

FATHOMING CULTURAL ASPECTS IN WRITING ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE MOVIES FOR ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract

Movie interpretation teachers need to understand and explain cultural differences when assigning writing tasks for ESL students. Students need to be given the proper cultural orientation and representation for a writing assignment. Since language is interrelated with culture, the cultural values and norms are expressed through the language. Therefore, it is imperative that movie interpretation teachers recognize and convey the cultural elements found within a film. Teachers need to be aware of what the cultural aspects and the cultural ideas are that need to be socialized to the students to enable them to fully grasp and immerse themselves within the context of the culture. This paper will reveal hindrances students may face in understanding cultural aspects of a movie and provide teachers with guidelines as to how to overcome these obstacles. Examples of various movie genres will be discussed to give teachers insights into how to act as cultural brokers and facilitators to tackle understanding of the cultural facets found within the films, and how to relay this knowledge to the second language learners.

Keywords: cultural aspects, cultural brokers, cultural values and norms, interrelation of language and culture

INTRODUCTION

Classical films can serve as an intergenerational cultural broker for ESL viewers to expose them to a whole new world and time period. However, language contexts often cause confusion for ESL students, especially when related with a cultural context that they are unfamiliar. The degree of difficulty students face can influence the learning dynamics in the classroom. By utilizing an effective teaching method, it can help students become culturally competent and act as a catalyst in creating a classroom of competent ESL learners. Diamond and Moore (1995) focused on key roles and responsibilities for teachers to be in three categories: as cultural organizers, cultural mediators, and orchestrators or social contexts for learning. “Culture provides the tools to pursue the search for meaning and to convey our understanding to others” (Gay 2000, 77). Ladson-Billings (1992) places the responsibility upon the trainer to develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Through films ESL learners can gain secondary experience of a foreign culture. However, it is the teacher’s responsibility to relay to students information which is prejudiced or stereotypical to help students gain a better cultural understanding of the film being viewed.

To better understand films, several guidelines should be followed. First, students should know the purpose of watching a film. Then they should be knowledgeable about the film. The teacher can ask students what they already know about the film and give them insight into important information that they may not be aware. Next, students can read movie reviews and blogs about the movie to be viewed. After that, students can do their own online research about the director, actors, and any other pertinent information regarding the movie. If time permits, the teacher can pause the movie and discuss important points that the students may otherwise miss or not realize. Next, as they are viewing, students can make notes about relevant information or scenes related to the essay questions. Finally, the teacher can relay cinematic aspects of the movie to help students become more savvy viewers.

Students need to be prepared with background information, so that they can know about the individuals who appear in the film, and about some of the issues about which they speak. Students also should be able to read about and understand visual symbols and the way in which sight and sound can influence perception to let them be more critical and observant regarding the events in the movie. Understanding the visual images from a film can aid students to be more visually literate and encourage them to learn more about historical events. The language level and social maturity of students also need to be taken into account in deciding what film to show. The educational purpose of showing the film also needs to be made clear.

Students can learn much about US history from films such as Pearl Harbor, The Patriot, Saving Private Ryan, Casablanca, Enemy at the Gates, Apollo 13, Pleasantville, Gone with the Wind, Malcom X, The Alamo, All the President's Men, Midway, The Grapes of Wrath, Remember the Titans, Fort Apache, High Noon, The Longest Day, etc.

Historical films can be used to explore the appropriateness, legitimacy, and values of the era under examination. With that in mind, teachers need to devise effective pedagogical methods to take into consideration a classical movie's properties and consumption by students. For example, movies can be used in the classroom as a primary source to reflect on the time period in which they were made, and as a secondary source to show the feel of the past (Marcus, 2007, p.6).

When ESL students are shown historic movies without proper instructional support, they may simply believe everything they are seeing on the view screen without being able to think objectively that not everything they are seeing is necessarily historically accurate. Many classical films have socio-cultural contexts that can influence how students view particular historic aspects.

A pedagogical content analysis needs to be made that encompasses the content of the representative period, whether it is fact or fiction; the historical and social construction of the past and the people in it; and the empathy or moral response in reacting to the past (S.A. Metzger in Marcus, 2007, p.66).

For example, when asking students to write about a classical film the likes of Casablanca, students need to be given a list of the major actors and characters they played; a brief synopsis of the movie (which can be found at www.imdb.com); background notes on the geopolitical situation; historical background; an explanation of the English used in the movie; a list of words and expressions that may be difficult for students to comprehend (such as exit visas, German couriers, suspicious characters, scum, ran guns, dossier, Gestapo, overstay your welcome, gin joint, price on your head, you said it, slipped through our fingers, for old time's sake, etc.); information about the rejection of isolationism; strategies to guide and motivate students to be open-minded, perceive, and process the information relayed through the movie to help them gain a better cross-cultural understanding; and Internet links to useful information related to the movie (such as at <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/modules/ww2/combatfilms.html>). After all of these points have been covered, students should be adequately prepared to answer the essay questions.

1950s GENDER-DRIVEN FILMS

In examining a film about the gender roles of the 1950s, gender is also a cultural challenge for ESL learners. Therefore, several points need to be considered. Gender is a cultural resource and can be considered as an apparatus in understanding and thinking more about cultural aspects of a particular time period. For example, students can be given the following essay questions related to two different movies about life in the 1950s. Write about the depiction of male and female gender roles (how men and women define their behavior) in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *Rebel without a Cause*. What do the movies reveal about the sex and gender norms of the late 1950's and early 1960's? Do the movies attempt to define proper gender roles and sexual behaviors for young women and/or men? Are there characters and/or plot developments in either of the movies that contradict the movie's overall messages on these issues? Defend your answer with examples from each of the movies. In tackling these questions, it may be an overwhelming task for viewers who have not grown up

in or never watched a movie from this time period.

Before watching the two movies above, ESL students will need to be given background information about the concept of a happy family during the 1950s, the characteristics of a stereotypical housewife, designs of what a typical house interior looks like, feminine roles (cooking, staying at home with children, baking, washing the clothes, cleaning the dishes, doing the grocery shopping, managing an ideal electric kitchen, etc.), a typical family evening, and how parents interact with their children. The differences in role segregation between men and women can be covered in terms of education, profession, housework, decision making, and child care and education.

Then students can be shown typical TV series or films that are representational of that time period. For example, to see the epitome of a 1950s housewife, they can watch classic TV series such as *Leave it to Beaver* or *I Love Lucy* to see how television show acted as a symbol for 1950s ideology. In these TV shows the husband is the breadwinner and only does minor household chores such as mowing the lawn or doing minor home repairs. The wife is a homemaker who is expected to have dinner on the table, keep everything spic-n-span, and look presentable for her husband when he gets home from work. The movie *Pleasantville* and the TV series *Mad Men* can also be played for students as an introduction to gender roles of that time. *Mad Men* is an excellent gender-driven TV series drama that also depicts gender roles of the 1950s.

WESTERN FILMS

When watching a western genre film, it is also necessary for ESL students to understand the various structures of a western film. Westerns can generally be classified as classic, traditional, and professional. Wright in Turner (1993, p.90) maintains that the western usually employs a set of four basic oppositions. The heroes and villains are aligned around four basic oppositions that we can examine modulations in the genre and in the social meanings that they generate. The four pairs of oppositions are inside society / outside society, civilization/wilderness, good/bad, and

strong/weak. In the classic plot the hero and society are aligned to look like: hero-society/villains, good/bad, civilization/wilderness, strong/weak, and inside society/outside society. For the more professional plot the hero is just as likely to be identified with the wilderness, as opposed to society: hero/society, outside society / inside society, wilderness/civilization, strong/weak, and good/bad.

Wright in Turner (1993, p.91) continues by outlining the narrative functions of the classic western. 1. The hero enters a social group. 2. The hero is unknown to the society. 3. The hero is revealed to have an exceptional ability. 4. The society recognizes a difference between itself and the hero; the hero is given a special status. 5. The society does not completely accept the hero. 6. There is a conflict of interests between the villains and society. 7. The villains are stronger than the society; the society is weak. 8. There is a strong friendship or respect between the hero and the villains. 9. The villains threaten the society. 10. The hero avoids involvement in the conflict. 11. The villains endanger a friend of the hero. 12. The hero fights the villains. 13. The hero defeats the villains. 14. The society is safe. 15. The society accepts the hero. 16. The hero loses or gives up his special status.

In the traditional western, the hero may leave society due to a feeling of disillusionment or disgust due to its failure to support the values which he is entrusted, like as a sheriff. In this kind of a western, society is often seen as weak and hollow as in the movie High Noon.

Then the professional plot completes the inversion of the pattern of oppositions found in the classic plot. In the professional plot, the heroes can be seen as outside society, connected with the wilderness, and strong. They represent a critique of society, which is placed on the bad side of the opposition (like in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and The Wild Bunch). The outline is shown as follows: 1. The heroes are professionals. 2. The heroes undertake a job. 3. The villains are very strong. 4. The society is ineffective, incapable of defending itself. 5. The job involves the heroes in a fight. 6. The heroes all have special abilities and a special status. 7. The heroes form a group for the job. 8. The heroes form a group and have respect, affection, and loyalty for each

other. 9. The heroes fight the villains. 10. The heroes defeat the villains. 11. The heroes stay (or die) together. (Turner, 1993, p.92)

In reading a Western film such as *High Noon*, students should be active and learn how to read the screen by focusing on elements such as the musical score, characters, plot, theme, symbols, camera techniques, mood, and conflict. Students can be given essay questions directly related to the film or they can be asked to compare the film with another of the same or different western genre and how the directors make use of the characteristics of a typical western.

By understanding the type of western genre and the characteristics associated with it, students will be equipped with the skills needed to properly evaluate a western film. Students can also learn about how myths about western culture affect how people act in their daily lives; often appear in literature, film, and music; are utilized by advertisers to sell products; and are used by politicians to get votes.

FILM NOIR

Film Noir is an American crime/gangster and detective/mystery genre mostly from the 1940s and 1950s. This type of movie is especially challenging for ESL learners as the movies are in black and white, which students generally find to be uninteresting. Furthermore, the English language used is nonstandard and oftentimes obsolete in today's society. To gain students' interest to watch this kind of film, they need to understand the characteristics and attributes of film noir.

The primary moods of classic *film noir* were melancholy, alienation, bleakness, disillusionment, disenchantment, pessimism, ambiguity, moral corruption, evil, guilt, desperation and paranoia. Heroes (or anti-heroes), corrupt characters and villains included down-and-out, conflicted hard-boiled detectives or private eyes, cops, gangsters, government agents, socio-paths, crooks, war veterans, petty criminals, and murderers. These protagonists were often morally-ambiguous low-lives from the dark and gloomy underworld of violent crime and corruption. Distinctively, they were cynical, tarnished, obsessive (sexual or otherwise), brood-

ing, menacing, sinister, sardonic, disillusioned, frightened and insecure loners (usually men), struggling to survive - and in the end, ultimately losing.

The females in film noir were either of two types (or archetypes) - dutiful, reliable, trustworthy and loving women; or *femme fatales* - mysterious, duplicitous, double-crossing, gorgeous, unloving, predatory, tough-sweet, unreliable, irresponsible, manipulative and desperate women. Usually, the male protagonist in film noir wished to elude his mysterious past, and had to choose what path to take (or have the fateful choice made for him).

Invariably, the choice would be an overly ambitious one, to follow the dangerous but desirable wishes of these dames. It would be to follow the goadings of a traitorous, self-destructive *femme fatale* who would lead the struggling, disillusioned, and doomed hero into committing murder or some other crime of passion coupled with twisted love. When the major character was a detective or private eye, he would become embroiled and trapped in an increasingly-complex, convoluted case that would lead to fatalistic, suffocating evidences of corruption, irresistible love and death. The *femme fatale*, who had also transgressed societal norms with her independent and smart, menacing actions, would bring both of them to a downfall.

Film noir films (mostly shot in gloomy grays, blacks and whites) showed the dark and inhumane side of human nature with cynicism and doomed love, and they emphasized the brutal, unhealthy, seamy, shadowy, dark and sadistic sides of the human experience. An oppressive atmosphere of menace, pessimism, anxiety, suspicion that anything can go wrong, dingy realism, futility, fatalism, defeat and entrapment were stylized characteristics of *film noir*. The protagonists in film noir were normally driven by their past or by human weakness to repeat former mistakes.

Film noir was marked by expressionistic lighting, deep-focus camera work, disorienting visual schemes, jarring editing or juxtaposition of elements, skewed camera angles (usually vertical or diagonal rather than horizontal), circling cigarette smoke, existential sensibilities, and unbalanced compositions. Settings were often interiors with low-key lighting, venetian-blinded windows and rooms, and dark, claustrophobic, gloomy appearances.

Exteriors were often urban night scenes with deep shadows, wet asphalt, dark alleyways, rain-slicked or mean streets, flashing neon lights, and low key lighting. Story locations were often in murky and dark streets, dimly-lit apartments and hotel rooms of big cities, or abandoned warehouses.

Narratives were frequently complex, maze-like and convoluted, and typically told with foreboding background music, flashbacks (or a series of flashbacks), witty, razor-sharp and acerbic dialogue, and/or reflective and confessional, first-person voice-over narration. Amnesia suffered by the protagonist was a common plot device, as was the downfall of an innocent Everyman who fell victim to temptation or was framed. Revelations regarding the hero were made to explain/justify the hero's own cynical perspective on life. (taken from <http://www.filmsite.org/femmesfatales.html>)

Therefore, for a movie to be considered as a true film noir it must contain most of the following elements: it should be dark, shadowy, and have contrasting images; it should be in black and white; the characters are hard and disillusioned with a degree of likeability; a male character faces a moral dilemma; there is a woman who is dangerous, alluring, and independent; it is a crime or detective story; there are flashbacks, voice-over narration, one-liners, witty dialog, angst, paranoia, betrayal, insecurity, and no happy ending. The movies are often shot or influenced by German directors.

When students fathom all of the aspects of a film noir, they will be able to apply what they know to write an essay on this type of film. For example, students can be assigned to write an essay about a film noir movie focusing on the aspects of film noir found in the movie, while considering the lighting, setting, characters, use of flashbacks, narration, type of dialog, story, etc. They can use examples from the movie to support their details and understanding about characteristics of film noir. Some of the more popular film noir movies include *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Double Indemnity*, *Kiss Me Deadly*, *The Big Sleep*, *The Blue Dahlia*, *Gilda*, *The Killers*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, among others.

Another aspect that should be covered regarding this kind of movie is the use of one-liners. Some famous one-liners that are still well-known today from the 1942 movie *Casablanca* include “Here’s looking at you, kid”, “Play it again, Sam”, “Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship”, “We’ll always have Paris”, and “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine”. By being able to recognize one-liners in movies, students will be able to see how they are integrated and engrained into society today.

Finally, dialog can also pose a problem for ESL students as students not only have to understand the words used but also pay attention to the tone, body movements, and character interactions. The 1950 film noir *Sunset Boulevard* has numerous idiomatic expressions which will undoubtedly pose problems for students in comprehending the movie. Some of these expressions include: you’ve come to the right party, the poor dope, grinding out original stories, lost my touch, the company’s played ball with you long enough, there’s going to be fireworks, he’d just look at your heels and know the score, I had an original story kicking around Paramount, it was dead as a doornail, big shot, he was a smart producer with a set of ulcers to prove it, the poor kid was once mixed up in a holdup, he’s trying to go straight, they tell the kid to throw the World Series, gimmick, pretty hot, all wet, a rehash of something, I wish I could crawl into a hole and pull it in after me, I found it flat and banal, name dropper, I’m over a barrel, waiting for the gravy train, then I talked to a couple of yes men at Twentieth, he was hard at work in Bel Air making with the golf clubs, once a talent like yours gets into that Mocambo-Romanoff rut you’re through, hocked all my junk, take a crack at Hollywood, if ever there was a place to stash away a limping car with a hot license number, I couldn’t go back to my apartment now that those bloodhounds were on to me, I’d drop the credit boys a picture postcard telling them where to pick up the jalopy, it was a great big white elephant of a place, a neglected house gets an unhappy look this one had it in spades, a lot of pale little frogs croaking pish-posh, don’t get sore at me, I had no pressing engagement, etc. Due to the numerous idiomatic expressions found in the film,

students should be given a list of these words and phrases and instructed to look up the definitions before the film showing if time permits. Or teachers can provide the meanings themselves.

COMPUTERS AND SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES

Another area that poses problems for students is in writing about science fiction movies that have a lot of computer terminology and idiomatic expressions. To assist students to be prepared before watching a film of this nature they can be given a list of computer-related vocabulary and instructed to look up the meanings of words they do not know before viewing the film. This will give students practice in looking up computer-related vocabulary definitions with online dictionaries and help them to know difficult computer vocabulary before they watch the film. The same thing can be done for general English idioms and expressions. Students can even be instructed to make sentences using these idioms and expressions. A glossary of computer and Internet terms can be found at: <http://www.matisse.net/files/glossary.html> and the free online dictionary of computing at <http://www.foldoc.org/>.

Some popular science fiction movies that deal with computers include *The Net*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Blade Runner*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *The Matrix*, *I Robot*, *Johnny Mnemonic*, *Terminator*, *Universal Soldier*, among others. Before watching these kinds of movies, students need to understand the common themes that run throughout these films such as neurotechnology (tools that analyze and manipulate the human nervous system), robots, cyborgs, androids, and the three laws of robotics as written by Isaac Asimov: a robot may not harm a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; a robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the first law; and a robot must protect its own existence, as long as such protection does not conflict with the first or second law.

When they understand the common themes of science fiction movies that use computers, then they can look up definitions for computer, technological, and idiomatic expressions used in the film. For example, the movie *Ghost in the Shell* has numerous

computer terminology and idioms that many ESL learners will not know the meanings such as: patrolling air units, a 208 is in progress, airspace, bug-free program, debugged, bug, project 2501, sections 6 and 9, there's a lot of static in your brain, get our hands dirty, extraction point, a listed programmer, thermoptic camouflage, the Gavel Republic, the last bunch, the old junta, I'd have the man deported in a heartbeat, programmer defection, keep our hands clean, how's her brainwave output look?, switching over the virtual experience mode pattern, cyber-brain was hacked, the Puppet Master, hack her ghost, hacks through her protection, an old-style HA-3, we'll have to cut the line to eliminate all risk, phantom hacker, the EC, violation of cyber-brain privacy, ghost-hacked, if he's so hot, less detectable, harder to trace, pawn, Matever, it's my ass on the line, Zastaber, cyber-net implants, over-specialization, cracking software, trace the calls, vicious cycle, next expected hack point, old coot, pops, type C collection truck, network may have tipped him off, shoulda used a back door, go for the collar, he hosed us with high-velocity AP rounds!, a submachine gun, thermoptic camo, I'll flank him from above!, this job just never lets up, that's what you get when you overload the ammo rating, frame's bent all to hell, the barrel's shot, a puppet without a ghost, we'll rush the place, have your men pull the plugs on all their cars, HQ, collared, three priors, a military liaison, scrap dealer, thug, a 'virtual experience', deprogrammings, cyborg, floaters, on stand-by, wired into the core of our being, metabolic control, enhanced sensory perception, vastly increased data processing speed and capacity, cyber-brains and cyborg bodies, high-level maintenance, sold our souls, cyborg shells, the expanse of the data net, a Megatech Body assembly line, had thrown up a cordon, if a hacker did this he had to swim through, some of the heaviest protection around, organic brain, virtual ghost-line, a real ghost is dubbed off, data degradation, dubbing, map the barrier perimeter and dive in there, time to rip her apart, celluloid dolls, neurotech devices, cracked through the protection, program with a ghost-line on it, a protection maze, fell into our laps, cyberdocs, cyber-brain technicians, MFA treaties bureau, full-replacement cyborgs (a replicant made with a cyborg body and com-

puter brain), real brain matter, titanium skull, infra-red view, pressure sensor records, the original ghost block within the shell, cyber-brain crime, anti-Puppet Master attack protection, dive into a body, an autonomous life-form, a self-preserving program, node, flow of information, externalize memory, artificial intelligence, sea of information, the rangers in Section 4 and Section 6, punch it!, tell them to watch for a tail, perhaps he has a thing for someone over there, I think we may have been taken for a ride, to grease the wheels of diplomacy, what are you packing? - an M-23 and a Unit B, choppers, IFF signal, ammo, you're certifiable, a big-ass gun I appropriated from the equipment division, class-A cyborg bodies, flechette bullets, snipers, jack into your device drivers, begin cardiovascular suppression, I'm pulling the plug, stabilizer syncro, someone's jamming us from outside, scrambler codes, the whole thing ends in a draw, and the net is vast and limitless.

Another movie, Blade Runner, has just as many specific computer terminology and idiomatic expressions. Some of the computer terminology includes: blade runner, I-X-4-P-D, Nexus-6, Voight-Kampff test, shuttle, aerial patrol, Tyrell Corporation, electro-field, bio-chemical data, morphology records, Esper — a 231, industrial refuse, combat model, Genetic Sector, personal body servant, tireless field hand, custom tailored humanoid robot, defective cones, pocket-charger, trace, forger, steel-mill, equipped, third generation Nexus Sixes, skin-flesh culture, selected enogenic transfer conversion capable of self-perpetuating thought, para-physical abilities, emigration program, a five, a direct hit is a positive retirement, traffic ordinance M-139 statutory freeway limit restricted by one-hundred and eighty kilometers, Methuselah Syndrome, incept date, hyper metabolism, emotional spectrum, automatons, escaped andy, malfunctioning andies, empathy test, retired a human, android, memory implant, she has transcended her conditioning, photo over-layer packet, built-in obsolescence, spinner, long term spacers, big time techs and bio-guys, high zoners, tracker, animoids, generation, accelerated decrepitude, griffon, modified, alteration in the evolvement of an organic life system, coding sequence, E.M.S. recombination, alkylating agent and a potent mutagen, repressor protein, operating

cells, the bast of all possible androids, and God of biomechanics.

The idiomatic expressions in *Blade Runner* include: fed up, got hit, pride and joy, jumped a shuttle, up shit creek, door-prizes, this little honey, pain in the ass, bum-steer, it's their personalities that usually get me, might not be so hot to go up there, pay the little guy last, I live here pretty much alone, don't let the bed bugs bite!, claim to fame, dirty work, be on your toes, nerves of steel, the name of the game, loud and lewd, is that mother real?, jeezus!, hummer, nothing is worse than having an itch you can never scratch, he made a play for the nurse, "Home again, Home again, jiggidy jig" (from a Mother Goose rhyme, a children's poem), one-man army, black widow, "I think therefore I am" (a famous quote by the French philosopher, Rene Descartes), don't be fooled by appearances (I have cleaned my apartment before, but not in a very long time), snooping around my stuff, prodigal son, you're quite a prize, the cat is about to get out of the bag, "Think of yourself as a light, Mary. Shine before you're turned off", that wouldn't be very sporting, aren't you the man?, show me what you got, looks like I'm gonna have to scale it down for you, give you a handicap, where are those balls of yours?!, and unsportsmanlike.

As seen above, computer-related science fiction movies can have just as much genre specific terminology as other types of films. To aid students in getting quick access to these types of words and expressions, they can read the movie script first at the movie script websites: www.script-o-rama.com or www.imsdb.com and jot down any new vocabulary before viewing the movie. Since the Internet and computers are a prominent technology, it is necessary for ESL students to become familiar with and grasp the different terminology.

1980s VALSPEAK TEEN FILMS

Even more current movies from the 1980s that use valspeak can pose difficulties for ESL students to understand. Valspeak is a special language that originated in the San Fernando Valley of California and partly among surfers. This type of speaking originated in the 1970s and is characteristic of California English dia-

lect lexicon. Elements of valspeak are found widely throughout American English even today, for example with the hedge word “like” frequently used in conversation. Valspeak is also used a great deal in the movies Valley Girl, Clueless, Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure, Bill & Ted’s Bogus Journey, Wayne’s World, and In the Army Now. When asking ESL students to write an essay based on one of these movies, this special kind of language will need to be understood by them. Students can look at the following useful websites related to this particular language: www.urbandictionary.com, www.onlineslangdictionary.com, and www.i80s.com. There is even a useful Valspeak text translator at: <http://userweb.cs.utexas.edu/users/jbc/home/chef.html>.

For example, in the movie Valley Girl some of the cultural language that may be problematic for ESL students includes: grody to the max = gross, disgusting, cool in a strange way; tubular = cool, awesome, excellent; gnarly = awesome, bad, nasty, gross; gag me with a spoon = that is so disgusting; totally, so totally, totes = very, really, completely; like = to show an approximation follows, used as a quotative particle or hedge; why = used to give additional emphasis but has no specific meaning; duh! = everyone knows that, obviously; no duh! = of course (anyone who disagrees with you is stupid); as if! = it will never happen, you wish, you are wrong; what-ever! = I don’t care, I don’t believe you; worst (something) ever! = This is the worst (something) I have ever experienced/seen; so, like, ok, you know, something = used as fillers with no specific meaning; I know, right? / I know, really? = to show agreement; to the max = completely, maximum, very; for sure = definitely; bummed = disappointed; bitchin’ = cool, great; barf me out = it is so disgusting (I could throw up); splurge and purge, scarf and barf = eat ravenously and then force yourself to throw up; trippin’-dicular = spectacular, wonderful, great; freak me out = I am so shocked; and pukeoid = disgusting person. This kind of language is often spoken with a high rising intonation.

CONCLUSION

ESL students need to develop the proper skills to better understand the deep meanings embedded in a film. Through the

proper cultural introduction, orientation, and representation, students can successfully write about a movie at more than just the surface level. All students can be equipped with the ability to deeply interpret a film text by following several guidelines. Students should strive to find meanings beyond just the plot and character level. By understanding the basic narratives of a movie, students will be able to give a deeper interpretation of a film. Teachers should act as cultural brokers and facilitators to aid ESL students to overcome cultural hindrances in their quest to comprehend how a film affects its viewers and appreciate the inner meanings of a film.

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