

The Role of Films in the Teaching of Foreign Languages

Ildiko Csajbok-Twerefou¹

Abstract

Films are a very valuable medium in the teaching of a foreign language. Our research and experience indicate that in the foreign language classroom films offer an opportunity for students to learn not only the target language and its culture, but also new words, new terminologies and new phraseology, as well as their proper usage—activities which would not be achieved in a normal language classroom. Films can also create a forum for students to practise using the language through class discussions, especially at the advanced level. It is for this reason that many language-teaching institutions have multi-media rooms with the requisite facilities such as television sets, video cassette players, CD and DVD players. However, the successful use of films depends on many factors, including the preparedness of the instructor and the right approach, and perhaps these considerations account for their virtual absence from classrooms in many countries, and specifically in Ghana. In this work we analyze the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages. We focus on the importance of films, the mode of their selection and the appropriate timing for their use. We also outline a methodology and recommend exercises at each stage of the teaching process in order to provide a point of reference for instructors.

I. Introduction

There are many ways and conditions of teaching and learning a foreign language. These include individual or group learning with or without an instructor. The main aim of learning a language is to be able to understand, speak, read or write the language. In all these endeavours films can play a significant role. Films provide a context for students to better appreciate the language and its cultural context and can therefore make foreign language learning easier and more interesting.

¹ Dr. Ildiko Csajbok-Twerefou is a Lecturer in the Russian Section of the Department of Modern Languages, University of Ghana.

It is for these reasons that multi-media rooms with facilities such as television sets, video cassette players, CD and DVD players are made available for the teaching and learning of foreign languages in many institutions. Unfortunately, in foreign language teaching departments in many countries in general, and in Ghana in particular, the use of films is not yet a common practice. The argument most often heard is that watching films in class does not give students the opportunity and the time to practice using the language. Besides, the general perception of many lecturers and students is that films are used for fun. This last point is true. However, the fun nature of films makes them a valuable resource for language learning. This is because using them provides the dual advantage of having fun in class while also learning. The video and audio components offer model pronunciation, intonation and accent, as well as showcase the behavior of the native speakers of the language. These aspects of language use cannot be found in textbooks or storybooks.

The Department of Modern Languages of the University of Ghana offers six foreign languages and therefore has six sections: Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish and Swahili. Apart from Chinese, which was introduced a few years ago, all these languages have been taught for many years. Based on the previous knowledge of first year students, one can categorize these languages into two groups, with French and Arabic in one and the rest in another. This is because in Ghana French is taught in junior high and senior high schools (JHS and SHS), and a student must obtain a very good grade in this subject at the SHS in order to pursue it at the university. With regard to Arabic, about fifteen percent of Ghanaians are Muslims (Asamoah-Gyedu, 2003), who learn this language in order to be able to read the Koran. There are special schools, mostly established by faiths of the Islamic religion but sometimes with the support of the government, where Arabic is taught. Thus by virtue of their religious affiliations some Ghanaians can understand Arabic, although there are many students of the Arabic Section with no knowledge of the language. In contrast to the languages in this first group, students who enter the university to study languages in the second group usually have no knowledge in them.

This paper looks at the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages in Ghana, paying particular attention to the importance, the challenges likely to be encountered and some methodological issues involved in an attempt to use this medium. Such a discussion is relevant since it will provide instructors with practical steps that will facilitate their choice of appropriate films and guide them in the pre-watching, watching and post-watching processes. The paper uses a three-fold approach to investigate the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages. First, it provides an extensive literature review on the topic, with specific attention paid to the use of films in the teaching of the Russian Language. Secondly, it is based on a survey undertaken on the use of films in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the Department of Modern Languages, University of Ghana. Thirdly, it draws on the author's extensive experience in the use of films in the teaching of the Russian Language over the past seven years. The paper has seven sections. Section two discusses the importance of using films while section three gives an insight into when it is appropriate to use them. Sections four and five examine the choice of film and the teaching process, respectively. The last section concludes the paper.

Using films in foreign language teaching is not new. Leontev (1975), a Russian psycholinguist, argues that at the intermediate and advanced levels of foreign language learning, when students have got the basic knowledge of the language, the use of film becomes imperative. Another scholar, Kutuzova (1982), places more emphasis on the use of films than on reading passages or stories because films offer rich material for listening and speaking as well as for discussion and civilization studies. In addition, Massi and Merino (1996) conclude that giving visual messages a place in the foreign language curriculum is an interesting and entertaining way to enhance the learner's command of the target language and the messages available through film offer a refreshing change of routine in the classroom. Generally, having a combination of audio and video components in the classroom makes it possible for students to better understand the language since it offers them an opportunity to ask more questions, make more comments and have a better feel of the language than they would otherwise experience.

In historical films there are many different elements which are not very much related to the story being told in the film but which make important additions to it. Examples are music which psychologically and emotionally affects the audience, altering the speed of scenes at different times; narrators who explain specific and core elements of the film; and information provided about the time and place of the films (Balazs, 2002). All these make it easier to understand the film and the language.

One problem that has been identified is the lack of information on the methodology for the use of films in the teaching of a foreign language. Azimov (1990, 1994, 1996), Kasnyáné (1985), Kasyanova (2004), Leontev (1975), Lonergan (1988), Schukin (1981, 1990, 2003) and Vegvari (1981, 1988, 1999, 1998) argue that the methodology in the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages is not well developed, notwithstanding the fact that the use of films in the teaching process is not new. Kasyanova (2004) argues that in many cases the pre-viewing and post-viewing exercises are not done properly, and therefore many cultural aspects, words and phrases, among others, are not understood by the students. A study by Petneki (2007) in Hungary showed that even if institutions acquire technical equipment such as audio or video gadgets, due to the dearth of knowledge on the methodology for the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages only a few language teachers would use such resources frequently, in spite of the numerous advantages that they have.

2.0 Situational Analysis of the Use of films

There are many advantages in the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages. Massi and Merino (1996) and Gvozdeeva, (2004) argue that the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages is not common in foreign language teaching departments in many countries. Reasons given for the absence or the poor use of films in the teaching of foreign languages include the lack of methodology or time to prepare for lectures and the dearth of equipment and materials. In a study by Petneki (2007) to evaluate the use of alternative methods in the teaching of foreign languages, respondents who were instructors in the teaching of English were asked how often they use alternative methods in their teaching. About eight percent (8%) responded that they often use video in teaching,

seventy six percent (76%) said they sometimes use it, while about sixteen percent (16%) answered that they have never used it.

Our survey on the use of alternative methods in the teaching of foreign languages in the Department of Modern Languages, University of Ghana revealed a minimal use of alternative methods in the teaching process. Out of the thirty five foreign language instructors who were interviewed, about a fifth - twenty percent - responded that they use alternative methods in their teaching. Of those who use alternative methods of teaching, seventy one percent (71%) use audio, twenty eight percent (28%) use video and fourteen percent (14%) use computers in a multiple response mode.

Reasons given for the use of alternative methods in foreign language teaching include: that they provide a convenient way of making students cope with different accents, intonation patterns and voice modulations and voices; that they help build the communicative skills of students, including listening and responding appropriately to sound beats taken from a native environment of original speakers of the language; that they improve students' writing and sharpen their ability to distinguish between homophonic words; and that they help students to polish their understanding of the language and provide an authentic and formative way of learning it. With respect to the non-use of alternative methods in the teaching process, seven percent (7%) said they do not know how to use them, sixty four percent (64%) alluded to the non-availability of equipment and materials, twenty nine percent (29%) responded that alternative methods are not applicable to the courses that they teach (i.e., history and literature¹) and twenty four percent (24%) alluded to the large class sizes and the intermittent supply of electricity. However, the majority of the lecturers – about eighty three percent (83%) – said they are prepared to use alternative methods if facilities and training are provided.

Our teaching experience indicates that more use of films in foreign language teaching would be a welcome change. For example, students' assessment of a course in which they watched and analyzed films in oral classes was excellent. Specifically, the students were asked to rate the extent to which the course advanced their knowledge of the discipline. In the four consecutive semesters that the course was offered, the overall

score by the students was 4.37 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “poor” and five means “excellent”. This translates into an overall percentage score of 87.45% and crudely indicates that the methodology is excellent.

3.0 Importance of Using Films in Teaching Foreign Languages

Films portray the socio-cultural background of a people and provide information about the reality of appearances, about language and speech and about character. They communicate this information not only through what the actors say but also through what the film “shows” its audience. For example, when we watch a Ghanaian film, it captures areas of the country and the lifestyles, mannerisms, morals, religion, beliefs, values and dreams that pertain in these places. To know these is to know the people of Ghana and their socio-cultural and socio-economic environment. The same argument applies when we use foreign films in the teaching of a foreign language. There is a wealth of non-linguistic and cultural information in films from countries whose languages we teach. Asamoah-Gyedu (2003:14) remarks that African films and TV drama have become means of moralization. Language structures and lexical items used in communicative situations provide rich examples of the use of the language in everyday life. According to Massi and Merino (1996: 20), “film is an excellent medium for the explicit teaching of syntactic, morphological, semantic and pragmatic aspects of a foreign language”. Films thus help to create the appropriate “language environment” in the classroom.

Some Universities provide a study abroad programme that is designed to help students to understand the use of the language in everyday life, among other things. However, very often the programme does not provide students with the opportunity to visit traditional families, and to some extent students do not get to see the traditional setting of the country and to have a feel of the everyday use of the language. An understanding of the traditional setting and everyday life through films is a great step for students towards understanding the country and adapting well, should they have the opportunity to visit that country through the study abroad programme or other means.

There is a psychological benefit in using films: it strengthens the motivation and interest of foreign language students. Gvozdeyeva (2004) argues that one of the positive effects of using films in the foreign language classroom is their ability to impact students' emotions and to influence their power to understand the practical use of the language. Leontev (1975), a Russian psycho-linguist, argues that at the intermediate and advanced levels of learning foreign languages, when students have got the basic knowledge of the language, the use of film becomes very imperative. Kutuzova (1982) also emphasizes using films more often in the teaching and learning of foreign languages than reading passages or stories, because not only do students have more information from the films compared to the reading of stories and passages, but also, films provide rich material for listening, more opportunity to speak or discuss, and a context for civilization studies, all at the same time. Additionally, Massi and Merino (1996) conclude that giving visual messages a place in the foreign language curriculum is an interesting and entertaining way to enhance the learner's command of the target language, and the messages available through film offer a refreshing change of routine in the classroom. Furthermore, the use of audio, video and multimedia equipment in teaching foreign languages provides more room, more actions and varied situations in the communication and the teaching of foreign languages. This is quite different from the usual teaching process in classrooms (Lukyanova, 2002).

According to Vegvari (1998), it is important to introduce new technologies into the methodology of foreign language teaching using feature films, because many studies in Hungary have concluded that doing so is the best way to teach the language in the classrooms, particularly in the absence of a native language environment. Therefore, having audio and video facilities in the classroom makes it possible for students to better understand the language, since these offer them an opportunity to ask more questions, make comments and get a better feel of the language.

Fazilyanova (2006) argues that as a result of the use of films in the teaching process, the level of knowledge of foreign language students is higher than that of those who were taught using traditional teaching methods. According to her, before information technologies became a part of many disciplines, teaching experts established through many

tests and researches the relationship between teaching and learning methodologies and strategies, and how students can successfully recall or remember studied material at some later date. The results indicate that if audio materials are used, a student could recall one fourth of the materials. If the information is visual, the students could recall a third at some later date. When they combined the data from audio and visual material, the indications were that a person remembered almost half of the information at a later date, and if the student took active part in the learning process, he or she could remember about three-quarters of the heard and seen information.

Many resolutions from the Congress of MAPRYAL² (in 1986, 1990, 1994, etc.), have concluded that using films to teach a foreign language is relevant in that films may provide the best language surroundings in the class; students learn new things about the particular country such as its political, cultural and educational systems, traditions, morality, as well as the different time periods of the country. Films also help students to learn many new phrases, words and phraseology. Massi and Merino (1996: 20) argue that “using films in the teaching of a foreign language is not an entertainment. It is dosage, a strong drug, and it is important to know where, when and how much should be given at anytime”.

Based on the work of Kadochnikova (2003), Kasyanova (2004) and Dmitrievna (2005), we summarize the importance of the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages as follows:

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Importance</i>
<i>Psychological</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help increase the interest of students; • stimulate the ability of students to work independently; • help students actively develop critical thinking; • provide an opportunity for instructors to better know their students (through deep discussions and analysis of the films);

- provide opportunities to acquire and master the language within a reasonable time.
- Socio-cultural*
- enable students to understand the culture and social life of others;
 - enable students to compare different cultures and psychology of peoples living in different countries;
 - enable students to see people in different social environments through their pronunciation, the use of grammar and style;
 - make it easier for learners to adapt to the foreign country should they have the opportunity to visit that country.
- Pedagogical*
- increase the motivation of students to build the stimulus for the development of their abilities in their chosen specialty;
 - reduce emotional tension;
 - make it possible to use different interactive forms of organization in teaching foreign languages;
 - bring to the fore questions on moral and ethical issues.
- Linguistic*
- help activate and develop the main types of action in speech (reading, writing dictation, speaking and audio/listening);
 - introduce lexicological structure used in speeches.

- Paralingual
- make it possible to see and understand paralingual situations;
 - help develop non-verbal situations such as body language, mimicking, distance between the actors, clothes, etc.;
 - help to understand the language through the actions in the film that go to explain its phonogram;
 - help introduce non-verbal ways of interacting.

3.1 Challenges

Like all teaching processes, the use of films in the teaching of foreign languages has some challenges. These can be grouped into technical, methodological and psychological. In the area of technical challenges, Dmitrievna (2005) argues that lack of television and video systems in the classrooms and difficulties in getting correct and useful tapes/records present the most important challenge. In addition to these difficulties, the majority of respondents who took part in our survey cited the irregular supply of electricity and the large class sizes. With respect to methodological and psychological challenges, the preparatory exercises before the class (watching the film, preparing questions, typing, printing and copying questions) takes a lot of the instructor's time, while on their part students unable to understand what is said in the film may get frustrated and lose interest in watching it.

4. When to Use Films and Types of Films

Generally, in the teaching of foreign languages instructors prefer that beginners answer questions in full. This is because when students answer questions in full, they repeat much grammatical and lexical material that is already known. In this way, the language is taught without regard to the real world situation. For example, in class, if a question is asked, *what is your name?* the required answer would be *my name is John*. This is correct. However, in the real world, the answer is more likely to be 'John'. For beginners, this way of teaching foreign language cannot be changed. We

may only add more communication, dialogue, simple songs, etc. However, at the intermediate and advanced levels the use of films becomes a very effective way of learning foreign languages since it provides an immersion into the real language, especially in situations where the students do not have the opportunity to visit the country of origin of the language. This suggests that the use of film could be more appropriate at the intermediate and advanced levels. For example, in the University of Ghana, as students major in different areas, the number of students decreases during the third and fourth years. It is at this level that the use of films in the teaching of a foreign language becomes necessary and advisable. The third and fourth year students should have the vocabulary necessary to analyze individual films and to do a comparative analysis of films from different cultural and historical contexts. For beginners, our experience suggests that one can use other materials such as songs, cartoons or short films that would be well appreciated by students.

In using films to teach foreign languages a challenge that arises in connection with the methodology is the type of film to use in class. Kasyanova (2004) argues that the choice of film is one of the most important steps in the foreign language teaching process since it should depend on the concrete audience. According to Gvozdeyeva (2004) two types of motivations are important in the choice of films:

- Self-motivation - when the film is interesting by itself, and
- Motivation - when the student understands the film in the language which he or she is studying.

Films that are quite easy to understand bring satisfaction to the student, instill some confidence that (s)he can understand the language and encourage him/her to put in more effort in studying the language. Good films can serve as a valuable pedagogical aid, both in the classroom and in private studies. Also, a good film arouses the sensitivity of the learner and stimulates him/her to stretch his/her imagination and creativity (Massi and Merino, 1996). According to Kasyanova (2004) films made on a native writer's stories, novellas etc. should be compulsorily shown to students. The problem that one is confronted with is that, sometimes students may not understand the language of these feature films because

the phonogram of these films may be difficult. It is also advisable to use comedies which reveal the sense of humor and help to understand the psychology of the natives.

5.0 Considerations

The following are important considerations regarding how to decide what type of film to use.

5.1 Entertainment value

The first consideration is that the film should be interesting. Making the right choice of films may pose a considerable problem for the instructor. This is due to the fact that a film which may be interesting to the instructor may not be appreciated by the students, partly due to the age difference between students and instructors. Thus, it will be imperative to know the students before the choice of film is made. A way out of this problem is to read some short stories during the first 1-2 weeks. These short stories should be different in theme, author, the time they were written and the periods they describe. Analysis and discussion of the short stories could help instructors in choosing the best film that will be of interest to the students. In this way, the majority of the students will appreciate the film and watch it with interest and zeal.

5.2 Proficiency level of Students

The second consideration in the choice of films is students' level of knowledge of the language. As Gvozdeyeva (2004) argues, efforts should be made to ensure that students enjoy the film through their understanding of the language and not only through the other aspects of the film. Specifically, students' level of knowledge of the language does differ and therefore choosing a film to satisfy all students – those with a greater and those with a lesser knowledge of the language— becomes a problem. To some extent, this problem also may be resolved by reading and discussing different short stories initially to observe the level of knowledge of individual students. In fact, the daunting task of the instructor in this situation is having an idea of the level of knowledge of the average student and using that as a benchmark for selecting films. The

problem that arises with this methodology is that some students benefit at the expense of others if care is not taken during discussions. Specifically, students with above-average knowledge in the language may not benefit during the analysis and discussions, while those with below-average knowledge of the language may not wholly understand the analysis and discussions. It is also possible that students with a better knowledge of the language may not lose but on the contrary, enjoy the film much more than anyone else. This is due to the fact that such students have no problem with understanding the conversation. Thus, they may pay more attention to other aspects of the films such as the character of the actors, the beauty of the heroes or of places, jokes etc. Contributions from such students during the analysis and discussion of a film could be used as a yardstick by the instructor to measure his/her success in the choice of film.

5.3 Historical Context

The third consideration is to acquaint the students with the period in which the film is set. In situations where students are not familiar with the period, especially with films acted in the medieval age, the ideal way is to describe the nature and the specific features of that period before watching the film. This is a very important step, because without it the film may not be interesting and will not be understood by the students. Films set in modern times may also need some initial description of their nature and features. However, such description should not be done in detail since it may prevent the students from making their own comparison of the civilization, morality and peoples of their own country and those of the country the film is depicting. In historical films, there could be many different elements which are not very much related to the story being portrayed in the film but which make important additions to its meaning. Examples are music which psychologically and emotionally affects the audience; the variation of the speed of scenes at different times; narrators who explain specific and core aspects of the film; and provision of information about the time and place of the films (Balazs, 2002). All these make it easier to understand the film and consequently the language.

5.4 Duration of the film

The fourth consideration is the length of the film. Films which are longer than thirty minutes but not much more than two hours are recommended. This is because the film should be watched thrice. Sometimes there are very interesting and useful television serials. However, because of the limited time in the classroom, they may not be the best for oral classes but could be good for oral exercises. Such films could be given to the students to watch during their leisure time.

5.5 Cultural Sensitivity

The fifth consideration is the difference between the country of origin of the student and the country about which the film is made or in which it is set. Since we have different countries, so also do we have different moralities and political, cultural, religious and social structures. Care must be taken in choosing films from different countries due to these differences. It is quite acceptable to show films that portray the differences between countries. However, we must be cautious since some moral, social and cultural values which are approved of in some countries may not be accepted in others. It is recommended that instructors have a good idea of the differences between African, European, American and Asian cultures where sexuality or religion is a great concern. Also, instructors should be careful not to choose films that seem to portray negative aspects of a country since they might not depict the whole truth. For example, many films in Africa and in Ghana to be specific, portray the consultation of “spiritualists” and “mallams” in times of need, but that may not be the general practice in the country (Asamoah-Gyedu, 2003).

5.6 Subtitles

The question that arises here is: “should the film have subtitles or not?” It is good to have films with subtitles that can be regulated. In this way one decides to use the subtitles when one needs them, and switches them off when one does not need them. When is it recommended to use subtitles? Ideally, it is good to switch off the subtitles if the conversations in the film are not difficult to understand. This will help the students to develop their comprehension. On the other hand, if the text of the film is difficult

and complex, using the subtitles will be beneficial to the students. In sum, the use of subtitles should depend on the level of the students and on the degree of difficulty of the phonogram of the film (Boyko, 2007).

5.7 Melodies in Films

There is another dimension in the choice of films: should the film have songs or not? Some songs in films may talk about the country, the people or their traditions. Some films may have foreign melodies, which can be of interest to students. This may also show the relation of the country to different countries of the world. Therefore, films with songs are recommended. There should however not be many songs and they should be interesting to the students. Some songs have verses of famous native writers and may appeal to students. Our experience suggests that many students, especially in Ghana, like singing and show interest in learning such songs about the country whose language they are learning.

In general, making the right choice of film provides teachers with practically unlimited possibilities to analyze and compare the different socio-cultural environments and the specific behavior of people in different situations (Dmitrievna, 2004; Novikova, 2004, etc).

6. The Teaching Process

From our experience, the best result of using films in the teaching of foreign languages is achieved when the film is watched thrice. In this section we present the actual processes involved in using films to teach a foreign language as well as the methodological issues. When we work with any text in class, the methodology for teaching a language as a foreign language involves three major stages - pre-reading, reading and post reading. Using films in the teaching of a foreign language has the same format - pre-watching, watching and post watching.

Some instructors (see, for example, Abdrahmanova (2007) and Kasyanova (2004)) have argued that the film should be watched twice. Using examples from two famous Russian comedies of Leonid Gayday – *The Caucasian Captive* and *Diamond Hand*, Kasyanova (2004) argues that the basis of

the film – apart from its cultural importance – is a detailed analysis of the use of the language or its phonogram and therefore divides the teaching process into three stages:

1. Student's self-study of the phonogram of the film, which should be provided together with words, phrases and phraseologies that play an important role in understanding the phonogram of the film, often referred to as the *lexical minimum*;
2. watching the film using the lexical minimum and watching the film without the lexical minimum;
3. analyzing the film – the characters, the story, the pictures and many more.

The problem with this methodology is that students cannot have the opportunity to watch the film step by step with the instructor during the second stage of the process. Therefore many questions which arise during the self watching will not be answered simply because the instructor cannot provide the students with the whole phonogram of the film as lexical minimum. This warrants the third watching of the film that should be done together with the instructor.

Abdrahmanova (2007) argues that it is very important to have pre-watching exercises, because one can anticipate and respond to questions which may come up during the watching process. If pertinent questions are not well answered before they are raised this can affect the work of the post-watching stage, because the students would not be able to understand the film without some important information, such as the period in which the film was acted and the morality and traditions of the country. In this regard, it is imperative for the instructor to watch the film and prepare exercises for the class. Recommended activities before watching the film with the students could include but should not be limited to:

1. Explaining the period in which the film was acted, especially if it is different from our period.

2. Explaining the major morality and the political situation of the country portrayed in the film.
3. Giving or discussing the lexical minimum of the film.
4. Developing questions about the film in written form that will help students pick up the relevant information the film wants to communicate. This has the dual advantage of helping students to focus their attention on the major points of the film and the instructor to check if they really understand the film. Such questions may include:
 - What are the names of the heroes?
 - What is their social status?
 - What are the names, ages, social status, etc., of their family members?
 - What are the names, ages, social status, etc., of their friends?
 - What dreams do they have?
 - What is the main problem of the film?
 - How was the problem settled? Was it solved well?
 - Characterize the heroes.
 - Who was your favorite hero? Why?
 - What language styles were used by the heroes? How does language characterise them?

In cases where students have visited the country or the town about which the film was made or in which it was set, we may ask students questions about the places they know. We may also ask questions about the character of the people in that town or country and ascertain whether or not the

filmmakers are right in their depiction. Other questions could include whether they did meet heroes in the film in that country, what their feelings are about the film and how it could be continued, as well as the possibility and necessity of continuing it. All these form part of the pre-watching stage and will help the students to polish up their oral proficiency as well as understand the culture of the country whose language is being learnt.

Students watch a film by themselves once or twice from the onset. Instructors may decide to watch the film with the students during this time, though it is not necessary. It all depends on the availability of time, classrooms, equipment, etc. The first time the students watch the film, they should understand the main story the filmmakers want to communicate. It is generally not recommended during this time to give any information other than what has been earlier suggested, so that students have the opportunity to think critically about the film. As they watch the film for the first time, the subtitles may be on or off. Ideally, it is good to put them off so that students may develop their own audio-visual understanding.

In watching the film a second time, the subtitles could be included to make it easier for the students to get more information. However, as discussed earlier, this will depend on the level of difficulty of the film and the level of understanding of the students. The subtitles could be put on if the instructor believes that the film is too difficult for the students or their level is below the standard required for them to understand the film. Sometimes, the instructor may be compelled to ask students whether they want the subtitles to be switched on or off. Personal experience over the past years indicates that students with a lower level of knowledge of the language will ask for subtitles to be put on while those with a good knowledge of the language may remain indifferent. Actually, such reaction (or the lack of it) from students helps the instructor to know their level of understanding.

After watching the film for the second time, the student should have more understanding of it as well as new information about the characters, country, lifestyles, etc. It is important at this point to discuss the answers to the questions provided. Where necessary, the instructor could provide more information about the period of the film as well as explain the

traditions of the country about which the film was made. Such traditions may not exist or may be different from what is practised in the country of the students. For example, "Boxing Day"³ in Ghana falls on the 26th December, while in Russia it falls on the last night of the year - 31st December. Thus a Ghanaian student watching a Russian film in which presents are given on the 31st of December will not understand the situation since (s)he knows that this must be done on the 26th of December. Also, the Russian word – баня – banya – "bath-house" has many meanings and carries so many traditions which could not be explained by simply providing its translation. The discussion should not be very deep, since the students could be asked to write essays on those differences. However, it is important to answer any questions before the third show.

During the third show, it is recommended that the film be watched in parts and together with the instructor. After every scene it is necessary to stop the film and discuss it. At this point the pictures which were not understood the conversation, new words and phraseology should be explained. It may sometimes be necessary to use the subtitles. It is also important to give more time to the students to express themselves during the discussion stage to enable them develop and comment on both the film and the language used in it. Watching the film for the third time is very important and probably takes the longest time because every scene should be discussed thoroughly to the understanding of the students, and where necessary, a scene should be re-watched. The question that arises is, "when is it recommended to stop the film during the third watching?" The phonogram and the flow of the story can help the instructor divide the film into short episodes and consequently direct him/her when to stop and discuss the film (Kasyanova, 2004). Generally, it is advisable to stop the film any time the instructor wants to explain something. Sometimes, it might be necessary to repeat some portions of the film, for example, pictures of national importance, since the students may never have seen such sights before. Additionally, it is important for pre-developed questions to focus on these places or pictures of national meaning and importance. Generally, during this time it is essential that the culture and civilization of the country should be discussed.

It is also imperative to stop the film when we hear a very useful phrase, word or phraseology. In native films we may meet a lot of such expressions, which students may not understand even if their knowledge of the language is above average. This is because students mostly learn the language in the classrooms and do not get the opportunity to listen to its use in everyday life - in the streets, in shops, in offices, in hospitals, at different levels of the educational system, at home, in the kitchen or in the bedroom. In addition, one can stop the film when there is any psychological specialty of the country, such as humor. In their everyday language people often use wisecracks or witticisms, many of which are from films. The work of the instructor is to draw the student's attention to these by stopping the film and, if necessary, re-watching the episode. Furthermore, one can stop the film if there is any key information which should be understood by the students to enable them enjoy and understand the film as one complete story. Discussion at this level should be more detailed than it was after the second watching of the film.

After watching the film the third time with an in-depth discussion, students should be asked important questions on the film: What did they learn from the film? Why do they think it is important to watch the film? Can they continue the story of the film? If yes, how? If no, what are the reasons? This forms the post-watching stage. If the general perception of the students is that the film cannot be continued, then maybe the story was well told. Students' response to the film helps the instructor to evaluate the choice of film and the presentation and discussion of the material. If the right choice of film is made, all stakeholders involved— students and instructor— should enjoy the whole teaching and learning process.

Finally, we should give post-viewing exercises. Such an exercise should be in written form and should help students learn how to write essays. Post-viewing exercises could focus on:

- (Short or long) summary of the film.
- Analyzing the behavior of one or more characters.

- Expressing feelings about the film (either some scenes or the film as a whole).
- Comparing the socio-cultural environment of the country in/about which the film was shot with that of their own country.

Undoubtedly, such a three-tier process of using films in the teaching and learning of a foreign language requires time, but time can be saved if the students have their own copies of the film. In that case the film could be watched twice in class and the students allowed to watch it for the second time at home, or students could watch the film twice individually and the third time with the instructor. Pre-developed questions could also be done at home and discussed in class. Evidently, such a process is possible only if the class size is small. With a small class size, all the students can have the opportunity to contribute significantly to discussions.

7. Conclusion

Our study indicates that many language instructors do not use alternative methods in the teaching of foreign language, and this is because of the time needed to prepare and to what is perceived as the unduly multi-staged teaching process. However, our experience and that of others indicate that using films in the teaching of a foreign language provides an opportunity for students to learn new words, new terminologies and new phraseology, as well as practise the language in class through discussions, especially at the advanced level. The success of using films in the teaching of a foreign language, however, depends on the preparedness of the instructors and the application of the right methodology.

The most difficult challenge that faces an instructor is the development of the socio-cultural competence in teaching: how to interpret different verbal and non-verbal aspects of a specific cultural setting, how to choose the right film and to avoid imposing one's own conclusions, opinions and views on students. However, most of these challenges could be surmounted if instructors put in more effort and ensure that the context of the film suits the development of the students.

References

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 1996. *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*.

Asamoah-Gyedu, J. Kwabena. 2003. *Blowing the Cover: Media Projections of Religious Functionaries / Specialists in an African Context*. Legon Journal of the Humanities, Vol. XIV, 2003. Faculty of Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. pp. 1-20.

Balázs Béla. 2002. *Film Maker, Film Critics*, Budapest, Korona.

Boyko, Sergey. 2007. <http://www.school.franklang.ru>.

Doran, Robert M. and Fredrick E. Crowe (eds). 1988 *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Topics in Education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Collentine, Joseph. 2000. *Insights into the Construction of Grammatical Knowledge Provided by User Behavior Tracking Technologies* Language Learning & Technology. Vol. 3, No. 2, January 2000, pp. 44-57 <http://lit.msu.edu/default.html>

Hilka Buza, et al. 2000. *Célnyelvi kerettanterv a két tanítási nyelvű általános iskolák részére*. Budapest.

Huang, Shih-Jen Liu and Hsiao-Fang. 2000. *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 2, February 2000.

Kramsch, Claire, and Roger W. Andersen. 1999. *Teaching Text and Context through Multimedia*, University of California, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Language Learning & Technology Vol. 2, No. 2, January 1999, pp. 31-42

Kutuzova, G.I. 1982. *Criteria for Choosing of Informative and Cognitive Films*. Moscow.

Leontev, A.A. 1975. *Psychology of the Perception of Cinemas*. in Audiovisual and Technical Pre-requisites in the Teaching Process. Moscōw.

Massi, Maria Palmira and Adriana G. Merino. 1996 *Films and EFL. What's playing in the Language Classroom?* 34. 1. p20

Petneki Katalin. 2007. *Az élő idegen nyelv tantárgy helyzete az általános iskolai kérdőíves felmérés alapján*. Országos Közoktatási Intézet, National Institute for Public Education. www.oki.hu

Zyubanov, V. Y. 2003. *Using multimedia technologies during the english as a second language classes on the basis of "LINGUIST" complex*. Tomsk.

Абдрахманова И.Э. (Abdrahmanova I.E.). 2007. Некоторые мысли о страноведческом и лингвострановедческом компоненте при обучении студентов-иностранцев восприятию русской телевизионной речи. Москва.

Азимов Э.Г. (Azimov E.G.) 1996. Теория и практика преподавания русского языка как иностранного с помощью компьютерных технологий: автореф. дис. ... д-ра пед. наук / Азимов Э.Г. ; ИРЯП – М., 1996. – 38 с. – Библиогр.: с. 34-38.

Барменкова О.И. (Barmenkova O.I.). 1993. Видеозанятия в системе обучения иностранной речи // ИЯШ - №3. С.20–25.

Байтукалов Т. (Baytukalov T). 2007 **О навыках полиглотов. Часть 1-я. Аудио-курсы VS Видео-курсы.** <http://www.efl.ru/forum/threads/20368>

Бердичевский А.Л., Колларова Э. (Berdichevskiy A.L. and Kollarova E.). 2006. Русист XXI века: Кто он. Русский Язык за рубежом. №1. Москва.

Вегвари В. (Végvari V.). 1998. Новые технологии обучения русскому языку филологов Венгрии (на основе видео): Автореф. дис. ... канд.

пед. наук / Вегвари Валентина; Ин-т рус. яз. им. А.С.Пушкина. - М., 1998. - 27 с.

Гвоздева А.С. (Gvozdeeva A.S. 2004. - Использование видео на уроках английского языка. Курсовая работа. Самара <http://www.5ka.ru/29/29117/1.html>

Кадочникова Л.М. (Kadochnikova L.M.). 2003 Не традиционные формы урока, Шуя

Касьянова В.М. (Kasyanova V.M) 2004. Страноведение и лингвострановедение в методике преподавания РКИ. **Художественные фильмы на занятиях по РКИ: от понимания к постижению образа страны.** // Русская и сопоставительная филология: состояние и перспективы: Международная научная конференция, посвященная 200-летию Казанского университета (Казань, 4-6 октября 2004 г.): Труды и материалы: / Под общ. ред. К.Р.Галиуллина.– Казань: Изд-во Казан. ун-та, 2004.– С.169-170.

Лукьянова И. (Lukyanova I.) 2002. На Иглише не поспишь *По материалам журнала “Иностранец”* <http://www.inostranets.ru/>

Новикова А.А. (Novikova A.A.). 2004. **Медиа на уроке английского языка: техническое средство обучения или медиаобразование?** М.

Перемотай назад, и снова погрузись в английский (Об эффективном использовании видеомэгнофона в изучении английского языка)

<http://www.english.language.ru/schools/sa43.html>

Полулях И.Д. (Polulyah I.D.). 2005. Фестиваль педагогических идей. Открытый урок 2004-2005 © **Издательский дом “Первое сентября”**. www.festival.1september.ru

Русский язык в Сенегале. 2002. // Пушкинские чтения-2001. Материалы научной конференции 14 июня 2001 года. М., 2002. С. 103-105.

Фазылянова Х.М. (Fazilyanova H.M.). 2006. Обучение речевому общению с использованием видеокурсов на занятиях по русскому языку как иностранному в условиях курсового обучения. Автореферат. М.

Щукин А.Н. (Schukin A.N.) 1990. Методика преподавания русского языка как иностранного для зарубежных студентов-филологов (включенное обучение)/ под ред.Щукина А.Н. М.,1990.

Щукин А.Н. (Schukin A.N.) 2003. Методика преподавания русского языка как иностранного: Учебное пособие для вузов. М., 2003.

Узорко К. (Uzorok K.). 2001. Методическое руководство по проведению занятия по русскому языку в рамках аудиовизуального курса для студентов-иностранцев с использованием видеозаписи мультфильма «Мороз Иванович Вильнюс

http://www.bestdissertation.com/work/work_26657

Notes

- 1 They are to some extent wrong in thinking that they cannot use films in teaching History and Literature. Films can be used in teaching these subjects, but the methodology may be a little different from that for oral classes.
- 2 The International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (IATRL) was founded as a public and non-governmental organisation at an Inaugural Conference in Paris (7-9 September 1967), on the initiative of scholars from a number of countries. In 1975 it was accorded UNESCO's consultative status, category "C".
- 3 Boxing Day is the day when people give presents to friends and loved ones. In Hungary, for example, Boxing Day falls on the 24th of December.