

**Ilona Goldmane**  
(University of Latvia)

## **LIFELONG LEARNING VIA DIFFERENT RECEPTIVE CHANNELS**

*lifelong learning, film, perception, cognition, 'Hamlet'*

For many generations of the English language learners the reading of classical literature in the original has been the measure of their language level. There are many various methods and techniques used by teachers in order to assist students in raising both their language competence and cultural awareness, and the viewing of film versions ranks as one of the well-tried and established methods among them. Conveying its messages via different receptive channels, primary visual and auditory, along with a recreational potential recognized by an audience and an educational one acknowledged by educators, the cinema possesses a great aesthetical potential which allows considering it to be an art.

Definitely not all films can be rated as artworks since many of them are made to satisfy a mass consumer's urge to entertain and at the same time function as an economic enterprise for film producers. Film which was created not as an entertainment medium but rather scientific experiment to demonstrate the phenomenon of persistence of vision. . . . throughout the history of film, the development of a film's external structure has allowed filmmakers to reveal the internal structure of a story in new and creative ways (Joniak 2003: 2-3), gradually merging it in the kingdom of other arts.

As any art, film is multifunctional: it can serve as a means of the distribution of information (informative function), a set of knowledge (cognitive function), shape a public opinion (ideological function), reflect the cultural norms of a society (cultural function), raise moral standards (ethical function), promote the notion of beauty and artistic values (aesthetic function), facilitate people's and peoples' communication (communicative function), play a significant role as a "national pastime" (recreative function) and bring an audience emotional enjoyment (hedonistic function). In addition, "film has the power to invoke societal change and open audiences' eyes to new perspectives of the human experience." (Joniak 2003: 1)

Indeed, despite a vast literature devoted to film - historical, technical, sociological - very little material instructs a viewer in how to attend to films for the sake of increased pleasure and understanding. "We many have believed that possessing information about a work of art was the highroad to pleasure and understanding; but it is the quality of fused perceptions that accounts for the intensity of aesthetic experience." (Feldman 1972: 446) Looking at the screen still does not mean understanding a film. According to Dick (1998: viii), "visual thinking is an intellectual act; it is not the passive watching of a 'flick'." The perception of art is a small model of the perception of the world, a means of its cognition. The conditions of contemporary life do not demand as much of our perceptual capacities as we are equipped to supply. "Perhaps aesthetic pleasure is, in fact, the satisfaction experiences in employing to the full our innate capacities for perception." (Feldman 1972: 43)

In connection with film viewing it is possible to distinguish between two types of perception: 1) a direct one during the act of watching, and 2) a critical one which takes place in the form of post-viewing reflections on the issues seen. Moreover, any art is always co-creativity as "artist - artwork - recipient" is a highly dynamic

communicative system. The process of film production is the encoding of filmmakers' message while the process of viewing presumes its decoding, picking up cues and filling gaps. In modern art an artist does not offer ready truths, a truth is born in the process of perception as a result of a dialogue between the artist and the spectator. The spectator's inner speech is taken into consideration while structuring an art work. The active role of a viewer is especially advocated by representatives of cognitive psychology with its assumption that "humans seek to make sense out of their environment by testing hypotheses and drawing inferences, offers many intriguing leads for an account of the spectator's activity." (Bordwell, Thompson 1971: 41)

Thus the spectatorship should be created and viewers' taste should be developed not by manipulating it but by shaping their needs, disassembling stereotypes of perception, cultivating flexibility, imaginative thinking and reflection, creativity, passion to learning, the faculty of defending their own opinions and tolerating opinions which differ. Film, as any text, demands from its reader some specific 'reading' skills, and a person who masters this kind of 'literacy' can perceive messages via the two main receptive channels operated by the cinema - the visual and auditory ones - gaining insights into the richness possessed by this art. The possession of this richness, in its turn, can expose a 'reader' to the ability of being a better observer and, as a result, a more adequate participant in the process of the creative cognition of the world on the whole. Vygotsky states (Выготский 1987: 247) that though it is impossible to teach a creative act but it does not mean that it is impossible for an educator to assist learners in its forming and appearing.

The format of the article imposes certain limitations on the choice of the material and only some examples of particular cinematic techniques will be provided in order to illustrate how they, appealing to a viewer's different receptive channels, develop his cognitive potential and shape his aesthetic evaluation of a film. The examples will be given from two *Hamlet* film versions made by Laurence Olivier (UK, 1948) and Kenneth Branagh (UK, 1996).

In most films the first image to appear on the screen after the studio's or the distributor's logo is a main title and a credits sequence. Olivier's main title is designed in white ornamental letters and followed by a credits sequence which appears against the stormy sea. Accompanied by a musical prelude, this sequence establishes the tragic mood of the whole story. The next shot reveals the platform of the castle, hardly seen through a foggy sky, against whose background a quotation from I.iv.22-30 "So oft it chances in particular men..." is presented both in visual and auditory forms as it is internalized by Olivier himself who is not only directed it but also plays Hamlet's role.

Kenneth Branagh does not introduce a credits sequence, and the main title appears as the inscription on the monument to the Old Hamlet. The establishing shot of a magnificent palace panning to the face of deadly frightened Bernardo (played by a black actor what seems intriguing for those who know the text) combined with carefully selected thrilling sounds launches a viewer in a mysterious winter night.

Both of the filmmakers skilfully employ the close-up which, according to Jean-Luc Godard, was invented for tragedy while the long shot serves better for comedy (Dick 1998: 37). Indeed, the close-up a tremendously powerful aesthetic device which can exaggerate enormously the most subtle and transient visual effects. In addition, the enormous enlargement of persons and objects in the close-up forces the viewer to attend to the tactile qualities of his visual experience. Not only can the film director draw attention to significant details, but also he can generate an intense awareness of the texture of these details. As a result, the viewer perceives the sensuous qualities of images with a vividness perhaps unequaled

since his early childhood, when *tactile* examination of objects prevailed over visual observation." (Dick 1998: 43)

Olivier's most successful close-ups are the first appearance of Claudius drinking from a silver cup which perfectly suits the characterization given him by Hamlet in I.iv.13-37; numerous close-ups of Hamlet's face, suffering and thoughtful, covered by sweat and deep, almost unbearable sorrow. The close-up of Claudius' "cursed hand" (III.iii.43) turns it into a brilliant metonymy and thus becomes a symbol of his crime while Hamlet's empty throne stands for the Prince's unfulfilled royalty and disillusion. Another close-up of Laertes' rapier reveals his treacherous deception which some minutes later will lead him to his own destruction. Branagh employs a series of close-ups in I.v during which Hamlet learns a "horrible" truth from his father. Especially impressive are six extreme close-ups intercutting between the Ghost's enigmatic and Hamlet's wide-open questioning eyes.

Each filmmaker has his own hobby horse: Olivier favours crane high-angle shots (excellently applied in IV.vii during which Claudius is trying to convince Laertes to revenge the death of the young man's father) while Branagh is fond of travelling shots which allow him to emphasize the characters' relationships as well as long takes used in all Hamlet's soliloquies which slow down the pace and underscore his reflective mood. At the same time Branagh masterly uses the potential of editing in the Mousetrap Scene (III.ii): a 10-minute sequence (to be more precise, 10 minutes and 28 seconds - III.iii.97-319 - till enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) consists of 303 shots. This rapid montage creates a frenzied rhythm which underlines Hamlet's agitation and urge to catch Claudius' conscience. In his turn Olivier in the same scene skilfully exploits the auditory channel, particularly music, which in the course of the performance starts to act as a dramatic device revealing the King's crime. On the whole, in Olivier's film version music plays an extremely important role. Drawing on the conventions of symphonic romanticism, Walton (the composer of the 1948 film version) introduces a system of leitmotifs which underscore not only the general mood of the narration but also fulfil many other different functions, namely, foreshadow the character's appearance or substitute his or her visual presence, for instance in the Closet Scene (III.iv) the Ghost is never shown but his distorted voice is preceded by his leitmotiv which announces his arrival.

The dissolve is a more typical transitional device for the 1940s though Branagh implements it too. The image of yelling Ophelia shocked by the news of her father death, introduced by Branagh between IV.iii and IV.iv, dissolves into the image of the lake in which this poor creature will drown herself later. The drowning itself (IV.vii) is presented through another dissolve - Gertrude's image dissolves into Ophelia's and then into the establishing shot of the lake. Olivier is a master of superimposition - for instance, an excellent combination of camera work, music and superimposition precedes Hamlet's soliloque "To be or not to be" (III.ii). The camera pans up the stairs and the music builds frenetically as viewers (both Olivier and Branagh use an objective camera, thus making a viewer a direct observer, even a participant of the action) climb the stairs after him, leaving Ophelia sobbing at the bottom. After tilting up to the sky and then down to the sea, the camera fixes on Olivier's head, the image blurs from frothing waves to his brain until he 'thinks' (part of the monologue is presented as a voice-over narration) the first line.

Another significant technique employed by Branagh is the flashback which enables him to visualize some important scenes, for instance, Scene II.ii in which, according to Branagh, not Polonius but his humiliated daughter is trying to utter Hamlet's letter while her reading is interrupted by the flashbacks of an intimate scene

between Hamlet and Ophelia, the Player's monologue on Hecuba (II.ii), Hamlet's reminiscences of Yorick (V.i) and all Fortinbras' mentions. The flashback also affects a viewer's interpretation of some events, particularly in I.iii when Polonius teaches Ophelia not to trust Hamlet's unproved feelings but the girl's memories about their love making, given as a series of flashbacks, validates her assurance and argues with the opinion of those who believe that Hamlet never loved Ophelia.

In his white-and-black film Olivier exerts a potential of lighting in order not only to create a more realistic space but also to promote some additional messages. Hamlet's face is the most lit among the other characters as if the light favoured him as the most alive and natural creature in this kingdom of shadows. The most engaging implication of shadows is demonstrated in V.i: Hamlet's shadow, which matches Yorick's skulp, symbolically foreshadows his own destiny as well as emphasizes the fragility and mortality of a human being.

In addition to some above-mentioned cinematic devices, Branagh introduces some mythic associations and two particular shots - the end of the Nunnery scene (III.ii), when Ophelia like Maria Magdalena looking up at the furious and desparate Hamlet, as well as the last shots of the Duel Scene (V.ii), when dead Hamlet is being carried by guards - recall a strong association with the resurected Jesus Christ.

There is an opinion that a good film can be watched with sound off, and the history of the silent film confirmed this assumption at the very beginning of the cinematographic era. Undeniably, Shakespeare's dramas are famous and loved not only for their ellaborate narration, but for the beauty of their language. However, exactly visual and auditory cues, which form the cinematic texture, can shape a deeper comprehension of Shakespeare's messages, assisting a viewer in overcoming his natural fear of sophisticated pieces of classical literature and the language barrier. In this way film can create a strong motivation for the following encounters with the Bard's literary heritage and make it more accessible for a modern reader/viewer.

Some modern educators consider (Markkula, Suurla 1998: 14) that the national level of education based on literal knowledge is not a sufficient aid to success. There is a need for changes in attitudes and values, which will lead to a society of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is a principle which operates on a number of levels. For an individual it means passion to learn and responsible cooperation, which create civilization based on knowledge and understanding and bring forth new technologies and social innovations.

They emphasize the importance of a learner's positive attitude to learning, the ability to cope in the changing world, flexibility, which turn him/her into a researcher. "The development of attitudes and values is always involved with changes of habitual patterns of thought and old conceptions." (Markkula, Suurla 1998: 66)

Thus film studies combined with language and literature studies can not only open a door to the world of classical literature, but also, since the perception of film involves a human's main receptive channels, it can, definitely questioning the established learning methods, become a means of lifelong learning for a person of any age, gender, profession and nation.

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## **RAKSTA 'MĀCĪŠANĀS CAUR DAŽĀDIEM RECEPTĪVIEM KANĀLIEM VISAS DZĪVES LAIKĀ' KOPSAVILKUMS**

Filmu versiju apskatīšana ir viena no pārbaudītākām un atzītākām metodēm, kuras izmanto valodu pasniedzēji, lai palīdzētu studentiem paaugstināt gan valodas kompetenci, gan kultūras izpratni. Kā jebkurai mākslai, filmai piemīt daudz funkciju: informatīvā, izziņāšanas, ideoloģiskā, kulturālā, ētiskā, estētiskā, komunikatīvā, izklaidējošā un hedonistiskā. Tomēr, ekrāna vērošana nenozīmē filmas izpratni, jo vizuālā domāšana ir intelektuāla darbība un process, kura laikā skatītājs kopā ar filmas autoru piedalās radošā procesā, jo "mākslinieks - mākslas darbs - recipients" ir augsti dinamiska komunikatīva sistēma.

Filma, kā jebkurš teksts, prasa no tās 'lasītāja' dažādas noteiktas 'lasīšanas' prasmes, un cilvēks, kurš šo 'lasīšanas mākslu' ir apguvis, spēj uztvert informāciju caur diviem galvenajiem receptīvajiem kanāliem, kurus sniedz kinematogrāfija - vizuālo un skaņas - iegūstot šīs mākslas bagātības izpratni. Savā ziņā šī izpratne var palīdzēt 'lasītājam' kļūt par labāku novērotāju un rezultātā - par adekvātāku dalībnieku pasaules radošajā izziņas procesā kopumā, tādā veidā radot mācīšanās nosacījumus mūža garumā jebkuram cilvēkam, neatkarīgi no viņa vecuma, dzimuma, nodarbošanās un tautības.

Pamatojoties uz divu filmu versiju par Hamletu - Lorenza Olivijē (Lielbritānija, 1948) un Keneta Branasa (Lielbritānija, 1996) – ir doti specifiskās tehnikas daži piemēri, lai ilustrētu, kā tās var attīstīt skatītāja izziņas potenciālu un ietekmēt viņa filmas estētisko uztveri. Neapstrīdami Šekspīra lugas ir slavenas un mīlētas ne tikai to izstrādātā vēstījuma dēļ, bet pirmām kārtām, par valodas skaistumu. Tomēr, tieši vizuālās un skaņas norādes, kuras veido kinematogrāfisko struktūru, var ietekmēt Šekspīra ideju dziļāku izpratni, palīdzot skatītājam pārvarēt dabiskās bailes no klasiskās literatūras izsmalcinātajiem darbiem, kā arī no valodas šķēršļiem. Tādējādi, filma var veidot stiprāku motivāciju nākamajām saskarsmēm ar dramaturga literāro mantojumu un padarīt to pieejamāku mūsdienu lasītājam/skatītājam.