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WHAT DO LEARNERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CINEMA? FILM AS A LEARNING TOOL IN ADULT EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The author reflects upon the dominating culture of images in the today's fragmented and globalised world. She examines the cinematographic text as a tool that can be used in the process of adult education, facilitating the education of the generations who, unlike younger generations, were not born into the world of images. The author argues that teaching and learning about cinema can represent a tool which enables individuals to acquire cinematographic literacy and discover their psychological, cultural and social selves. The author starts by examining the cinematographic text as a consequence of the technological evolution. She goes on to describe the evolution of the cinematographic text, emphasizing its grammar, syntax and semantics, while focusing on the advantage of the cinematographic text and language over other languages, since such text leads to free interpretation and learning. Finally, she discusses film as a teaching and/or learning tool that puts an end to the hermeneutics, reveals the other (not the self), and leads to the comprehension and construction of our individual, social and cultural identity.

Keywords: cinema, cinematographic text, adult education, learning, identity

KAJ MORAJO VEDETI O FILMU TISTI, KI SE UČIJO? FILM KOT UČNO ORODJE V IZOBRAŽEVANJU ODRASLIH – POVZETEK

Avtorica razpravlja o kulturi podob, ki prevladuje v današnjem fragmentiranem in globaliziranem svetu. Preučuje filmski tekst, ki ga obravnava kot orodje v izobraževanju odraslih, ki se, nasprotno od mladih, niso že rodili v svet podob. Trdi, da sta poučevanje in učenje o filmu orodje, ki posameznikom omogoči, da razvijejo filmsko pismenost in odkrijejo svoj psihološki, kulturni in socialni jaz. Najprej predstavi filmsko besedilo, ki je posledica tehnološke evolucije. Nato opiše evolucijo takšnega besedila, pri čemer se osredotoči na slovnico, skladje in pomen besedila. Poudari, da imata filmsko besedilo in filmski jezik prednost pred drugimi besedili in jeziki, saj omogočata svobodno interpretacijo in učenje. Nazadnje razpravlja o filmu kot učnem orodju, ki zmanjšuje pomen hermenevtike, razkriva drugega (ne razkriva gledalčevega jaza), s čimer vodi gledalca v razumevanje in konstrukcijo individualne, socialne in kulturne identitete.

Ključne besede: film, filmsko besedilo, izobraževanje odraslih, identiteta

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, each major form of technological development, including cinema, has been integrated into the education process as a tool that facilitates learning. Today, images have become a privileged way of communicating, supplanting words, as well as writing and reading of the texts. Consequently, our ways of perceiving, receiving and thinking have changed. This is the reason why all generations need to develop cinematographic literacy, with the help of formal and non-formal or informal learning. Schooling stimulates linear learning, focusing on time and sequence, which is necessary for the understanding of literary texts, but not of film narratives. Linear learning and expression are hardly in tune with today's fragmented world. Books are less adapted to the new world than films, therefore learners need to know how a cinematographic text functions, and they need to understand film language, which is subject to constant technological changes and developments. Television, video and film use a visual language that is difficult to always be interpreted correctly. Without acquiring the required knowledge in this field, film in education remains merely a technical method, and not the actual language that stimulates learning and imagination.

CINEMATOGRAPHIC TEXT IS A CONSEQUENCE OF TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

The digital technology revolution projected the majority of the world population into a world dominated by images and by the same token shifted it into a globalized world. We live at a historic crossroads (McLuhan, 1974). Faced with the spectacular rise of the number and diversity of the mass electronic media, more than ever before the young people seem to be using the right hemisphere of the brain more than the left one, as images have become the privileged way of communication, supplanting words, writing and reading of texts. Therefore, all generations, including the older ones who were not born into the current world of images, need to develop cinematographic literacy with the help of structured education, as well as experiential (formal and informal) learning.

Images Versus Words and How They Are Perceived

Some psychological studies examine how information is perceived, received and interpreted, and more specifically, how individuals select pieces of information and recognise those that are most important for their survival within the ecosystem (Rodríguez, 1998, p. 25). On the other hand, Kerchove (1995) theorizes that from the moment we start learning to read, we learn an alphabet denoting sounds, which at the same time conditions the relation we have to time and space. Why is it that all writings representing sounds are written horizontally, while those representing images, like the Chinese characters, are written vertically? Writing from left to right affects the way we think, focusing our attention on time and sequence, the two essential functions of the left hemisphere (ibid.). Ferrés (1992) states that reading from left to right takes place in time. Thus reading from left to right is an analytical, abstract process which is followed by a logical analysis. This

is how we first learn in school. On the contrary, seeing a picture is an overwhelming and absorbing act, a synthetic, holistic process (ibid.; p. 27). Vision processes triggered in human brain are related to a great number of scenic constituents, shape, colour, depth, movement, etc. There are about thirty areas of the brain that help processing the form, light, colour, and depth, leading to the creation of a single and whole image. In addition, the perspective also seems to represent an important element. According to Panofsky's studies (1991), perspective has already represented an integral part of the representations of space in the Western painting. Space is thus the object of knowledge, a kind of epistemic space of representation. In the future, the faculty of perspective will undoubtedly be gaining in importance.

Image as a Product of Modernity

According to Singer (1995) modernity implies a phenomenal world, which is faster, chaotic even, as well as fragmented and disorienting when compared with the immediately preceding stages of human cultural developments. Baudelaire (2013) and Balázs (2010, p. 97) underline the importance of aesthetics, and the importance of the fragment and fragmentary narrative. The film narrative is thus by definition more in tune with the modern fragmented environment. Moreover, Balázs (ibid.) claims that camera looks at the characters and their environment through the eyes of one character. The camera can observe the environment through the eyes of a different character every time, therefore providing multiple viewpoint angles. The result of this is the action space that is seen from the inside, through the eyes of the *dramatis personae*. As noted by Margaret Cohen (2004, p. 284), the film presents the possibility of reading everyday that allow us to see the real panoramic (horizontal movement from left to right) and other texts (not the film texts). They do not allow us to read. To a large extent, film is more suited to the task in this respect, due to its new technological possibilities.

Image as an Illusion of Movement; Cinema Through History

The audio-visual dimension is possible due to the producing of the illusion of movement. The producing of this illusion – which is possible due to the retina persistence – has gone through several stages. In the early hours of the twentieth century film technicians decided to reproduce life. First, they invented photography and later cinema. In 1872, Muybridge held in California set successive stages of the movement of animals and humans. In 1894, in the United States, Edison and his assistant Dickinson invented “Kinetoscope” – a kind of a large box with a screen through which an observer could watch the unfolding of a film. (Rodríguez, 1998, pp. 169–170). In 1895, the Lumière brothers offered first public performances of their great invention, the “cinematograph”. The rise of the first cine-clubs came about, triggered by the practice of the Lumière brothers. Their films were screened in various public places, including department stores, theatres etc. Cinema is thus a relatively recently established art form and technique, with no more than a hundred years of history. It has gone through several decisive development stages, although these were not always perceived as such. Nevertheless, cinematographic literacy also requires

familiarity with the rather conflicting development of cinema (i.e. the advent of sound film). Moreover, cinema was not born in just one country (France, the United States etc.) and the story of the development of cinema is not only about the development of film but also about the existence of a number of intellectuals, critics, film clubs and specialised magazines, as well as cinema museums and cinematheques. They all compose the cinema culture. In some countries cinema is perceived both as an art form and as a way of spending leisure time. Adult learners therefore need to make a clear distinction between the two types of cinema.

CINEMATOGRAPHIC TEXT LEADS TO INTERPRETATION

Image as Narrative

Understanding cinematographic images and their nature and functions enables adult learners to find common grounds on which to conceive, structure and perceive audio-visual documents. This topic is therefore to be given specific attention whenever a film is produced or used as a learning tool in the context of adult education. Constituting an organised and structured narrative, cinematographic images are not just a random collection. The narrative – looking and being looked at and by or watching and being watched from various angles, as well as the feeling of being observed in the same way – refers to a multiplicity of the points of view. Moreover, the narration changes whenever there is a change in the point of view. In addition, the image is not monolithic but heterogeneous. The whole image leads to a representation that necessarily obeys a certain number of the rules of construction. One needs to be visually literate in order to understand the construction of representations through film images, and this is exactly what the film education is supposed to provide the learners with. The cinematographic (audio-visual) language which unites the sound and the image is also based on the principle of narrative continuity-discontinuity. The narrative continuity involves exposing cinematographic elements, characters and actions so that the viewer can integrate into the narrative structure chronologically. From time to time, a flash back technique is employed to this end. Though there is a tendency to compare the cinematographic language with the literary one, the first fundamentally differs from the other, and the visual script does not represent a work of art similarly to the literary text. The difference between the two languages needs to be demonstrated and the learners should be aware of the existence of both, the art of cinema and the cinema. Moreover, cinematographic language cannot be conceptualized as art, but as a technique. Cinematographic language constantly employs narrative discontinuity, that is, the possibility of reducing the narration of the story to two or three seconds by using the narrative ellipsis whenever possible. The latter is possible because cinema employs images as symbols.

The logic of the cinematographic language is not determined solely by the effect of the formal similarity between the message and the reality to which that message refers, but also by the dissimilarities between the message and the reality (Rodríguez, 1998, p. 25).

Users cannot know whether the images are real or fabricated. Some believe that images are manipulated, others that they primarily constitute narration. When using film, especially featured films, as a learning tool, an adult educator realizes that when it comes to images, the learners are not always sure about their meaning and are moreover often not unanimous about it, which can and should give rise to ample opportunities for discussion and, consequently, learning. In addition, an adult educator should look into how the learners screen films. Learners who are exposed to films as a part of the learning process need to possess the knowledge about how images, reality, and fiction interact on the screen. Nevertheless, it seems that the users' beliefs about the cinema and its images have greater impact on their reception of the film than the knowledge they may have acquired about cinematographic language. Users most often believe that the images, in relation to reality, either imitate it, lie about it, or manipulate it. But above all they should learn about the importance of the way the images are structured. Simply rearranging the order in which the images appear can change the meaning of the narration. Generally, when reading is employed as a learning tool, the level of consensus as to the meaning of the words and sentences is much higher than in the case of cinematographic images and the narrative they convey.

Image As a Sign

According to Pierce (1993, p. 94), the essential character of the sign is to designate or signify another thing which is absent, concrete or abstract. It is therefore necessary to understand the operation of the image as a sign. The sign takes place of the object that is not there. According to Pierce's semiotics, it is possible to read cinematographic language by acknowledging that the view of the camera is framed, and that therefore the reality is framed by the frame, the threshold, and that the frame is a fragment of the external object. The film aesthetics is the result of the mediation between this fragment and the world. Roland Barthes underlined that modern men, the men of the cities, spend time reading, words, images, gestures, behaviour (Barthes, 1964, p. 40). Umberto Eco (1991) suggests that reading implies reader's willingness to decipher iconic and/or linguistic forms, thus contributing to our understanding. In school, learners are taught to understand verbal messages. But are they taught to read and write messages based on images? Television, video and film use a visual language that is resistant to interpretation. It is therefore important to know, what are the elements, as well as the meanings and the structures of language, and to be active, constructive and critical receivers.

SYNTAX AND GRAMMATICAL IMAGE

Captured in the syntax of the moving image there are progression and conflict. Namely, nothing is produced by itself, but is always the result of a confrontation – of cause and effect, of action-reaction, a result of opposing characters. Image produces a language that, by its structure, form and rhythm, stimulates and feeds the imagination of the potential audience, which is what Gaston Bachelard called „imaginative forces“ (Kaplan, 1972). In the 1970s, the analysis of the cinematographic discourse was dominated by the influence

of Jacques Lacan (1982, p. 11). Metz (1980) offered analytical tools for the examining of the cinematographic discourse, emphasizing the heterogeneity of meanings and combinatorial rules. In the 1980s, Gilles Deleuze claimed that film does not represent the reality, but the is an event that, instead of representing, restores the real (Deleuze, 1984, p. 285). The film shot acts as an icon which carries the character of the action, i.e., covers the feelings and the theme that are embodied in the act.

CINEMA, A NEW LANGUAGE, WAS SHAPED STEP BY STEP

The poetics of film was preceded by the fragmentary aesthetics of modernity and modernism, with reverberations in arts such as literature and painting. In his manifest *The Birth of a Sixth Art*¹ Riccioto Canudo (1911) argued, not without justification, that film would eventually absorb all other arts, thus giving rise to the myth of the total art. While Georges Méliès introduced a film that tells a story, the Lumière brothers continued to work in the documentary direction. Between 1915 and 1924, D. E. W. Griffith employed different shots to explore the drama of the narrative. In the 20's of the last century, the Russian formalists, led by Kuleshov, introduced the edited film, in which the organization of scattered fragments of images into a rhythmic sequence is intended to produce effect, make sense, and elaborate ideas, concepts and ideologies. This group also included Pudovkin (2012, p. 148) and Vertov (1992, p. 49).

From here on film takes on a new dimension as it fails to focus on what happens outside and in front of the camera in order to fix what is within the camera frame. With Edwin S. Porter's film, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), the ability of continuity appears within the film language for the first time. The juxtaposition of images opens up the structure and the design of the film editing. With Porter, the camera captures places, spaces, and events, organizing them into a speech which tells a story. With Griffith, the film language focuses on the object, or more specifically, on breaking the real object in the shot by moving the camera. To focus the story, Griffith uses close-ups, medium shots, open plans.

While the visual language focuses the viewer's attention, the most important aspect of it is the framework. Whereas reality has no framework, the film has one. Thus, in film the viewer's gaze is intentional and imposed, similarly as in painting and photography. Even in the era of the silent film, the fifth historical moment to be highlighted was the technological advent of sound and its synchronization with the picture. The combination of visual syntax and sound syntax introduced a significant complexity to the composition.

In the 1940s, realism was revised and later reborn in the post-war period through work of Bazin (1992), Kracauer (1997) and received a new expression in the works of Italian neorealism. From 1940s onwards, and under the influence of the Frankfurt School, the film theory has been focusing primarily on the analysis of the film reception. Film is seen as

1 R. Canudo wrote *The Birth of the Sixth Art* (1911) in which he argued that cinema was the sixth art form (after architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry). In 1912 he redefined dance as the sixth, and cinema as the seventh art.

a cinematographic text, and conceptualized as a language. Film operates through integration and is simultaneously considered as an integrating tool. By consolidating what Ricciotto Canudo defended in 1911, and that which Eisenstein resumed in 1930s, today film is seen as a form of art, as a place of convergence and interaction between the verbal and the visual language, both of these together constituting a unit that is more than a mere sum of its parts. This assertion is defended by Balázs (2010), Benjamin (2015), Burch (with *Praxis Cinema*, 2015), and Aumont and Aumont (1994), who dealt with the *film aesthetics*. In the 1960s, structuralism takes possession of the cinema. From then on, narrative film is seen through the prism of Saussure's semiotics. Film text is analysed in the context of the concepts offered by Metz, in *The Meaning of Cinema* (1968) and *Language and Cinema* (1980). In the sixties of the last century, film studies are developed by École des Annales. The 1970s were marked by a discussion on whether film can be considered as a historical document. Basically, film narrative is characterized by its hybridity, the joining of both visual and sound syntax with the verbal concept, weaving together the syntaxes of different languages, and making them communicate with each other. This is how films tell their stories in a very unique way and become a means of *mass communication*.

Cinema, And The Art of Cinema

There is a clear difference between the cinema and the art of cinema. The first decades from 1900 to 1930, following the emergence of the cinema, were marked by a burning discussion about what exactly the art of cinema is. The comparison between the art of cinema and other arts was the focus of several essays about the art of cinema. The same processes of comparison can be employed in the adult film education. One of the most outstanding film theorists of that time who dealt with the hybrid nature of cinema was Sergei Eisenstein (2002, p. 104). He examined elements of literary works by Dostoevsky, Gorky, Flaubert, Goethe, and Baudelaire, which could be transferred into an imagistic text, or to put it differently, into a story told through images (Eisenstein, 2002, p. 102). Since the 1940s, the filmmakers have been dealing with films very much in the same way that Eisenstein did with other arts. In the 1950s and 60s, they offered their reflection on films and film gender. They reinterpreted older films and introduced more complex narratives. It appears that the mixing and hybridization of languages, art, and their underpinning concepts and notions are inherent to cinema.

In 1936, Walter Benjamin wrote *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility*, addressing the issues of photography and reproducibility of films. With it, film ceased to be perceived as a unique art object. Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) focused their discussion of the film text on its role as a means of *mass communication*.

Friedrich Schiller (*Letter VII*) was convinced that aesthetic education was important, although he did not exactly know why. Every adult educator should ask her- or himself the question about the pragmatic importance of a work of art. Is it about the stimulation of the imagination, which allows the learner's mind to visualize new possibilities by associating ideas? Is it about playing that is free of all constraints?

Which Image and Which Culture? What is Cinema?

The cross-cultural multiculturalism has become a rapid process which depends on the individual and already internalised multiculturalism. Thus, Paul Virilio (1986) argues that speed is tyrannical, represents a threat and is, at the same time, the essence of today's life. It has ceased to be a phenomenon and became a power that leads to the absolute speed and, by the same token, to the absolute power. A video means that although, in reality, there is only one step between the „I see“ and the “I see myself”, this can also represent a giant leap, when the learner does not understand the functioning of the audio-visual language. If an adult educator employs an audio-visual document as a means and not as a language, the information is processed by the learner in a linear way, and the use of film becomes merely a technical method.

Today, the flat screen has replaced the white pages of a book. There is one simple but fundamental difference between a film and a book. While the latter requires the learner to follow the storyline in order to read or, in other words, use his or her knowledge and the power of imagination, the former, with its story unfolding on the TV screen without a human intermediate, has a tendency to render the viewer or the learner passive. The viewer does not watch television but on the contrary, the television watches the viewer. This situation can, in the long run, lead to the creation of “a blurred man”; a man who is displaced, who has lost his boundaries. This is the kind of man described by the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (Soares, 2015); a man who does not have an identity, nor does he have multiple identities that would be provided by reference to his or her community. He or she has become a loose being, one without ethical and aesthetic paradigms to lean on. He or she has become that, which Jameson calls “a disintegrated individual” (Jameson, 1991). The today's world of images, saturated in the exaggeration of excess, will have to shift towards the world of otherness, with education occupying a special role in this shift (Lyotard, 1989).

CINEMA AS A TOOL IN THE ADULT EDUCATION

More than anything else, cinema is an encounter. It facilitates the meeting of people, extending the individual worlds by featuring on the screen both that which is familiar and that which is unfamiliar to the viewer/learner. On condition that the gap between the two is not too wide, cinema stimulates learning and creates the desire to learn. In this sense, cinema sharpens perception and makes it more alert, and contributes to the viewers/learner's understanding of diversity. In order to interpret the content of a cinematographic text, the individual features of the film language need to be identified. Film language is subject to technological development, which continues to offer new possibilities.

The perceptual judgment is that which shapes understanding. Our synthesis of the world is dynamic and adapted to the environment by relying on appropriate cognitive processes. The pedagogy of the image requires the learners and adult educators to understand the language of images and the language of sounds – that is the audio-visual text. The *media*

are instruments by which the reality is encoded. New forms of representation create the need to learn how to decode them, as the language of images in many ways represents a second, different language. Simultaneously, it requires educating the communicators to be able to issue their own messages.

We are the descendants of the so-called *People of the Book*, evolved through the *Gutenberg's Galaxy*, while the rails of our culture – the alphabetic literacy – belong to the *Marconi's Galaxy*. In the eyes of Henri Hudrisier, the greatest paradox „is that we live in an image-inflation world while our thinking is still guided by the power of the text (Hudrisier, 1982, p. 78).

Only a few decades ago, the first mental processes that a child learned at school were reading, writing and calculating, the processes related to the left hemisphere of the brain. Even today, learners are taught to follow the way of a well-constructed linear sequence. Currently, new technological tools such as computer, DVD, Data Show etc., are being used in education. Additionally, the third industrial revolution took place, placing us in a globalized world of multiple digital technologies which are used to communicate and learn. Because of the globalisation, film needs to play a bigger role in the education process.

For a long time, education privileged the use of the written language. Since the contemporary culture is visual, it is the language of the images that is moving into the forefront today. The learner is encouraged to learn through comics, video games, television, cinema, and by using the computer. Today, all *media* make use of the image. In the educational and learning processes, a proper balance between words and images facilitates the development of the thinking processes in general and in particular. Many authors have agreed that without sensation, perception, and representation, there can be no progress of thought; therefore it is important that teaching and learning be based on the connections between the word and the image. While in the early twentieth century, film theory debated whether the image expressed or reproduced reality, we know today that the image does not illustrate or represent reality, but rather rebuilds it by employing its own language, as it is produced in a given historical moment.

The use of cinema as a teaching/learning tool is based on the awareness that the film narrative per se implies the need for a complex analysis, which includes production, light, colour, costume, camera, setting, language and interpretation. For Ferro (2001), film language is linked to the individual's thinking, mind set and culture. The twentieth century witnessed important technical and technological developments and, consequently, also aesthetic development. Therefore, the cultural significance of film or films is always created by the context in which the film is screened or produced. Films are by no means autonomous cultural events, since they always result from particular cultural myths, beliefs, values and social practices. It is in connection with them that the oral, written or audio visual narratives gain meaning (Duarte, 2002, pp. 51–52).

Any technological evolution, including cinema, represents a vehicle for social and cultural values. Furthermore, films are no longer limited to the large public screens and films

can be screened anywhere, which includes the educational and learning environments. Morin (1984) and Delors (2003) agree that humans are complex beings who are able to establish relationships with others, thus exposing themselves to continuous transformation. Film in education helps to establish interpersonal and inter-group relationships, as well as the world around us, therefore significantly conditioning the process of individual or collective transformation. A proper balance of words and images facilitates the development of thinking processes in general and in particular, together with the teaching/learning processes. And what is more, it has been found that without feelings, perceptions and representations, there can be no development of thought; this furthermore illustrates the importance of using film as a teaching/learning tool whenever possible.

Using cinematographic text as a didactic tool implies that film and film narrative require a complex analysis of the production, light, colour, costumes, sets, camera, language and performance. Film allows a lot of creativity. Today, a large number of people have developed a different relationship with the Seventh Art. While the technical means for viewing films are diverse, the viewing of films in an intimate environment has also changed cinematographic language. A book, a song, a painting or a film can all affect the perception of reality, the generating of ideas, the human mind. Man has been freed of constraints, which is causing changes in the individual ethics and logic. Film is an art that allows for a multiplicity of interpretations. Films have to be screened several times to offer the viewers the permission to freely exercise hypothetical-deductive reasoning. A movie is an open dialogue between the director and the audience. The completeness of the cinematographic sign only becomes real when it is read by a receptor, which makes for the process of semiosis, as the sign of the action takes place.

As McLuhan (2011) said, our schools spend increasing amounts of energy on preparing the students for a world that no longer exists. We argue that audio-visual literacy has become imperative for both the students and the teachers. In 1450, Gutenberg invented the movable type and the printing press, but the spread of this printing method was slow and encountered resistance. Today, we are in the era of audio-visual communication and electronic means and film can no longer only be a simple adjunct to the educational methods and processes. Beyond any doubt, the most widespread and effective contemporary culture is one based on the images that are created and disseminated by the television, video, and magazines; while the written culture retains its social importance and privileged position, a new, so called “third culture” has already been emerging. It is thus high time for the visual learning strategies to be introduced into the educational systems, if the learners are to be integrated successfully into the twenty-first century culture and society.

CONCLUSION

Introducing the culture of images into the adult education process can represent a stunning experience for many adult educators and learners, especially those who were not born into the world of images, and have been taught and trained to learn and express themselves

linearly and in sequences. On the other hand, film is a wonderful tool that enables the developing of a different, divergent type of rational process, and gives rise to a different kind of transformative communication and relationships, in a way that encourages the discovering of one's psychological, cultural and social self. It is important to achieve a proper balance between the use of images and words in the educational processes. Adult educators, trainers and adult learners need to be trained in order to understand film and able to interpret it. This substantially changes the role of adult educators, who have to learn about the essential constituents of film, history of the cinema, and the power of images in reconfiguring the reality. This appears to be an urgent task, since Gutenberg's galaxy is rapidly being supplanted by another galaxy, the galaxy of images.

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