of the attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of a particular culture; and as a text where multiple semiotic systems converge to make meaning.

INTRODUCTION – WHY FILM NOW?

There are numerous reasons for incorporating foreign language film into our curricula. Film itself is an authentic source material (that is, created for native speakers and not learners of the language), a cultural artifact as worthy of study in foreign language classrooms as canonical texts of literature. The language spoken in film is often performed text, but it is a performance where native speakers suspend disbelief and accept the dialogue as 'real;'[4] one need only note the impact of phrases from popular films and television shows such as *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972) (English) or *Irony of Fate* (Ryazanov, 1975) (Russian) or *La Haine* (Kassovitz, 1995) (French) or Godzilla (Honda, 1954) (Japanese), to see how readily language from popular film becomes part of everyday speech. Moreover, the spoken language of film often incorporates a wide variety of sociolects of the target language, e.g., the speech of various socio-economic and educational levels, the speech of children and non-native speakers, slang and jargon, rural and urban speech, and a range of regional dialects. These reflect the varieties of speech that students will encounter in the target country, and making students aware of the varieties of L2 sociolects should be an important part of their language learning.

As the MLA Report (2007) cited above notes, film can be "used to challenge students' imaginations and to help them consider alternative ways of seeing, feeling, and understanding things" precisely because film is concerned with and portrays the burning social, economic, and political issues of the day, as well as peoples' reactions to these issues. Of course, not all films are concerned with socioeconomic issues, but are focused instead on human relationships and human foibles. At its heart, film can facilitate an analysis of the C2's[5] value system, allowing our students to reflect on differences between the student's

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[3] The Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 made it illegal to circumvent access-controlled technologies embedded in DVDs, which thereby made it illegal for academics to create clips from DVDs. In July of 2010 the Library of Congress granted college and universities an exemption from this provision of the DMCA. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Millennium_Copyright_Act.

[4] The suspension of disbelief is often culturally and film genre specific. Thus, the frequent shift to song in a typical Bollywood film or a particular style of acting will influence how an American audience receives the foreign language film, which might be quite different than the reception of the C1 audience.

[5] C1 refers to the culture, i.e., attitudes, behaviors and beliefs, of each student in the classroom, which will vary from student to student; C2 refers to the culture (and subcultures) of the language under study (the L2).

culture and the C2. These cultural values are embedded throughout films and can be analyzed in a series of teachable moments.

Despite these potential benefits to the use of film, film is difficult for students to understand, and difficult for language teachers to teach. Unlike printed text, which affords instructor and students time to dwell on the language of a passage or easily juxtapose the language of two different passages, with film the flow of information across the screen is rapid and nearly instantly gone. With a written text, students may not understand a grammatical structure or know the meaning of a particular word, but with film they often cannot even recognize words they do know in the rapid flow of speech. Moreover, the filmic text has multiple semiotic systems functioning simultaneously, which make it a challenge to process the audio and video information. The audio channel includes the spoken words of the actors and perhaps the voice-over of a narrator in addition to sound effects and music. The video channel transmits the gestures of the actors, their position relative to one another, the position, angle, focal length, and range of the camera (a visual point of view), the length of the shot, and the setting, including lighting, color palette, etc. As is the case with literary texts, students must learn the L2 vocabulary to be able to talk and write about the scene. Moreover, foreign language instructors themselves are not always well versed in cinematic devices and require some training.[6]

While there are instances when viewing an entire film is preferable (after all, there are courses and textbooks built on a film curriculum of six to fifteen films), the difficulties of doing so support the use of shorter clips from films, commercials, and TV productions. More specifically, the use of clips offers instructors a clear advantage in that students are able to focus on one scene in depth and explore the language of the clip and the various components of visual semiotics (dress, setting, gesture, facial expressions, color palette, etc). In other words, clips afford a close 'reading' of a scene. In addition, there are numerous pedagogical benefits to the use of film clips. The quantity of language is more manageable, the clip can be replayed multiple times in class, or the clips can be put on a learning management system, thereby giving students access to clips as homework assignments. Overall the options instructors have in terms of assignments are infinitely greater (see below).

While there are certainly clear advantages to the use of clips, there are disadvantages as well. Isolating a specific scene from a film decontextualizes it and some interpretive meaning is lost. Scenes in a film are often in dialogue with one another: conversations echo earlier conversations, or the juxtaposition of scenes is often used to create meaning. As is the case with great works of art, something is lost when a part is torn from the whole. In a similar vein language instructors commonly use excerpts from printed texts, and even when using the entire text, students do not read every text with which that text interacts. In the case of film, like with reading texts, instructors can use strategies to contextualize the clip in order to facilitate analysis and comprehension. For example, instructors can provide the context of a scene, show longer segments before focusing in on specific clips and/or show multiple clips. Two or more scenes from the same movie can be easily contrasted, or clips can be combined with written texts to explore a topic from multiple modes, or clips on similar topics from multiple films can be compared and contrasted, e.g., a scene from a foreign film and the

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[6] A good place to start is Fabe 2004.

same scene from its Hollywood remake, as has been demonstrated by Sabine Levett in the Cultura project.[7]

THE LIBRARY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM CLIPS (LFLFC)[8]

A few years ago several language instructors began asking the staff at the Berkeley Language Center to create clips for classroom viewing. It soon became clear that putting clips on a DVD for one instructor, only to have a second instructor request the same clips six months later, was not going to be a productive endeavor.

Image 1: Screenshot from the LFLFC: Splash page

Thus was born the idea of creating an Internet-based database of film clips, particularly a system that would enable delivery of clips over the Internet and thereby provide students with access to clips from their residences. The LFLFC was the collaborative work over a three-year period of Chris Palmatier, the Berkeley Language Center's programmer and web designer, and myself, with additional input from language instructors at UC Berkeley.

The process of cutting and tagging clips is time consuming. After ripping the film from the DVD and encoding (.H264 codec) the film as an mp4 file, each film is cut into clips based on the scene content, but for technical and pedagogical reasons no clip is longer than four minutes. After the clips are created, the taggers (typically native speaker graduate students or language lecturers) create lists of the vocabulary spoken in the clip in dictionary format and English descriptors of the clip content from a controlled list of items. A typical 100-minute film requires 40 hours to clip and tag. As of June 1, 2011, the LFLFC has more than 9000 clips extracted from 265 films in 17 languages. The film collection consists of 1125 films in 41 languages, so there remains much work to be done.

The design of the database was driven by five overarching factors: 1) to create a system that would allow instructors to search for and find clips that could be easily integrated into their syllabi; 2) to provide instructors with the tools to exploit the clips pedagogically; 3) to provide students with heuristic tools to help them make sense of the clip; 4) to allow users to comment on content already extant or to add new content so that its application is dynamic; 5) to work within the fair use doctrine of U.S. Copyright law. I will now cover how these features were implemented into the LFLFC.

Searching for clips

When using the search tool on the online database several data fields are queried looking for matches of the search term: descriptive tags, the clip title, clip description, pedagogical comments, user comments, and vocabulary. Each of these is described below in addition to discussing some of the difficulties in their design and application.

Descriptive Tags. To enable instructors to search for clips required the creation of a tagging scheme that would anticipate the kinds of searches that language instructors would want to perform. Tags were divided into three broad areas: linguistics, speech acts, and culture. *Linguistic tags* for the most part reference the locutionary act and include grammar,[9] lexicon ('profanity', 'names', 'numbers'), sociolects ('antiquated', 'bookish', 'bureaucratic', 'slang', 'non-native', i.e., language spoken by non-native speakers), genre (speech quoted from another genre, not the dialogue/monologue of the film, e.g., reading from a 'book', 'letter', watch a 'play' within the film, listening to the voiceover of a 'narrator'), and a handful of other tags (gesture, idiom, irony, language play, metaphor). *Speech acts* refer to the functional use of language and include both illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Examples include 'greeting', 'introduction', 'advice', 'description', 'narration', 'obfuscation'. In addition, taggers often found that it was helpful to language instructors to extend the notion of speech act to

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[9] Grammar tags, e.g., 'case', 'tense', 'subjunctive' were not used to tag instances of the speech, but rather either the unusual or sustained use of a grammatical construction or when characters comment on the grammar in their speech. Early in the project we came to realize that tagging for instances of specific grammatical features, such as 'passé composé,' would be counterproductive. A French clip that was particularly interesting in its use of various French tenses, or a clip that was saturated with a particular tense, would be tagged for 'tense', and then the tagger could comment further in a comment field.

include items that were not speech acts in and of themselves, but that included a specific set of vocabulary and speech acts bundled together. For example, in our *speech acts* we find the tag 'telephone' used to describe instances where telephone vocabulary are found ('may I speak to…', 'sorry, wrong number', etc.). Finally, *cultural tags* include the setting ('bank', 'beach', 'hotel', 'school'),[10] actions that characters are engaged in ('drinking', 'cleaning', 'grooming'), and topics of discussion ('education', 'health', 'marriage', 'nature', 'crime', 'elections', etc.). The project's Wiki[11] contains a complete list of tags used to describe the content and language of a clip.

Both the use of descriptive tags and deciding on the specificity of the tagging proved to be a challenge. On the one hand, a highly specific system of tagging, for example, one containing tags for 'robbery,' 'murder,' 'rape,' 'assault,' etc., would yield very precise results and would work well if the collection of clips for a language consisted of thousands of clips, but would be overly detailed for a language having only several dozen clips. On the other hand, generalizing a category and tagging 'crime' works for the smaller data sets, but yields too many results for the larger data sets. As more clips were added, taggers sought more specific descriptors and as a result their number became inflated. Currently, I am working on reducing the number of descriptors in the database, while still including specific information (e.g., murder) in the clip description, so that a search on 'murder' will still yield results.

Equally challenging is deciding when a clip qualifies as containing a particular feature. For example, taggers had to decide how much screen time, how many words, and what level of speaker involvement is needed for an apology to be tagged as 'apology'. Would a clip be tagged for 'apology' if a scene included a perfunctory, "You spilled your coffee." "Oh, sorry. Say, who's taking the kids to school today?" or would it have to include something more substantial? At what point does a speech act, a setting, become taggable? It was decided that tagging a clip for a setting makes sense because it contains cultural information (e.g., 'train' – how people queue up while waiting for a train, the language used in purchasing tickets, how people behave and are dressed on the train, etc.); however, a scene involving a conversation between two people on a train should not be tagged for 'train' if that cultural information is absent and the train only serves as the location where the conversation takes place. Unfortunately, when tagging the clips the choice is rarely clear and individual taggers handle similar scenes differently, some choosing to tag for 'apology' where others would not, leading to a degree of inevitable inconsistency in the database. However, the extensive training of taggers minimized this inconsistency, and whatever inconsistencies do remain will be addressed by end users through their ability to comment on individual clips (see below). In an ideal world two taggers would tag each film separately and then agree on a common set of tags. However, the desire to build a workable corpus of films and budgetary constraints did not allow the luxury of two taggings for each film.

Clip Title and Clip Description. Each clip is given a short descriptive title such that an instructor who knows a film can scan a list of clips from that film and have a sense of the content of each clip. The clip description summarizes the content of the clip and contextualizes it within the plot of the entire film so that students can make sense of the

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[10] Some may find the inclusion of setting under culture curious. Our goal here was to tag clips in a way that would help instructors to find clips of interest. To that end certain behaviors or cultural artifacts are associated with places, in other words, the language, dress, and behavior of individuals in a church setting will be quite different from that of a beach or a bank.

[11] http://blc.berkeley.edu/index.php/wiki/LFLFC%3ADescriptive_tags/

events of the clip. However, inasmuch as the title and description could impact the interpretation of the clip, these items may be hidden when film clips are ordered for student viewing.

Pedagogical Comments and User Comments. When taggers clip and tag a film, they have the opportunity to make suggestions for ways in which the particular clip may be used or features in the clip of particular value to language instructors. Similarly, instructors using the database may comment on how they use a particular clip or add to the list of notable features of the clip. These comments allow for ongoing changes to the database by end users, keeping the entire enterprise dynamic and flexible.

Vocabulary. The language spoken in the clip is tagged by dictionary form and can be searched. Tagging vocabulary presented its own set of challenges. Capturing spoken language in written form involves numerous compromises and decisions. Since the main reason to capture the spoken vocabulary was to provide students with some scaffolding for understanding the spoken language, without resorting to captions or a script (see Heuristic Tools, below), taggers relied on dictionary forms, but determining the dictionary form is not always straightforward. For example, is the dictionary form of a participle used as an adjective the participle or the verb from which it is derived? In the case of Russian, this question was answered by tagging adjectival uses of participles as adjectives, but participles used as part of a verbal construction were tagged as the verbal infinitive ("The broken glass lay scattered on the floor" would be tagged as 'broken'; "The glass was broken" would be tagged as 'break').

Using English as the primary language for our descriptor tags, clip titles, and clip descriptions biases the system to an English view of the world. The tag "train" evokes different images and connotations than Russian поезд 'train' or электричка 'suburban commuter train'. The issues raised by using English are only partially alleviated by supplementing the English tags with some L2 terms, e.g., Russian дача/dacha 'summer cottage' or Japanese げんかん/genkan 'entry way'. It was decided to use English as our primary system in order to maintain in the tagging some consistency of approach across languages.

Pedagogical tools

The single most important pedagogical tool offered to instructors is a clip annotator. Instructors are able to comment on or to ask questions about a clip and embed the comments/questions within the clip at whatever frame the instructor chooses. This greatly facilitates the instructor's ability to focus student attention on language, culture, or the cinematic construction of meaning when students are working with clips outside of the classroom. Any annotations created by one instructor are available to other instructors to add to clips when they are ordered.

Instructors also have the ability to create lesson plans around a clip or clips. Metadata about the lesson plan (language level, areas of knowledge, activities involved, in-class or homework) are collected, and handouts or exercises can be uploaded, and any clips in the lesson plan are listed. Other instructors can then download all the materials and have the clips made available to them at the click of a mouse.

As noted above, instructors can also choose whether to make information about a clip and film (clip description, year portrayed in the clip, film description) available to students, so as to not unduly influence students' interpretations of a clip.

Heuristic tools

In addition to the option of showing clip and film descriptions (in English), instructors decide whether students watch the clips with no subtitles, subtitles (in English), or captions (subtitles in the target language).[12] Of course, providing subtitles affects the viewing of the film, as students tend to listen less and to focus on the English text. They also see less of the film canvas.[13] Subtitling also makes the film less foreign by introducing the student's L1 and all of the associated values and behaviors associated with the C1 and embedded in the students' value system, although there might be very good pedagogical reasons for employing subtitles. For example, one may wish to foreground how English subtitles have subtly changed the meaning of the passage, creating an exercise in translingual awareness. Captions, on the other hand, aid in acquisition and in the retention of new vocabulary and overall comprehension,[14] although the focus on listening has been lost.

The second vocabulary tool that instructors can choose to make available to students is a list of the key words in the passage. When taggers watch clips, they not only tag for culture, linguistics, and speech acts, but also for the spoken vocabulary in the clip, which is presented in an alphabetized list of dictionary forms.

Deciding how to represent the spoken language in written form presents numerous challenges. Taggers did not create a phonetic transcript or even captions, but a list of the key words. For example, an English sentence such as: "Yesterday we stopped by the 7-11 on our way home from church." could be tagged: [7-11, by, church, from, home, on, stop by, way, yesterday], omitting the personal and possessive pronouns. However, it could also be tagged without the prepositions, if taggers decided that they were not key to understanding the clip. Similar issues were confronted by taggers in each language – whether to tag particles, prepositions, common adverbs such as 'now' or 'even', demonstrative, possessive, personal pronouns, etc. The initial taggers in each language established working guidelines for their language, often through a process of negotiation, and then published their guidelines on a Wiki site, to which later taggers could then refer.[15] As taggers negotiated how to tag a particular spoken phrase, they had to balance two disparate constituencies: students, who use the vocabulary list as a tool to help them make sense of the spoken language (and therefore benefit from phrases more than individual words) and language instructors seeking to use the vocabulary lists as a means of finding clips modeling particular spoken words.

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[12] Depending, of course, on what was available on the original DVD from which the clips were taken.

[13] Within the film industry there is substantial controversy over any kind of subtitling, with many directors preferring that their films be dubbed so as to not distract from the visual impact of the image on screen. This should give pause to language instructors who would limit the use of film to a modeling of language and fail to see film as a means to explore the creation of meaning in a particular context.

[14] See Winke, 2010.

[15] See http://dcrf-dev.berkeley.edu/blcwiki-dev/index.php/Spanish_tags for an example of the guidelines for Spanish; tab to the discussion for examples of the negotiating process between taggers.

Image 2: Screenshot from the LFLFC: Student view of a clip, with the annotation tool, the vocabulary list, and background information on the film all visible

Currently the LFLFC development team is working on another tool to aid student comprehension. By February 2012, students will be able to play a file of the audio spoken in the video clip, but stretched to 150% of its original length, without change in pitch. In this slowed down audio it is considerably easier for students to indentify individual words in the speech flow and thereby understand the text, without resorting to subtitles, which tend to turn listening into a reading exercise.

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Dynamic structure

In designing the database great importance was placed on creating a system that instructors would be able to modify according to their needs. This is accomplished first by a clip comment field, where instructors can make comments about a clip (e.g., add tags, indicate problematic areas in the clip, or make suggestions for the pedagogical exploitation of the clips). Second, the annotations created by an instructor for a particular clip are available to any other instructor for inclusion when they order the clip. Therefore, the annotations become a shared resource for all instructors. Third, the system allows the creation of lesson plans for a clip or a series of clips (see Pedagogic Tools, above).

Fair use

Another constraint on our design was meeting the fair use test of U.S. Copyright Law.[16] While the purpose of these clips is clearly educational, each clip is a small percent of the total film, and arguably we introduce students to foreign language film thereby benefiting the producers and distributors of these films, yet it was still necessary to take measures to insure that the clips would not be abused and show up on YouTube or other public sites.

First, each institution accessing the film clip database must indicate which DVDs are owned by the institution before instructors at that institution can access the clips from that DVD. Second, instructors agree to post the URLs to the clips only on university-owned, password-protected websites. Third, the URLs are active for a two-week period and then become invalid, generating an error message. Fourth, the URL contains information about the film, including links to the site where the DVD was acquired and a picture of the DVD cover, thus promoting acquisition or rental of the DVD by students.[17]

INTEGRATING FILM CLIPS INTO THE CURRICULUM

Film clips may be used in the foreign language curriculum in a myriad of ways. In this paper I will focus on three: first, film clips can serve as a model of language use, in particular as a vehicle to improve listening comprehension, enrich vocabulary, and develop translingual competence; second, as a model and reflection of the C2's cultural artifacts, values, and behaviors, and therefore a vehicle to develop students' transcultural competence; and third, as an exploration of how multiple semiotic systems work together to create an artistic, meaning-full text. In theory, this third area should be a natural consequence of activities in the first two.

Sometimes instructors have attempted to use the database to teach grammatical form, but this is a use of the film clip that I find less convincing. Individual grammatical forms lasts only a fraction of a second in a clip that is often several minutes long. As a result, taggers rarely tag for grammatical forms, with the exception of passages that sustain a grammatical form at some length, e.g., a series of imperatives, a past tense narration using a

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[16] A detailed description of fair use is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use

[17] Indeed, many students report that they rent or purchase DVDs of clips they found interesting or entertaining.

particular verbal form repeatedly, a series of comparisons, etc. In our experience a focus on individual word forms is not a particularly effective use of this database or its clips.

However, textbooks whose approach includes functional uses of language or that contain culture references, no matter how cursory, present opportunities for using film to develop these topics using authentic cultural material. For example, in one chapter of our first-year Russian textbook verbs for "to marry" are introduced. The unit contains a sidebar on weddings in Russia, together with a half-dozen words (bride, groom, ring, etc.) associated with weddings listed in the text. A search of the database yields 15 clips tagged for wedding (70 for marriage), including a scene of a church wedding in 19th century Russia, a wedding celebration in a dorm in 1950's Soviet Russia, a documentary account of the first wedding in space between a Russian cosmonaut and an American astronaut, clips with characters planning a wedding and calling off a wedding, etc. In short, ample material is available to not only extend the vocabulary presented in the textbook, but to explore changing Russian wedding traditions, attitudes towards marriage, expectations of male and female roles in marriage, and so forth.

Focus on language

Film clips afford opportunities to expose students to performed conversations, transactions, and other verbal exchanges common in the C2. These exchanges provide students, in particular those at the elementary and low intermediate levels, an opportunity to improve their listening skills and broaden their vocabulary, using the visual clues as an aid to understanding the spoken language. In this section I will examine how clips might be used to improve students' listening comprehension and translingual competence, and finally I discuss how instructors might use subtitles productively.

Listening comprehension. For students just beginning their study of the language or at the intermediate level, the kinds of questions instructors might pose to students would tend to focus on the denotative nature of the linguistic sign, and student answers could range from 1-2 words to entire paragraphs.[18] For example: What phone number was left on the answering machine? What words did the male character use that are denigrating to women? Where did the female character say she is planning to go that evening? How does each character want to spend the bonus money and what arguments do they put forth in defense of their point of view? Such questions are often not always easy for beginning and intermediate students, as they do require an understanding of the vocabulary and grammar in the passage, which students may not understand even when they know the individual words and grammar involved but cannot make it out in the rapid flow of speech. In this regard the visual clues in the film and the vocabulary lists of spoken language provided in the LFLFC are particularly helpful aids for student understanding. Questions such as these, focusing on the denotative nature of the linguistic sign are a necessary prerequisite before moving on to more complex uses of language.

Film clips are much more valuable as a context in which students might infer characters' attitudes and societal values based on subtle uses of language, gesture, or even silence. For example, in the Japanese film *Departures* (Takita, 2008), the main character Daigo, after losing his job, confesses to his wife that he borrowed a very large sum of money to buy his cello.

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[18] In addition to asking questions, there are numerous activities that develop student listening comprehension (see Sherman 2003).

She is upset, reproaches him for not discussing it with her, and then says "Gohan tsukuru-ne" ("I'll fix dinner). Here the 'ne' particle connotes a subtle inclusivity, not in the sense that she is inviting him to help fix dinner, but rather her 'ne' signals that she is reaching out to her husband even though she is upset with him. An instructor might ask students to speculate on whether they think Diago and Mika's marriage would survive his financial deception and their reasons for thinking so.[19]

A second example of this more subtle use of language can be found in the Russian film *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears* (Menshov, 1979). In a scene late in the film Katya, Aleksandra, and Goga are eating dinner when the doorbell rings and a man Goga's age enters. Goga invites him to dinner and offers him some cognac. The guest (Aleksandra's biological father, unbeknownst to Aleksandra and Goga), agrees and takes a seat. Goga turns to Aleksandra and says in a half whisper, «Давай, Александра, подсуетись» ("C'mon, Aleksandra, quickly get busy"). The dictionary meaning of the word подсуетиться is 'to get busy, to make use of oneself' and the subtext here is 'get out a place setting for our guest'. However, this surface level meaning contained in subtitles and dictionaries only begins to convey the deeper pragmatic meaning inherent in the exchange. This particular verb would normally only be used by a family member speaking to another family member. Therefore by using this verb, Goga establishes his moral paternity and his closeness with Aleksandra precisely at the moment when her biological father reenters her life. By failing to grasp how the director has aligned Goga and Sasha linguistically, even though she is physically positioned between the two men, students are apt to misinterpret the scene. Again, students could be asked to speculate on where Sasha's sympathies lie and what clues, linguistic or visual, support their hypothesis.

Subtitles and captions. Subtitles present instructors with another avenue to explore language in film, focusing on what happens to meaning in the process of translating a spoken text into written English. Film, with its inherent time constraints and more often than not highly colloquial forms of speech, presents its own particular sets of issues when films are 'translated' through the mechanism of subtitling. Moreover, when films are accompanied with professionally made subtitles, ample opportunities are created to focus students' attention on the foreignness of the original text and the way this foreignness is neutralized in the subtitles.

As pointed out earlier, the spoken language is but one of the many streams of meaning in a filmic text. Within film studies, metaphors comparing a director's work with that of a painter's, e.g., a director's color palette, the film frame, etc., underscore the importance of the visual component. It is in this regard that we are to understand the preference of many directors for the dubbing of voices over subtitling in rendering the spoken text in another language (Egoyan & Balfour, 2006). Fortunately for foreign language educators, subtitling is the more popular medium of 'translating.'[20]

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[19] I am indebted to Wakae Kambara, Lecturer in Japanese at UC Berkeley, who used this scene as part of her BLC project on using film to teach Japanese sentence-ending particles. For a more detailed analysis of this film, please see her paper in this issue.

[20] Although a foreign language film dubbed into English might be used in much the same way as a subtitled film, the disadvantage of a dubbed film is that one loses the foreign language and with it much of the culture. However, in a particularly fascinating analysis Giulia Centeneo of UC Santa Cruz has reported on the ways that various Italian dialects are used in the dubbing of Hollywood films to reinforce certain character traits. For example, the bad guys in a Hollywood Western will be voiced by actors with southern Italian dialects.

If the goal of the instructor in showing a film clip is to explore language usage, subtitles are perhaps best used at more advanced levels of language classes and limited to a directed analysis of the subtitles themselves. Although for elementary students subtitled films facilitate comprehension through the L1, very little language is going to be learned (perhaps students will pick up an occasional word, e.g., the Japanese word for painful when watching a woman scream "itai" as a doctor treats her wounded finger, but this would happen whether or not the film is subtitled). And there are times when elementary students can identify errors in subtitling (e.g., in the Russian film *Prisoner of the Mountains* (Bodrov, 1996), a doctor tells a recruit to «присядь»/"squat" but while the subtitles say that he is doing a sit-up the recruit actually squats; no knowledge of Russian is needed to identify the error).

In advanced classes, however, students can explore the inevitable choices that must be made in the process of subtitling, not only questioning what was left out and what was added, but also addressing the emotional tone established by certain words and whether or not the subtitles capture that tone successfully. After working with the subtitles that accompany a film, it is a particularly useful exercise to have students subtitle a clip from a film. It is useful for the instructor as the exercise will demonstrate the level of students' comprehension, and it is useful for students in developing their translingual competency, i.e., the ability to understand and move between the L1 and L2. In contrast to translating printed texts, the subtitling exercise can draw on a host of visual clues such as interlocutors, gestures, facial expressions, as well as the spoken word and the intonation, to help students choose the English equivalent of the L2. The repeated viewing of a clip in order to capture the language and subtitle the clip (or transcribe the spoken text) often reveals aspects of a scene that are missed in a single viewing. However, if one chooses to show film (clips) with subtitles to intermediate or advanced students, the subtitles should be analyzed and challenged – using English subtitles as an aid to comprehension in a passive viewing of the film is counterproductive precisely because they deprive the film of its foreignness.

Finally, we should address the issue of captions (subtitles in the L2). According to (Winke, Gass & Sydorenko 2010), showing film with captions increases student vocabulary recognition and comprehension of the text. However, what remains unclear is whether providing students with captions helps them to develop their ability to listen and to comprehend a spoken text over time. In other words, comprehension of the text may increase because the students rely on reading skills so the impact on the development of listening skills remains unclear.

Focus on culture

Film might be used as a window on cultural artifacts, to show dress, rural and urban housing, the inside of a church, a graveyard, etc. Video clips can be exploited to explore differences in attitudes and values between the C2 and C1. Students explore characters' emotional reactions to other characters and to events, reactions that are sometimes difficult for American students to read. For example, in the Japanese film *The Eel* (Imamura, 1997), the male and female leads are walking down the street discussing her pregnancy. He has led others to believe that the child is his. She offers to have an abortion, but he says to her that she shouldn't, she should have the child, at which point she drops a few steps behind him and follows in his footsteps. A Western interpretation might very well interpret her stepping behind him as an act of rejection or submission, but for the Japanese viewer the meaning is

clear: she is accepting him as her husband and showing him due respect; cf. consider the Japanese proverb that says a woman should walk three paces behind her husband. As a discussion exercise to explore this cultural difference instructors can ask students what their reaction is to this scene or to think about occasions when Westerners, too, would also step back and yield space as a sign of respect.

Similarly, Russian films can be used to examine Russian attitudes towards alcohol, doctors and medicine, the police, marriage, children, the elderly, all the while contrasting and comparing them to American attitudes, etc., in order to attempt to debunk common stereotypes both about the C2 as well as American culture. Our challenge, as instructors, is to see these clips as our students see them, i.e., with American values projected onto the Russian scene, and then decide on a course of action that would dispel those notions or, at a minimum, to raise student consciousness about the possibility of alternative interpretations. Such an approach not only opens the student's mind to the C2's way of understanding the world, but it also juxtaposes the C2's values with those of American culture, permitting a deeper understanding of the C1.

Focus on interpretation of text

The particular approach to film that is advocated here, the use of film clips, does present some difficulties when the question of textual interpretation is raised, because any one scene derives some of its meaning in its relationship to other scenes in the film. For example, in my Russian class we watch a clip from *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (Bodrov, 1996), where a schoolteacher reads a letter from her son, a draftee serving in the army, to her elementary school class. In the scene the soldier's letter is recited in a very simple language, something quite close to the language of the elementary children. The letter is initially read in his narrated voice and then it shifts to the voice of his mother as the camera focuses on the faces of the schoolchildren. In other scenes in the film the soldier, having been taken prisoner by a Caucasian tribal leader, makes a toy for village children and is able to bond with his captors, in particular the young daughter of the tribal chief. His child-like character is contrasted with his more worldly senior officer, also taken prisoner. In the context of the entire film the letter reading scene reinforces the young officers innocence and his openness to Chechen culture, contrasting it with the senior officer's crassness and dismissive attitude to all things Chechen. These traits are important to the characters' fate later in the film (the child-like soldier is able to establish a human contact with his captors and survives, his senior officer does not). In order to counter the possible interpretative limitations of viewing only this clip, students can explain what this particular scene tells them about the soldier's character. Typically, focusing solely on language, most students will respond that the soldier is not well educated. For most students further prompting is necessary for them to see how the visual (scenes of children) and verbal (the soldier's child-like language) are working together to create meaning, i.e., the soldier's child-like nature and inherent goodness.

Of course, the three areas of focus we have been considering, language, culture, and interpretation of text, are not mutually exclusive and all three interact when working with a clip. Consider the clip "Kolya finds Goga" from the Russian romantic comedy *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears* (Menshov, 1979) (here slightly truncated and in my translation from the Russian):

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(woman opens apartment door for a man who has rung the bell)

Man: Georgii Ivanovich, also known as Goga, Gosha, Yuri, Gora, Zhora, does he live here?

Woman: There's only Georgii Ivanovich living here. This way.

(she leads him down a corridor, where they encounter a painter and an old woman)

Man (to old woman): Hello.

Old Woman: Hello.

Woman: He is looking for Georgii Ivanovich.

Old Woman: Oh dear lord.

(man enters room, where another man is sitting at a table, covered in bottles of beer and vodka. The first man (Nikolai) sits down, is poured a full glass of vodka, which he drinks in one motion, takes a piece of dried fish and smells it and then puts it down).

Georgii Ivanovich: Gosha.

Nikolai: Nikolai (they shake hands).

Georgii: What's the weather like today.

Nikolai: It was raining this morning.

Georgii: What's happening in the world?

Nikolai: There's no stability. Again terrorists have hijacked an airplane.

(scene shifts to a darkened room where three women are sitting on a sofa and armchair, two of whom are crying)

Woman 1: And why are you crying?

Woman 2 (to Woman 3): Katenka, you are so lucky! You used to say all the time that at our age you can't fall in love anymore because you'll immediately see all the person's faults.

Katya: He doesn't have any faults. He's the most perfect man in the world.

(Scene returns to the men, now both heavily under the influence of the vodka)

Nikolai: You said that if a wife has a higher salary, it doesn't suit you, so how could she admit …

Georgii: Stop trying to pull the wool over my eyes. She deceived me …

Nikolai: No, it's a misunderstanding.

Georgii: No, that is what she believes. She revealed, in her actions, that for her, a person's social status is higher than his, than my personal status.

Nikolai: Translate that for me. Listen …

Georgii: Again?

Nikolai: No.

(Scene shifts back to the crying women. The men return, the women spring up to feed them).

Image 2: Screenshot from the LFLFC Website: Ordering a clip: Options available to instructors when ordering a clip for students

With regard to language,[21] this clip can be used at the very beginning of a first-year Russian course to illustrate the usage of Russian names: the formal name and patronymic, as well as the large number of diminutive forms built from Georgii (Goga, Gosha, etc.) and, later in the clips, forms derived from Ekaterina. At issue here is not only a list of forms, but also how they are used. For example, note the interchange following the drinking of vodka: Nikolai has shown he can drink an entire glass and knows what to do with the fish, earning Georgii's respect, who offers his name in diminutive form, Gosha. Nikolai responds with the more formal full form of his first name, because Georgii has yet to establish his credentials. And the woman who answered the door has only a formal relationship with Georgii, so she only knows him by his name and patronymic.

Other interesting questions can be raised to explore cultural phenomena found in this scene:

- What kind of apartment is this? (Communal).
- Why did Nikolai greet the old woman and not the painter in the hall? (He shows respect to the elderly and doesn't want to disturb a man at work).
- Is it strange that Katya would find a man who goes on a drinking spree after having learned that she earns more than he does, "the most perfect man in the world?"
- What is the role of vodka in the relationship between the men?
- Is a man getting sloshed a concern for Katya, other than her fear of losing him?

These questions focus on behaviors depicted on screen that reflect societal values of that time. These can be juxtaposed with clips from other films where drinking is portrayed, either romanticized as here, or shown in a negative light, with all of the accompanying damage to family relationships and to the social structure depicted in the most graphic realism (e.g., scenes from *Little Vera* 1989). The showing of only one clip might reinforce stereotypes (i.e., 'Russians love to drink and do so heavily'); multiple clips can reveal to students a range of Russian attitudes and behaviors surrounding the consumption of vodka in Russian society.

Finally, as an interpretation of a text, students might be asked whether this scene is from a comedy or a drama, and what evidence they would cite to support their claim (elements of comedy in Nikolai's dress, their slapstick while arguing about Katya's intent, the language). We might ask whether the students see any particular theme being developed in the scene and what cinematic devices are used by the director to develop that theme? (The use of juxtaposition of shots of the men getting drunk interspersed between shots of the women crying at home builds sympathy for the plight of Russian women, and in fact much of the film is about Katya's inability to find a worthy man).

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to show why film has historically been such an underutilized resource in our foreign language classroom and why this should no longer be the case. As is the case with printed text, film provides instructors with a means of exploring how a foreign culture uses a particular medium to create meaning and represent its values to itself; unlike

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[21] Solely for the sake of discussion, I separate the language, cultural and interpretive aspects of this clip. In fact, they are intimately interrelated.

text, the medium is oral, but with a strong visual component. I have argued for an approach to film that works from the film clip. When an entire film is shown, time constraints can prevent a class from analyzing a film in the same way that written texts are treated in the classroom, i.e., students have the opportunity to explore specific passages for their language, point of view, the audience being addressed, intertextual dialog, etc. It is precisely at the level of the clip that we can explore the text in depth. And even when entire films are shown in class, specific clips can still be used to analyze a specific scene or to juxtapose multiple scenes as homework assignments.

I have considered both the potential benefits and future areas of inquiry related to the Library of Foreign Language Film Clips at UC Berkeley. In particular, I have discussed ways of responding to the decontextualization of the clip and the methods used for tagging the film content and the spoken language. Finally, I have looked at a number of ways that film clips can be exploited in the classroom to develop listening comprehension, to deepen students' understanding of the C2, and to sharpen their critical thinking and appreciation for the multiple ways that meaning is created in a film text. Our challenge, as instructors, is to devise activities that involve students in a process of discovery of the linguistic, cultural, and cinematic clues that together form the basis for an interpretation of text.

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