The power of film

Teaching culture, media literacy
and intercultural competence in ELT

Malin Evasdotter Lindström

Ämneslärarprogrammet

Abstract

In this paper I discuss how film can be used to teach culture, media literacy and intercultural competence, skills necessary in a global, high-tech society according to several of the studies cited. Linguistic and ethical aspects to regard when choosing materials and methods are also discussed. The reasons for using film can be many: Motivational, rewarding, providing functional language input, increasing vocabulary or, as several examples in this paper show, provide a source for cultural insight and discussions (regarding both one's own culture and others). However, to successfully teach culture, media literacy and intercultural competence through film, preparational as well as follow-up work are essential and the film materials need to be chosen with care, since not only language but also other aspects of the content may interfere with learning. Used wisely, film has the ability of being a powerful and efficient teaching tool in ELT.

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1 Introduction

"Teachers do not teach only subject matter. Through their practice they also teach how to think critically. If we are progressives, then to teach, for us, is not to deposit packages in the vacant consciousness of learners" (Freire, 1998, p.5). By saying this Freire reminds us that we have a responsibility as teachers to think about what we teach and relate it to the surrounding world. The Swedish national curriculum states that "inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity between people are the values that the education should represent and impart" (Skolverket, 2013, p.4). This means teaching ethics, democracy and gender issues in all subjects, a demanding task to take on and a great responsibility to society as a whole. Students need to be taught cultural awareness and critical skills, considering the xenophobic and antisemitic tendencies growing in Europe today. This is addressed in the curriculum: "Xenophobia and intolerance must be confronted with knowledge, open discussion and active measures" (Skolverket, 2013, p.4). To manage keeping a critical point of view, analysing arguments and developing their own opinion, students are in absolute need of these skills, and ELT's contribution to this can be considerable through teaching culture. Teaching culture is also a part of the Swedish national curriculum: "Students should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge of living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used. Teaching should encourage students' curiosity in language and culture" (Skolverket, 2012, p.1). Curiosity might be the key in these matters, keeping motivation levels at the highest. What is important to remember is that since English is used in more or less the entire world today as a Lingua Franca, we need to have a global perspective on culture studies in ELT, compared to the British and/or American perspective which dominated ELT in the 1900's. With society turning more global, the need for us to understand one another is increasing. Students need to develop intercultural competence in order to understand and reflect upon their own culture as well as others' (Pegrum, 2008).

One way of developing intercultural competence in ELT is through the use of film, a powerful tool in language teaching since it has the possibilities not only to teach linguistic skills but also cultural and critical ones as well. Using films can also constitute a way of increasing motivation and inspire to curiosity in the subject, as Shea (1995) suggests: "I use popular movies as much to stimulate interest in English as to provide input of pragmatic and linguistic features of the language to be learned" (p. 10).

Using films in ELT in the Swedish teaching environment is however somewhat different from the cases studied in previous research. The difference is mainly the language proficiency level of Swedish students. Swedish students in upper secondary school have studied English since the age of 8 or 9 and they are used to watching films and television programmes in English, mostly with Swedish subtitles, something that has proven successful in developing target language vocabulary (Markham, 1999; Markham, Peter & McCarthy, 2001). However, as will be discussed in this paper, vocabulary is only a small part of language and teaching is needed in other aspects of the target language in order to be able to fully comprehend and use the target language (Shea 1995; Libbon, 2008). It may also be the case that students have a vocabulary large enough to grasp the main plot of a story, but not enough to understand the subtle details, and many times the references might be different to what Swedish students are used which might lead to the meaning passing them by completely. In ELT in Swedish upper secondary school today, films are often used as a reward for working hard, or even a bribe to keep students focused, as stated by Pegrum, Hartley and Wechtler (2005): "Feature films have long been employed as an embellishment to language courses or as an end-of-semester reward" (p.5). It is supposed to be a moment of fun in language studies, a break from hard work. It may seem to be a good idea since the section regarding reception in the syllabus states that students should come across "different social and dialect features" in spoken language through "film and other media" (Skolverket, 2011).

The aim of this review is to look at what research says about the potential benefits of films in relation to the development of critical skills, cultural awareness and intercultural competence, focusing on studies on using film in ELT. Most of the studies on using film with an aim for critical awareness or intercultural competence have the character of self-report. They describe a course design and report the outcome from it. One of the studies, done by Seferoğlu (2008), gives results in numbers on how much students think they have increased their cultural understanding. However, even though studies in form of self-report may be more difficult to compare and evaluate, so is also the case with the skills taught in these studies and it does not reflect their level of importance. It is not easy to measure critical skills and intercultural competence. Self-evaluation, as done by Seferoğlu (2008) is one way, but tests measuring these skills are difficult to create. Studies focusing on linguistic aspects on using films are generally more quantifiable and generalizable. All of the studies I have found either focus on low level learners or university students. Swedish upper secondary students are somewhat in between, adolescents but still with an intermediate level of language proficiency, which should be considered when choosing materials and methods.

2 Theoretical background

The use of films in ELT has become popular alongside with the communicative approach and the use of authentic materials in ELT (Cady, 1995). When seeing it from Shea's (1995) perspective: "Movies are narratives that, like literature (and even, in fact, conversation), tell a story about the world, presenting imaginative slices of reality, mini-worlds in which viewers are invited to enter and take part" (p.10), it is no wonder films have this high status regarding popularity. In the following section a short summary of the terms *communicative language teaching*, *communicative competence* and *authentic materials* is presented as well as their relevance for using film in ELT.

2.1 Communicative language teaching and communicative competence

Communicative language teaching "pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view" (Littlewood, 1981, p. 1). This means that in addition to teaching vocabulary and grammar, other aspects of language are also taught, such as when a certain use of language is appropriate as well as what function certain phrases might have in different situations in order to develop communicative competence. *Communicative competence* as a term was first used in the early seventies and focuses on the needs of the learner, with both cultural knowledge and cultural sensitivity regarded as essential (Savignon, 2002). Communicative language teaching tends to focus a lot on the use of authentic materials and authentic language production, since authentic language differs from the language taught in the classroom. According to Littlewood (1981) the learner "will need to understand speech in situations where communication is made difficult by physical factors such as background noise, distance or unclear sound reproduction" and "become accustomed to speech which is not perfectly planned, but contains the false starts, hesitations and so on which characterise most everyday speech" (p. 65). The learner will also need to "understand speakers who vary in tempo of speech, clarity of articulation and regional accents" and "these will include other non-native speakers of the language" (Littlewood, 1981, p. 65). Using film in ELT is one way of practising these skills, since it provides language spoken with the intention to sound as natural as possible, with all its hesitations, half sentences, accents and disturbing noises, but

as mentioned by Shea (1995) communicative skills are not always easy to measure and it might be hard to prove the efficiency of using films with regard to developing communicative competence:

> *Students would have to be tested and, aside from not wanting to spend already limited class time on non-productive evaluation, tests are not accurate measures of the kind of learning (or, rather, activity) I'm talking about. The joint scaffolding of conversational and journal interaction is not measured on most testing instruments. Fluency of expression and a focus on ideas and feelings is not usually recognized either. [...] Alternative testing measures are called for, ones which include such factors as attitudes toward language use, confidence in expressing ideas and experiences, fluency and the persuasiveness of ideas, quality of engagement and participation, and so on. These aspects of language use are not easy to measure. (Shea, 1995)*

The problems with how to measure aspects of teaching are applicable to most subjects, not only language teaching. These problems have been stressed in recent years in the efforts to claim the proficiency of teaching and increase the status of the teaching profession. Shea's point of view, that while not all aspects need to be measured we can still regard them as valuable, would be difficult to claim in the debate of today, although it may be necessary as a counterpoint.

2.2 Authentic materials

There is an ongoing discussion of what materials are authentic and if it is possible at all to bring authentic materials into the classroom without diminishing their authenticity (Tatsuki, 2006). According to Bahrani and Tam "authentic language input is any materials in English which has not been specifically produced for the very purpose of language teaching" (2012, p. 56), a definition widely used and accepted since the debate about what is authentic or not seems to be unsolvable and unproductive (Tatsuki, 2006). According to Tatsuki (2006) the debate nevertheless has a value and hopefully will help increase an awareness of authenticity among teachers. Regarding the language in films, Tatsuki (2006) claims it is not always convergent with real language and she suggests that for example in a film directed at women, men might be portrayed as more prone to giving compliments and making apologies than in real life, in order to please the female audience and sell more cinema tickets.

Still, despite these hesitations regarding authenticity in featured language, authentic materials are popular since they are supposed to increase students' motivation, provide a clearer indication of the functional aspects of language and according to Bahrani and Tam (2012) avoid negative transfer (when the learners transfer vocabulary or grammar incorrectly from their L1 to their L2). However, just because these materials are authentic does not mean that they are efficient in ELT. Bahrani and Tam (2012) refer to Martinez (2002) who claims "the authentic language materials which are used for language learning may be too culturally biased and the vocabulary may be irrelevant to the language learners' needs" (Bahrani & Tam, 2012, p. 57) and Tatsuki (2006) refers to Lee (1995) who claims that it is necessary that learners "feel positive about the materials and react to them as was pedagogically intended" (Tatsuki, 2006, p. 3).

According to Lonergan (1984), films and television programmes "are real and meaningful; and they have a relevance to the learner which transcends the immediate needs of language learning" (p. 8). However, Lonergan adds that these authentic materials need to be prepared and worked with both before and after viewing and he also argues that they should be shown "in shorter sequences than the whole film" (1984, p. 8). The debate on whether films should be viewed in sequences or as a whole is considerable and has been going on for more than twenty years. I discuss this matter further in the section on linguistic aspects concerning choosing materials and methods.

3 Teaching culture

The Swedish national curriculum for upper secondary school states:

> *An international perspective is important to be able to understand one´s own reality in a global context and in order to create international solidarity. Teaching in different subjects should […] prepare [students] for a society that will have closer cross-cultural and cross-border contacts. Having an international perspective should also contribute to students' developing greater understanding of cultural diversity within Sweden. (Skolverket, 2013, p.6)*

This shows how important it is to teach culture, not only in ELT but in all subjects, in order to develop students' abilities not only to understand other people and other cultures but also to understand themselves and their own culture better. Without these abilities, the fear of *the other*, as in the unknown, and xenophobia may spread and serve as breeding grounds for conflicts on individual as well as national and international levels. To work with these matters, discussions on what causes these fears can help students understand different opinions and positions, thus "while fear can evoke negative reactions […] understanding possible reasons for such responses can help one become more culturally sensitive" (Libbon, 2008, p. 84).

There are many questions to consider while teaching culture, in the next section I have chosen to focus on two which have a direct correspondence to the film medium: media literacy and intercultural competence.

3.1 Media literacy

Apart from being able to read and write literacy used to mean the ability to analyse a text. Nowadays, this older kind of literacy is not sufficient as argued by Eken (2002): "The changes in communication technologies […] are forcing educators to reconsider their views of literacy and what it means to be a reader and writer in the 21st century" (p. 2). In a way, literacy has become a much wider concept than it used to be. With new technologies, the written word can spread at an enormous pace and it is more difficult to judge whether what you read comes from a reliable source or not. Caution and critical skills need to be taught along with reading and writing skills. As it is stated in the syllabus, students need to "have the ability to critically examine and assess what they see, hear and read in order to be able to discuss and take a view on different issues concerning life and values" (Skolverket, 2013, p.

9). To distinguish the new kind of literacy from the one we knew, Bueno (2009) uses the term *media literacy*, but the term *multiliteracies* is also used in a similar way by Pegrum (2008) for example. Media literacy includes all kinds of media, films as well as Internet communication. When it comes to film, it seems to be an excellent tool to train students' media literacy. Eken (2002) claims that the washback effect from film studies is beneficial in other media as well:

> *Improving students' film literacy raises their awareness of the power of the human mind to interpret clues, and through this awareness students learn to think critically and analytically as well as to engage in creative expression. Therefore, any student who actively tries to understand a film is indeed involved in a process of criticism and creative expression, which helps him or her to develop skills to effectively read both films and other media products. (p.10)*

Students also seem to experience this increased awareness after working with film, since as many as 93% of students interviewed by Seferoğlu (2008) agree or strongly agree about the fact that the film improved their "awareness about cultural issues and cross-cultural comparisons" (p. 5).

Zoreda (2006) claims the Anglophone culture and the films provided by American and British film studios are very suitable for study, since students live in an environment where these films and television programmes provide the vast majority of what is available on television and at cinemas, and therefore especially in need of examination and analysis. For Swedish upper secondary students, these films and television programmes are so common they probably see them as a part of their own and not a foreign culture. A twofold analysis would be needed therefore, examining their own as well as American or British culture and through this show similarities and differences.

3.2 Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence has become a necessity in our global society in order to promote intercultural understanding as well as facilitate intercultural communication, communicative competence alone being insufficient to achieve global communication (Pegrum, 2008). The communicative approach still stands as a theoretical linguistic base for intercultural communicative competence, but according to Pegrum intercultural competence and multiliteracies also link to "the sociocultural and critical approaches which have come to prominence in recent years, and situate

them within a framework of the transformative power of language learning in particular and education in general" which results in *critical intercultural literacies* (2008, p. 137). Critical intercultural literacies are supposed to help students understand their own and other cultures through different kinds of media and to reflect critically not only about them but also "reflect critically on one's own previous knowledge, experiences and perspectives" (Pegrum, 2008, p. 137). Several scholars report positive results from courses held using these intentions.

Bueno (2009) designed a course on 1930s Spain using a filmed version of Federico Garcia Lorca's play *Yerma*. The course contained a viewing of the film in parts combined with lectures and activities to enhance understanding, followed by discussions of specific aspects of the film specially chosen to help students find information not only about Garcia Lorca, but also the cultural heritage of Spain the specific period by studying the symbolism used in the film (Bueno, 2009). According to Bueno, one of the major issues with teaching culture through the film medium is that students regard film solely as entertainment and therefore have difficulties analysing it and she sees this as an important reason to teach media literacy in order for students to develop critical skills (Bueno, 2009).

Charlebois (2008) taught a similar course at a Japanese university on the film *The Color Purple.* On this course questions of race and gender were discussed and focus was on developing students' critical consciousness, something advocated by Freire (1998). The students were assigned to find information about the film before viewing in order to prepare and fill in some of the cultural gaps existing. Even though Charlebois prefers viewings in class, because of time issues this viewing had to take place outside class since he preferred the students to watch the film in one sequence. The students were to answer questions on the film while watching, discuss gender and race aspects of the film in the following lesson and lastly write a critical response paper on the film, a major assignment performed over several lessons with teacher's response on both outline and two drafts before the final hand-in. The reason for spending such an amount of time on the paper is that Charlebois consider it a major part in developing the critical skills and he claims the procedure necessary in order for the papers to contain more than "simply plot synopses" (Charlebois, 2008, p.130).

Libbon (2008) who teaches German, has done several projects on teaching German culture along with its history with the aim of making students view their

own culture as well as others' with a critical eye. She designed a course on the German film *Schwarzfahrer* (German for someone who travels without a ticket, a fare dodger, but also a wordplay, since Schwarz means black and the main character is black) with a similar object of helping students develop a cultural sensitivity, through investigating the terms *the other* and *otherness*, also with positive results. Libbon uses one part of the course to focus on body language. While showing the film without sound she asked her students to look at the reactions of the different characters since body language is often seen as universal, but just as often it can vary from culture to culture causing misunderstandings. Libbon addresses this issue by giving the students opportunity "to see how cultural differences and similarities can be communicated through body language: gestures, facial expressions, stance, proximity to others, etc." (p. 84). Libbon uses a technique where the students through role play get to take other viewpoints than their own. By experiencing and discussing these positions they can develop a better sensitivity towards others and she claims "this discussion thus not only allows the students to react on an emotional level as they discuss their feelings but to respond on a cognitive level as well as they try to find rationale for the various behaviours they observe and logical means for mediating these behaviours" (p.85).

These projects and course designs are examples of how film can be used to develop critical skills and teach students media literacy, a big step towards intercultural competence.

4 Choosing materials and methods

Littlewood (1981) states that listening is not a passive skill, it "demands active involvement from the hearer" (p. 66), but he also claims that "mere unmotivated exposure is not enough to ensure that they develop the ability to listen and understand" (p. 66), which suggests that film should be taken seriously and be worked with as with any other material used in ELT and choosing the materials with care is the first priority.

"[A]ll walks of life can, and should, be represented in film choices. Globalisation is equally about glocalisation, the resurgence of the local through global distribution channels. Film is one of those distribution channels we can exploit to bring varying cultural and subcultural discourses into the language classroom" (Pegrum, 2008, p.148). When teaching ELT we are supposed to teach culture not only to increase the students' knowledge of other cultures but also to make them more aware of their own. By knowing your own culture and being able to critically reflect on it you may be able to look at other cultures with a new sense of curiosity, using the same critical awareness. Freire (1998b) advocates this perspective and suggests that discussing the familiar, what the students know, is a first and important step towards a critical understanding. This is one of the aspects to keep in mind when choosing a film, there are global topics which can be first discussed from a local point of view and then from other angles in order to create a sense of critical balance.

Several other aspects need to be considered when choosing a film for language classes, such as how the film is composed. For example, Bueno (2009) refers to Voller and Widdows (1993) who claim that "learners comprehend best when films have strong story lines and easily recognizable main characters" (p.320). However, in the following section, I will focus on the linguistic and ethical aspects, the cultural and film analysis having been discussed in earlier sections. Another important issue that needs to be mentioned is technical knowledge. Lack of confidence when using technical equipment might create obstacles for the teacher leading to a situation where, if at all used in class, films are watched in one sequence alone with no work directly connected to it (Lonergan, 1984).

4.1 Linguistic aspects

All of the studies I have found address the difficulty of the language used in films not produced for language teaching, but "instructors must find ways to scaffold aural

comprehension" (Bueno, 2006). This is where teachers need to have their students' level of proficiency in mind and choose materials that will take them to the next step in their language development to speak in Vygotskian terms. Seferoğlu (2008), who studied students' experiences of working with film in ELT, noticed that students at advanced level obtain information from films about how to initiate and maintain conversations, negotiate meaning and how to use exclamations and filling expressions. They also get in contact with colloquial language in a context, as well as non-verbal communication (which has also been stressed by Libbon (2008) as important since this may differ between cultures) and different kinds of dialects, accents and slang (Seferoğlu, 2008). However, students do not experience films as helpful in improving grammar or writing (Seferoğlu, 2008) a statement supported by a study of Van Lommel, Laenen and d'Ydewalle (2006) where the effect of using films with subtitles was examined.

Most of the studies I have found indicate that films should be shown in segments with pre-activities before the showing and follow-up activities afterwards (Lonergan, 1984; Cady, 1995; Bueno, 2006). Bueno (2006) also stresses the repeated viewings of difficult sections and the need of time for reflection. However, some studies report the showing of the entire film being the most efficient way for students to grasp the entire story and not lose the context (Seferoğlu, 2008; Shea, 1995). When the film is watched in one viewing, preparational work is crucial before the viewing in order for the students to be able to understand the film. Many times, students see the film outside of class since lesson time does not allow a full one-sequence viewing. In all cases, follow up work needs to be done, though this may be conducted in very different ways, as described by Shea (1995) who teaches English at a Japanese university:

> I respond to what students say using interactive discourse strategies of engaged response: summary, clarification, restatement, extension, and so on. By doing things like noticing ideas, asking for more explanation, extending important implications, and pressing for clarification, I am engaging with students as an authentic partner in a joint, scaffolded construction of talk [...]. I am also demonstrating a wide range of discourse practices, from vocabulary words and grammatical structures to interactional patterns and pragmatic routines, as well as interpretive approaches to texts, which students, through their own engagement in the interaction, can appropriate as their own. (p.14)

Shea's students were reluctant to speak in class, but felt much more at ease writing. He therefore developed a teaching method where he first let the students take notes in a journal

regarding the topic, in this case the film they have been watching, and after that he started the oral discussion (Shea, 1995). These methods of scaffolding students through listening as well as through oral presentation are supported by Bueno (2006), who describes similar methods of dealing with the discussions after viewings.

When choosing a film to work with it is important to consider the dialogue in the film; both the content of the dialogue as well as how it is structured and presented. In a study focusing on choosing materials, Bahrani & Tam show that for low level learners cartoons were more efficient than news programmes or feature films in order to increase vocabulary, but whether these findings also agree with higher level students remains to be investigated (2012). Also, "learners find monologues highly charged with emotion and action-packed scenes particularly difficult to comprehend" (Bueno 2009), issues important to think about when selecting material. According to Bueno (2009) the language in action scenes is often spoken in an unclear way, shouted, murmured or disturbed by other sounds. Another aspect, also common in action films, is the kind of language used. Tatsuki (2006) comments on this:

> *In a film like E.T. the screenplay depicts children who use vulgar, rude*
> *language to each other and to their mothers. One reason for this was*
> *entertainment – the more outrageously these kids spoke in the opening scenes,*
> *the funnier the scenes and more poignant the later drama. Whether the*
> *screenplay was capturing a legitimate "slice of life" in the America of that time*
> *is debatable. (p.11)*

Tatsuki (2006) argues that we need to consider "whose language", "in what contexts and for what purposes" and "by what means" the language is produced in order to see if the language is appropriate for the situation intended (p. 5), just because the material is authentic does not mean it is appropriate for the students' needs. This corresponds to how the communicative approach is explained by Littlewood (1984): the teacher has to find out what needs the student has with his or her language. In Swedish upper secondary school these needs are defined by the curriculum, such as for example in the syllabus for the course English 5 where the communication content is supposed to contain the following elements:

- *Subject areas related to students' education, and societal and working life; current issues; events and processes; thoughts, opinions, ideas, experiences and feelings; relationships and ethical issues.*
- *Content and form in different kinds of fiction.*
- *Living conditions, attitudes, values and traditions, as well as social, political and cultural conditions in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used.*

- *The spread of English and its position in the world.*
  (Skolverket, 2011, p.3)

It might be an easy way out to use whatever film the teacher finds interesting and classify the language content as "content and forms in different kinds of fiction" (Skolverket, 2011, p.3), but if a Freirean or intercultural perspective is intended, all of the above could be covered by choosing material carefully.

4.2 Ethical aspects

"Ethical perspectives are of importance for many of the issues that are taken up in education. For this reason education in different subjects should cover these perspectives and provide students with a foundation for and support their ability to develop personal views" (Skolverket, 2013, p.6). Ethical perspectives can include discussions about ethics and moral choices, such as the ones discussed in the section on intercultural competence, but there are also ethical aspects to consider from the teacher's point of view when choosing film materials. What is morally right to show students and how far does the responsibility of the teacher stretch? When reading Freire, the answer is quite clear: "to transform the experience of educating into a matter of simple technique is to impoverish what is fundamentally human, the teaching of contents cannot be separated from the moral formation of the learners. To educate is essentially to form" (Freire, 1998b, p.39). Freire places great responsibility on the teacher's shoulders and addresses also the relations of power between the teacher and learner, an issue of importance to keep in mind (Freire 1998b).

There are several other ethical aspects to consider when choosing material for a film class. The example provided by Tatsuki (2006) in the previous section regarding bad language is one. Considering Swedish upper secondary students it may be relevant to discuss bad language in order to help them distinguish between the language of the street and language appropriate for social situations. Strong words are used in other places than the street, but which ones are appropriate in which situation is a cultural question.

We also need to consider the content of the film regarding violence. The research results regarding the effect of violence on adolescents are not consistent as Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) show in their review for the WHO. On younger children research is clear that violence is damaging, but on adolescents it is not always the case, however. When it comes to adolescents with reading difficulties violent films seem to lead to more

antisocial behaviour and violent behaviour than in other adolescents, while adolescents who have witnessed or experienced violence themselves seem to be even more affected (Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005). Browne and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) also refer to a meta-analysis of 217 published and unpublished studies performed by Paik and Comstock (1994) which states that when film violence is combined with sexual content it seems to be more damaging to children and adolescents and that violence in cartoons seems to have a strong effect regarding violent and antisocial behaviour.

The ethical perspective on how we portray other cultures is an important one to consider. According to Libbon (2008) great care must be taken when showing materials depicting stereotypes, in order not to stigmatise people. Instead teachers may use them as a basis for discussion on how these stereotypes have been created and sustained. Libbon (2008) brings up the matter of emotional connections with stereotypes and the importance of raising awareness of these emotions and through this also drawing cognitive conclusions.

Another ethical matter is copyright, since nowadays respecting copyright is not only a legal matter but also a question of ethics. With the option of downloading every film ever produced at hand, there is a moral choice for teachers and schools to make if they decide to respect copyright laws or not. As stated by Simons (1995):

> *If you are an educator who is teaching or researching then copyright law regarding copying books, articles, videos etc. may be quite restrictive. In this respect, you may believe in the view that all knowledge, art and culture once created should be free and accessible to everyone. Alternatively, if you are an educator who is publishing then copyright law becomes your friend and possibly the reason for your income. In this respect, you may take the view that the interests of those who create a work should be protected thus encouraging the authors of such work to produce more for the benefit of the public or for benefit to themselves. (Simons, 1995, p. 84)*

In Swedish schools the legal way of showing films is either to purchase the DVD or streamed version of a film through one of the several organisations providing films for institutions, or if the teacher already possesses a film he/she wants to show in the classroom, there is a possibility of buying a license for this film (Skolverket, 2009).

5 Conclusion

Film cannot and should not be seen as an answer to all our linguistic, cultural and critical needs. It may however have a role to play in guiding students to a point where they are better able to make sense of the web of textuality which envelops them. This may in turn give them more options for shaping their own textual self-representations and, ultimately, aspects of their identities, linguistic and non-linguistic. (Pegrum 2008, p.149)

According to the national curriculum, ELT should provide an insight in cultures where English is used and all subjects should focus on ethical and cultural aspects, although, in the Swedish upper secondary school's course syllabus for English, the terms *intercultural* or *intercultural competence* are not mentioned. Cultural knowledge is addressed but to give students opportunity to develop "the ability to discuss and reflect on living conditions, social issues and cultural features in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used" (Skolverket, 2013, p.2) is not enough since "becoming intercultural means going beyond stereotyping, gaining knowledge about the complexity of the foreign culture and how its members see each other and outsiders" (Zoreda, 2006, p. 65). In the values section of the curriculum a more intercultural perspective can be found were the globalization of society is addressed and how it "place[s] high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity" (Skolverket, 2011, p.4).

Film has been proven a great tool to realise these aims, by helping students develop both intercultural competence as well as media literacy, skills needed to achieve global citizenship in the 21st century (Pegrum, 2008). The studies of Bueno (2009), Charlebois (2008) and Libbon (2008) gave examples on how to work with these issues using film and the all showed positive results even though they reported some difficulties regarding students' attitude towards film as pure entertainment and students' difficulties with critical analysis.

When researching this review, I found no studies done on Swedish or other Scandinavian students despite the number of English films that Swedish and Scandinavian students encounter every day, giving them a unique position regarding the learning of English. The studies I have found were all done on either low level learners at different ages or on university students.

Very little seems to be done on appropriate film content. Only Tatsuki (2006) mentions bad language, no pedagogical studies bring up violence or explicit sexual content. Many films today contain explicit sexual content, which needs to be considered before

showing the film to students. Not only could the scenes cause embarrassment, there may be students in class who have witnessed or experienced sexual assaults and sexual explicit scenes may remind them of the trauma. One possible explanation for the lack of studies on appropriate film content is that it goes without saying in many cultures that you simply do not use that kind of film in either primary or secondary school. However, both I and my fellow teacher trainees have seen that in Swedish upper secondary school today it seems to be very common to use the same kind of films in ELT as the students would go and see at the cinema. It would definitely be interesting to investigate if this is really the case everywhere and also to find out the teachers' as well as the students' thoughts about this. Do teachers think that they need to show action movies in order to keep the students interested and do the students expect these kinds of films to be used in ELT? Are films used as an "embellishment", to use Pegrum's word (2005, p.8), in ELT in Swedish upper secondary school today, or is it used as a powerful tool to teach both linguistics and culture? These questions need further research in order to be answered.

ELT is not a task to take lightly as stated by Libbon (2008): *"Although grammatical and communicative competencies [...] are vital to language learning, effective communication is more than a matter of language proficiency. [...] It is only through cultural literacy [...] that true communication can take place and that a change in attitudes towards one's own culture as well as the other culture can occur"* (p. 82-83). Teachers have indeed a considerable task helping their students develop both communicative skills as well as intercultural competence, but with an efficient tool at hand this task may seem a bit more manageable. According to the studies presented and discussed in this paper, carefully chosen film together with well-prepared discussions and tasks may perfectly well serve as this powerful tool.

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