

# **MOVIE IN CLASS**

## **Seeking For An Enjoyable English Class**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION**

Teachers who have devoted themselves to studying their own subjects without any doubt of it tend to take it for granted that students will also be able to achieve desired scholastic performance if they study as hard as possible.

As progress the mass media that could bring a variety of information, however, the students have come to have a different standard of value judgement on things from that which used to be; they have a lot of opportunities to choose only what could be suitable for themselves. And they would no more accept the importance of being diligent which might have been strong motive of learning before.

Some English teachers try to motivate the students by discussing how important the learning of English would be. They may explain to the students that English is an international language in which each of the students will communicate with people of other countries or that English is a very systematic language which may give a new idea of considering Japanese. These utterances who want may be effective to those who are always interested in English and those to have an occupation in the field of international business. But most students will not pay attention to the importance and necessity of English, and they will ask. "Who the hell needs English in Japan?" So the English teachers "have no way but arousing interests of the learners who have no sense of necessity or duty in learning English." 1

#### **DEVISING TEACHING MATERIALS**

The more a teacher tries to vary his class, the less the current textbooks and other materials will cover the content of the class he intends to teach. The provided textbooks may not cover changeable colloquial expressions of English, and even supplementary readers and tapes may not match the whole demands of the students. So it is important for the teacher to put in the class other teaching materials which should arouse students' interests which should be suitable for their ability.

The above argument does not mean that the current textbooks and the teaching methods are inappropriate to everyday classes. The textbooks are well-organized so that it should be easy for the Japanese students to learn English systematically, and the methods are based on the linguistically proved theories. The point here should be focused on the degree to which the teacher would vary his class.

This is just like a seasoning for a meal. It is a matter of course that one will get tired of a meal if the same one is served every day. One usually wants to have it varied constantly. The same idea can be applied to the English teaching if seasonings are given appropriately. The seasonings will be very useful to keep the students' attention to learning English, or at least, to have them participate in the English class. And they will feel that learning English can be quite interesting. Varying a class will also makes the teacher himself feel fulfillment of teaching English. He must prepare very well the materials he is going to present, and he must consider how he can make them effective in the class. As a result, the teacher's enthusiasm will be reflected on both himself and the students greatly.

The author here has found that the use of movies in class could be one of the ways to motivate the students in terms of having them participate in an English class positively, not reluctantly. And he actually adopted some movies in his class as a supplementary teaching material. Movies to be mattered here are those without subtitles; movies with subtitles will largely decrease their usability in exercising the listening skill of the students. Some ideas and experiments in using movies will be presented and briefly discussed in the following chapters.

# 1. EFFECTS OF MOVIE

One of the important effects of using movies in class is their distinct feature of supplying audio-visual information which can rarely be given by other teaching devices. When a passage is given just on a textbook, the language involves only the surface meaning of itself. Little heart or emotion will be conveyed to its readers. Then if it is accompanied with the corresponding spoken language, its implied meaning will be caught by the listeners(readers). However, the implied meaning of the utterance may not be sent fully to the listeners, for there exists no visual image including facial expressions, body movements, and others which may be a crucial key to understand the exact meaning of the utterance. Now, what shall be expected if it is accompanied with a certain visual image, especially an animating one? The receivers will put together the visual image and the spoken language, and they will experience a language interaction which is very similar to that which they do in an everyday situation. They will also find some body languages which are typically seen among English-speaking people; some are those also seen among the Japanese, and some are not.

Movies can also provide some cultural aspects of the countries where they were made. A movie is generally produced as a story, so it usually involves a certain cultural matter of the people and the country described. This outstanding feature should be made the best of so that the students may get interested in, and consider, the foreign culture.

Most important is that movies can arouse the students' interests. Being a high school student, most of the students start getting interested in movies, especially foreign ones. They have come to have more opportunities to see foreign movies than before, and they hope to be able to understand a foreign movie without reading subtitles. An English teacher says that "many junior high school students have a very simple hope that they will talk to a foreigner in English. Being a senior high school student, however, they come to hope sincerely that they would be able to understand a foreign movie without reading subtitles." 2 His statement suggests us that the students may want to have movies as learning materials. The following table, surveyed by the author, proves it very well:

Q:What do you think about the idea that movies will be used as learning materials, mainly to train your listening skill and to introduce foreign culture?

| Answer To Choose                 | Percent Naming |     |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----|
|                                  | JHS            | SHS |
| 1. I strongly agree to the idea. | 64%            | 60% |
| 2. I agree to the idea.          | 28             | 31  |
| 3. I have no idea on it.         | 6              | 9   |
| 4. I disagree to the idea.       | 2              | 0   |

\*JHS and SHS: See Notes # 3.

The table indicates that more than 90 percent of the students agree to the idea of using movies in the class as teaching materials and that they expect the movies to bring them many opportunities to listen to spoken English. A junior high school student says, "I love movies. They give us real English that is directly related to the life of the people who speak it." And another says, "English is generally regarded as a school subject on which we are going to get a good grade, and we may never know its wonderfulness. But if we see a movie where we can hear English with a fine performance of the players, we will find a fine aspect of English." Most students have a great expectation that they will learn from a movie something different from those which they have learned in the classes before.

## 2. COMPREHENSION ON MOVIE

How much do the students understand a foreign movie without reading subtitles? This may be the very question about which the English teachers have been worried when using movies in the English class, for most of the teachers have found it very difficult even for themselves to understand a whole foreign movie without reading subtitles. So the English teachers who intend to use movies will have to investigate how much the students can understand a nonsubtitle foreign movie (which is restricted to those whose language is English here) before they carry out a plan of using one as a teaching material. The ability of the target students may be simply investigated by showing them a movie and giving them some questions and/or a questionnaire on it.

A survey was done on this matter. An American movie, "The Twilight Zone -- Segment 2", was shown to some junior and senior high school students, and several questions about its content and words were given to them. The movie, directed by Steven Spielberg, is approximately 25 minutes long and is about a hope to live in among the old. Below listed are some of the results:

Q2. What did they call the game in the movie?

| Answer To Choose   | Percent Naming |     |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|
|                    | JHS            | SHS |
| 1. Hit-the-ball    | 0%             | 7%  |
| 2. The-can-kicking | 10             | 14  |
| 3. Kick-and-run    | 10             | 35  |
| 4. Kick-the-can    | 47             | 30  |
| 5. (Uncertain)     | 33             | 14  |

Correct answer: No. 4

\* The word "kick-the-can" is heard at least five times in the movie as in "My game is kick-the-can.", "Another day, another summer, another game of kick-the-can.", "Huh, huh, huh, kick-the-can!", and so forth.

Q5. The following utterance of Mr. Bloom's is supposed to be an important key that would lead you to the theme of the movie. Put an appropriate word in the blank space.

"The day we stop playing is the day we start getting ( )."

| Answer | Percent Naming |     |
|--------|----------------|-----|
|        | JHS            | SHS |
| (old)  | 37%            | 19% |

Although there exists a little difference between the results of the junior high school students and those of the senior high school students, the ability of the target students will be known from the investigation.

Then, how do the students evaluate their own comprehension on the movie? Here are two questions on understanding its content and words:

Q: How much did you understand the content of the movie?

| Answer To Choose       | Percent Naming |     |
|------------------------|----------------|-----|
|                        | JHS            | SHS |
| 1. Perfectly or almost | 4%             | 0%  |
| 2. More than a half    | 43             | 31  |
| 3. A little bit        | 43             | 47  |
| 4. Not at all          | 10             | 22  |

Q: How much did you understand the words of the movie?

| Answer To Choose       | Percent Naming |     |
|------------------------|----------------|-----|
|                        | JHS            | SHS |
| 1. Perfectly or almost | 0%             | 0%  |
| 2. More than a half    | 2              | 2   |
| 3. About a half        | 10             | 4   |
| 4. A little bit        | 50             | 40  |
| 5. Not at all          | 38             | 54  |

It is known from the above tables that most of the students have found it rather difficult to understand the nonsubtitle movie, especially its words. And most Japanese students will give the same or similar results if the experiment is done in the same condition. Therefore the teacher will have to give them some prior instructions which will be helpful to them in understanding the movie.

Two major ways will be noted for the possible prior instructions: one is to give a brief outline of the movie and the other is to give more minute reference, a filmscript. The former helps students understand the content of the movie more than when nothing is given, for the students already have a little knowledge about the content and may be able to follow the story easily. The latter helps them catch more detailed points of the movie. The students will distinguish some specific words and may even find the hidden meaning of an expression. The most important aspect of the way here, however, is that everyone could enjoy seeing the movie with relative ease away from understanding nothing. The following table indicates how much the students regard a filmscript as helpful in understanding a movie:

Q: Was the filmscript helpful to you in understanding the movie?

| Answer To Choose            | Percent Naming |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Very helpful             | 49%            |
| 2. Helpful                  | 37             |
| 3. Can't say helpful or not | 13             |
| 4. Not so helpful           | 2              |
| 5. Not helpful at all       | 2              |

\* This time the movie is "My Bodyguard"(America, approximately 100 minutes) about an American high school life. The target students are 132 of the author's.

The students were given a 8-page, teacher-made filmscript consisting of important expressions prior to the showing and studied it well. The result shows that the filmscript was helpful to most students in understanding the movie.

The author has a plan to show "Young Frankenstein"(what they call 'horror comedy') and to give the students a more detailed filmacript so that they may enjoy even the jokes and humor in it beyond the story.

### **3. PLACEMENT OF MOVIE**

Although so many students want to see foreign movies in English class, the English teacher should not use them just to give the students leisure to enjoy themselves as at a movie theater. Otherwise the students would regard the English class as time to escape from the tension of learning, and the desired educational objectives will not be achieved. When a teacher uses a movie in a class, he must find out its possible usage in order to make the best of its potentiality as a teaching material.

One of the possible ways is to pick up a part of a movie to use it for teaching conversational expression of English. As the students have already seen the movie, they must have a certain visual image for the situation which is very ideal to learn conversational English. Even though they are not seeing the very scene when learning the expression, they will keep up with the practical situation where the expression is being used. And they will acquire a skill to use the expression in another appropriate situation. More importantly for a teacher who would use a part of a movie as a textbook, the selected part will be very useful in teaching grammar and usage of spoken English. For example, if a teacher uses the following dialogue from "Return of the Jedi", he will be able to teach the usage of perfect tense, of 'no longer', and of others if he likes:

D: Darth Vader

L: Luke Skywalker

D: The Emperor has been expecting you.

L: I know. . . , Father.

D: So you have accepted the truth.

L: I've accepted the truth that you were once Anakin Skywalker, my father.

D: That name no longer has any meaning for me.

L: It's the name of your true self. You've only forgotten. I know there is 'good' in you. The Emperor hasn't driven it from you fully.

That was why you couldn't destroy me. That's why you won't bring me to your Emperor now.

The teacher may want to give the dialogue to couples of students and have them exercise it, and lead them to speaking it out or even performing it.

Another application after showing a movie, as discussed before, is to mention some cultural characteristics described in the movie. The students will learn them very easily.

Although movies have the outstanding usability as teaching materials, they still have important questions to be considered. One of them is that it could take much time to show a movie. Sometimes a movie is longer than the class hour. In this case there will be two possible ways. One is to divide a movie into parts; a two-hour movie can be shown in separate classes of two hours with some partial cutting. But the time between the classes should be as short as possible so that students can connect the two parts in their minds. The other is to get another hour or two from colleague teachers who are willing to cooperate in the idea in order to show a movie continuously. This way may be better for students to understand a movie, and in fact many students stated they wished to see "My Bodyguard" continuously after it was shown separately.

#### 4. SELECTION OF MOVIE

Selecting good movies is an important task of the teacher to achieve the educational objectives of using movies. Movies usually used at school are those which teachers think are ethically appropriate so that those concerning sex or violence tend to be considered inappropriate to be shown at school. This judgement will be largely approved, but the judgement is sometimes escalated up to the overlimitation of using movies with which students will have fun. Among those which are usually regarded as nothing but fun, there are many good ones to teach conversational expression or foreign culture. Therefore movies to be used in the class should be selected from any kinds of movies which may be good to teach English as long as they do not violate ethical matters.

As it is English that is to be taught in an English class, movies used may be partial to those whose language is English, especially American movies. But if the teacher wants to use a movie just to introduce certain cultural matters understandable without language, he may choose some from movies of any language other than English. There are many good movies in the world; for example, Germany, France, Italy, Soviet, Yugoslavia, Israel, and so forth. The English teacher may want to choose a movie from these countries not to make the students keep an eye to one society but to let them open their eyes to the whole world.

It is also important for the teacher to know what movies are popular among the students. If he uses a movie which is far away from that which will catch the students, they will not get interested in it at all. He does not have to use movies with which the students will have fun, but he needs to pay attention to those which they might like to see. The following table indicates some of the currently popular movies among the high school students:

Popular Movie Best 5 as of Nov. 1984

| JHS                 | SHS                 |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Star Wars series | 1. Star Wars series |
| 2. E. T.            | 2. E. T.            |
| 3. The Day After    | 3. Rocky            |
| 4. Superman         | 4. Mad Max          |
| 5. Dirty Harry      | 5. Footloose        |

"Star Wars" and "E. T." seem to have got great popularity among the young. These movies, in fact, are not only interesting to see but also very useful in picking up a scene or words to exercise conversational expression, for the words spoken in the movies are very easy to understand so that little English-speaking children can grasp them. The other movies are those which were recently shown on TV or at theater, so their popularity may not last long. Although they don't come up to the table, old masterpieces like "Gone with the Wind" and "The Sound of Music" are also nominated as popular movies.



The importance is, however, how the teacher will make the best of their potentiality as teaching materials.

Notes

1. Kiyotada Tazaki, Eigo Kyoiku Gijutsu (Tokyo: Taishukan, 1969), p. 12.
2. Eiji Saito, Eigo of Sukiniaseru Jugyo (Tokyo: Taishukan, 1984), p. 16.
3. JHS: 49 students of Saitama University Dispatched Junior High School  
SHS: 86 students of Kawaguchi Senior High School

Appendix

## 映画の理解に関する質問とアンケート

| 学 校   | 学 年 | 学 科 | 性 別 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8 |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 中・高・大 |     |     | 男・女 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

↓  
あてはまるものに○ 大学生のみ      →ここからは何も記入しないで下さい。

I 今、御覧になった映画についてお尋ねします。

1. あなたはこの映画を以前に見たことがありますか。

- ア. ある                      イ. ない

2. あなたはこの映画の「内容」がどのくらい理解できましたか。

- ア. ほとんどわかった  
イ. だいたいわかった  
ウ. あまりよくわからなかった  
エ. ほとんどわからなかった

3. あなたはこの映画の「せりふ」がどのくらい理解できましたか。

- ア. ほとんどわかった  
イ. だいたいわかった  
ウ. 半分くらいわかった  
エ. あまりわからなかった  
オ. ほとんどわからなかった

4. 次はこの映画の内容について少し細かい質問をします。

(1)映画の中で老人たちが夜中に楽しんでいた遊びは何ですか。

- ア. ボール投げ
- イ. 追いかっこ
- ウ. カンけり
- エ. かくれんぼ

(2)その遊びはこの映画の中では何と呼ばれていましたか。

- ア. Hit the ball
- イ. The can kicking
- ウ. Kick and run
- エ. Kick the can
- オ. わからない

(3)子供になってしまった老人たちが、再び老人に戻りたいと思った主な理由は次のうちのどれですか。

- ア. もう1度働かなければならないから
- イ. 人生のつらかったことを再び経験しなければならぬから
- ウ. 自分の子や孫が自分より年上になってしまうから
- エ. 老人ホームの友だちと別れなければならぬから
- オ. わからない

(4)老黒人 (Mr.ブルーム) は、子供になった老人たちに、「あなたたちが再び老人に戻った時、身体は老いているが…」何をもっているだろうと言いましたか。

- ア. good kind heart
- イ. old. but strong mind
- ウ. rich. bright heart
- エ. fresh. young mind
- オ. わからない

(5)次の老黒人 (Mr.ブルーム) のせりふはこの映画の“かぎ”と思われるものです。空らんにあてはまる語を入れて下さい。

The day we stop playing is the day we start getting ( )

## II この映画の内容から離れてお尋ねします。

1. あなたは映画を見るのが好きですか。

- ア. 大好き
- イ. 好き
- ウ. 好きでも嫌いでもない
- エ. 嫌い

2. あなたは洋画 (劇場及びテレビの字幕スーパー入り) をどのくらい見えていますか。

- ア. 週に数回
- イ. 月に数回
- ウ. 年に数回
- オ. ほとんど見ない

3. その時あなたはどのようにして映画を見えていますか。

- ア. 字幕には目を向けなくて全て原語で聞いている
- イ. できるだけ原語で聞き、わからないところだけ字幕を見る
- ウ. ほとんど字幕に頼りっぱなし

4. あなたは字幕スーパーなしに映画を見られるようになりたいですか。

- ア. ぜひになりたい
- イ. できればになりたい
- ウ. になりたいと思わない

5. ヒアリングの訓練として特にあなたがやっていることがありますか。

- ア. テレビ・ラジオの英語講座      エ. 映画をビデオに録画して何度も見る  
イ. FEN を聞く                          オ. 英語の歌をくり返し聞く  
ウ. 外人とおしゃべりをする      その他 (                                  )

6. あなたが最近見た映画で特に印象に残った映画は何ですか。

題名：  
その映画はどこで見ましたか。

- ア. 劇場      イ. テレビ      ウ. その他 (                                  )

7. あなたが今まで見た外国映画で特に好きな映画を3つあげて下さい。

- ○  
○

8. 私は将来、映画を授業に定期的に取り入れ、ヒアリング力の向上と、外国文化の紹介などをしたいと考えています。  
もし、あなたが私の生徒だとしたら、このことについてどう思いますか。

- ア. ぜひやってほしい  
イ. できればやってほしい  
ウ. どちらでもよい  
エ. あまりやってほしくない

理由：