

Films for Language Learning and Global Issues

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In this paper we demonstrate how films can be used to provide students with vital knowledge of global issues in addition to vocabulary and language practice. We explain why and how film-based lessons are conducted in EFL classes by describing two cases in which a 3-stage viewing process was adopted to use films that covered peace, international understanding, and environmental conservation. In addition, how students perceive viewing films in classes is explored, showing results from end-of-the-year surveys. Finally, the importance of fostering attitudes towards language learning while raising awareness of global issues is discussed.

本稿は映画が学生や生徒の語彙や言語の上達ばかりでなく、グローバル問題に必須な知識を獲得する目的で、有効利用できる方法を提示している。ここでは外国語としての英語のクラスで映画を教材として使用した理由と方法を説明し、国際理解、国際平和、文化の多様性、環境保全などの例を用いながら、三段階の映画鑑賞方法を使った2つの授業の事例を紹介する。加えて生徒が教室で映画を観ることについてどのように考えるかが(年度末のアンケートの結果を用い)提示される。最後に、言語学習とグローバル問題を解決しようとする意識を養う重要性について論述する。

FILMS TRANSCEND all barriers and differences and they inform us about the human condition (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008, p. 1). Therefore, many students enjoy watching films. Language teachers are interested in using film in their lessons, but need proof that they promote language learning.

In this paper we reveal the findings of a study using films and their positive EFL outcomes, providing students with increased awareness of global issues. Global issues cover world problems (e.g., war, hunger, environmental destruction) as well as concepts including peace, human rights, and social responsibility. Global education can be defined as “a new approach to language teaching which aims at enabling students to effectively acquire and use a foreign language while empowering them with the knowledge, skills, and commitment required by world citizens for the solution of global problems” (Cates, 2013, p. 24).

The first part of this paper addresses the basic questions of why films have value in EFL classes, how they might be used, and how they were employed to teach two global issues: peace, using the World War II film *Hell in the Pacific*, and recycling via *Toy Story 3*. The second part shows what students think about viewing films in their EFL classes, implying the possibility of using films to foster language learning and interest in global issues.



Why Use Film?

Previous studies have suggested that bringing the outside world into the language classroom has a remarkable effect on Japanese students, considering (a) the limited opportunities students get to practice vocabulary and language in classrooms (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008) and (b) the fact that authentic textbooks often gloss over such topics as international understanding or cultural diversity (Teaman, et al., 2003). Stempleski and Tomalin (2001) wrote:

The value of film as a language teaching and learning resource is self-evident. It is motivating, and it provides a source of authentic and varied language. It is very effective at bringing the outside world into the classroom and providing a stimulating framework for classroom communication and discussion. (p. 1)

Bramford (1998) suggested that motivated students can review and expand foreign language knowledge through movies while students with little motivation may take interest in foreign culture and language. On global issues, Fukunaga (1998) agreed that movies are “a useful strategy, especially when the issues seem too difficult, too time-consuming, or too remote from students’ lives” (p. 7). In other words, films may reach out to a wider range of students, engage them in class activities, and educate them about global issues including international understanding and environmental conservation.

How Can Films Be Used?

King (2002) remarked that teachers need to make the most of the learning opportunities of using films in order to justify their use in the classroom. This reminds us that teachers are accountable and that they need to guide their students and help them develop their knowledge through the viewing process. Models for

the use of film in classrooms have been provided by educators. For example, Holden (2000) used an 8-step procedure and had students keep film response journals, while Roell (2010) profiled a variety of films for intercultural training and constructed a 3-step procedure for teaching film, a sample teaching unit, and a list of films.

For this research, a model of 3 stages, pre-, mid-, and post-viewing, was developed to facilitate students’ learning with films. Following is a brief explanation of how films can be used for language learning in each of the 3 stages charted in Table 1.

Pre-Viewing

Before watching the film, the topic of the film needs to be introduced and key vocabulary usually needs to be taught. The pre-viewing phase is ideal for input, that is, reading or listening activities that provide background information, but the teacher may also want to set the context by having students speak about what they know about the topic in group or whole class discussions.

Mid-Viewing

During the film, a variety of tasks can be incorporated using dialogue, subtitles, note taking, and so on. Speaking activities could also take place at breaks in the action to reflect on what has happened or predict what might happen next. We inject a note of caution, however. It is not advisable to pause a film too often, as students may lose interest. They should be allowed to become engrossed in the film. But spending entire lessons watching movies is not recommended either. Teachers are advised to try to balance film viewing with language learning activities. Each teacher will need to decide how often and how much class time should be dedicated to film viewing, depending on the aims and objectives of the curriculum and the needs of the students.

Post-Viewing

This is an ideal time for output activities. Students can speak or write their opinions about the film. Input may also take place in the form of further information introduced in the target language via reading and listening activities.

Table I. Three Stages for Using Films in Classrooms

Stage	Activity	Example
Pre-viewing	Input activities	Introduce topic, teach vocabulary
		Discussion about what students already know
Mid-viewing	Incorporate tasks	Use dialogue, subtitles, note taking, etc.
		Speaking activities for reflection or guessing what will happen
Post-viewing	Output activities	Students voicing opinions
		Input of further information in target language

Two Case Studies

The following case studies demonstrate how using films in the high school classroom can provide students with knowledge of global studies while they are immersing themselves in spoken English.

Case I: Learning About World War II in a Japanese EFL Class (Fast)

The topic of World War II is something that English Course students at a private Japanese high school often have to deal

with during their compulsory 2nd-year study abroad. This is particularly so for those who go to Australia as they take part in the nation's annual ANZAC Day Ceremony each year, a memorial for Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought for their countries. Students report that their host family members, friends, and others often want to hear Japanese students' thoughts about the war. Students often seem to be frustrated by this because they lack the language skills or the background knowledge to form their own opinions. Teaching them about World War II before they go abroad seemed to be helpful, but should this be done in an English class? What are they taught in history and other subjects?

I questioned the students' social studies instructor, who explained that English course students do not have any lessons that deal directly with the history of World War II, but that they cover the politics and economics of the era in their 3rd-year Modern Society (現代社会) class. Their text *Saishin Nihonshi B* (最新日本史) is officially authorized by the Japanese Ministry of Education. It is a redesigned version of *Shinpen Nihonshi* (新編日本史), which received heavy criticism from the governments of China and Korea for its erasure of Japanese wartime atrocities (Nozaki & Selden, 2009).

Given that the students receive no formal lessons about World War II prior to study abroad, I concluded that it might be beneficial to at least introduce the topic in my English lessons. I chose the 1968 film *Hell in the Pacific* for this purpose and showed it to 28 first-year English course students about to study abroad, as well as 16 recently returned 3rd-year students in December 2011. My aims were to

- create an interest in this key event in history and encourage further independent study;
- give them opportunities for language learning and skills practice; and

- get them to think critically of what they might have done had they been alive during that era and better relate to the experiences of their elders.

The film *Hell in the Pacific* reduces the entire war down to two soldiers, one Japanese and one American, who are trapped on a deserted island together. They must decide whether to try to fight to the death or work together to get off the island. The film has no subtitles. The main characters speak their native languages and the viewers are forced to identify with whichever character they understand.

Lesson Plan for Hell in the Pacific

I designed a four-class lesson plan using the film, as shown in Table 2.

In Lesson 1, I started with the question: *What would you do if you were trapped on an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? You are not alone — there is an American there with you, and by the way, it's 1945.* At first students commented they might befriend the American but quickly realized that 1945 was wartime and America was the enemy, leaving them unsure how to answer. They watched the first 20 minutes of the film and spent the remainder of class answering questions 1-4 on their handouts (Appendix A), which dealt mainly with comprehension of the director's intent, for example, *Why were there no subtitles?* and *Why were the fight scenes so childish?*

Before watching the second portion of the film in Lesson 2, students familiarized themselves with key vocabulary by matching words with English definitions. During the film, students were asked to think about how, if they were the Japanese character in the film, they would use English to convince the American to help build a raft to get off the island. They then role-played their answers in pairs during the post-viewing.

For Lesson 3, students finished watching the film and wrote

their answer to Question 6: *Why did the film end so abruptly?* They then shared their answers in a class discussion. For homework, students wrote their own alternative endings to the film (Question 7) and opinions on whether or not WWII should be taught in their EFL lessons (Question 8).

Finally for Lesson 4, students peer edited their alternative endings and read them aloud in groups. The groups then selected their favorites and shared them with the rest of the class.

Table 2. Lesson Plan for *Hell in the Pacific*

Time of use	Materials	Activity
Lesson 1	DVD	Pre: <i>What would you do if you were on a deserted island with an American soldier in World War II?</i>
		Mid: Watch first part of film.
		Post: Discuss Questions 1-4 in groups.
Lesson 2	DVD	Pre: Vocabulary matching
		Mid: Watch second part of film.
		Post: Write answers for Question 5 and role-play with a partner.
Lesson 3	View: DVD to the end	Mid: Watch film to the end.
		Post: Write answers for Question 6, then share answers in groups. Write answers for Questions 7 and 8 for homework.
Lesson 4		Post: Peer edit answers to Question 7 <i>Write your own ending</i> and read in groups. Have students read their alternative endings in groups and share their favorites with the rest of the class.

Note. For handout, see Appendix A.

Students' Reactions to the Assignment

Question 8 on the handout asked students to answer the question: *Do you think it's important to study World War II in English Classes? Why? Why not?* Following are quotes taken from the students' written answers:

- I'll go to Australia next year. In the old days, Australia was the enemy. So I have to learn about WWII. If I don't know about it, I'll feel ashamed.
- Learning about WWII was really valuable for me. I had a hard time in Canada when people asked me my opinion about WWII. I knew what happened by I never thought about it from a Japanese or other country's point of view. I wish I had studied it before I left.
- The people of the world won't forget WWII. Many countries still bare the scar of the war.
- It is important for students to be taught about the War from teachers who are not Japanese. Students can learn other points of view. I think the government should provide more EFL classes to study about WWII.

The students were overwhelmingly in favor of studying World War II in their English lessons, however there were two students who felt the opposite:

- I don't want to rake up history. If I do, I'll cry. I don't know what happened in the past, but now is now. I want to go forward.
- I don't think it's important to study WWII in EFL class. WWII is scary for me and everyone too. We haven't forgotten this war, but Japan lost. So I don't think it's important to study it.

The students' opinions, both positive and negative, reinforced my view that studying World War II with these particular stu-

dents was a valuable experience. Students were exposed to new vocabulary and practiced their language skills. They were also able to better understand the time period, as well as the filmmaker's opinion about the war. Hopefully they were also able to begin developing opinions of their own.

Case 2: Learning About the 3Rs in a Japanese EFL Class (Harada)

This section introduces a 3-step lesson plan on teaching the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) using a scene from the film, *Toy Story 3*, at a high school. Students' responses are shared at the end of this section. This lesson was designed to help students connect the story from the film to their real lives by writing their own experiences related to environmental issues followed by viewing the film, reading the script out loud from the film scene, and reflecting on the film.

Reduce, reuse, and recycle are keywords for environmental issues. According to Kolenbrander, Todd, Schaefer Zarske, and Yowell (2005), *reduce* means minimizing the production and consumption of items that are made from new, not recycled, materials; *reuse* means extending the life of an item by using it again, repairing it, or creating new uses for it instead of throwing it away; and *recycle* means processing waste and using it as raw material for new products. In Japan, many students are already familiar with routines related to the 3Rs, such as placing used plastic bottles in the recycle bin.

The two main reasons for choosing 3Rs as a theme of this activity were (a) to remind the students that debris from the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011 is still an important environmental and social issue in Japan and (b) to allow students to share their ideas for an eco-friendly lifestyle.

Thirty-one female 3rd grade high school students at the advanced proficiency level took part in three 50-minute lessons

as an activity for a 2012 grammar elective course. In 2011, their seniors requested watching *Toy Story 3*. It was the winning entry for an in-class movie film poster design contest. I let them make their term test questions and answers related to the film. Blasco and Moreto (2012) remarked that from their experience with medical students, “Movie experiences act like emotional memories for developing attitudes and keeping them as reflective references in daily activities” (pp. 24-25). I felt viewing *Toy Story 3* would encourage students to keep their emotional memories. I continued to use it in 3rd grade classes the following year because one student suggested that they were in a similar condition in that they would soon graduate and move to the new stages of lives as Andy, a teenage boy in the film, did.

In the story, Andy had three options for his old toy’s destination: a box labeled “college,” a bag to be placed in the attic, or a trash bag. His younger sister Molly was asked to select which of her toys could be donated to the children in the daycare center because she had too many. I decided to connect this story with the 3Rs in my class.

Lesson Plan for *Toy Story 3*

As exemplified in Table 3, three class hours were used for students to view a 1-minute and 24-second scene from Chapter 4. In the first class, the students reviewed the keywords for the 3Rs by filling out a worksheet (see Appendix B) and writing down experiences, especially their own, related to the 3Rs. Then they watched the scene. They were also encouraged to give examples from a recent school trip illustrating their daily life.

Table 3. Lesson Plan Using a Scene from *Toy Story 3*

Time of use	Materials	Activity
Lesson 1	DVD Chapter 4	Pre: 3R Vocabulary
		Mid: Watch film segment. Post: Write about the discoveries from students’ experiences related to 3Rs.
Lesson 2	DVD Chapter 4 (2nd viewing)	Pre: Information gap pair work
		Mid: View film and check gap fill answers. Post: Show answers to their partner. Answer the questions including Question 2 on <i>Toy Story 3</i> .
Lesson 3	DVD Chapters to the end	Pre: Check spellings of the gap fill answers.
		Mid: View film.
		Post: Write comments about the film.

In the second class, students made pairs and read the script of the scene in Chapter 4 that I had transcribed from the subtitles of the film, designed as an information gap activity. They took turns saying their lines from the script while their partner spelled out the words in blanks. I asked them to check their spelling by showing the English subtitles from the film. Finally, on a separate worksheet (Appendix C), students were asked to write their answers to the questions including Question 2: *If you were a toy, would you be happy to be donated to a daycare after the owner grew up and no longer played with you? Why do you think so?*

In the third class, students refreshed their memories by checking their answers again on the printed answer sheet. Finally, they finished viewing the rest of the story and wrote brief comments about the film on their assessment sheet, which is collected every week at the end of the lesson.

Students' Reactions to the Assignments

Students were asked to write something about their experiences with their 3Rs in the post-viewing stage in the first class. Student A wrote about going to a glass factory on her school trip to Hokkaido remarking, "I discovered processing the glass and using it as raw material for new glasses . . . The glasses were beautiful even [if] they were recycled." Several students wrote about the glass factory as an example. In addition to applying the keywords from the worksheet using such words as *processing*, *raw material*, and *recycle*, one of them expressed her view that the recycled glasses were just as beautiful as new glasses.

As an example of using the 3Rs in daily school life, Student B illustrated a case of striking the stage set after a school event. She wrote, "When I dismantled a stage setting with my friends, we took away a golden [I]ace. We handled it carefully and put [it] away. . . . We are going to use it for another stage setting. They will cut down on expenses." Her writing indicates her club reused the stage set and she went as far as to explain how this decision contributed to cost saving.

Question 3 in Appendix C covered the question that emerged from the film: *Would you be happy to be donated to a daycare if you were a toy no longer played with by your owner?* Student C stated, "I think I would be happy . . . if the other toys there were not evil like in the movie. I think I'll have a good time, better than just being in the attic," which was a positive response. Contrastingly, Student D wrote, "I might feel sad because I played with the owner for a long time. I would love my owner, so I don't want [sic] to be donated to a daycare." Their answers may not be directly related to reuse or recycle, but show how they used their imaginations to understand the situation from the toy's viewpoint. Their answers led to them thinking about love and humanity as they expressed their opinions in English.

Student Opinions Regarding Films in the Classrooms

The two case studies indicate that film seems to be one of the best ways to immerse students in a new language environment and to cause them to consider issues they have never encountered. O'Bannon and Goldenberg (2008) claimed that the classroom climate will improve when students are told they will be watching a film. The following sections from the yearend surveys highlighting student opinions exemplify how they felt about learning from films.

Student Opinions: The Case of International Understanding Class

Students in the 2nd and 3rd grade ($N = 280$) taking a high school International Understanding class (not associated with Case Study 1) had an opportunity to share how they felt about having been shown films in class. In their yearend survey they were asked, "Did you learn a lot from watching movies?" Students were instructed to put a mark indicating their opinion and write their thoughts. A mark close to the frown face "☹" on the left end would indicate disapproval, the closer the mark to the face, the stronger the feeling. Likewise, if they felt positive, they were instructed to mark the side closer to the smiley face "☺" on the right end.

After viewing three films (*Babies*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and *Mad Hot Ballroom*) over the course of a year, the majority of students indicated that they strongly felt they had learned a lot from the films shown in class. Most students also wrote comments, some of which are included below:

- They say "Seeing is believing." Movies make understanding easy.
- I have learned there are many things that I don't know in the

world. Movies are interesting and easy to understand.

- *Babies* taught me about the differences of the environments where each baby lives. *Slumdog Millionaire* taught me about the problems of poverty in slums, and *Step* [*Step Step Step*—also known as *Mad Hot Ballroom*] taught me about many cultures and traditions.
- Movies are good for aural comprehension.
- I learned how to use colloquial English.

Student Opinions: The Case of Grammar Elective Class

The 3rd graders in the grammar elective class in Case Study 2 were asked to review what they learned in the class after viewing scenes from four films over the year (*Toy Story 3*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, *High School Musical*, *The King's Speech*). One of the questions was, "Which of the following activities do you think would be interesting if you were to join next year's class?" More than 70% of 21 students who handed in the questionnaire selected *Seeing movies and reading the original novels in English* out of eight items. Some of their comments included the following:

- I liked the movies a lot. So I am happy.
- Watching movies was a lot of fun.
- Seeing the movies with English subtitles was practical and I liked it [original in Japanese].
- Filling out the blanks in the scripts of the movie while watching the scenes on screen helps you understand the contents [original in Japanese].

The students' voices in both cases point out that they tried to understand and learn about the society, culture, and language in the films.

Enhancing Knowledge of Global Issues and Language Skills

Why do the students find films in class attractive? Crystal (2004) suggested that as we live in a televisual culture, we need "to use that culture to foster our initiatives, and to show young people that they can do the same, by making the technology available to them" (p. 28). Teenagers who have grown up equipped with personal computers and cell phones are familiar with audio-visual resources. With the support of audio and visual effects, they find it easier to understand the contents of films compared to simply using authentic textbooks.

What would be an effective way for today's teenage students to learn? Prensky (2001) stated that teachers today need to rethink the *legacy* content of a traditional curriculum (e.g., reading, writing, arithmetic) and combine it with *future* content, including digital and technological areas (e.g., software, robotics) and those that go with them (e.g., ethics, sociology, language) for their students, who are native speakers of digital languages. In other words, educators who are accustomed to teaching a traditional curriculum are encouraged to select materials and teaching methods appropriate for learning styles in the digital era. Films dealing with global issues that help students foster social awareness and enhance their language skills would be an example of how to merge legacy and future content.

Conclusion

Two case studies of high school EFL classes using films related to global issues were presented in three steps: pre-, mid-, and post-viewing. *Hell in the Pacific* was employed to discuss World War II and the peace movement and *Toy Story 3* was used to learn about the 3Rs to improve the environment. Students in both cases had opportunities to think critically about specific issues treated in the films they saw.

The opinions of the students who took part in this research suggest that watching films can be interesting, an aid to understanding, and something they like to do. With teachers' guidance, viewing a film in class and exchanging opinions with their peers, instead of passively studying via the materials of a traditional curriculum, help students increase their awareness of global issues.

Consequently, using films related to global issues will give synergistic benefits to the students by learning language while learning about global issues. Students can acquire vocabulary and grammar through film and familiarize themselves with issues such as environmental conservation or peace. We hope that by considering issues that are central to students' lives and by exchanging their opinions with their peers after viewing films, students will start recognizing the real problems in the global society and will try to find solutions for the future.

As a final addendum to this paper, we have attached a list of recommended films that was compiled when we asked the participants at our JALT2012 session to brainstorm the titles of films on global issues. See Appendix D for their film selections.

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Bio Data

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Appendix B

Case 2: Definition and Activities Related to the 3Rs

Worksheet Used for Toy Story 3

Grade: _____ Class: _____ No.: _____ Name: _____

3R

Vocabulary

3R: 3R is an acronym for _____, _____, _____.

composting: A process in which food, yard and animal wastes decomposes into new soil.

recycle: Processing waste and using it as raw material for new products; that is, making trash into something useful instead of just throwing it out. It is often called "resource recovery" because it is actually recovering and reusing natural resources.

reduce: Minimizing the production and consumption of items that are made from new, NOT recycled, materials. Not creating trash in the first place and lessening in amount, number or other quantity (recycling).

reuse: Extending the life of an item by using it again, repairing it, modifying it, or creating new uses for it instead of throwing it away.

Adopted from Teach Engineering
http://www.teachengineering.org/view_lesson.php?url=collection/cub_/lessons/cub_environ/cub_environ_lesson05.xml#vocab

(2) Write what you discovered from your experience.

(1) When you were on a school trip, what kind of 3R did you discover?

When: _____

Where: _____

What type of 3R was it?

(3) Write what you learned from the scene in Toy Story 3.

Worksheet by Naoko Harada

Appendix C

Case 2: Handout for Toy Story 3

<i>Toy Story</i> Chapter 4	Grade: _____	Class: _____	No.: _____	Name _____
Q1. Write out the sentence structures using S, V, O, C.				
(a) I'm not leaving.				
(b) Come on.				
(c) You have more toys than you know what to do with.				
(d) Some of them could make other kids really happy.				
(e) You choose the toys you want to donate.				
(f) They're junk.				
Q2. Why do you think Andy did not want his sister Molly to touch his toys?				

Q3. If you were a toy, would you be happy to be donated to a daycare after the owner grew up and no longer played with you? Why do you think so?				

Q4. What other ways to reuse or recycle toys can you think of?				

Q5. Write your idea about recycling unused clothes.				

Worksheet by Naoko Harada

Appendix D

Videos and Books on Global Issues Recommended by Conference Attendees

Title	Year
<i>12 Angry Men</i>	1957
9B	1988-
<i>Babies</i>	2010
<i>Baraka</i>	1992
<i>Bend It Like Beckham</i>	2002
<i>Chalk</i>	2006
<i>Freedom Writers</i>	2007
<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>	1987
<i>Gran Torino</i>	2008
<i>Guess Who's Coming to Dinner</i>	1967
<i>In the Heat of the Night</i>	1967
<i>Mad Hot Ballroom</i>	2005
<i>Mississippi Burning</i>	1988
<i>Motorcycle Diaries</i>	2004
<i>Philadelphia</i>	1993
<i>Rabbit-Proof Fence</i>	2002
<i>Rize</i>	2005
<i>Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi [Spirited Away]</i>	2001
<i>Shall we Dance?</i>	2004
<i>Shomuni</i>	1998-
<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i>	2008
<i>Stand and Deliver</i>	1988
<i>Supe Size Me</i>	2004
<i>Tampopo</i>	1985

Title	Year
<i>Teachers</i>	2001-2004
<i>The Color Purple</i>	1985
<i>The Crying Game</i>	1992
<i>The Gods Must Be Crazy</i>	1980
<i>The Long Walk Home</i>	1990
<i>UN Works</i>	Un- known
<i>WALL-E</i>	2008
<i>Whale Rider</i>	2002

Note: All titles were released as movie films except for *Shomuni* and *Teachers* broadcasted as TV series and *UN Works*, which was a collection of video clips.

The films recommended by the participants were mostly in English or Japanese, but other foreign language films, such as in Spanish, were also suggested.